
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

1974

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

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P R E F A C E

For almost a century the GOSPEL ADVOCATE has been dedicated to preparing Sunday school lessons soundly based upon the Scriptures. David Lipscomb in defending the Sunday school movement wrote in 1880: "There is just the same authority for teaching the old and the young the Bible in classes or in a school on Sunday morning at church that there is for preaching sermons." David Lipscomb wrote and published seven volumes on *Notes on the Sunday School Lessons*. His *Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* resulted from his comments on the Uniform Sunday School Lessons for 1897. And E. A. Elam was the immediate successor of David Lipscomb who continued the preparation of Sunday school literature.

This fifty-third volume of the *Annual Lesson Commentary* is presented with appreciation to the members of the churches of Christ and all others who will pay us the honor to study the content of these lessons. We have striven to be worthy of your confidence.

The best thinking in biblical scholarship has been examined to make this a better lesson commentary. However, the lessons have been prepared with the rank and file membership of the church in mind. It has been the purpose of the author to provide the Bible teachers with clear and helpful information which they may rely upon as being true to the Bible without human additions or interpretations. The author is mindful of his limitations, but a sincere effort has been made to uphold the high standard of the tradition of the GOSPEL ADVOCATE in soundness of faith and practice.

Each lesson has been prepared as a self-contained body of information which may be studied without reference to the preceding lessons or the ones which follow. However, all of the lessons in each quarter are designed to form a still large pattern of unity and related truth. The central theme of the lessons for each quarter is kept continually in mind.

The lessons for the first quarter trace the growth of the people of Israel. God's "Chosen People," from the time of Moses until their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. We are made aware that God is unfolding his grand design to bless all of mankind.

The second quarter lessons single out the great patriarchs whom God chose to work out his will in his developing purpose to bring salvation to all men through Christ. The accounts of their lives serve us with examples of human behavior at its finest best, but also the human weaknesses and frailties of the same people is related without apology.

The lessons in the third quarter present the great Christian doctrines of the Bible which are the primary foundations of the Christian faith. The fourth quarter is devoted to a study of the Book of Acts which depicts the beginning and growth of the church in about some thirty years in the first century following the establishment of the church on Pentecost.

Since 1945, the GOSPEL ADVOCATE has prepared its own lesson plans best suited to meet the teaching needs of the churches of Christ and to help individual Christians grow strong in the faith. The author and the publisher of this volume hope it will prove to be valuable to the many thousands of readers who will peruse its content.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSONS FOR 1974

FIRST QUARTER

Israel in Bondage	Lesson I—January 6	Ex. 1:6-20
The Call of Moses	Lesson II—January 13	Ex. 3:1-12
Israel's Flight from Egypt.....	Lesson III—January 20	Ex. 14:13-27
God Feeds His People.....	Lesson IV—January 27	Ex. 16:1-15
Israel at Mount Sinai.....	Lesson V—February 3	Ex. 19:1-6, 16-21
The Ten Commandments.....	Lesson VI—February 10	Ex. 20:1-17
Sin in Israel.....	Lesson VII—February 17	Ex. 24:1-3; Lev. 10:1-7
The Day of Atonement.....	Lesson VIII—February 24	Lev. 16:5-22
Laws of Social Justice.....	Lesson IX—March 3	Lev. 19:9-18, 32-37
Religion in the Home	Lesson X—March 10	Deut. 6:4, 5; 11:18-25
Right Decisions	Lesson XI—March 17	Deut. 11:8-12, 26-32
Rebellion in Israel.....	Lesson XII—March 24	Num. 21:1-9
Report of the Spies	Lesson XIII—March 31	Num. 13:17-33

SECOND QUARTER

The Providence of God.....	Lesson I—April 7	Matt. 6:24-34
The Grace of God	Lesson II—April 14	Eph. 2:1-9; Tit. 2:11-14
The Word of God.....	Lesson III—April 21	Deut. 6:4-9; John 5:38-40; 1 Tim. 4:13-16
The Blood of Christ.....	Lesson IV—April 28	Mark 14:24; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:18-22; 10:28, 29; Rev. 7:14
The Authority of Christ	Lesson V—May 5	Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 3:22, 23; Eph. 1:19-23; Rev. 19:11-16
The Reign of Christ	Lesson VI—May 12	Isa. 9:6, 7; Matt. 19:28, 29; Heb. 1:1-4; 12: 1, 2
The Church of Christ	Lesson VII—May 19	Matt. 16:18-20; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:10-17
Obeying God.....	Lesson VIII—May 26	Matt. 7:21-27; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:8, 9
How to Become Members of the New Testament Church	Lesson IX—June 2	James 2: 20-24; Matt. 21:28-31; Rom. 10: 10; Acts 2:37, 38
Worshipping God Acceptably.....	Lesson X—June 9	Matt. 15:7-14; John 4:19-26
The Duty and Privilege of Prayer.....	Lesson XI—June 16	Matt. 7:7-11; James 1:5-7; 1 John 5: 13-15
The Second Coming of Christ.....	Lesson XII—June 23	1 Thess. 1: 9, 10; 4: 9-18; 2 Pet. 3:1-7
The Uniqueness of Christ.....	Lesson XIII—June 30	Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23; John 1:1-9

THIRD QUARTER

	Lesson I—July 7	
The Faith of Abraham.....		Gen. 12:1-9; 13:14-18
	Lesson II—July 14	
The Tolerance of Isaac.....		Gen. 26:12-25
	Lesson III—July 21	
The Weakness of Esau.....		Gen. 25:27-34; 27:41-45
	Lesson IV—July 28	
The Strength of Jacob.....		Gen. 28:16-22; 32:24-30
	Lesson V—August 4	
The Exaltation of Joseph.....		Gen. 41:33-44
	Lesson VI—August 11	
The Brotherly Love of Judah.....		Gen. 44:18-34
	Lesson VII—August 18	
The Kindness of Joseph.....		Gen. 46:1-7; 28-30; 50:24-26
	Lesson VIII—August 25	
Triumphant Death.....		Gen. 25:7-10; 35:28, 29; 49:29-33
	Lesson IX—September 1	
Faith's Hall of Fame.....		Heb. 11:3-10; 17-22
	Lesson X—September 8	
The Triumphs of Faith.....		Heb. 11:32-40
	Lesson XI—September 15	
The Great Cloud of Witnesses.....		Heb. 12:1-11
	Lesson XII—September 22	
Abraham, James' Example of Genuine Faith		James 2:14-24
	Lesson XIII—September 29	
Lessons from History.....		2 Pet. 2:1-9

FOURTH QUARTER

	Lesson I—October 6	
The Ascending Lord.....		Acts 1:1-12
	Lesson II—October 13	
The Descending Spirit		Acts 2:1-13
	Lesson III—October 20	
The Obedient People.....		Acts 2:37-47
	Lesson IV—October 27	
The Persecuted Apostles		Acts 4:1-14
	Lesson V—November 3	
The Determined Disciples.....		Acts 4:18-31
	Lesson VI—November 10	
Two Early Hypocrites.....		Acts 5:1-11
	Lesson VII—November 17	
A Problem Solved		Acts 6:1-10
	Lesson VIII—November 24	
A Saint Martyred		Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60
	Lesson IX—December 1	
The Gospel Goes to Samaria.....		Acts 8:4-8, 14-17, 25
	Lesson X—December 8	
Saul, the Persecutor, Becomes Paul, the Persecuted		Acts 9:1-9, 17-19
	Lesson XI—December 15	
The First Gentile Converts.....		Acts 10:30-48
	Lesson XII—December 22	
Antioch, Great Missionary Church.....		Acts 11:19-30
	Lesson XIII—December 29	
Political Oppression		Acts 12:1-17

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FIRST QUARTER

BEGINNINGS OF A NATION . . .

Aim.—The aim of the lessons for this quarter is to study carefully some of the outstanding historical events in the lives of the people of God in the days of Moses which so powerfully influenced their lives and which led to the establishment of the kingdom of Israel.

Lesson I—January 6, 1974

ISRAEL IN BONDAGE

Lesson Text

Ex. 1: 6-20

6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph.

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

10 Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there fall-eth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out or the land.

11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor:

14 And they made their lives bit-

ter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor.

15 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah:

16 And he said. When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive.

18 And the king of Egypt called for the mid wives, and said unto them. Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive?

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them.

20 And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

Golden Text.—*"The people multiplied, and waxed very mighty."* (Ex. 1: 20.)

Devotional Reading.—Deut. 10:19-22.

Daily Bible Readings

December 31. M.....	An Oppressed People (Ex. 1: 6-20)
January 1. T.....	A Call for Help in Affliction (Psalm 142: 1-7)
January 2. W.....	A Promise of Deliverance (Psalm 107: 1-9)
January 3. T.....	Confidence in Prayer (Psalm 3: 1-8)
January 4. F.....	Blessings on Those Who Suffer (Matt. 5: 1-12)
January 5. S.....	God's Favors to Israel (Psalm 106: 1-23)
January 6. S.....	God's Kindness (Psalm 106: 23-48)

Time.—Probably 1706 B.C.

Place.—Egypt.

Persons.—Children of Israel, Egyptians, Pharaoh, Shiprah and Puah.

Introduction

The Old Testament purports to be more than the historical narrative of the Jewish nation. Christians and Jews believe it to be the sacred history, which it is, that discloses God's revelation of himself to man. On the pages of sacred Scripture is recorded, not only what God has done in the past for man, but his divine plan for man's future as well. God is not only the God of Israel, but he is also the supreme ruler and creator of the universe who charts the stars and directs the affairs of men. Only as sacred history can the Bible be understood in its full significance.

This lesson presents a new epoch in God's dealing with God's chosen family, Abraham's descendants. Centuries passed in silence from the death of Joseph until the birth of a nation under the guidance of Moses. The Israelites in Egypt experienced one of the most exciting periods in all the history of mankind. In a brief period of time, they escaped the bitter toils of slavery to achieve independent status as a nation of God's "chosen people."

In less than an average lifetime they experienced a miraculous deliverance from the most powerful tyrant of the ancient world and received a code of laws that made them God's covenant people. The emancipation of the Israelites was so meaningful and their involvement with God so vital, one sixth of the entire Old Testament is devoted to this period in Israel's history. Beyond the years of the Egyptian oppression, the events recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy transpire over a period of less than fifty years.

Biblical scholars are in general agreement on the historicity of Israel's bondage in Egypt during the New Kingdom era following the expulsion of the Hyksos dynasty of

the Pharaohs. An enormous body of ancient Egyptian text exists with not a single mention of the Israelites until their re-settlement in Canaan. All we know, however, about ancient Egypt exactly tallies with the Old Testament account. The ancient chronicles of Egyptian history would have wanted to forget their great humiliation at the hands of a nation of slaves.

And it is, nonetheless, painful for a people, not only to remember their humble origins, but also a period of degrading servitude. However, the Israelites were mindful of their years of bondage in the land of the Nile. And this grew partially out of their respect for God's commandment, who would not have Israel to forget those years: "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt and Jehovah they God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." (Deut. 5:15.) The Israelite period is only meaningful when we realize that the Egyptian period of Israel's history and God's enlarging plan was for them to become the saviour of mankind through Israel's greatest son, Jesus the Christ.

The closing chapters of Genesis narrate the movement of the Israelites to Goshen, the lush green delta region of the Nile. The first chapters in Exodus are of primary importance to comprehend the birth of a nation. We are now ready to turn to the lesson text. The first seven verses of the first chapter of Exodus describe how the family of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, became a numerous and mighty people. These verses mark the transition from the book of Genesis to Exodus and link the two together.

The Golden Text

The people multiplied and waxed very mighty. (Ex. 1:20.)

The immediate background of this verse grows out of the calculating and pitiless plot of Pharaoh to murder the male children of the

Hebrews at the time of their birth. The Scripture mentions only two midwives—Shiprah and Puah. They were probably the trusted midwives of the king. They practiced their profession in the capital

and were perhaps the chief of all the midwives in Egypt. Two midwives could hardly have performed all the services for the Israelite women throughout Egypt.

However, Pharaoh's new plan to weaken the Israelites failed, for "the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them." (Ex. 1:17.) God rewarded the midwives for their upright conduct. The words "God dealt well with the midwives" sim-

ply mean that he blessed them and their work. On the one hand he blessed their work in that the children of Israel continued to be fruitful and multiply—"and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty"; and on the other hand because the midwives feared God, he blessed them in particular with homes of their own since they had helped make the house of Israel great and numerous.

The Text Explained

Israel Becomes a Nation

(Ex. 1:6, 7)

And Joseph died and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

The first five verses of the first chapter in Exodus describe how the descendants of Abraham became a great and powerful nation. "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt . . . Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls; and Joseph was in Egypt already." (Ex. 1:5.) It was proper to record the names of Jacob's sons at this place in the sacred history of Israel so as to preface the epic events of migration, war, and revolution to be chronicled in later history of the people of Israel. The number *twelve* would from this time on have a special meaning, for there were twelve apostles; and John described the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem each being a single flawless pearl. (Rev. 21:21.)

And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls." The number seventy, likewise, came to hold a special meaning for the Hebrews in their history. The number commonly indicated the perfection of a family blessed with children and their children. Jacob's family in this manner, was perfect in the number of his children. Interestingly, Moses chose seventy elders of Israel to assist him in the wilderness sojourn. (Num. 11:16, 24.) The Great Sanhedrin, the supreme rul-

ing body of the first century Jews, was comprised of seventy leading elders of the people.

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." However the Israelites continued to flourish beyond imagination. The family by divine grace multiplied and spread throughout the land. The ancient blessing which God bestowed upon Adam and Noah: "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) was confirmed in particular to Abraham: "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee" (Gen. 17:5). God's promise to Abraham filled the measure to overflowing in the number of the descendants of Israel in Egypt. The children of Israel were not only fruitful, they teemed: "The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." Now we are able to understand how the children of Israel became a nation, for at this time Hebrews are first called a people. (Ex. 1:9.)

Israel in Bondage

(Ex. 1:8-12)

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them

with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

The prosperity and growth of the Israelites provoked envy and hatred among the Egyptians. This had become especially painful to the Egyptians when "there arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph." A new dynasty of Pharaohs had replaced the one that was in power when Jacob and his sons were favorably received in Egypt.

That the new king did not know Joseph simply means the incumbent Pharaoh was not bound by any ties of gratitude to the Israelites for what Joseph had done for the Egyptians a long time ago. Joseph was carried into Egypt in a most favorable time. The Hyksos kings were then ruling Egypt. The Hyksos were foreigners who conquered the Egyptians in a period of national weakness. The Hyksos were of Semitic origin which means they were of the same blood stock as the Israelites. *Hyksos* means "chiefs of foreign lands"; they were also referred to as the "shepherd kings." Shepherds for religious reasons were "an abomination" to the Egyptians. The Egyptians had good reasons for fearing these Semitic invaders from Asia, who used the horse and chariot for the first time in Egypt to conquer the land. Very little is known about these people, and it is understandable why the Egyptians make no mention of the Hyksos overlords.

It was only natural for the new Pharaoh to form a dislike and distrust of the Hebrews. Were they not of the same blood stock as the Hyksos, and had they not been especially favored by the Hyksos? Pharaoh was not without cause to distrust the Hebrews who were numerous and powerful, and could make the difference between victory and defeat in the event of another invasion such as the Egyptians had experienced at the hands of the Hyksos.

It is not surprising that the nomad Jacob and his family with their flocks and herds were settled during the reign of the Hyksos kings in the lush, green region of Goshen in the Nile Delta, the most

beautiful and fertile land in all of Egypt. The Israelites grew wealthy and powerful and the land was filled with them. At the time Joseph occupied high office, Goshen was near the Egyptian capital. (Gen. 46:28ff.) The Israelites, no doubt, had easy access to the royal court through the good offices of Joseph, and the times could not have been more favorable. However, the best of times became the worst of times. The Hebrews were widely spread over Egypt. Their prosperity and number was becoming more and more painful to the Egyptians.

Historians are not certain which of the Pharaohs it was of the New Kingdom dynasty who knew not Joseph. But he feared and distrusted the foreign Hebrews as the Egyptians had before feared the Hyksos. The Hyksos had been expelled from the land in a rebellion begun by the elders of Thebes which later grew into a national revolt against the Hyksos crushing and driving them from the land.

The New Egyptian dynasty adopted the Hyksos methods of warfare—the horse and war chariot—and came to be cruel and powerful tyrants as the Hyksos had been before them. The common people among the Egyptians were reduced to a state of servitude, and the Israelites were forced into slave labor gangs with Egyptian captains, or taskmasters, placed over them to exact ever increasing demands of work.

The king used a pretext to enslave the Hebrews, and his fears may have been real: "Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land." From this declaration, we learn that the Egyptians had no desire to drive the Israelites from the land as they had the Hyksos. The Hebrews were enriching the economy of the Egyptians, and Pharaoh devised the plan to command a large working force of slave labor. This is the manner in which the sacred history describes the Egyptian suppression of the children of Israel in order to exploit them.

On account of this fear whether it was real or pretended, Pharaoh

"did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens" compelling them to do forced labor. The design was to undermine the strength of the Israelites by means of the burdens of toil and general misery so they would cease to multiply.

The Israelites performed the tasks imposed upon them and they built for Pharaoh treasure cities—Pithom (the house of the god, Atum), and Raamses (the house of Raamses). The cities were probably built as depositories for weapons and other supplies in case of an attack from foreign invaders which was, at all times, a possibility.

An authentic touch is lent to this period of oppression—"the taskmasters afflicted them with their burdens." This simply means that the Israelites were beaten with whips which was standard procedure with the Egyptians. However, the more they sought to persecute and intimidate the Israelites "the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel."

Second Stage of Bondage (Ex. 1: 13, 14)

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives better with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field, all their service, where-in they made them serve with rigor.

The effort of the Egyptians to reduce the Israelites was unsuccessful. As the burdens of the Israelites grew and oppression increased, their will to survive and to prosper grew in proportion. The Egyptians embarked upon the second stage of the enforced servitude of the Hebrews. The first phase of labor was of the ordinary kind. But now "the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor." This was the kind of intolerable toil designed to crush a man's spirit and embitter his life. The Israelites were forced to work in brick and mortar and all kinds of work in the fields and in other places. This program of the king also proved abortive as the Israelites continued to multiply to the utter dismay of the Egyptians.

Pharaoh's Order to the Midwives (Ex. 1:15-20)

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

Pharaoh would not be defeated even though he could not weaken the Israelites by indirect methods; he decided to put an end to their power by a direct method. The king dared not make an open decree of his new plan, so he attempted to achieve his objective secretly. Pharaoh said to the Hebrew midwives: "When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and ye see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, ye shall kill him." They were to kill them, of course, secretly, probably in such a way that the parents would think the infant died of natural causes before or during the birth. Pharaoh justified his inhuman action by reasoning that the Hebrew threat to Egyptian security could be brought to an end in this way.

However, this new diabolical plan of Pharaoh failed. The midwives feared the King of the Universe, and not the human monarch of Egypt. History ever repeats itself. Man will eventually recoil in horror against the inhumanities of man to man, when even death is preferable to destroying innocent children.

Pharaoh summoned the midwives to rebuke them for their failure to carry out his command. We are not guilty the midwives said to the king: "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for

they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them." The answer that the Hebrew mothers were strong and vigorous had to be accepted by Pharaoh.

Despite all the efforts of Israel's enemies to destroy them, each persecution was followed by Israel's continued growth in strength and number. The promised blessings of God increased proportionately in rich rewards to the Israelite children. Pharaoh was finally compelled to acknowledge that all of his attempts to suppress the Israelite people had failed, and Pharaoh's orders to the midwives went unheeded. Neither ordinary work or heart breaking labor had crushed the Hebrews, in spite of even greater hardships added later.

Pharaoh no longer operating under the cloak of secrecy and deception, commanded that, "every son that is born ye shall cast into the river." (Ex. 1:22.) The open decree resembled what Abraham, the father of the Israelites, feared might happen to him when he and Sarah in a time of famine sojourned in Egypt: "They will kill me, but they will save thee alive." (Gen. 12:12.) God, who had saved Abraham and Sarah, delivered the children of Israel also. It was owing to Pharaoh's inhuman decrees that their redeemer came in the person of Moses and their salvation at the

hand of God, and a nation was born.

We are reminded that God is not slack in keeping promises as some men count slackness. When the aged Jacob learned that his son, Joseph, was alive and doing well in the land of Egypt, he hesitated momentarily in going down to Egypt to live in the adopted land of Joseph. God assured Jacob: "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: and I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again." (Gen. 46:3, 4.)

We are also reminded of another age in the days of the early church in Jerusalem. The apostles were subjected to growing intimidations and persecution. Despite the command from the Pharisees and Sadducees to Peter and others to cease preaching the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, they continued to do so. Finally the Pharisees and Sadducees were cut to their hearts and were minded to slay them. On that occasion, Gamaliel, the Hebrew scholar of the age, warned them: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts 5: 38, 39.)

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The Old Testament is both a revelation of God and the history of God's dealings with descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

2. God delivered the people of Israel from the most powerful tyrant of the ancient world in spite of Pharaoh's efforts to frustrate the plans of God.

3. The Israelites grew prosperous and great in number in Egypt because God had promised to favor and to multiply them and because they were to fulfill a special providential role in God's scheme of redemption for mankind.

4. The ingratitude of the new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph was measured in his cruel treatment of the Hebrew people through a real

or pretended fear of the people.

5. Pharaoh failed in each scheme to reduce the Israelites because he was fighting an uneven battle against God.

6. The pitiless character of Pharaoh was manifested when he abandoned the secret plan for the midwives to destroy the children and ordered every male child of the Hebrews to be cast into the Nile.

7. The Israelites through the providential help of God increased in number and strength as their burdens became heavier.

8. The more desperate the lot of the Hebrews became, the opportunity for God to powerfully deliver his people grew in challenging proportion.

Questions for Discussion

What is the golden text for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.
Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How is the Old Testament more than just the historical record of the people of Israel?

What part of the Old Testament is devoted to this period (bondage and freedom) of the Israelites?

Do Biblical scholars agree that the Israelites were slaves for a period of time in Egypt?

Were the Israelites ashamed to remember that once they had been slaves?

The Golden Text

How do you account for Israel growing and waxing mighty in spite of Pharaoh's plans to reduce them?

How did God reward the midwives for their courage?

Israel Becomes a Nation

Where did the descendants of Abraham grow to become a nation of people?

How many children and grandchildren who came from the loins of Jacob were in Egypt?

How was the number "seventy" invested with a special significance in Hebrew history?

Why was Abram's name changed to Abraham?

Israel in Bondage

What is meant in the expression that a new king arose who knew not Joseph?

Who were the Hyksos kings?

Why did the Hyksos rulers favor Joseph and his family?

What is the meaning of Hyksos?

Why did the Egyptians hate the Hyksos overlords?

Do you believe that the new Pharaoh was actually afraid of the Israelites?

Were the Israelites profitable slaves to the Egyptians?

Second Stage of Bondage

Were the efforts to reduce the Israelites through harsh slavery successful?

What is meant by the expression that the Hebrews were made "to serve with rigor"?

Pharaoh's Order to the Midwives

Did Pharaoh openly announce his plan to have the Hebrew children killed at birth?

How did the midwives answer Pharaoh when his plan did not work?

What is meant by the statement that the midwives feared God?

Why did Pharaoh turn to the open resort to kill the Hebrew children?

Lesson II—January 13, 1974**THE CALL OF MOSES****Lesson Text****Ex. 3: 1-12**

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb.

2 And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

3 And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

4 And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that

are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

9 And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works.*” (Acts 7:22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ex. 2:16-21.

Daily Bible Readings

January 7. M.....	... Moses' Birth (Ex. 2: 1-10)
January 8. T.....	... Moses' Early Life (Ex. 2: 11-14)
January 9. W.....	... Moses' Wise Choice (Heb. 11: 24-26)
January 10. T.....	... Moses in the Land of Midian (Ex. 2: 15-22)
January 11. F.....	... Moses' Parents (Ex. 6: 20)
January 12. S.....	... Moses and Christ (Matt. 17: 1-8)
January 13. S.....	... Moses' Death (Deut. 34: 1-12)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—Mount Sinai.

PERSONS.—God, Moses, children of Israel, the Egyptians.

Introduction

Into the home of two God fearing Levites, Moses was born destined to become the saviour of his people. Had Pharaoh's edict been obeyed the infant would have been thrown into the Nile River. When the Levite mother, Jochebed by name, gave birth to the child, she perceived that the child was beautiful and healthy. This made her suffering even greater for fear that the child might perish.

The mother's love for the child was so great that she hid him three months. When Jochebed could conceal the child no longer, she determined to commit the child to God's care. She made a floating cradle of woven papyrus reeds daubed with pitch so that not a drop of water could seep in.

She laid the child in the ark and placed it among some reeds at the river's edge. The word *ark* occurs only two times in the Old Testament—at this place and the Genesis record of the great flood. In both cases, one who was deemed worthy to become the saviour of others was rescued from drowning. In the first instance, the salvation of humanity was at stake, and here the salvation of the chosen people was assured.

Jochebed perhaps knew the place where Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the river, and the child was placed there in the ark at the river's edge. The mother hoped that the sympathy of the princess would be aroused by the sight of the helpless child. Miriam, the sister of Moses, was stationed nearby to watch over the fate of the ark and the child. When Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe, she saw the ark and commanded it to be

fetched to her. The fondest hopes of Jochebed were realized when she, daughter of the king, was moved with compassion as she beheld the weeping baby and she was determined to save it.

Miriam, perceiving the compassion of the princess, approached her and inquired if she might go and call a nurse from among the Hebrew women. Many of them were bereft of a child and could suckle another infant. And so in the good providence of God, the mother of Moses experienced the unutterable joy of caring for her own son.

Moses grew and was weaned, and his mother brought him to Pharaoh's daughter; and she called him Moses and he became her son. The word *Moses* goes back to an Egyptian word *mes*, *mesu* meaning "one born," "a child." The word *Moses* in Hebrew means "to draw out of water." "And it came to pass . . . when Moses was grown UD." (Ex. 2:11.) This implies that Moses grew up and matured and became a young man.

Scripture gives no details concerning the upbringing of Moses other than Pharaoh's daughter adopted and reared him and provided him with an education. The Egyptian school system was the most sophisticated in the ancient world. Sons of the kings of the Syro-Palestinian states were sent to Egypt to study with Egyptian aristocracy. In this way, the visiting royal sons became pro-Egyptian in their sentiments.

A prince such as Moses with brilliant parts would have mastered the hieroglyphic form of writing and probably the Akkadian cuneiform

method of writing on clay tablets. Moses, no doubt, listened to the court music of the skilled harpists, and heard the court maids read aloud Egyptian literary history. Indeed, Moses was skilled in all the knowledge of the Egyptians. (Acts 7:22.)

At some period of his life Moses learned of his Hebrew origin, and he resented the enslavement of his people. On one occasion when Moses was visiting among the laboring Hebrews, he saw an Egyptian, the captain over a Hebrew labor-gang, beating one of his kinsmen. Moses "looked this way and that way, and when he saw there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." (Ex. 2:11, 12.) By this act, Moses demonstrated that he had the qualities of spirit to pursue justice and rescue the oppressed.

On another day, Moses visited his brethren, and he saw two of the Israelites striving with each other, and Moses sought to resolve their difference. One of the men angrily demanded: "Thinkest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?" (Ex. 2: 14.) Apparently the Hebrew that Moses had protected related the incident.

The Golden Text

And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works. (Acts 7:22.)

The fact that Moses grew up in Pharaoh's house meant that he was provided the most excellent education by the Egyptian state which boasted the most advanced civilization of the ancient world antedating the earliest Greek civilization by more than a thousand years. And the statement that Moses was grown up meant that he had grown great and risen to a position of eminence.

The Scriptures imply that everything occurred by divine providence to warn Moses of the peril to his life. Pharaoh sought to kill him and Moses fled to the land of Midian where many years of his life would be spent. His years in Midian were not wasted. After helping the seven daughters of a Midianite priest to water their flocks, Moses was invited to live in the nomad's home and ultimately married one of his daughters. Moses seemed to have lived a happy life in the tents of his father-in-law, Jethro. Zipporah, his wife, bore Moses two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. (Ex. 2:11-22; 18:4.)

The episodes narrated in this section serve as an introduction to Moses' mission to save Israel. In the meantime, the Pharaoh who sought Moses' life died. (Ex. 2:23.) The Israelites were hoping for deliverance from their slavery. God heard their prayers and commissioned Moses to lead the suffering people to freedom. (Ex. 3:24.) The ordeals in the life of Moses served to prove the qualities of his character, and his personal courage fitted him for the awesome undertaking to lead Israel out of the land of Egypt.

That Moses was reared by an Egyptian princess, among other things, meant that he escaped the submissive spirit which is born and bred into a slave. Moses had displayed a masterful spirit from the time he slew the Egyptian to the occasion he helped Jethro's daughters at the watering troughs to drive away the rude shepherds. Moses, like the apostle Paul, was one of the handful of superlative men of history, who shape not just an age, but the whole course of human history.

The Text Explained

The Burning Bush (Ex. 3:1-5.)

Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a

bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, here am I.

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moses' valiant effort to help his people in Egypt ended in failure, and he fled as a fugitive from the face of Pharaoh to save his life. Moses was then forty years old, and he would spend the next forty years in the land of Midian around the Gulf of Aqabah in the Sinai Desert. During those long lonely vigils of shepherding his flocks in the desert, Moses must have kept company with his thoughts as such great men are wont to do. Without being conscious of the fact, he was gaining invaluable experience in a vast desert region that does something to a man's soul when he is alone. The self discipline needed for his future responsibilities was being shaped.

The call of Moses to become the saviour of the children of Israel is especially significant in the light of his background and training. In the court of Pharaoh, Moses learned the meaning of authority and the stern demands that the exercise of authority made. Not without reason was Moses reluctant to return to Egypt and to demand the release of the Israelites in the presence of Pharaoh and in his own court. Pharaoh's power then extended even unto the Euphrates River. Moses appearing before Pharaoh and making such demands would be construed as a challenge to the king in the exercise of his power and authority.

Like Jacob in his time, Moses was tending sheep on the back side of the wilderness when God addressed him calling him to become a shepherd of a different kind "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them?" (Isa. 63:11.) In this same desert that Moses had come to regard as his home would, in God's providential plan for the children of Israel, continue to be his home in the long wilderness sojourn.

On one occasion, an event occurred when Moses was looking for greener pastures for his flock. In leading his sheep deeper into the wilderness, Moses came "unto the mountain, unto Horeb." From this

time forward, this mountain would come to be known as the Mountain of God. In this mountain, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses "in the flame of a fire out of the midst of a bush." The form of the flame was unique. The bush was blazing, producing the fire out of itself; yet it remained whole. What Moses saw was a miracle. Although the bush (i.e. blackberry, *Rubus discolor*) is commonly found in the desert region it is no unusual phenomenon for a bush to be consumed by fire.

This strange sight aroused the attention of Moses, and he turned aside to view this unusual matter at close quarters and to fathom the mystery "why the bush is not burnt." Numerous attempts have been made to symbolically explain the burning bush, but any such attempt would be a clear distortion of the text and its meaning.

"And when Jehovah (Yahweh) saw that he turned aside to see, God (Elohim) called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses." An interesting play is made on words in this verse of scripture. During the long sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites had lost a direct knowledge of Jehovah (*Yahweh*), the God of Abraham of Isaac and Jacob. *Yahweh* is the English transliteration for the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and it is spelled *Jehovah* in the American Standard Version. The Israelites had retained only a general and vague knowledge of God whom they called *Elohim* which is translated God in our English text.

The voice that Moses heard saying "Moses, Moses" impressed upon Moses the urgency and importance of the call, and he said, "Here am I."

Moses indicated his willingness to hear and to obey. Although he only heard a voice and saw no image, Moses knew that something sublime and exalted confronted him.

Moses was advised not to come closer and to take off his travel soiled sandals: "for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground." He removed his sandals and waited. Moses had not yet reached that full prophetic state to qualify him for a nearer approach to God. The command for Moses to remove his shoes was a custom in the East that still persists. The

practice of wearing sandals was a protection from dirt and a protection to the feet. No Brahmin will enter a pagoda, or a Moslem a mosque, without first removing his shoes. When entering their respective holy places, the Arabs and Samaritans first take off their sandals or shoes. The site of the burning bush for Moses was indeed holy because it marked the presence of God, and the putting off the sandals was not merely a respect for the place itself, but the reverence which man owes to God: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." (Eph. 3:14-16.) And it may also be added that whatever ground he may stand on and wherever he may stand becomes holy ground by virtue of his standing there. As too often is the case, the most neglected piece of real estate on earth is usually the piece of ground on which a man stands.

God Identifies Himself

(Ex. 3: 6)

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

Moses was startled to hear these words. The names of the patriarchs recall the opening verses of this chapter that God remembered, for the sake of the enslaved Israelites, the covenant that he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we begin to understand why God confronts Moses before the mountain of Horeb.

The covenant that God made with the fathers is repeated in the promise that God made with Jacob at Bethel. Jacob was fleeing the wrath of Esau, his brother, whom he had defrauded of his birthright. Jacob slept one night at Bethel with a stone under his head and he saw in a dream a ladder that was set on earth, and the top of it reached into heaven with angels of God ascending and descending on it. And God said: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to

thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt be spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 28:13-14.)

What Moses heard at the site of the burning bush summed up the promise that God had made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob and now he was on the very threshold of fulfilling that promise. And in the expression *thy father*, the three patriarchs are classed together as one, and each of the patriarchs stands out singly having received the same promise of God.

"Moses was afraid and hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." As soon as Moses learned he was in the presence of the God of his fathers, he quickly hides his face. (Cf. 1 Kings 19:12, 13.) Although the Bible is careful not to mention any corporeal form apart from the fire in the midst of the bush, Moses dared not even to look directly upon the burning bush when he knew that it was a vision of God, and Moses listened with great fear and apprehension to the voice of God.

Promise of Deliverance

(Ex. 3:7, 8)

And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

These two verses have special significance. God had seen the affliction of his people and heard their cry under the whips of their taskmasters. God had come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them to a good and broad land. Beginning with the first verse and the expression *my people*, every verse in the rest of this chapter refers to God's people in some particular manner. The children of Israel are God's special concern, and we shall learn

later they are God's "chosen people."

God's statement that "I am come down" to deliver "my people" out of the hands of the Egyptians, seems to mean that God must descend to the earth to act thereon since God sees, hears, and knows everything from his throne of glory. Although God is omnipresent, the scripture here deliberately makes use of the verb come *down*, because heaven is the exalted place of God's intervention in human affairs.

The promise of deliverance from the Egyptians is only a part of the annunciation made to Moses; the second and principal declaration is the promise to bring them "unto a land flowing with milk and honey." This is the description of a land ever sought by the desert nomad in his never ending treks—a land blessed with pasture for cattle producing milk, with trees whose boughs furnished man, without toil, food sweet as the bee's honey, rich, fertile lands that yielded large harvests as a result of man's labor. The spies whom Moses sent into Canaan returned with grapes, pomegranates and figs and said of the land—"it flowed with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." (Num. 13:27.)

In a third phase, God said that it was the dwelling place of six peoples; the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Now as in the ancient world, Palestine is a small land, a beautiful oasis completely surrounded by vast deserts. It is a land of grass and flowers, and milk and honey, and the choicest productions of such lands. This would be the future home of the children of Israel that would be won in subsequent years at great cost and sacrifice.

The Commissioning of Moses

(Ex. 3:9, 10)

And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

And now, it is necessary to repeat an earlier statement: "the cry of the children of Israel is come unto

me: moreover I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them."

The cup of God's wrath was full and his judgment of the Egyptians and deliverance of the Israelites was imminent. What would soon take place relates back to a promise that God made to Abraham in this promised land of Canaan: "And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, I will judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." (Gen. 15:13, 14.)

God commanded Moses—"I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people . . . out of Egypt." Moses was startled to learn the reason for God's speaking to him from the burning bush, and now he knows. Moses would go as God's commissioned agent to lead the people of Israel forth from the house of bondage, and Moses is assured that he will meet with success. It is only mentioned here that Moses would deliver the Israelites out of Egypt and that they would worship God in that mountain. Moses, however, was not allowed to lead the people into Canaan. But first, Moses would be sent to Egypt to warn Pharaoh of the impending punishment.

God's Assurance to Moses

(Ex. 3:11, 12)

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said. Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

The response of Moses to this awesome commission was a natural one. Moses had not yet attained to a full understanding of God and the meaning of his identity. Moses had powerful memories of literally running for his life when he fled Egypt under the indictment of Pharaoh. The prospects of appearing before another tyrant of equal ferocity was not to his liking. We are not surprised when Moses responds to God's command: "Who am I that I

should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Moses now begins to realize the full import and the awesome difficulties of that commission. To put it simply, Moses, the humble shepherd did not feel himself worthy or capable to accomplish so great a mission fraught with so many dangers which meant approaching the greatest monarch of the age. And thus to God's command came the reply of Moses: "Who am I?" Moses knew who he was—he was a simple shepherd. Now he was called to return to the court of Pharaoh that he had left long ago and to become the leader of a nation of people and lead them out of Egypt. Moses remembered when he had set himself to be a judge in Egypt and learned his lesson of humility in the school of Midian. (Acts 7:22-29.) The son of Pharaoh's daughter had been too long a shepherd to think of himself as a leader of men. Moses could not envision that Pharaoh would be so foolish as to let a multitude of profitable slaves go free.

God assured Moses with a promise: "I will be with thee." And the sign which God gave Moses was

that he would worship with these people at this mountain. The promise that God made to him on this occasion required a full measure of faith and confidence on the part of Moses; but at the same time, it was a promise that provided Moses with assurance and confidence. As surely as God has appeared unto the fathers with blessings and promises, just as certainly he appeared unto Moses as the God of his fathers to fulfill the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through the instrumentation of Moses.

God's promise to Moses "I will be with you" assured Moses that he would not be alone and that God would give him the power to succeed in his mission. The miracle of the burning bush and the promise that Moses would return to the site of the burning bush to worship God on this very mountain provided Moses with the proof he needed. Moses was now standing on the threshold of one of life's greatest adventures, whose meaning in human history will not close until God summons man to appear before him in that last great day of judgment.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God will accomplish his purposes and fulfill his promises in due time.

2. God sustains and protects his children despite sufferings and supreme penalties that some must pay.

3. Like Moses, we should live whole lives of service to God.

4. Each person should remain curiously alive and sensitive to human experiences.

5. The ground we stand on is holy ground if we make it so

through responsible service.

6. A sense of awe and reverence in the presence of God is fulfilling.

7. God will balance the scales against injustice in its time.

8. The meek still inherit the earth because of their capacity to appreciate it.

9. Courage and humility are two ingredients of successful living.

10. Confidence which grows from faith in God will cause a person to stand undaunted.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What did Jochebed perceive about her new born child?

How was the mother able to hide the child?

Was the child placed intentionally where Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the Nile?

What is the meaning of the word Moses?

Did Moses know he was a Hebrew? Explain.

Why did Moses flee the land of Egypt?

What were the names of the wife and father-in-law of Moses?

Golden Text

How are we to know that Moses was a man of learning and personal accomplishments?

What were Moses' advantages in being reared in Pharaoh's palace?

How did Moses display on two occasions his courage and personal concern for others?

What place does Moses occupy in history?

The Burning Bush

How old was Moses when he fled Egypt?

What were the values of Moses' lonely years spent in the desert to make him a leader of men?

What had Moses learned in Pharaoh's court about leadership?

Why did Moses turn aside to see the burning bush?

What is the relation between *Jehovah* and *Yahweh*?

How does *Elohim* (God) differ from *Jehovah* (Yahweh)?

What is meant by holy ground?

God Identifies Himself

Who are the fathers?

What covenant did God make with each of the fathers?

Promise of Deliverance

What does God mean by the expression "my people"?

What is the meaning of the word "omnipresent"?

How would you explain the expression of God—"I am come down"?

When is a land said to flow with milk and honey?

What were the names of the six peoples living in Canaan?

The Commissioning of Moses

Why did God appear to Moses in the burning bush?

Where would the people of Israel come to worship God after leaving Egypt?

God's Assurance to Moses

Was Moses anxious to lead the Israelites from Egypt?

What did Moses mean by the expression, "Who am I"?

How did God assure Moses to give him courage?

Why was Moses unafraid to face Pharaoh when he had fled Egypt in fear years before?

Lesson III—January 20, 1974

ISRAEL'S FLIGHT FROM EGYPT

Lesson Text

Ex. 14: 13-27

13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

16 And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19 And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them:

20 And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the

darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

2'i And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

24 And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians.

25 And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

26 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his

hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptian

tians fled against it; and Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And Pharaoh said ... I know not Jehovah, and more-over I will not let Israel go.*” (Ex. 5:2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Ex. 13:17-22.

Daily Bible Readings

January 14. M.....	Israel Is Prepared (Ex. 12: 21-28)
January 15. T.....	Israel Is Warned (Ex. 11: 4-10)
January 16. W.....	Israel Is Instructed (Ex. 12: 1-11)
January 17. T.....	Israel, God's People (Deut. 7: 1-6)
January 18. F.....	Israel's Assurance (Ex. 15: 11-21)
January 19. S.....	Israel's Enemies Destroyed (Ex. 14: 23-31)
January 20. S.....	Israel's Song of Deliverance (Ex. 15: 1-10)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACES.—Egypt and the Red Sea.

PERSONS.—Moses and the children of Israel; Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Introduction

Moses was the saviour of the children of Israel under divine direction. Their salvation was brought about through awesome and terrible signs visited upon the Egyptians at the hands of Aaron and Moses because of their tyrannous persecution of the Hebrews. When Moses came into Pharaoh's presence demanding permission for Israel to worship in the wilderness, Pharaoh answered Moses with contempt: “Who is Jehovah?” To the haughty king of Egypt, the God of Israel was only one among many gods. And had not the God of the Hebrews proved to be inferior to the gods of Egypt, and were not the Hebrews living as slaves under Egyptians' whips?

Pharaoh not only resisted the demand of Moses, but he added to the intolerable misery of the Hebrews by increasing their already bitter labor. Pharaoh's proud resistance was countered. Aaron and Moses came to Pharaoh's court to persuade the king to alter his decision. Aaron first cast down his rod in the presence of Pharaoh which was a symbol of God's power and authority, and it became a snake. The two Egyptian magicians, Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:6-8), performed a similar feat to discredit Moses; however, “Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.” (Ex. 7:12).

Pharaoh was not at all persuaded and refused to acknowledge the claim of Jehovah, or to let the people go. Pharaoh and the whole of Egypt suffered in rapid succession

ten crippling plagues climaxing with the death of the first born male children of the Egyptian. In one way or another, the gods of Egypt were related to the Nile River. The plagues that God brought against the Egyptians were not all completely strange to Egypt, but their magnitude was. It was not uncommon for the waters of the Nile to become putrid in the years of uncommonly high overflows with the shores lined with dead stenching fish which were stifled in the turgid, muddy waters. The Egyptians were accustomed to frogs, but not an army of frogs invading even the kneading-troughs of the housewives. Lice and insects swarmed over the land. The plague of disease upon the cattle had religious overtones. The *Apis Bull* had been for centuries an object of Egyptian religious devotion. The Egyptians fell victims to disease and great hail stones ruined the grain ripening in the fields; and what remained was devoured by a mighty cloud of locusts that came in from the desert across the Red Sea. The Egyptians were accustomed to dust storms, darkening the sun, but not a darkness so deep that even the sun lost its light. The sun god of the Egyptians was named Re; and like the prophets of Baal in Elijah's time, he could not drive the darkness from the land.

The plagues were miracles beyond natural explanation. The plagues were the implacable judgments of God on the gods of Egypt. The last plague against the Egypt-

tians, the death of the firstborn, was the darkest hour for the Egyptians, but it marked the beginning of deliverance for the Israelites. In preparation for the last plague and the deliverance of Israel, each household prepared a lamb for the passover supper. God ordered the heads of the household to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the lintel, and the doorpost to save the firstborn male children of Israel at the time the destroyer entered the homes of the Egyptians across the land. (Ex. 12:21-23.)

On the midnight hour, death struck the firstborn of Egypt. The Israelites had eaten the memorial supper in haste and were prepared to leave the land at a moment's notice. Pharaoh, who too lost his first born, sent for Moses and urged him to take the people and leave the land, even in great haste. (Ex. 12:29-32.) Moses remembered that Joseph had his brothers to swear they would carry his bones back to Canaan for burial. (Gen. 50:24, 25.)

We are told that when Pharaoh had let the people go that God led them not by the way of the Philistines. This road led from Egypt to Beersheba and into the heart of Canaan. Nor were the Israelites allowed to go along the shores of the

Mediterranean sea coast. This was the military road of the Egyptians when they were embarked on northern expeditions. The south-east course towards the peninsula of Sinai would not lead them toward Canaan. Yet this was precisely the route taken by the Israelites. God chose the long way home for the children of Israel, and this was the route that would bring them to Mount Sinai, to the place where God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush and promised his return with the children of Israel to that very place. (See Deut. 8:1-3.)

Israel was moving slowly out of the Nile delta toward the shores of the Red Sea. "And it was told the king of Egypt that the people were fled." (Ex. 14:5.) Although Pharaoh had agreed for Israel to go, he repented himself of that decision. On the night of death, his heart was filled with terror, but now the grief had changed to raging anger. With the calculated view of returning the Israelites back to Egypt and to slavery, Pharaoh issued the order of mobilization. The king summoned up his powerful battle strength with the inflexible determination to pursue the Israelites into the wilderness and bring them back by force.

The Golden Text

And Pharaoh said . . . I know not Jehovah, and moreover I will not let Israel go. (Ex. 5:2.)

After the Israelites in Egypt heard the message Moses had brought to them after his encounter with God in the Sinai desert, Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh to negotiate the release of Israel. Since the people of Israel were reduced to abject servitude, only Pharaoh could release them from their bondage.

The request Moses made to Pharaoh for the people to go serve their God in the desert turned out badly and very much to the disadvantage of the Israelites. Pharaoh diagnosed their request to go into the wilderness to worship as an inclination of their unwillingness to work. And Pharaoh retaliated by adding to their humiliation by increasing their labor.

Moses left the site of the burning bush before the mount fully assured that he was God's chosen vessel to

lead Israel out of Egypt, and to doubt his divine calling never crossed his mind after he departed the site of the burning bush. He afterwards made his way toward the court of Pharaoh. The Lord had appeared to Aaron in Egypt, and he was commanded to go into the wilderness to meet Moses between Midian and Egypt. Moses told Aaron upon their meeting all the words God had spoken to him. Thereafter, they journeyed together to Egypt at which time they assembled the elders of Israel in conference and Aaron spoke to the elders and to the assembly of the people. Moses performed the signs, to wit, the signs of the rod and the leprosy. They heard and believed that the Lord had remembered the children of Israel. Furthermore, the people bowed down, prostrated themselves as a token of thanksgiving to the Lord their God. (Ex. 4:27-31.)

"And afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said unto Pharaoh, Thus

saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness."

Moses and Aaron were met with initial failures. They came to Pharaoh, as the king supposed, in the role of emissaries, with the command for Pharaoh to respond favorably. Pharaoh's response was characteristic of a proud and powerful ruler; and furthermore, the king considered himself a god and was thought of as such by his subjects. With overweening arrogance, Pharaoh rejoined: "Who is

Jehovah, that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go?"

The king had never heard of Jehovah until that day, and he responded negatively to the imperative request of Moses and Aaron. In no un-ambiguous language, the king responded: "I will not let Israel go."

From that time forward, Pharaoh continued to impose harsher burdens upon the Hebrews. The king relented temporarily on the night the first born of all Egyptian male children and cattle perished; but he soon afterwards changed his mind.

The Text Explained

Promise of Salvation

(Ex. 14: 13, 14)

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

The salvation from Egypt was the greatest event of the Old Testament times for the Israelites. After Pharaoh learned that the firstborn of the male Egyptians were dead, he was, at first, anxious for the Israelites to get out of Egypt. (Ex. 12:31-34.) At this juncture, the Israelites were making last minute plans to leave Egypt. The passover supper was instituted on the eve of their departure. The Israelites started their exodus by moving southward from Raamses to Succoth. They were forbidden to take the northern and shortest route to Canaan because of the great danger that would await them at the hands of the Philistines, a wild maritime people who had migrated from the Aegean sea area to Canaan in the twelfth century before Christ.

The Israelites were diverted into the wilderness of Etham. They were ordered to encamp near Piha-hiroth, between Migdol and the sea at the edge of the desert. It was at this encampment that the Egyptian charioteers overtook the Israelites. It was a simple matter for soldiers mounted on chariots to overtake quickly the people who were proceeding at a leisure pace and who had not been apprised of the pursuing Egyptians. The pursuing force

was made up of six hundred picked chariots, "and all the chariots of Egypt." (Ex. 14:6-7.)

The Israelites were greatly alarmed when they saw the approaching chariots. Their situation was impossible. They were pinned in by the sea on the east, and on the south and west by high mountains with Pharaoh's army close behind them. Destruction seemed inevitable. The children of Israel were not armed for battle outwardly and they were insecure inwardly.

Although they cried unto Jehovah for help, they seemed to have little confidence in him; and they exclaimed to Moses: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt?"

Moses was further accused by the people that "we spake unto you in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." The Israelites thought it better to die as slaves in Egypt than to perish by the Egyptian sword in the wilderness. So accustomed had the Israelites become to look upon the Egyptians as their master, that even now they numbered more than 600,000 men, they were still afraid to fight them. Moreover, they were untrained slaves and lacked courage to fight a disciplined army.

The greatness of the soul of Moses was manifested in the impending crisis. He answered the people with courage and unmitigated faith in God in this hour of peril: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which

he will work for you to-day." Moses assured the people that the "Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye will see them again no more." And Moses said to the people that God would fight for them and he charged them to hold their peace. Moses is confident of the Lord's salvation in spite of the fact he did not know how God would work for them.

The Way of Salvation (Ex. 14:15-18)

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. And lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

Moses must have prayed unto God at this juncture although there is no mention of it. The Lord said to Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" Now was not the time for prolonged prayer; the time for action had come. The Lord ordered Moses: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." The idea is that the Israelites should go forward without fear or anxiety. Although the sea before them looked like an impassable barrier, they were told to go forward step by step, the sea would not impede their way. Moses was assured that the Israelites would obey his command.

Moses was further instructed: "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it." The sign to Moses was, at the moment he did this, God would send a strong east wind which would part the waters. The Lord assured Moses that the children of Israel would go in the midst of the sea on dry ground.

God said to Moses that he would harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they would go in after them. The Israelites could have out

flanked the sea, but God deliberately chose the route to confound the Egyptians. The statement follows: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his chariots." Pharaoh, it will be remembered, had arrogantly demanded of Moses and Aaron, "Who is this Jehovah?" Pharaoh knew him not and expressed no fear in him. And this is the story of mankind as he ever flaunts and despises God who created the universe and fashioned man in his own image, and man continues to suffer for his rebellions. But it would not be the pursuing army of Egypt that would remember the experience, but the Egyptians who had remained behind in Egypt.

Israel Passes through the Sea (Ex. 14:19-22)

And the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and the pillar of cloud removed from before them, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and Jehovah caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

The first two verses of this section depict a sublime scene. The angel of the Lord who went before the Israelites moved and went behind them. And the pillar of cloud that stood all day before the Israelites as a signal to the people moved from before them to stand behind them to separate the people of Israel from the pursuing Egyptians: "And there was the cloud and the darkness."

And so it was that the heavens facing the Egyptians remained all the night covered with an inscrutable cloud. A great darkness settled over them. The Egyptians were immobilized by the absolute darkness and were unable throughout the night to come closer to the Isra-

elites: "and the one came not near the other all the night." However, the cloud became a light and lit up the darkness on the side of the Israelites.

Moses did as God commanded him." And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea." All that night a strong east wind blew from the desert, and the waters of the Red Sea were driven back, and the bed of the sea became dry. Numerous attempts have been made to explain the providential dividing of the waters of the Red Sea. Some think the crossing of the Red Sea took place in deep sea waters at the north end of the Red Sea which runs from the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Suez. Other students place the crossing further north in the vicinity of the Bitter Lake in a swamp covered with shallow water and reeds, which was not passable at times. The latter explanation is sometimes used to rationalize the Bible account.

In either case, the Scriptures are clear that the crossing of the Red Sea was a miraculous event. And whoever attempts to explain the entire episode rationally does not in fact interpret the Scriptures, but intrudes his own ideas into the idea expressed in the Bible.

What the Scriptures intend for us to understand is that God worked awesome things to save a nation of people. The wonder of the miracle lies in the fact that at this very moment it was necessary for something to happen to save the children of Israel; something wonderful did happen, and on a scale not in keeping with normal circumstance of nature. A people numbering two million and more were poised and waiting for the salvation of the Lord to come.

And all that night while a strong east wind was blowing, the Israelites were crossing through the Red Sea on dry land with a wall of water on their right hand and on their left hand, north and south of the ford.

Discomfiting of the Egyptians

(Ex. 14:23-25)

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass in the morning watch, that Jehovah looked forth upon the

host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians. And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said. Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

The Hebrew way of counting time divides the night watches, and last watch is called the "morning watch." And so it came to pass in the morning watch that the Lord looked through the pillar of fire upon the chariots of Egypt which were driving into the Red Sea in hot pursuit of the Israelites. The children of Israel had safely arrived on the eastern bank of the Red Sea. The Egyptians could see them, and they thought the same conditions which prevailed for the Israelites to make safe passage would still continue for them, and they would too make the dangerous passage swiftly and safely. But in this, they were tragically mistaken. And so the Scriptures state that Pharaoh's army of chariots "went in after them into the midst of the sea" in a great rush with the single minded objective to overtake and to recapture the Hebrews.

The statement is made that God "discomfited the host of the Egyptians" when they drove into the midst of the sea. "God took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily." The dry ground was beginning to give way and the water was welling upon the sea bed which minutes before had provided a safe passage for the Israelites. The Egyptians were thrown into a state of panic. Their chariots were dismembered, and they were unable to move in the bedlam of chariots, horses and men.

The Egyptians were filled with terror. They were dealing with a supernatural force beyond the power of men. They exclaimed: "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Pharaoh in the initial stages had mocked Moses when he said: "Who is Jehovah?" "I know not Jehovah." Pharaoh learned about God that day. The great multitudes of the Israelites stood still on the other shore as Moses had commanded them watching Jehovah fighting in the midst of the sea for them.

The Punishment of the Egyptians

(Ex. 14:26, 27)

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Stretch out thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

The Lord commanded Moses and he raised his hand above the waters of the Red Sea. At that moment, walls of waters came thundering down upon the Egyptians who were unable to move from the raging, boiling water. This was the final retribution, measure for measure, which God brought upon Pharaoh for enslaving the Israelites and casting their infant sons into the murky waters of the Nile.

As Moses stood with hand outstretched over the sea, the water rose higher and higher as the sea came pouring in upon the Egyptians from two directions, from the south and the north; and the sea returned to its place. As the day was dawning, the sea had returned to its full strength. The Egyptians caught in the sea were madly endeavouring to escape with their lives, and "Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea."

Israel witnessed as God won a great victory for them that day. The sea and the shores were filled with the debris of the battle and the bodies of the Egyptians. The people then greatly feared Jehovah and believed in Moses, their leader. Moses had told the people the day before as they saw the Egyptians pursuing, they would not see them so again. The Israelites not only now feared the Lord, but they believed that God would save them in the future. Though they had spoken harsh, distrusting words to Moses, the Israelites on that occasion trusted completely their deliverer.

We may conclude this lesson by turning to the New Testament where the apostle Paul reminded the Israelites of their salvation from Egyptian slavery: "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea." (1 Cor. 10:1, 2.) As for the Israelites who experienced a great salvation, they still faced the wilderness, and not all who left Egypt made it to Canaan. And Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians: "Now these things were our examples." (1 Cor. 10:6.) And so it is that the strong do not always overcome in battle, nor do the swift win the race, but the faithful who persist to the end win the victory and earn the crown.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Pharaoh stands as a symbol of man's arrogant denial of God and his power to work his will among men.

2. God works even now his wonders beyond man's power to understand to save the righteous and to punish the workers of evil.

3. God who saved Israel from the most powerful tyrant of the age and who moves mountains from their places continues to direct the affairs of men and nations.

4. The passover supper became the most powerful and lasting reminder of Israel's bondage and redemption. The Lord's supper has an even greater reminding power of God's presence for Christians who

faithfully meet around the Lord's table.

5. God hardened the heart of Pharaoh in the sense that the sun melts wax and hardens clay. The pity that would melt the heart of a compassionate person would harden the heart of the sadist who revels in the troubles of others and seeks to add to them.

6. God still divides the good from evil. From the side of evil, a great darkness continually prevails. In the place of the righteous, a great light of knowledge is always present.

7. God continues to work his wonders of deliverance and salvation even now through Christ and our obedience to his teachings.

Questions for Discussion

Introduction

Did Pharaoh deny that the people of Israel had a God?

What is the *Apis Bull*?

How were the plagues related to the religious beliefs of the Egyptians?

What did Moses remember about a promise made to Joseph?

Golden Text

What did Pharaoh mean by the statement, "I know not God"?

Where in the wilderness did Moses meet Aaron?

What were Pharaoh's first responses to Moses' request to let the people go?

Promise of Salvation

Who were the Philistines?

How many men were there among the Israelites in round numbers?

Explain why the people lost faith in God

and Moses to deliver them from the Egyptians before the Red Sea.

Israel Passes through the Sea

What separated the Israelites from the Egyptians on the night both were encamped before the Red Sea?

Are we able to determine the place where the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea?

Why did the Egyptians believe that they could safely pursue the people of Israel without fear of reprisal?

Describe how God overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the Sea.

The Punishment of the Egyptians

When Moses raised his hand over the Red Sea, what happened?

How many of the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea?

What happened to Moses?

What lesson did the apostle Paul draw from Israel's bondage and deliverance?

Lesson IV—January 27, 1974

GOD FEEDS HIS PEOPLE

Lesson Text

Ex. 16: 1-15

1 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.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness:

3 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 fleshpots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4 Then said Jehovah unto Moses. Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not.

5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that Jehovah

hath brought you out from the land of Egypt;

7 And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Jehovah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

8 And Moses said, *This shall be*, when Jehovah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that Jehovah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah.

9 And Moses said unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah; for he hath heard your murmurings.

10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud.

11 And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying,

12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying. At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God.

13 And it came to pass at even,

that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoarfrost on the

ground.

15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Give us this day our daily bread."* (Matt. 6: 11.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 6:32-40.

Daily Bible Readings

January 21. M.....	Israel's Murmurings (Ex. 16:1-3)
January 22. T.....	Manna Supplied (Ex. 16:4-20)
January 23. W.....	Water Provided (Ex. 17:1-6)
January 24. T.....	Manna and the Sabbath Day (Ex. 16:21-30)
January 25. F.....	Manna, A Memorial (Ex. 16:31-36)
January 26. S.....	Christ, Our Bread from Heaven (John 6:32-40)
January 27. S.....	God's Bountiful Blessing (Deut. 8:11-20)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—In the wilderness.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, and the children of Israel.

Introduction

The great need of Jesus after fasting forty days in the wilderness was for bread. Satan came to Jesus in his weakened condition to tempt him saying: "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." (Matt. 4:3.) The elemental appetites are common to mankind. The first step into sin resulted from the mother of mankind desiring a fruit forbidden to her. The need of bread that Jesus experienced to sustain his body, had to be fulfilled. However, the tying of a prideful act to satisfy an elemental appetite was wrong. Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4.)

However, a simpler fact as a certainty does not exist than that though man does not live by bread alone, he cannot live without it. Bread is the means by which man lives, not the reason why he lives. Even the saint in his prayer depends upon bread. Jesus spoke often about food and clothing and shelter which are the three absolute necessities to sustain life. To deny a person who is hungry and naked and in prison the essentials of life, is to shut the gates of heaven in one's face. (Matt. 25:42-45.)

We hear much nowadays about the "social gospel" as if the need to feed the hungry and clothe the naked is just now being discovered despite the clearest commands of

the gospel which require the Christian "to visit the fatherless and widows, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:24.)

Our present lesson is an account of God's feeding a multitude of Israelites in the desert. Under divine direction, Moses had been enabled to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt from the shame of forced labor. It is not a thing unknown in history for a people to desire freedom from their oppressors and to rise in rebellion against them. The Egyptians were defeated in their attempt to pursue and recapture the fleeing Hebrews. God had arrayed a series of supernatural calamities to harass and to defeat the Egyptians. It was the greatest moment in the lives of two million or more people to sing a song of deliverance on the east bank of the Red Sea. At the same moment, it was the beginning of a journey that lasted for a whole generation.

Being safely led through the Red Sea and delivered from Egypt, Israel was led into the desert by Moses to Sinai to be acknowledged there as God's chosen people. Leaving the Red Sea, Moses led Israel into the desert of Shur. This is the area of the triangular bridge which joins Egypt and Palestine. Moses led the Israelites three days into the desert and found no water. The journey which had begun so filled with hope turned into com-

plaining. They found water at a place named Marah. Then they came to Elim, a desert oasis, blessed with an abundance of sweet water and luxurious vegetation.

Despite the rugged and barren grandeur that is typical of the desert of Sinai, it must not be imagined that the desert is an impassable wilderness devoid of water and

vegetation. Even to this day, wells and springs and scattered vegetation are within a day's journey along the west coast of the Sinai peninsula. Although the encampment at Elim was comfortable and pleasant, the Israelites could not stay, and it was necessary for them to resume their journey into the wilderness.

The Golden Text

Give us this day our daily bread.
(Matt. 6:11.)

Jesus spoke often about food, drink, and clothing, and more often about bread. Jesus acknowledged that bread is the means by which man lives, and not the reason why he lives. Jesus was once praying in a certain place, and one of his disciples said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1.)

In the Sermon on the Mount, the point should not be overlooked that after Jesus addressed his heavenly father and prayed for the coming kingdom, he addressed himself to the physical need for bread: "Give us this day our daily bread." This petition is not for luxuries and a lifetime of security, but for the daily provision of bread, and the opportunity to work for one's daily food. Even the manna in the wilderness which came from heaven spoiled if it were not gathered daily. And we need to pray to God for daily bread and not "to demand" as did the Israelites to Moses in the desert. When a Christian seeks for something and prays sincerely, he acknowledges that he will be faithful in his daily toil and leave the difficult part to God.

Actually, this statement in the Lord's prayer amounts to a petition for daily sustenance and an expression of confidence that God in his unfailing providence will supply

our daily physical needs. Jesus taught what indeed is most obvious, that God feeds the animals and the birds. Not even a sparrow falling to the ground could escape God's attention. The lesson for us to learn is to live one day at a time, and to be not overly concerned about the uncertain tomorrows which hold both good and evil.

This statement reminds us, and there can be little question over the idea, that Jesus had in mind the *manna* that God supplied the Israelites in the desert. Jesus urges faith and confidence in God's providential arrangements. All food comes from God, and man cannot create what nature already provides. And the truth is that God cares for our bodies as for our spirits. Jesus spent so much time healing men's diseases and satisfying their physical hunger, we would be wise to remember that we may do no less.

A person who belittles his body is slandering the temple that God fashioned in which our immortal souls may dwell only for a while. We must also keep in mind, however, that the prayer is for something more than bread. Times are when in great sorrow or undue stress that a hungry person will push away his food. There is no joy in bread unless there is food for the spirit.

The Text Explained

Israel Complains to Moses

(Ex. 16: 1-3)

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.

The Israelites moved away 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 departure out of the land of Egypt." The wilderness of Sin is a desert area at the foot of the Sinai plateau well inland from the Red Sea. We should probably assume that the desert named "Sin" is connected with the name Sinai. About six weeks had passed since the Israelites left Egypt. After the oasis of Elim, the wilderness of Sin was the next stopping place in which a lack of food and water would be felt, and the people began to feel the dearth of food. Here the entire people murmured against Moses, whereas at Marah only a part of the people complained against Moses. (Ex. 15:24.)

We assume that a great many Israelites had little more than the clothing on their backs and a few other personal belongings. Now their provisions were spent. The bread which they were accustomed to eating was gone, and they complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said: "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." What they were saying was that in Egypt they would have, at least, died a natural death. Now they feared their fate would be something far worse, combating the hostile forces of nature and other enemies that the desert would reveal in due time.

The complaints of the people are understandable. For people to forget their old troubles when confronted by new ones is one of the foibles of human nature. Now the Israelites saw their good life back in Egypt in a complimentary light. That the Hebrew slaves ate flesh in Egypt was undoubtedly true with sufficient bread. And they charged Moses that he had brought the people into the wilderness "to kill this whole assembly with hunger." This was indeed a clear exaggeration of their circumstances; however, their plight was real and a crucial emergency existed.

The Israelites who had come out of Egypt were acquainted with the desert and they knew well the terrors of the wilderness. The desert-land was the very opposite of

the fertile land where values abide. But in the desert, there is no seed, nor figs, nor vines, nor pomegranates, and where there is no water to drink. (Num. 20:5.) In the desert the good plants do not grow; and its soil is full of stones and salt, covered with nettles, thorns, and thistles. (Isa. 5:6; 7:24.) The Israelites called the wilderness "terrible" because it was a waterless waste infested with such fierce creatures as serpents and scorpions, and the fiery consuming winds. (Deut. 8:15; Jer. 4:11.) The Sinai wilderness was a far cry from the land promised the children of Israel with cultivated fields, green pastures, and where the rains poured from above, with springs of water welling from the ground. From a land of brooks and rivers, the creators of fertility, the blessings are found. We are able to understand their angry cries against Moses.

Bread from Heaven

(Ex. 16:4-6)

Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that Jehovah hath brought you out from the land of Egypt.

Food gives life and it strengthens the soul. The children of Israel could rightfully expect food from God. Had he not made a covenant with them and had not Moses led them from Egypt? A stronger breach cannot be imagined than to deny bread to the hungry, or a stronger peace and confidence be inaugurated than to provide a person with his daily bread. To eat with one's enemy would be inconceivable, and for a friend to refuse bread separates the strongest blood tie of kinship.

The Israelites craved two things judging from their statements. They wanted meat, for they remembered the "flesh-pots of Egypt," and for bread, "when we did eat bread to the full." Against this background we are prepared

for what happened. Jehovah promised Moses to rain bread from heaven. *Bread* is a synonym for food. Since the people hungered for meat, they were given quails; and since they longed for bread, they were given manna. That Jehovah spoke in this fashion to Moses suggests that Moses had prayed to God. (See Ex. 15:25.) Moses was then assured of Jehovah that bread for the people would come from heaven.

The Scripture reads, "The people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day." This Jehovah said to Moses, "that he might prove the children of Israel whether they will walk in my law or not." The idea is contained here that the people would feel the need of divine providence and that they would depend upon God for their daily bread and that they would have faith in him and walk in his teachings.

An unusual command was given about gathering the bread. On the sixth day the people were ordered to gather twice as much as they gathered daily. God worked in the six days of creation and rested on the seventh. There is no clear reference that the sabbath day was a day of rest for the people before it was made a part of the Ten Commandments. (Ex. 20:8-11.) Israel learned from this experience that the law of the sabbath among the Israelites would become a fixed institution.

The People Promised Bread (Ex. 16:7-12)

And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah; for that he heareth your murmurings against Jehovah: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said. This shall be, when Jehovah shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that Jehovah heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah. And Moses said unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before Jehovah; for he hath heard your murmurings. And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of Jeho-

vah appeared in the cloud. And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God.

After Moses and Aaron had heard God's promise regarding the raining of bread from heaven, they turned to the people and said, "At even" before the end of this day, "then ye shall know that Jehovah hath brought you out of the land of Egypt." "And in the morning" tomorrow morning—"then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah." God had heard their murmuring and had favorably received their requests. Moses on this occasion chided the people: "What are we, that ye murmur against us?" Moses demanded to know why the people murmured against them since they were only carrying out what God had commanded them. God, not Moses and Aaron, had delivered Israel from Egypt, and their murmurings were against God.

Moses understood that Jehovah would give the people the flesh and bread they craved. Then Moses turned to Aaron who spoke in Moses' stead to the people with the instruction to command the congregation of Israel that they come near before Jehovah. And it came to pass as Aaron spoke to the people, they looked toward the wilderness, and, "behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud." The people recognized the presence of God and his concern to protect and to sustain them. And a second time, Jehovah promised Moses bread in the morning and flesh in the evening for the people of Israel.

Bread: Morning and Evening (Ex. 16: 13-15)

And it came to pass at even, that the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat.

And it came to pass, "at even the quails came up, and covered the camp." The accounts of the quails and the manna are related to actual circumstances that may even today be observed on the Sinai peninsula. The quail is a migratory bird, and appears in large numbers on the Sinai peninsula. It is said in Numbers 11:31 that the wind from the Red Sea brought in the birds. The quails usually fly in vast numbers from the cold northern countries to the warm regions of the South and return in the spring to the northern regions.

When the quails reach land after traveling over vast distances for a day over sea, they come to rest from sheer fatigue on the land. And it is quite easy for the people to capture them. However, the quails land on the Mediterranean coasts of the Sinai peninsula only in the autumn. And so it was that the quails came in from over the sea and settled over the whole face of the camp. The quails that the Israelites gathered all that day, and all the night, and all the next day were gathered in the early spring season. And the promise that the Lord made to the children of Israel that "at even ye shall eat flesh" was fulfilled becomes quite clear that God fed the people within circumstances outside the normal order of nature.

When morning broke, the day began as usual for the Israelites. But when the frost was gone, over the whole face of the wilderness the people saw "a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground." And when the children of Israel saw the white substance, they said to one another: What is it? And Moses told the people: It is the bread which Jehovah hath given you to eat." Actually the word *manna* in the Hebrew language means *what*. The Israelites did not know what to make of the fine white substance, which was the miracle of bread that God had promised that would rain from heaven and which would become a prominent part of their diet for the next forty years until they came into the habitable land of Canaan.

This is the beginning of the account of the miracle of manna from heaven. Like most of the miracles associated with Moses, this one, too

was based on a local phenomenon. Numerous tamarisk trees grow in the Sinai desert which are habitually fed on by a certain kind of insect, the aphides. The insects exude the superfluous sugar which they absorb from the tree. The tiny whitish globules fall to the ground and are eaten by the ants, or gathered by the people and eaten. But we must keep in mind that the manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness fell in vast quantities. The matter is narrated as a miracle and only in this way may it be understood. Needless to say, manna was not their sole food throughout their wanderings in the wilderness. Their cattle furnished them with milk and butter. John the Baptist, you will remember, lived on a diet of desert honey and locust.

Moses commanded the people to gather for each person an omer daily, which is less than a pint, and two omers on the sixth in preparation for the sabbath. Moses told the people: "Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath unto Jehovah." (Ex. 16:23.) The word *sabbath* occurs for the first time here in the Old Testament.

We may conclude this account by remembering a little boy who did not have much to offer—five barley loaves and two fishes—which fed a multitude. He had followed Jesus on the other side of Galilee with a large number of people. But out of what the boy had to offer, Jesus found the means to work a great miracle and to feed about five thousand people that day. And they said: "This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world." (John 6:14.) On the following day, Jesus taught his disciples a lesson about bread: "Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven." (John 6:31, 32.) And in this context, Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger." (John 6:35.) And this is our great lesson that the true *manna* which came from heaven is the Christ—not the manna the fathers ate in the wilderness.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Man cannot live by bread alone, but neither can he live without it. Jesus criticizes the person who supposes that he can live his life on a physical level apart from spiritual values.

2. The "social gospel" is the new form of an old Bible teaching and adds nothing. It has always been Christian since the beginning of the church to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit man in all of his needs.

3. God has provided man with the bounties of nature since the creation of man, and he continues to supply human needs through natural providence.

4. Fault finding, criticism, personal abuse, and such like never clothed the naked or fed the hungry, or moved God. He knows our needs and will give us good gifts in time if we appropriate them in the right manner.

5. A great virtue also is simply to wait upon the Lord to fulfill his promises to us in due season.

6. The difference between a miracle and an event in nature are both beyond the power of mankind to comprehend. We are to understand that God provides food and water for the people of Israel in the desert outside the normal course of nature.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of the lesson:

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction.

Are the bodily appetites within man wrong in being satisfied?

Does the Bible discount the need of man for bread?

Discuss the statement that Israel's escape from Egypt was the greatest event in their lives.

The Golden Text

What did Jesus mean by the statement. "Give us this day our daily bread"?

Is "give us this day our daily bread" a command that we can make of God?

Explain that all food comes from God and man cannot create what nature provides.

Israel Complains to Moses

Where is the wilderness of Sin?

Why did the people of Israel complain of lack of food when they had their cattle, sheep, and goats?

Why is it so easy for a people to forget their old troubles when confronted by new ones?

Why did the people regret having escaped the slavery of Egypt?

Describe the terrors of desert regions to a people not accustomed to them.

Bread from Heaven

Why should the Israelites have rightfully expected food from God?

What is the importance of bread to friendship?

What two kinds of food did the people want?

Does the command to gather bread six days imply the people rested on the sabbath?

The People Promised Bread

Why did Moses resent the people murmuring against him and Aaron?

What time of day did God promise bread to the people? and flesh?

Bread: Morning and Evening

What kind of flesh did God provide the people of Israel?

Discuss the migration habits of the quail in relation to the Sinai peninsula.

What is the dictionary meaning of the word *manna*?

Where does the word sabbath occur for the first time in the Bible?

What did Jesus say about the eating of manna?

Lesson V—February 3, 1974

ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI

Lesson Text

Ex. 19: 1-6, 16-21

1 In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

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16 And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

20 And Jehovah came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount: and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

21 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto Jehovah to gaze, and many of them perish.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And Jehovah said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee for ever.” (Ex. 19:9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 12:18-24.

Daily Bible Readings

- January 28. M..... Law Given At Sinai (Deut. 5:1-21)
- January 29. T..... Law Given Only to Israelites (Deut. 5:1, 2)
- January 30. W..... Law Given Because of Transgressions (Gal. 3:19)
- January 31. T..... Law to Last Till Christ Came (Gal. 3:16-19)
- February 1. F..... Law Fulfilled By Christ (Matt. 5:16, 17)
- February 2. S..... Law Inferior to New Covenant (Heb. 8:6-13)
- February 3. S..... Law Removed, Nailed to Cross (Heb. 2:14-17)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—In the wilderness at Mount Sinai.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, and the children of Israel.

Introduction

The last stage of Israel's journey to Mount Sinai was beset with problems which seemed insurmountable to the people. Little did the children of Israel understand what the years ahead would offer in trials they could not have imagined (for a fully detailed itinerary of the

children of Israel, from the morning they left the land of Egypt until they reached the approaches to the land of Canaan, read Numbers 33: 5-37.)

We are informed that “all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness

of Sin . . . and encamped in Rephidim." (Ex. 17:1.) Moses was sorely tried again at this place. The Exodus book concentrates on this one encampment. Jehovah for the third time demonstrated his power to help the people in a severe crisis. When the Israelites came to the encampment at Rephidim, they hoped to find water; but reminiscent of Job's erstwhile friends, who were likened to desert streams that failed the travellers in dry seasons: "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channels of brooks that pass away; which are black by the reason of the ice, and wherein the snow hideth itself: what time they wax warm, they vanish. . . . The caravans that travel by the way of them turn aside; they go up into the waste, and perish." (Job 6:15-18.)

At Rephidim, the people murmured against Moses because of their disappointment to find water, for the waters of the wady had already failed at the time of their arrival. However, they were not just content to murmur on this occasion: "the people strove with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink." (Ex. 17:2.) The gravity of the situation was reflected in their complaint: "Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" (Ex. 17:3.) And Moses cried unto the Lord, for he was at loss to know what to do. The people were angry and almost ready to do Moses bodily injury.

As the people complained against Moses, so he complained in turn to God against them. The Lord did not become an arbiter of the strife between Moses and the people. As a good father who pays no attention to the wranglings of his children, the Lord moved instead to help the people, in their distress. Moses was directed to take the rod with which he had smitten the Nile and to stand before the rock at Horeb and smite the rock, and water would gush forth in vast quantities ample for the children of Israel and their herds and flocks. (Ex. 17:5, 6.) Today as pilgrims travel in the direction of ancient Moab and Ammon in the desert lying south-east and adjacent to the Dead Sea, he comes to a place called the "Valley of Moses."

The Bedouins to this day come

early in the morning to desert wells leading their donkeys with water skins and jugs strapped to them to carry water back to their black wool tents for daily use. Some years ago an English officer saw with his own eyes, at a wady in the southern part of the Sinai peninsula, a company of Sudanese camel corps digging in the gravel up beside the cliff in order to discover the source of the water dripping up by the side of the cliff. A hard blow with an axe broke the outer face of the cliff. Numerous cavities were revealed in the stone from which an abundance of water began to gush. God, indeed, cares for his creatures, and he feeds the birds, and provides man with bread and water even in the desert. Sometimes within the normal order of nature, and at other times, in ways beyond comprehension God provides for his creatures. That the desert concealed its water, which may be found, did not diminish the need for God's miraculous intervention in the desert to sustain the children of Israel on that occasion and for the next forty years with sufficient water.

At the place where Moses spoke to the rock, water came forth in great volumes. And Moses called the name of the place Massah (which means proof), and Meribah (whose dictionary definition is *strife*). The place was so named because there the people tempted Jehovah. (Ex. 17:7.) This has been too often the common failing of mankind. With many God is too often like a "panic button" a person pushes in his extremity as he puts the Lord to the proof.

This segment of the wilderness journey to Sinai, without doubt, is intended to suggest that the Lord was concerned to deliver the children of Israel from every danger of the forces of unpredictable nature and from the hostile enmity of people such as the Egyptians.

Israel suffered its first attack in the wilderness by Amalek, a Bedouin people, who lived a nomadic life in southern Canaan near Kadesh. (See Gen. 47:.) And in another scripture, they are pictured as living in the Negeb wilderness: "Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South." (Num. 13:29.) We may guess at the reasons for the attack. The Scripture states: "Then came

Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim." (Ex. 17:8.) Since Israel was at the approaches of Canaan where they lived, probably they sought to forestall any movement of the people in their direction. Moses described what Amalek did unto them along the way. "He met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were feeble behind thee." (Deut. 25:18.)

Moses chose Joshua to lead Israel. As the Israelites counter-attacked the Amalekites, Moses held out his hand like a banner above the people. Whenever Moses would lower his hand in fatigue, the Israelites faltered. Then Aaron and Hur stood on either side of Moses holding his arm aloft, and Israel prevailed against Amalek. (Ex. 17:10-13.)

Another significant thing took place as the children of Israel journeyed to Sinai. The father-in-law of Moses, Jethro, the priest of Midian, a man of great importance among the desert people, came out to meet Moses in their wilderness.

And he brought with him Moses' wife, Zipporah, and their two sons. Moses rehearsed to his father-in-law about their deliverance from Pharaoh. Jethro rejoiced in the success of Israel and paid honor to Moses. (Ex. 18:9.) Jethro also gave advice to Moses which should be especially noted. Jethro saw the intolerable burdens of Moses as the people came to Moses to judge their differences. The priest of Midian suggested to Moses that he appoint able men, elders of Israel, to assist in governing the people. "So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said." (Ex. 18:24.)

And now begins the most sublime part of the Torah (the teachings of Moses) that we designate as the law of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch. What happened at Mount Sinai determined the future of the children of Israel, and would be supremely significant in its meaning for all mankind throughout all the history to the end of time.

The Golden Text

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever. (Ex. 19:9.)

At some time in the third month after Israel's departure from Egypt, they encamped at the approaches to Mount Sinai. And Moses went up into the mountain for the Lord to speak to him. Moses was told to remind the children of Israel how the Lord had mightily delivered them from Egyptians and had brought them to that day before the mountain. The Lord was now ready to make a covenant with the children of Israel that would seal them as his chosen people forever. This, however, would be conditioned by their obeying God and keeping his covenant.

So Moses came down from the mountain and returned to his brethren. Moses summoned the elders to appear before him and proposed to them all "these words which Jehovah commanded him." All the people answered affirmatively; all were of one mind and spirit, and said: "All that Jehovah hath spoken, we will do." The pro-

posal was in the nature of a question which required an answer. Moses, it must be assumed, on the morning of the second day, ascended the mountain to enter into the seclusion of the divine presence.

The direction to Moses began: "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud." Jehovah promised Moses that he would come near to him. But Moses could see no form, for God would be concealed in a thick cloud. The purpose for God's coming was to be, "that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever." The doubters would no longer doubt, but believe. Special care should be taken to note that it would be Moses whom the people would believe forever. In these words, Jehovah apprises Moses that the first phase of the making of the covenant must result in an agreement with the people. We are not here told what the words were that the people spoke, but they expressed their willingness and readiness to hear the words of the Lord.

Agreement had been achieved on both sides in respect to the making

of the covenant. Now nothing remained but for the people to make preparations for the great day when Jehovah would proclaim the covenant from the mountain. This oc-

casation was of supreme importance to the Israelites. Here they would receive the Decalogue, and other laws basic to their faith and unity as a nation of people.

The Text Explained

Camping in God's Presence (Ex. 19:1, 2)

In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mount.

The events centering around Mount Sinai are of such importance that we could not, otherwise, understand how the descendants of the patriarchs became a great and powerful people. Here Jehovah entered into a covenant relationship with the children of Israel out of which the whole fabric of their existence as the chosen people emerged. Moses, the great leader who had led them out of Egypt, became the instrument through whom God created a whole new kind of people. Whatever we may understand about the Israelites is ultimately derived from the law which God gave to the people through Moses.

Three months after the night Israel left Egypt, the Israelites had reached the wilderness of Sinai and were encamped before the mountain of the same name. Biblical scholars are not in exact agreement on the location of the wilderness of Sinai and the mount. Although it is impossible to determine precisely the site of the biblical mount, tradition since the fourth century places Mount Sinai in the southern part of the Sinai peninsula. The mountains now called *Jebel Musa* (the mount of Moses) is 6500 feet high. The traveler approaching the mountain enters a valley two miles long and one-third to two-thirds of a mile wide. Towering above the plain are three mountain peaks. *Jebel Musa* is the favored location. This imposing granite formation of the southern Sinai peninsula is preferred as the site where Moses received the law because the valley

would accommodate a great multitude of people.

The time Israel entered into the Sinai wilderness was on the day of the third new moon since leaving Egypt. The mention of the third month (the new moon) is not unintentional. Since the Exodus, the last two weeks of Nisan (the first month of the Hebrew year) had passed, and four weeks of Iyyar had passed. Israel was in the seventh week of journey. Seven days formed a unit of Hebrew time. Moses does not say that the Decalogue was spoken from the mountain on the fiftieth day (Pentecost) after the sabbath dating from the first passover. Yet it is obvious that the tradition that God delivered the Ten Commandments of the first Pentecost after the first passover fits the Scripture.

In verse 2, we read: "And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the wilderness of Sinai. . . . Israel encamped before the mount." The scriptures provide no details for the site or the uttering of the Ten Commandments. It is fitting that both are shrouded in secrecy lest man should secularize the place as he has done in locating the traditional places of Jesus' birth and such like.

God's Promise to Israel (Ex. 19:3-6)

And Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

While the people were resting in their encampment before the moun-

tain, Moses immediately "went up unto God" to keep his appointment waiting for God to call him. "And Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain." First, Jehovah delivered to Moses his commission "to tell the children of Israel," to remind them what God had done to the Egyptians. The statement "how I bare you on eagles' wings," also occurs in Deuteronomy 32:11. "As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, that fluttereth over her young, he spread abroad his wings, he took them, he bare them on his pinions." As the mighty eagle can bear its young on its mighty wings; so just as safely, Jehovah had brought Israel safely into his presence before the sacred mount.

Now Jehovah makes a proposal to Moses for the people. The proposal is that Israel should make a covenant with a sacred agreement to obey the covenant. The Lord would make Israel "mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine." Moses forty years later told the Israelites on the eve of their entering Canaan: "Jehovah did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he sware unto your fathers." (Deut. 7:7, 8.)

God chose Israel to perform an exalted spiritual task: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." The idea here is that Israel would be a nation of priests, and they would occupy among all nations the role performed by priests. They were to be a holy nation, that is to say, a nation wholly dedicated to the service of God. So the covenant promise was made. Although all the earth is the Lord's, yet Israel was promised to become his cherished treasure above all people. They were to become a holy nation which would not perish, but continue forever. And with this, God concludes with solemn words, "These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

The People Before the Mountain (Ex. 19: 16-18)

And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings,

and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Moses had told the people to wash their garments and to sanctify themselves on the first day and the second day and on the third day. Jehovah would come before them in the midst of the mountain. (Ex. 19: 10, 11.) The children of Israel were prepared and waiting with high expectation the appearing of the Lord.

"And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning" that a fearful storm broke forth. The heavens were covered with clouds; flashes of lightning rent the sky, and the peals of thunder rolled through the heavens. A dark cloud covered the mountain. In this awesome setting, Jehovah descended in fire upon the top of Sinai while billows of smoke were rolling from the mountain, and the whole mountain quaked. You may remember that God revealed himself in a similar fashion to Elijah—"but Jehovah was not in the wind . . . not in the earthquake . . . not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." (1 Kings 19:11, 12.) And it was then that Elijah perceived the voice of God in the still small voice.

The storm frightened the people as storms in the region of mountains usually do: "and all the people in the camp trembled." But there was no fear in the heart of Moses. "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God." The people stood on the "nether part of the mount." This is to say they stood outside the boundary of the mount that Moses had set lest they touch the mount and die.

Jehovah Speaks to Israel (Ex. 19:19, 20)

And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And Jehovah came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount: and Jehovah called Moses

to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

The people waited quietly before the mountain, waiting for the forces of nature to subside, but they became increasingly more turbulent. The voice of a trumpet was heard in the midst of the mountain. The blowing of the *shofar* (a ram's horn without a mouthpiece) accompanied many of the major religious ceremonies of the Israelites. When a human being blows a trumpet, the more he blows, the more exhausted he becomes, and the sound becomes weaker and weaker. But not so with the sound of the *shofar* on Sinai which waxed louder and louder.

Moses spoke and God answered him by voice. Jehovah descended to the top of the mountain, and called Moses to the top of the mountain. And the simple statement, "Moses went up," prepares us for what follows. The people were waiting in quiet reverence. The

purpose of this narrative in Exodus is to prepare the reader for the giving of the Law.

What happened at Mount Sinai would forever remain fixed in the minds of the people of Israel. Mount Sinai was a holy place because here God had revealed himself to them. The Israelites never forgot they had a history before they entered Canaan. Among all the mountains of the desert, Sinai occupied a special position because on this mountain, God made his covenant with them on which their life was based. Moses built an altar to offer a sacrifice for the confirmation of the covenant. (Ex. 24: 4-8.) This holy mountain in the desert was the Israelites' first sanctuary, the beginning of their life as the "people of the Book." In the Scriptures, we find that Jehovah is pictured as coming from Sinai. (Deut. 33:2, Judges 5:5, Psalm 68: 9,18.)

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The journey to Mount Sinai was beset with problems for the Israelites as is all of life. The people of Israel replaced their faith and trust in God with personal frustration and harsh criticism of Moses as is often typical of people.

2. God has sustained mankind throughout history with bread and water as a matter of course of nature. Man has no reason to suppose that God will not continue to do so.

3. The Israelites faced Amalek in a battle which they did not solicit and had no desire to fight. And life has a way of putting us into situations with no choice but to handle circumstances the best we can.

4. The people promised Moses they would do what God had spoken. A man's word is the bond of his character. What he commits himself to should be honored.

5. God is not slack to keep his promises though the wait may be often long and our confidence may grow shaky. It is not in man to direct his ways. Trust in God permits no alternative.

6. God chose Israel not because they were great in number but because he loved them for the sake of Abraham and their own sake. God in no less way loves the Christian whom he has called through the gospel.

Questions for Discussion

Introduction

Were the people of Israel aware of the dangers they faced in the desert after leaving Egypt?

Are the deserts of Africa and the Middle East devoid of water except for the rivers?

What is the meaning of the word Mas-sah?

Who was Amalek?

How did Aaron and Hur help Moses to prevail against the Amalekites?

Who was Jethro other than being the father-in-law of Moses?

Golden Text

Did the people show a willingness to enter into a covenant relationship with God?

How did Jehovah say he would descend into the presence of Mount Sinai?

Why did Jehovah visit Mount Sinai to speak to the people?

Camping in God's Presence

How long did it take the Israelites to reach Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt?

Is it possible to locate the exact mountain called Sinai in Exodus?

What is the meaning of the word *pentecost*?

How do you explain that God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel on the first Pentecost?

God's Promise to Israel

What is the meaning of the expression, "How I bare you on eagles' wings"?

What did Jehovah say about his possession of the earth?

Did Jehovah accept Israel because of

their great power and importance as a people?
How are we to understand that Israel would be unto God a kingdom of priests?

The People Before the Mountain

What did God command Moses to tell the people to do on the first and second day?
What were the natural circumstances Which attended God's descent, to Mount Sinai?

Were the people of Israel frightened by the presence of God?
Why did the people remain positioned away from the base of the mountain?

Jehovah Speaks to Israel

What is a *shofar*?
Where was Moses when God spoke the commandments to Israel?
Who are the "people of the Book"?
What is the importance of Mount Sinai to the Hebrew people?

Lesson VI—February 10, 1974

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Lesson Text

Ex. 20: 1-17

1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of *any thing* that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me,

6 And showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work;

10 But the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in* it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within, thy gates:

11 For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Golden Text.—"So that the law has become our tutor to bring us unto Christ. . . (Gal. 3:24.)

DEVOTIONAL READING,—Deut. 5: 1-21.

Daily Bible Readings

February 4. M. Ten Commandments Given (Ex. 20:1-17)
February 5. T. Duties to God (Ex. 20:1-11)
February 6. W. Duties to Man (Ex. 20:12-20)
February 7. T. Blessings of the Law (Psalm 119:1-10)
February 8. F. Delights of the Law (Psalm 119:11-35)
February 9. S. Understanding the Law (Psalm 119:36-50)
February 10. S. Fulfilling the Law (Rom. 13:8-14)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

Place.—Mount Sinai.

Persons.—God, Moses, and the people of Israel.

Introduction

The person of Moses towers above all other Israelites in the second millennium B. C. as the greatest leader of the Hebrew people. Only Abraham occupied a similar importance to Moses in the hearts of the children of Israel. (Matt. 3.) The abiding genius of Moses is always associated in our thinking in the role of a lawgiver. Jehovah divinely appointed Moses to be the instrument through whom God would make known his covenant to the people of Israel.

As we approach our study of the Ten Commandments, we should keep in mind there were other great bodies of law among the people of the ancient world. The Law of Moses, however, was more than a system of laws which required obedience. The distinct character of the Ten Commandments is to be found in the fact that God gave the law to the children of Israel. The Mosaic law embodied a spirituality that would enrich the quality of life of the Israelites. No other system of law in the ancient world assigned such a high value to human life, demanded a higher respect for the honor of womanhood, or allotted more dignity to the life of a slave.

The climax of the entire Book of Exodus is related in Chapter 20. God who descended into the midst of the burning mountain, said to Moses: "Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto Jehovah to gaze, and many of them

perish." (Ex. 19:21.) The people were thus warned that no one was to break down the barriers to see Jehovah. The priest who came near Jehovah to perform the sacred services were likewise charged not to enter the restricted area "lest Jehovah break forth upon them." (Ex. 19:22.) We are to understand that even the priests were too unholy to come into the sacred presence of Jehovah. This repeated warning, for both the people and the extension of it to the priest not to touch the mountain, was intended to awaken in the people a consciousness of their unworthiness to approach even the mountain where God momentarily dwelt.

However, the separation of the people did not extend to Aaron and Moses. Moses was told: "Go, get thee down." For the last time he would warn the people not to approach the mountain made sacred by God's presence. The stage was now set for one of the greatest events in mankind's history. All was still before the sacred mountain. The sound of the horn had died away. Thunder no longer rolled through the mountain, and there was no lightning. All of nature remained tranquil. And out of the amazing stillness that prevailed, Jehovah spoke unto the people out of a thick cloud. (Ex. 19:9.) And God made known to the people the fundamental laws contained in the Decalogue.

The Golden Text

So that the laic has become our tutor to bring us unto Christ. . . . (Gal. 3:24.)

Paul compares the function of the law to a tutor. A tutor was a household servant who was charged with the responsibility for looking after the sons of the household until they reached the years of manhood. They were more often responsible for the discipline of the children than for their education. The word for tutor in the Greek language is *paidagogos*, which usually meant the slave who took the children to school and saw to it that they did not get into mischief along the way. The word here is intended to suggest the inferior function of the law

of Moses in relation to the gospel of Christ.

The law of Moses was compared to the tutor who served as an attendant to minor children. The comparison of a tutor to the law was intended to mark the inferior and temporary function of the law. The law of Moses with its commandments, offerings, purification, and the like administered by the priests is depicted as leading us to Christ. Just as the law was like a domestic servant whose duty it was to lead children to school, so the law served to bring us to Christ *that we might be justified by faith.*

The meaning is clear that the law fulfilled its appointed purpose when

man was brought to Christ. We are no longer under the restrictions and discipline of the law. Now that we have the full free enjoyment of the relationship of a son to God, it is no longer necessary to treat as recalcitrants the people who have now en-

tered into the full freedom in Christ. And finally, man through the law learned that he could not earn salvation, and he was driven by the law to Christ who promises him full sonship and justification through faith.

The Text Explained

Jehovah, the God of Israel

(Ex. 20:1, 2)

And God spake all these words, saying, I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

The law of Moses is referred to as the "words of the covenant." (Ex. 34:28.) The Hebrew alphabet is composed of consonants—there are no vowel letters. The Ten Commandments spoken were in the form of words or brief statements. The first verse of Exodus 20 begins with the words: "And God spake all these words saying," and the words that God spoke were the words of the covenant: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon tables of stone." (Deut. 4:13.) This verse contains no command; it is a proclamation announcing the speaker.

The Ten Words begin with a declaration of Jehovah concerning himself: "I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt." By bringing the people out of Egypt, Jehovah had proven he was their God in particular although he was the God of the whole earth. (Ex. 19:5.) Due to this glorious act, Israel owes its existence as an independent nation to God who chose them to be his own special people. Hence the people were to serve God, not out of fear and dread in the way other people worshipped their gods, but from a sense of love and gratitude to their saviour and defender.

The Reverence of God

(Ex. 20:3-11)

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a

jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing lovingkindness unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The expression "other gods" is to be understood in this context as the gods of the Gentiles who were no gods. The words "before me" mean that throughout their existence, the Israelites were not to worship the gods of the heathens. To admit that other gods existed was blasphemous. This was an injunction against idolatry for all the people who had come out of Egypt and for all future generations.

The children of Israel were aware that their forefathers had worshipped other gods. "Then Jacob said unto his household. . . . Put away the foreign gods that are among you." (Gen. 35:2.) The Hebrews had lived long in Egypt where a complex polytheism (many gods) was accepted as the national religion of the Egyptians. Polytheism was the most common form of religious beliefs in the ancient period. Another word we may examine is *he notheism*. This was a belief among the heathens that different races of people had their own gods.

But rooted in their national pride, a people would believe their god was superior and would win in contest with other gods of their enemies. Elijah mocked the priests of Baal as they prayed in ecstatic frenzy for Baal to send fire from heaven to consume their sacrifice. (1 Kings 18:25-27.)

The second commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image" for the service of God, which meant any carved object of wood or stone. This was a common practice found among the heathen people. There is here a deliberate allusion to such heathen worship, particularly in Egypt. The gods of Egypt were fashioned in the form of cattle or other creatures. There were the gods who were the obscene representation of the fertility, gods like Min and *Amori* (Egyptian fertility gods) which were detestable to the Israelites.

The first commandment emphasizes the unity of God; the second commandment points up the spirituality of God. There is no clearer truth that no image of Jehovah is allowed: not of the starry heavens above, nor of man or beasts on the earth, nor of a fish or dragon in the waters under the earth. The command, "thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them; nor serve them," prohibited sacrificing or offering incense to them in any fashion.

Jehovah is a "jealous God" who refuses to surrender his rights by condoning idolatry and resents those who do. He is a jealous God visiting fearful punishment on the fathers and even to their children. It is not that God visits the punishments for the sins of the father upon the children; but he takes into account the sons of the fathers when punishing the children for their evil in following the bad examples of their parents. The punishment of the children unto the third and fourth generation becomes accumulative. The next generation is often more wicked than the previous one.

The scripture undoubtedly is issuing the warning so as to keep man far from sin, and that in the course of the nation's life, his children and grandchildren would not need to suffer the consequences of the sins of their forefathers. Since

an Israelite grieves over the tribulation of his children and grandchildren more than his own, the Bible warns him of the tragic punishments that his children and their children will be cursed to suffer for his transgressions.

On the other hand, the text moved their hearts to love God for the loving kindness he would show them—not for three or four generations, but for thousands of generations. This was equivalent to saying that God would show loving kindness to the people to the end of all their generations for loving him and keeping his commandments.

The third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain." The idea here is that it is a sin to utter God's name to no purpose, or with no valid reason. The uttering of a false oath is not meant, but the use of God for any useless reason is intended. The purpose of an oath was to safeguard the honor of God. The Gentiles were guilty of mentioning the names of their gods, such as incantations, sorcery, divination, and such like. You will remember the Scriptures state the prophets of Baal cut themselves with knives in their praying until their bodies were foaming with blood. (1 Kings 18:28.)

Jesus condemned his contemporaries for their taking such oaths that "whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing." (Matt. 23:16ff.) Of course, common cursing, the taking of the name of God and Jesus in vain, is a sinful and degrading practice. That such language will attract attention goes without saying, but such common and trashy language will bring no honor to the user.

The Lord will not hold him guiltless for taking his name in vain. Even though the courts of men are unable or unwilling to punish the violator—not so with God. God will bring his own severe punishment in due time.

The fourth commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Israel must have known that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. (Gen. 2: 1, 2.) In the wilderness before Israel reached Sinai, the people were told to gather twice the amount of manna on the sixth day

because: "Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Jehovah." (Ex. 16:23.) However, no commandment had been given to man to sanctify the sabbath until the commandment was given for the first time at Sinai.

The children of Israel were required to do no manner of work on the sabbath. Interestingly, there are seven categories of living creatures listed to underscore the seventh day: "*Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger* that is within thy gates." The sojourner was the Gentile who lived among the people of Israel in their walled cities.

All of this was enjoined upon the people since "Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it." This day was to be elevated above all the other days of ordinary activity. On the sabbath, the body was to be liberated from the burden of work and material things. The sabbath was dedicated to concerns of the spirit, not the people's relationship to creation, but to their Creator. The people were charged to imitate the manner of their Creator who alone created the world and all its parts and who is not to be identified with any portion of the world or with any of the forces of nature. This was a day of devotion and spiritual joy.

Honor to Whom Honor Is Due

(Ex. 20:12)

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

This commandment which enjoins the honoring of father and mother marks a transition from man's duties toward God to his duties toward his fellow man. Just as God was to be served with honor and fear, the reverence toward one's parents is placed on an equality with the observance of the sabbath. "Ye shall fear every man his mother; and his father; and ye shall keep my sabbaths: I am Jehovah your God." (Lev. 19:3.)

A distinction is made here between *love* and *honor*. Fellowmen or neighbors are to be loved. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Lev. 19:19.) You will remember Jesus said this law was the second in importance only to

the love of God. The love for one's parent was undergirded with honor. The reward for honoring one's parents is based upon the law of nature—measure for measure. If you will honor God and your father and mother who are the source of your life, you will have hopes for a long and happy life on earth.

Man and His Neighbors

(Ex. 20:13-17)

Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Jesus taught that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Luke 10:27.) All law is essentially God's law. It is that pattern of behavior which he has written into everything he has made. The moral law of God is closely related to man's reason, and this is because man participates in God's reason. God is not the author of confusion. And it is consistent with the character of God as a faithful Creator that the power of reason he gave to man to understand his moral obligations is not at variance with God. Of all of God's creatures, man alone is aware of divine reason and of his moral obligation to relate himself to it. The duties of a man to his neighbor are listed in relation to their significance.

"Thou shalt not kill." A man's life is his most cherished earthly possession. His right to enjoy it must be guarded against all threats which endangers man's life whether it proceed from open violence or stratagem. (Read Deut. 22:8; Lev. 19:14.) There is actually nothing new in the substance of this law; for in every civilized society, murder, theft, and adultery are considered as forbidden. Jesus, you will remember, took this law off a table of stone and wrote it on the human heart saying that a man who hates his neighbor has already committed murder in his heart. Cain was unwilling to acknowledge that he was his brother's keeper. (Gen. 4:9.) A man can be destroyed by violence or by the poison tongue of lying and tale-bearing.

The seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Adultery is used of both man and woman, who engage in sexual intercourse with the wife of another man, or the husband of another woman. "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife . . . the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (Lev. 20:10.)

This commandment not only protects one of man's dearest possessions, his wife, but it upholds the sacredness of marriage because God commanded in the garden the first man and woman to multiply and replenish the earth. The adulterer robs parenthood of its glory, and by his sin he denies the child the knowledge of the identity of his father and prevents him from paying his father filial honor.

The eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." This commandment prohibited not only the secret or open removal of another's property, but injury done to it, or fraudulent retention of it through carelessness or indifference. (Ex. 21:33; 22:13; Deut. 22:1-4; Lev. 19:11.) The penalty for stealing a man (kidnapping) to sell him as a slave was punishable by death. This law also included stealing a man's heart through deceit and every other form of stealing.

The ninth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." This means to testify concerning any matter pertaining to one's neighbor by giving testimony contrary to the truth. To give false witness "against thy neighbor" is not an act

which may injure or hurt one's neighbor directly, as does adultery, murder, and stealing. It nevertheless injures him indirectly through the influence that untrue testimony is liable to exert on the decision of the judge. Included in this commandment is tale-bearing as well as slander. It is to be understood here that "neighbor" does not mean that this law was intended just for the Israelites. The expression "your neighbor" is to be understood in the universal sense. "The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto as the home-born, and thou shalt love him as thyself." (Lev. 19:34.)

The tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet." All people acknowledge it is wrong to commit adultery or steal; but here, the commandment goes even further, and it is here declared as one of the fundamental principles of social life. It is forbidden to desire one another's wife or property. Desire is the first step that may lead to the second, adultery, theft, and possibly murder.

The number of things that may not be coveted totals seven: thy neighbor's house, thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The Decalogue concludes with the words, "or anything that is thy neighbor's." The central thought in the first part of the Decalogue is the love of the Lord: and in the second half to love your neighbor as yourself.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The Mosaic law is the greatest body of moral law ever given among men prior to the gospel.

2. The Ten Commandments do not compose the total of all the laws of Moses, but they contain the essential relationships between God and man, and man and his neighbor.

3. The Mosaic law was a good law and it served to bring the people of Israel to Christ and the gospel, and to bring freedom to all men.

4. The Mosaic law declares that all other gods are fictions of man without reality or substance in the past, present, or future.

5. Whatever man takes in his hand to worship, money or whatever, is a form of idolatry.

6. The light or disrespectful use of God's name is wrong in every sense.

7. A man's word should be his guarantee, not an oath.

8. A day that God sets aside for man should be honored for the giver of the day and for the reason it was given.

9. The honor of parents is based upon the fact that they are the immediate source of life for their children.

10. The duties of a man in his re-

lations to his neighbor grows out of his own person and his own needs.

11. The act of adultery is a sin of aggression of the guilty parties against others. The act dishonors the respective husband and wife,

and the children. It is an evil and destructive force in the church and community.

12. The law against stealing protects what a man has earnestly earned by the sweat of his brow.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place and persons.

Introduction

What other Old Testament person was held in high honor with Moses?

To what people did God specifically give the Mosaic law?

Explain that the giving of the Mosaic law is one of the greatest events in the history of man.

Golden Text

What was the relation of a tutor to children in the Roman world?

In what respects would the law be considered to be inferior to the gospel of Christ?

What was the primary purpose of the law according to Paul?

What did man learn about salvation through the law?

Jehovah, the God of Israel

What are the "words of the covenant"?

What is unique about the Hebrew alphabet?

What is the meaning of Decalogue?

Reverence of God

Does the first commandment assume there are other gods?

Explain the meaning of *henotheism*.

What is a "graven image"?

Who are *Min* and *Amori*?

In what respect is God a jealous God?

How are the sins of the fathers visited on the children to the third and fourth generation?

How many generations are blessed through righteous fathers?

What is the nature of taking God's name in vain?

What did Jesus command about swearing and taking oaths?

When did the sabbath become a day of forced rest for the people of Israel?

Was the sabbath primarily a day of worship?

Honor to Whom Honor is Due

Why is the honoring of parents called the first commandment with promise?

What is the difference between love and honor?

Why is honoring parents based upon a law of nature?

Man and His Neighbors

Why is the moral law of God closely related to man's reason?

Discuss the meaning of the law; "Thou shalt not kill."

Why is adultery an act of aggression against the church, the families and children involved, and the whole structure of society?

What is the relation of stealing to property rights?

Discuss the importance of the law governing the giving of false testimony.

How does the sin of coveting involve other sins?

Lesson VII—February 17, 1974

SIN IN ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Ex. 24: 1-3; Lev. 10: 1-7

1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto Jehovah, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off:

2 And Moses alone shall come near unto Jehovah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him.

3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do.

1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons

of Aaron, took each of them his censor, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he had not commanded them.

2 And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah.

3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

4 And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them,

Draw near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

5 So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said.

6 And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Let not the hair of your heads go loose, neither rend your clothes;

that ye die not, and that he be not wroth with all the congregation: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Jehovah hath kindled.

7 And ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting, lest ye die; for the anointing oil of Jehovah is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. . . .” (1 Sam. 15:22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Sam. 15:1-23.

Daily Bible Readings

- February 11. M.....God’s Instructions Regarding the Fire (Lev. 6:8-13)
- February 12. T.....Sin of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-11)
- February 13. W.....Sin of Substitution (1 Sam. 15:1-35)
- February 14. T.....Presumptuous Sin (Psalm 19:1-13)
- February 15. F.....Folly of Disobedience (2 Sam. 6:1-11)
- February 16. S.....Sin of Achan (Josh. 7:1-26)
- February 17. S.....Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)

TIME.—1491 B.C.

PLACE.—Mount Sinai.

PERSONS.—Jehovah, Moses, Aaron, Nahab, Abihu, Mishael, Elzaphan, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Introduction

This lesson is based upon the sin of Nadab and Abihu. Their sin was condemned by the third commandment of the Decalogue: “Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Ex. 20:7.) Nadab and Abihu dishonored the name of God through their profane behavior in the Tabernacle while officiating at the burning of incensed The law of Moses prescribes the penalty. “And he that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death.” (Lev. 24:16.)

The comprehensive name for divine revelation for the children of Israel was the *Torah*, which was the sole standard and norm of truth. *Torah* is translated *Law*, and therefore, the Law of Moses. Torah in an even broader sense included the whole of revelation—Old Testament Scripture—in which God made fully known his nature, character, and purpose, and what he would have man be and do.

The relationship between the law of Moses and sin is clearly expressed in the language which the Bible uses on the subject of sin.

Chattah is the Hebrew word for sin; and it means “missing the

mark.” The classic examples of men who publicly admitted “I have sinned” included Pharaoh, who perished in the Red Sea (Ex. 9:27); Saul, who dishonored God by failing to heed the words of Samuel (1 Sam. 15:24); David, who confessed his sin to the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12:13); and Judas, who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 27:14). These men “missed the mark” and God compelled them to suffer the consequences.

Another Hebrew word for sin is *pesha*. This second word means rebellion resulting in overt transgression. The attitude conveyed by this word is that of revolt or refusal to submit to rightful authority, a positive transgression to the law.

John sums up the biblical concept of sin in New Testament Scripture: “Everyone that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4.) The Greek word John uses for sin is *anomia*. The Scriptures teach that it was sin which entered into the

world that made the law necessary. (Rom. 7:7ff.) Paul wrote in this connection, “Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless, for the ungodly and sinners.” (1.

Tim. 1:9.) Sin is the deliberate breaking of God's law. Sin is a man's deliberately placing himself

above law and gratifying his selfish desires despite God's commandments.

The Golden Text

Behold to obey is better than sacrifice. ... (1 Sam. 15:22.)

These words of the last judge of Israel, Samuel, came as a result of King Saul's failure to obey Samuel's direction: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not." (1 Sam. 15:3.) The Amalekites were the first to attack the Israelites in the desert after the Israelites escaped Egypt]. Amalek was a nomad people inhabiting the Sinai desert in and around the Negeb. In company with the Canaanites, they came out against the Israelites and defeated them at a place called Horah. (Num. 14:45.) The Amalekites continued to harass Israel for many years after they settled in Canaan. (Judge 3:13; 6:3.)

To "utterly destroy" meant that Amalek and all that belonged to him was placed "under a ban or devoted to God." That which was marked in such a way could not be taken by the people and had, therefore, to be destroyed. And this also included all of the spoils of battle which were placed under the wrath of a divine ban. (Deut. 13:16ff.)

King Saul failed in his mission to smite utterly the Amalekites on that day. Only a part of the people fell into his hand, and they would continue intermittent warfare against the Israelites. (1 Sam. 27:8; 30:1; 2 Sam. 8:12.) And Saul took Agag, the king of the Amalekites,

alive. The reason for clemency is not recorded. And Saul and his men saved the best of the sheep and oxen.

Jehovah spoke to Samuel: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned from following me, and hath not performed my commandments." (1 Sam. 15:11.) God is said to repent when a change of conduct or character occurs in those with whom God is dealing.

On the next day, Samuel met the king who said: "I have performed the commandment of Jehovah." (1 Sam. 15:13.) Saul's words are the very opposite of God's words. Samuel demanded: "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ear, and the lowing of the oxen I hear?" (1 Sam. 15:14.) Saul's excuses only aggravate his sin. Because he tries to shift the blame onto the people, Samuel's classic rejoinder to Saul, "Behold,

to obey is better than sacrifice" meant that sacrifices which are the outcome of disobedience are worthless in the sight of God. God rejected Saul that day as king of Israel, and Saul said, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah." (1 Sam. 15:24.) And even in his confession, Saul exposed his weakness, for he blamed his failure on the people who would have the flocks spread.

The Text Explained

Israel Accepts the Covenant (Ex. 24: 1-3)

And he said unto Moses, Come up unto Jehovah, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off: and Moses alone shall come near unto Jehovah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him. And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do.

The Decalogue that God delivered to the children of Israel had to be

finally, ratified by the people. The ceremony in which the Israelites agreed to keep the commandments in the law of Moses is set, forth in these verses. In addition to Moses, the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and Aaron with the seventy elders of Israel were to accompany Moses into the mountain and worship God from afar off. Only Moses was permitted to draw near to the presence of Jehovah. The names of Nadab and Abihu appear somewhat abruptly here without any introduction other than they were sons of Aaron. Their names first appear in the genealogy of the high priest: "And Aaron took him Elisheba, the

daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon to wife; and she bare him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar." (Ex. 6:23.)

The sons of Aaron served with him as high ranking priests of the time. This is set forth in the first verse beginning in Exodus 24. The details of the ceremonial garments of the priests are given with the names of Aaron and his sons. The names of Nadab and Abilin are first in position of enumeration among the sons of Aaron and supposedly occupied positions of eminence among the priests since they were the eldest.

The seventy elders of Israel were instructed to accompany Moses into the sacred mountain. We may gather who these elders were by recalling the advice of Jethro to his son-in-law, Moses, to select able, God-fearing men to assist him in judging the people at all seasons. (Ex. 18:18-22.) And later, Jehovah instructed Moses: "Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people." (Num. 11:16.) These men, who represented the people, joined Moses, Aaron, and his sons to obtain a glimpse of the divine manifestation.

Other than Moses, they were commanded? "Worship ye afar off." Only those who have especially prepared themselves can approach God with proper reverence. We are reminded that Moses prepared the children of Israel as they stood before Mount Sinai waiting for God to address them. Isaiah, one of Israel's greatest prophets, found "himself unexpectedly in the presence of the Lord. The prophet described the awesome experience: "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." (Isa. 6:4, 5.)

Aaron, his sons, and the seventy were commanded to stand at a distance removed from the presence of Jehovah, "And Moses, alone shall come near unto Jehovah; but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him." Those commands were designed to instill

a sense of reverence in Israel's national and spiritual leaders. Reverence is the attitude a person makes with body and spirit in response to his awareness of being in God's presence. We should understand our "being in God's presence when as Christians we gather around the Lord's table! There are occasions, indeed, when nothing common or unclean may be tolerated, and when we should be filled with wonder and awe in the divine presence of the sacred.

The ceremony described in verse 3 through verse 11 is called, "The covenant which God made with the children of Israel." Moses had come alone into the **presence** of Jehovah in the mountain. He returned "and told the people all the words of Jehovah," and all the "ordinances." The children of Israel with one voice accepted the covenant. "All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do." It was necessary that the people should not only know what the Lord imposed on them in the covenant, but that they should declare their willingness to accept it and to perform what was imposed upon them.

The Israelites were now under sacred obligation to keep the covenant which they had made with Jehovah. We need to keep especially in mind Nadab and Abihu who are the principals in this lesson. They, too, were a party to the covenant. What this means is set forth in the law of Moses: "Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations, and repayeth them that hate him to their face. . . . Thou shalt therefore keep the commandment, and the statutes, and ordinances, which I command thee this day, to do them." (Deut. 7: 9-11.)

Rebellion of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-3)

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. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

The precise nature of Nadab and Abihu's profaning the altar service is not clear. The offense amounted to their "hating God to his face" for which they paid with a swift and pitiless death. We do not have to guess at their improper action: "And Nadab and Abihu died before Jehovah, when they offered strange fire before Jehovah, in the wilderness of Sinai." (Num. 3:4.) Aaron's eldest sons were ordained ministers of the sanctuary performing their priestly roles. Their duty and responsibility was to discharge their service in absolute devotion to the law. But the sons of Aaron did something else. They offered strange fire upon the sacred altar

What are we to understand by the "strange fire"? In the initiatory sacrifices Aaron made upon the newly built altar before the tent of meeting we learn: "And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat: and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces." (Lev. 9:24.) The guilt of Nadab and Abihu which brought on them such fearful divine punishment may have resulted from their using "strange fire" which was not lawful for them to do. They presumably took fire for their censers from somewhere, but not from the altar fire which alone could be employed for the sacred service. The fire which they were to use was of heavenly origin.

And in this context, we may raise another question. Could it be that Nadab and Abihu were making unauthorized offering of incense without the authority of Aaron? A rabbinical explanation also suggests that Nadab and Abihu entered the Holy Place while in a state of intoxication. "And Jehovah spoke unto Aaron saying, Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, that ye die not." (Lev. 10:8, 9.)

The joint sin of Nadab and Abihu was followed by divine punishment

on the spot. "And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah." As soon as Aaron learned of the tragedy, his first thought was to retire from the sanctuary and go into mourning for his sons: but Moses said to Aaron "This is it that Jehovah spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace." Aaron could only take in shamed silence these words from Moses. Aaron was thusly warned not to mourn his sons. For God wished to be sanctified by the priests who were near to him to serve him, and his service must not be desecrated by them.

Removal of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:4, 5)

And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Draw near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said.

Moses called the two brothers, Mishael and Elzaphan, the two sons of Uzziel, the paternal uncle of Aaron. The Old Testament tells us nothing specifically about Mishael and Elzaphan. They were charged with carrying out the dead bodies of the two men judged by God. This was done so the tent of meeting would not be defiled by the dead. (Lev. 22:4.) The expression "before the sanctuary" simply means they were slain in front of the entrance to the holy place. It must be naturally assumed they were carried out of the camp to be buried in some appointed place. They were carried out in their priests' coats, since their garments had been defiled by judgment. Are we to assume that fire came from Jehovah like a bolt of lightning and took their lives? Neither their bodies nor their garments were apparently consumed in flames. We do not know.

Jehovah's Charge (Lev. 10:6, 7)

And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Let not the hair of your heads go loose, neither rend your clothes; that ye die not, and that he be not

wroth with all the congregation: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Jehovah hath kindled. And, ye shall not go out from the door of the tent of meeting, lest ye die; for the anointing oil of Jehovah is upon you. And they did, according to the word of Moses.

The first point of interest here is centered in the two remaining younger sons of Aaron because they now occupied primary roles of priestly importance secondly to their rattier, Aaron, who was the high priest. What Moses said to Aaron and his two sons was mandatory then; and thereafter; not only for them, but for all priests. What is to be understood concerning mourning is that a death brought about by divine judgment is no different from a natural death, and the priests should behave in the same manner toward either by having no physical contact with the dead.

On this occasion Moses prohibited Aaron and his sons from showing any signs of mourning on account of the dreadful deaths of Nadab and Abihu. For them to have engaged in mourning ceremonies would have rendered them ceremonially unclean. This is to be understood in the laws of holiness enjoined upon the high priest and his behavior, and likewise, attendant priests: "And he that is high priest among

his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil is poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not let the hair of his head go loose, nor rend his clothes: neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his "father, or his mother, neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am Jehovah." (Lev. 21: 10-15.)

We are now prepared for Moses' directions to the priests: "Let not the hair of your heads go loose." The idea here is the "free growth" of the hair, e.g., "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall go loose." (Lev. 13:45.) This carries the idea to leave the hair in disorder, which certainly implies the laying aside of the headdress. This was a custom of

mourning. The Hebrews from ancient days who were in deep mourning would neither wash themselves, nor cut their hair, nor pare their nails.

The command, "neither rend your clothes," was another very natural expression of grief. The custom was to make a rent in the clothes in the front of the breast, by which the sorrow of the heart would be laid bare. (See Gen. 37:29; 44:13; 2 Sam. 1:11.) Aaron and his sons were strictly ordered to abstain from these expressions of sorrow "that ye die not, and that he be not wroth with all the congregation."

The reason for the rules for the priesthood was so they would not defile themselves by touching the dead. This, however, became a general law for the priesthood. On this occasion, any manifestations of grief on account of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu would have shown dissatisfaction with God's judgment, and Aaron and his sons would have brought upon themselves and the people the displeasure of God. When the high priest in his official position sinned, the guilt was shared by the people: "if the anointed priest shall sin so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin." (Lev. 4:3.)

We should remember that the sons of Aaron were described as anointed priests whom God ordained to minister in the priest's office. (Num. 3:3.) Whatever the nature of the "strange fire," the fact remains that their sin was an act of rebellion against God. The sin was the refusal to obey the command of God. Cain offered an unacceptable sacrifice to God and was cursed. (Heb. 11:4.)

Every Christian is called of God, and he is also ordained of God to minister in the church. (1 Pet. 2:9.) The Christian services are detailed in precept and example. We are left without excuse if we change the pattern of faith, worship, or deeds. When Moses received instructions to build the tabernacle, he was strictly charged: "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." (Heb. 8:5.)

We should be fearfully concerned

to change any precept or example in the New Testament which has been set forth by divine command. Yet, there is hardly a precept or service in the church that has not been changed or altered at one time or another. Martin Luther added

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The name of God means all that man can know and experience about God, and his name should be used in the deepest respect and reverence because God is the father of all mankind.

2. The greatest mark man can miss in his life is God. Sin means "missing the mark."

3. The Mosaic law was a good law, but the people were not good. Law is meant for the unruly, not the righteous.

4. Sacrifice means the shedding of blood and the giving of life. We should remember that to obey God is a greater free will offering to God than a sacrifice.

5. God will turn his face away from the disobedient.

6. To say that "I have sinned"

the word "only" to make the Scriptures read, one is saved by faith only. Are we any less responsible for changing God's Word than Nadab and Abihu? We are charged to rightfully divide the word of truth. (2 Tim. 3:15.)

sometimes is too late for restoration. King Saul lost his kingdom and his life as a result of his disobedience.

7. High position does not excuse a person from responsibility. Instead, his responsibilities are increased in proportion to his obligations.

8. Reverence is the expression of an attitude that a person makes with his body and spirit to show proper reverence for God.

9. Because a person is sincere is neither a reason nor an excuse for willfully disobeying God.

10. Willful disobedience is in open rejection of God, and the individual who behaves in such a manner may expect rejection at the hands of God.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How is the sin of Nadab and Abihu a violation of the third commandment?

What penalty did the Mosaic law prescribe for blaspheming God?

What is the meaning of the word *torah*?

What is the dictionary meaning of the word sin?

What relation did the Mosaic law bear to the unrighteous?

Golden Text

Why were the Amalekites such hateful enemies of the Hebrew people?

What does it mean to place under a "ban"?

Why did Saul spare the life of Agag?

What are we to understand in the expression "God repented"?

Did Saul accept the blame for failing to carry out the orders of Samuel?

What is meant by the expression that "to obey is better than sacrifice"?

How did King Saul expose his personal weakness?

Israel Accepts the Covenant

Where do the names of Nadab and Abihu first appear in the Bible?

What prominence did Nadab and Abihu seem to have among the other priests?

What was the office of the seventy elders and of Israel?

Discuss the fact that only those who have properly prepared themselves may approach God with proper reverence.

What did the people say when they agreed to enter into a covenant relationship with God?

Were Nadab and Abihu parties to the covenant?

Rebellion of Nadab and Abihu

What sin did Nadab and Abihu commit?

Do we know what the "strange fire" was that Nadab and Abihu offered?

List the explanations given about the strange fire.

Why was Moses warned not to mourn for his sons?

Removal of Nadab and Abihu

Who removed the bodies of Nadab and Abihu?

Were their bodies and garments consumed in the flames?

Jehovah's Charge

Explain why mourning for the dead and touching the dead was forbidden to the priests.

What is the meaning of the expression, "Let not the hair of your heads go loose"?

Describe another ritual in that time used as an expression of grief.

What was the relationship of the sins of the high priest to the people?

Lesson VIII—February 24, 1974

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Lesson Text

Lev. 16: 5-22

5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering.

6 And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself, and for his house.

7 And he shall take the two goats, and set them before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting.

8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for Jehovah, and the other lot for Azazel.

9 And Aaron shall present the goat upon which the lot fell for Jehovah, and offer him for a sin-offering.

10 But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement for him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

11 And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself.

12 And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil:

13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:

14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat on the east; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did

with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat:

16 And he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins: and so shall he do for the tent of meeting, that dwelleth with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

17 And there shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he goeth in to make atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that is before Jehovah, and make atonement for it, and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the children of Israel.

20 And when he hath made an end of atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"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.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Num. 29: 1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

February 18. M..... Preparation for the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-4)

February 19. T..... Observance of Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5-22)

February 20. W.....	Purpose of Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:23-32)
February 21. T.....	Blessings of Christ's Atonement (Isa. 53:1-12)
February 22. F.....	Paul and the Atonement (Rom. 5:1-11)
February 23. S.....	Christ Died for Us (1 Cor. 15:1-3)
February 24. S.....	Superiority of Christ's Atonement (Heb. 9:12-26)

TIME. — 1491 B.C.

PLACE. — Mount Sinai.

PERSONS. — Aaron and the people of Israel.

Introduction

The Day of Atonement occupied a highly eminent position in the law of Moses. As a matter of fact, it was the most holy and solemn day

of the religious year. What is it that gave *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) such a unique place in the life of the Hebrews? It is important for us to know that the day possessed a rigid sabbatic character demanding absolute abstention from all work.

The day was to be a strict fast from evening to evening: "Ye shall do no manner of work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of solemn rest, and ye shall afflict your soul: In the ninth day of the month at even, from even to even, shall ye keep your sabbath." (Lev. 23:31, 32.) The day was to be observed by all Israelites. Whatever person did not observe this most holy day of the year was branded a renegade: "For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day: he shall be cut off from his people." (Lev. 23:29.)

On this day, atonement was made to cleanse the people from all their sins and make them holy before Jehovah. (Lev. 16:30.) The confession of the people of their sins was an act of divine forgiveness. However, this day was to be observed annually throughout the generations: "And this shall be an everlasting statute to you, to make atonement for the children of Israel because of their sins once in a year." (Heb. 10:3, 4.) We should keep in mind the imperfections of the law of Moses since no person could measure up to the rigid de-

mands made by the law. 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. 10:3, 4.) We should know that fasting in the Bible means "to afflict one's soul." Fasting sometimes was a sign of mourning, sometimes an act of humiliation in the face of impending danger. It was an act of purely voluntary character, or a fixed institution, e.g., the Day of Atonement.

The only fast day prescribed in the law of Moses was on the Day of Annual Atonement. After the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, four other regular fast days were instituted in memory of various sad events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile. These facts are alluded to in Zechariah 8:19. The fast of Tebeth 10 commemorated the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem and Tammuz 17 commemorated the breach made in the walls; the Black Fast Ab 9 commemorated the destruction of the first and second Temples; Tisri 3 commemorated the assassination of the Jewish ruler Gedaliah, left by Nebuchadnezzar to rule Judea. Some pious Jews fasted every Monday and Thursday. You will remember Jesus caricatured the Pharisee who boasted that he fasted twice a week and tithed of all he got. (Luke 18:11, 12.)

As mentioned before, the Day of Atonement was a sabbath of eminent sanctity. The prohibition of every form of activity was iterated: "And ye shall do no manner of work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement to make atonement for you before Jehovah your God." (Lev. 23:28.) The law applied to the native and alien alike in the land. While the violation of an ordinary sabbath was punishable by death, God threatened himself to punish whoever worked on the day of Atonement. (Lev. 23:30.)

The Golden Text

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 golden text is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The primary theme of the letter is to reveal that God's full and final revelation to man is made through his Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3.) Christians now have a high priest who is seated at the right hand of God. The epistle contains earnest exhortations to the Hebrew Christians to remain faithful until the end. (Heb. 4:14-16.) The best approach to knowing the Epistle to the Hebrews is learning the content of the Pentateuch regarding the worship of the Hebrew people.

This verse of scripture states that we have Christ as our high priest and mediator whose saving power is without end who will save us from separation from God and all that it entails. There is no satisfactory way to explain what complete alienation from God means as to be cast into a great outer darkness with no guiding star and to live without hope in a loveless world. Life becomes a shoreless sea on a ship without a rudder and

compass; and there is no hope of a homeport that we can sail to. Life would be an endless defeat and the guilty would have no way to be freed from the guilt of his sin-stained life.

Our Saviour lives in worlds without end eternally blessing and saving all who come unto him. He is not just an advocate who acts as a mediator between two persons to bring about a reconciliation. He is the Word (Logos) who became flesh (John 1:14) to live among men. He is God and man in one person perfectly fitted to be our high priest forever. (Heb. 7:17.) The condition of Christ becoming our Saviour is contingent on our drawing near to God through Christ. Christ is no barrier to man since he describes himself as being the way and the truth. (John 14:6.) Christ is our perfect high priest if we submit ourselves to his yoke and learn of him. His priestly function is summed up in this expression that "he ever liveth to make intercession"—to plead in man's behalf in the presence of God. A high priest without power to make intercession for us in the presence of God would have passed into oblivion ages ago.

The Text Explained

Confessions of Sins (Lev. 16:5-10)

And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats for a sin-offering and one ram for a burnt-off offering. And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and set them before Jehovah at the door of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for Jehovah and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat upon which the lot fell for Jehovah, and offer him for a sin-offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before Jehovah, to make atonement for him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness.

Once every year thousands of Israelites gathered for the most sacred day in the Hebrew calen-

dar, which was Tisri 10, corresponding to parts of September and October. The aspect of the Day of Atonement which concerns us here is that on this day the atonement for the sins of the people was made before Jehovah.

Only the high priest could officiate on that holy day. The high priest was commanded to bring a young bullock (ox) for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering as a sacrifice for himself and his family. The offerings were admissions that man stood as a hopeless sinner in the presence of Jehovah.

The burnt offering was a total offering upon the altar signifying the total sinful nature of man. The blood, which is the life of the body, was let, and the sacrifice was totally consumed by the fire on the altar. This atoning sacrifice signified the complete praise and love to God on the part of the individual who brought the gift. (See chapter one

in Leviticus for law of the burnt offering.)

The law of the sin offering (Lev. 4) had nothing to do with sin in the respect to deliberate and willful wrong doing. "If any one shall sin unwillingly, in any of the things which Jehovah hath commanded not to be done," (Lev. 4:2), the law commanded such a sinner to offer a sin offering which was totally consumed in the flames of the altar. The blood of the sacrifice was the offering made in lieu of the sinner's life.

The high priest was then instructed to take two he-goats from the congregation of Israel for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering. Aaron then offered the bullock as a sin-offering to make atonement for himself and for his household. The two he-goats played a principal role in the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. They were taken and placed at the door of the tent of the meeting for later disposition.

"And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for Jehovah, and one lot for Azazel." (See Josh. 18:10, 11.) The casting of lots was perhaps contrived by having two stones, one marked with the name of Jehovah, and the other of Azazel, placed in a vessel and shaken. The goat marked for Jehovah upon which the lot fell was then at once offered as a sin-offering, but the other was kept ready for a procedure that was to be followed later.

The goat on which the lot for Azazel fell was to be set alive before Jehovah to make atonement for Aaron and the people. Afterwards Aaron would send the scapegoat into the desert. The desert was regarded as a place of death and desolation and a habitation of evil spirits. It was a land hostile to life and human habitation.

Atonement for the House of Aaron (Lev. 16:11-14)

And Aaron shall present the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself. And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it

within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat on the east; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

The procedure of the atonement services Aaron performed are set forth in order beginning with verse eleven. "And Aaron . . . shall make atonement for himself." The offering which Aaron made was first a sin-offering which he made for himself and for his family. The supreme moment of the rituals on the Day of Atonement came at the time when Aaron had made the sacrifice and was prepared to enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil.

The furniture in the Most Holy Place was the ark of the covenant. The ark was covered with a lid, also of pure gold with two cherubim, where the presence of God dwelt symbolically. The ark contained the tablets of stone bearing the Decalogue, an urn holding manna gathered in the wilderness of Sin, and the rod of Aaron that budded. A golden altar for burning incense was the only other piece of furniture. (Heb. 4:5.)

Aaron took a censer of coals of fire from the altar; and with a handful of finely beaten incense (spices), he burnt the incense upon the golden altar before the ark of the covenant so that the cloud of the incense smoke might cover the mercy-seat that was over the testimony, lest Aaron should die. The offering of incense symbolized the offering of prayer to God. (Rev. 5:8.)

It is assumed, as a matter of course, when the incense offering was finished, the high priest must necessarily return to the altar for the blood of the bullock which had been sacrificed there. "With his finger upon the mercy-seat . . . shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times."

The Sin Offering for Israel (Lev. 16:15-19)

Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did

with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat: and he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins: and so shall he do for the tent of meeting, that dwelleth with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. And there shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he goeth in to make atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before Jehovah, and make atonement for it, and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the children of Israel.

The following ritual followed precisely the same pattern as the offering of the bullock that Aaron made for his own sins and his family. The goat, on which the lot of the sin-offering fell, was sacrificed; and with its blood, Aaron made an offering of its blood upon the mercy-seat 'because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins.'

A warning was given that no man other than Aaron should be in the tent of meeting when he went in to make atonement in the holy place for his personal sins, the sins of his family and for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. The order precluded any one of the priests being present in the tent of meeting when Aaron passed into the Most Holy Place.

The ritual which Aaron performed next was the "special cleansing and hallowing" of the altar which stood before the tent of meeting. Aaron took of the blood of the bullock to make atonement for the altar by placing the blood upon the horns of the altar, and seven times he sprinkled blood upon the altar to cleanse and to hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people.

Departure of the People's Sins (Lev. 16:20-22)

And when he hath made an end of atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

The precise procedure that Aaron next followed his stated thusly: "And when he hath made an end of atoning for the holy place, and the tent of meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat." This was the goat upon which the lot of Azazel had fallen. Aaron then laid his hands upon the head of the goat and confessed over it the sins of the people. Aaron was acting in behalf of the congregation of Israel which included him. The sins of the people, so to speak, were placed upon the head of the goat to be carried away.

A man was standing nearby charged with the responsibility to lead the goat away from the camp of the Israelites into some remote area of the wilderness. We should keep in mind that both of the goats served as sin offering. The first was offered upon the altar before the tent of meeting, and the second goat bore the sins of the people outside the camp where it would surely perish in the hostile desert in the presence of its natural enemies.

We may wonder what meaning that the strange services on the Day of Atonement could possibly have for modern day Christians. The scriptures offer ample reasons. In the first place, fasting was strictly observed upon the Day of Atonement. Each person severely afflicted his body, totally abstaining from food, drink, and activities of all kinds. Jesus, you will remember, was criticized because he and his disciples were not given to the practice of fasting, though the disciples did observe the fast on the Day of Atonement. None but a

wicked Hebrew would have failed

to do so. The apostle Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service." (Rom. 12:1.) The Christian's afflictions of his body is part of his daily Christian services

requiring discipline at all seasons.

The Hebrew writer reminds us "apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) The author of Hebrews reminds us that the high priest entered alone, "once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:7.) "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year." (Heb. 10:3.) The Day of Atonement was like renewing a promissory note renewed year by year. The sins of the people were rolled forward year by year. God remembered their sins year by year and required the high priest, his household, and the children of Israel to appear before him once a year to make atonement

for their sins. In contrast, Christ is our atonement, and "through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9:12.) Christ is indeed, our perfect burnt offering, our sin offering, our trespass offering, and our peace offering, and our passover.

The Day of Atonement was followed five days later on Tisri 15 by the Feast of Tabernacles. This was a season of rejoicing and continued for seven days. Its observance was commanded in the Mosaic law: "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month is the feast of the tabernacles for seven days unto Jehovah." (Lev. 23:34.) The period was marked by processions, joy, and singing of hymns. There should be no less joy in the hearts of Christians who have the opportunity each Lord's day for communion with our Saviour who made the supreme atonement for our sins and entered the heavenly sanctuary to bring his own blood into the presence of God. (Heb. 10:19-29.)

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Christians are under no obligation to observe any special day of fasting since no such day is set forth in the New Testament. Christians are obligated to live dedicated lives of service to God. The apostle Paul commanded in the Roman letter: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service." (Rom. 12:1.)

2. Throughout all the generations of mankind, the need for each person to confess his sins to God has been an imperative without exception and God will accept no less. The great heroes of the Bible were sometimes weak and often erring. But their strength was greater than their weakness because they confessed their sins and were freely forgiven.

3. The saviour of mankind is a living saviour who ever stands in our stead in the presence of God interceding in our behalf for the forgiveness of our sins.

4. All of the people of Israel were ordered once a year to observe a day of fasting on Tisri 10 afflicting their souls and confessing their sins to God. Any soul who refused to respect this day was cut off from his people. There is no reason to think that God requires of Christians anything less than a strict obedience to his commands as set forth in the New Testament.

5. Christ became our willing scapegoat and bore our sins upon his person as he was led to Calvary to die for our sins.

6. Christ was, likewise, our sin offering who offered his blood for our sins.

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 Yom Kippur?
How long did the fast on the Day of Atonement last?

What was the penalty for dishonoring this most holy day?

What is meant by the expression that a remembrance is made of sins year by year?

Were other fast days required of the Israelites?

Name the other fast days and the occasion for each.

Golden Text

What is the primary message of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

Why is a knowledge of the Mosaic law necessary to understand the Epistle to the Hebrews?

Describe what a complete alienation from God would be like.

Confessions of Sins

What month and day did the Day of the Atonement fall on?

Who officiated on this most solemn and holy day?

What was the purpose of the burnt offering?

Explain the reasons underlying the sacrifices of the two he-goats on the Day of Atonement.

Atonement for the House of Aaron

Why was it necessary for Aaron to offer first sacrifices for himself?

What was the supreme moment of all the rituals on this day?

Describe the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat.

The Sin Offering for Israel

Did any of the other priests accompany Aaron when he entered the tent of meeting with the blood of the sacrifices?

What special cleansing did Aaron bestow upon the altar?

Departure of the Peoples' Sins

Why was the scapegoat led out into the wilderness?

Explain how Christ is our atonement for the sins we commit day by day.

Lesson IX—March 3, 1974

LAWS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lesson Text

Lev. 19: 9-18, 32-37

9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am Jehovah your God.

11 Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another.

12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of thy God: I am Jehovah.

13 Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind; but thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah.

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I am Jehovah.

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

18 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.

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 Jehovah.

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 Egypt: I am Jehovah your God.

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

36 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.

37 And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all mine ordinances, and do them: I am Jehovah.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."* (Luke 6:31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Amos 8:4-8.

Daily Bible Readings

February 25. M.....	Laws of the Feasts (Lev. 23:26-38)
February 26. T.....	Laws Touching Vows (Lev. 27:1-8)
February 27. W.....	Laws Regarding Cities of Refuge (Num. 35:9-21)
February 28. T.....	Laws for the Poor and Afflicted (Lev. 19:9-14)
March 1. F.....	Laws Respecting God (Lev. 27:30-33)
March 2. S.....	Laws Regarding Property (Mal. 3:8-12)
March 3. S.....	Judgment on the Unjust (Amos 8:4-8)

TIME.—Probably 1490 B.C.

PLACE.—Sinai desert.

PERSONS.—Moses and the children of Israel.

Introduction

Justice is the keynote of this lesson involving what is right in the presence of God and man. In the law of Moses, the splitting of law into ceremonial and moral has no warrant in the Scriptures. The law of Moses called for its sphere the whole of life—not only the inward but also the outward life. The Israelites never distinguished the difference between a natural moral responsibility such as, "Thou shalt not steal" and a statutory law such as, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." Right and wrong were not separated entirely by reason, nor by general custom, but by the revealed will of God which was always the Mosaic law. Morals had a legal character.

Justice as prescribed in the law included the fair dealing between man, the distributive justice which gave to each his own; public justice defined the function of the community in defining and enforcing the duties and the rights of the individual; and that form of justice whose task it was to define personal morals and personal integrity of character. What ever the law of Moses prescribed, it set forth that the life, honor, and property of another should be as dear to a man as his own. The world judges a religion by the lives of those who profess it—a tree is known by the fruit it bears.

Solicitude for the poor is broadly expressed in the law of Moses, and more so in the teachings of Christ and his disciples. The law contem-

plated a people living chiefly on the land. The poor people are marked with special concern in the law. The law is set forth in great compassion by Moses: "For the poor will never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying. Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land." (Deut. 15:11.)

How the righteous Job fulfilled this law is ideally described: "Because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless also, that had none to help him. ... I was an eye to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the needy: and the cause of him that I knew not I searched out." (Job 29:12-15.) And again, Job catalogs his charities: "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widows to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof (Nay, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father . . .) if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or that the needy had no covering . . . then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." (Job 31:16-22.)

This lesson also addresses moral commandments against stealing, lying, swearing, withholding wages, cursing the deaf, hampering the blind, talebearing, hating a brother, dishonoring the aged, wronging the sojourner, the use of unjust weights in trade and others.

The Golden Text

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. (Luke 6:31.)

This commandment of Jesus is

called the Golden Rule. Jesus said of this commandment: "For this is the law and the prophets." (Matt. 7:12.) We are to understand that

the very heartbeat of the law and prophets is summed up in this commandment. Love does not seek a neighbor's hurt; the whole content of the law, therefore, is love.

We may sometimes receive the impression that Jesus is echoing the law of Moses, for example: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah." (Lev. 19:18.) But this is not so; Jesus gave a broader base to this commandment in defining one's neighbor in the parable of

the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25ff.)

Out of the Golden Rule comes then the universal respect for mankind. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is the most comprehensive commandment in the law of Moses, and the Israelites also understood it in this respect. The apostle Paul phrases the thought thusly: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. 13:10.)

The Text Explained

Concern for the Poor

(Lev. 19:9, 10)

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am Jehovah your God.

This chapter from which the lesson text is taken contains a miscellany of laws which reflect the Decalogue. The holiness of the behaviour of the people toward God and man, is set forth in laws mostly concerned with daily life: the cultivation of the land, matters of justice, buying and selling, personal relations with neighbors, and so forth.

The law placed a never failing concern for the poor and distressed in the land whether he be a sojourner or home born. The law respecting harvest regulations stated that the workers should not "wholly reap the corners" of the fields, which is to say that some of the grain should be left standing for the poor. Furthermore, clean-up workers could not gather up the heads of grain dropped by the reapers: and a sheaf that had been overlooked in the field could not be reclaimed. (Deut. 24:19.) This belonged to the poor of the land.

Naomi sent Ruth to glean in the field of her husband's kinsman, Boaz. Boaz who learned Naomi's identity said to the reapers: "Let her glean even among the sheaves.

. . . And also pull out some for her from the bundles, and leave it, and let her glean." (Ruth 2:16.) A man's first obligation was to support the dependent members of his

own family and to relieve the necessities of his kinsfolk and the people in the community.

A similar law applied to the vineyards. The law forbade the stripping bare of the vineyard to recover the grapes that may have been overlooked in the first gathering. And the picking up of any fallen grapes was positively forbidden, for the distressed and stranger were given a share in the harvest and gathering.

You will recall that the disciples of Jesus passing through a grain field on a sabbath pulled off heads of grain to eat which the law allowed: "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest eat of grapes thy fill at thy own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel. When thou comest into thy neighbor's standing grain, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand." (Deut 23:24, 25.)

The responsibility of the Israelite in his deeds of charity is best expressed in almsgiving. The beggar who waited at the Beautiful Gate rightfully expected alms should be given him from the hands of Peter and John. (Acts 3:1-10.) The giving of alms was an act of righteousness be the gift money or a kind word. Almsgiving and deeds of kindness were equal to all the commandments in the law and required of God in proportion to the love that was in it. Almsgiving in the spirit of love was more than all the sacrifices: "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Jehovah than sacrifice." (Prov. 21:3.) And deeds of loving kindness even more than almsgiving: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap according to kindness." (Hos. 10:12.)

A Respect for Human Rights

(Lev. 19:11, 12)

Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of thy God: I am Jehovah.

These two verses contain a short list of prohibitions in connection with the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." (Ex. 20:15.) The law forbids various kinds of underhand relationships with the people with whom one lives. The prohibition against theft probably meant open robbery against human beings, or stealing money. This and dealing falsely are brought together here under the idea of dishonoring God by disobedience to his commands.

The matter of dealing falsely is set forth in another place: "If any one sin, and commit a trespass against Jehovah, and deal falsely with his neighbor in a matter of deposit, or of bargain, or of robbery, or have oppressed his neighbor, or have found that which was lost, and deal falsely therein, and swear to a lie; in any of all these things. . . ." (Lev. 6:2, 3.) Such behavior was a trespass against God for a person to deal dishonestly in a partnership and to swear that he had not the money claimed from him. A person guilty of such sins could not bring sacrifices to the altar to atone for his sins unless he first recompensed the person whom he had defrauded. Jesus set forth the principle: ". . . leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5:24.)

The words "neither shall ye . . . lie one to another" is cut out of the same cloth as the preceding prohibitions. This concerned money which had been lent that a person denied he had ever received. "Ye shall not swear by my name" is related to the third commandment of the Decalogue. A person who engaged in theft, robbery, and lying twice dishonored and profaned the name of God when he used the name of God as a pretext to mislead the individual whom he had defrauded.

Other Humane Considerations

(Lev. 19:13, 14)

Thou shalt not oppress thy neigh-

bor, nor rob him: the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind; but thou shalt fear thy God: I am Jehovah.

The idea not to oppress one's neighbor was that it was wrong to withhold a laborer's hire, and to rob him meant that in no manner was the man to be defrauded of his rightful wages. This law forbade transactions in which a person with property and physical strength could overpower a weaker person, or who would use his power to his advantage over weak and helpless people.

This law is set forth in broader principles: "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates: in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it." (Deut. 24:14, 15.) This is also a law of compassion. The wages the poor man earned in the day were needed that his children and wife would have bread to eat after the sun went down.

"Thou shalt not curse the deaf" is variously understood. The deaf are specified because they cannot hear. Although they cannot hear, they are human beings. Since the deaf cannot hear what is said about them and be incensed by what is said, a person should be all the more cautious in cursing a person who can both hear and *feel* the insult. There is also the implication that even though a deaf man could not hear oaths of others involving him, they were nonetheless effective. The law forbade the taking advantage of such a person through his handicap. The deaf was not to be ridiculed because he could not hear his assailant and defend himself.

"Thou shalt not put a stumblingblock before the blind" is closely related to the foregoing statement. No measure was to be taken against a helpless person who was in no position to take counter measures. One of the curses Moses spoke to the people of Israel was in regard to this: "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say,

Amen." (Deut. 27:18.) The people were warned to fear God who both heard and saw and nothing is hidden from his knowledge and who will punish every wrong act. And in like manner, every pious Israelite was obligated to be ears for the deaf and eyes for the blind in whatever form the need was fashioned.

Justice (Lev. 19:15, 16)

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I am Jehovah.

The administration of justice must be without respect to persons. In a cause in which a man is a poor man and the other rich, the judges must not favor a poor man in his cause, nor show regard to the other. Instead, the judges must administer impartial justice. The judges must not say that the rich are under obligation to the poor, and we will give judgment in his favor. The reason could also follow that because the rich man is well connected, the judges might not want to cause shame and bring about a miscarriage of justice.

Judges who perverted justice against the poor are denounced by the Old Testament prophets: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire." (Jer. 22:

13.) God's disposition in judgment is always in man's favor. The illustration of this is the following paraphrase of Job 33: 23: If nine hundred and ninety angels give a bad report of man and only one in a thousand gives a favorable account, then God will favor the recommendation of the one. God's justice is first of all man's assurance that God will not use his infinite powers over his creatures without regard to what is right. The character of divine justice is always tempered with mercy. These two attributes of justice and mercy are interwoven throughout the Scriptures like two beautiful threads in a tapestry.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer." The understanding of this statement is that talebearing is a form of merchandise—the carrying of tales as merchandise from one place to another. The persons who delight in sowing discord go about to discover evil which they can communicate to others: "Slanderous men have been in thee to shed blood; and in thee they have eaten upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they have committed lewdness." (Ezek. 22:9.) This is the description of the kind of people who go about seeking to bring ruin against his neighbor even to the cost of his neighbor's life.

Even the judges were warned against believing falsehood: "Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked." (Ex. 23:7.) God will not acquit the judges who accept false testimony and who commit judicial murder. The obligation to always speak the truth and seek the truth and to warn against false witness and slander is at all times emphasized.

Thy Neighbor and You (Lev. 19:17, 18)

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt surely re-buke 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.

There are six hundred and fifteen commandments in the law of Moses. The lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" The lawyer was a scribe, one of the Bible scholars of the time. Jesus immediately answered, first from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:5.) Although the lawyer had not requested it, Jesus spoke the second great commandment from the book of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Lev. 19:18.)

The second law was considered to be the preeminent law governing moral conduct. James wrote: "Howbeit if ye fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,

ye do well." (James 2:8.) Such a love is not only natural but good. A sound morality must make our personal interests equal with the rights of others. And in relation to the foregoing principles set forth in this lesson, two are especially significant. "Let the property of another be as dear to you as your own," and "Let the honor of another be as dear to you as your own" are particular cases of loving your neighbor as thyself.

There is another side to this fundamental law—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." They were not to cherish hatred in their hearts towards their brother. If a man had something against his brother, he was to go and tell him openly what he had against him and reprove him for his misconduct. This is what Jesus advised his disciples to do, "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Matt. 18:15.) This shows a sensitive regard for the feelings and honor of others. But this is one of the most difficult things a person is called upon to do.

Jesus further said: "If he sins against thee seven times in the day, and seven time turns again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17:4.) However, if one rebukes his neighbor and continues to do so, there must be a limit to this when the neighbor violently repulses him even in the presence of the church. Of this, Jesus said: "Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican." (Matt. 18:17.) Lastly, the children of Israel were commanded not to avenge themselves or bear malice against their neighbor, but to love them.

Laws of Respect (Lev. 19:32-37)

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. 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. 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.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head." The "first commandment with promise" is to honor one's parents. They are sources of life for the children and their earliest training which largely shape their children's character and their children's children for generations unborn. The commandment to honor the old man is the reverence for old age. This commandment enjoins a respectful bearing toward the aged person—not to contradict his conversation or sit in his place. This is simply a matter of good manners, and it is also a recognition of our spiritual and intellectual heritage from the past because our religion and culture is inseparably rooted in past ages. The Israelites connected the honor shown old people as reverence for God. The fear of Jehovah is also enjoined. The Mosaic law prescribed the final penalty for an incorrigible son: "And he that curseth his father or mother, shall surely be put to death." (Ex. 21:17.)

The strangers in the land were promised a haven: "And a sojourner shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him: for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt." (Ex. 22:21.) The Hebrews were not to oppress the stranger (non-Israelite) in their land; and if he lived in the land, the stranger would be treated as home-born and loved as a neighbor. They were not to approach him on the ground of being a foreigner, for so had been the Hebrews in Egypt.

As a universal rule, the Mosaic law commanded that no wrong was to be done in the administration of justice, or in social intercourse, and to trade with accurate weights and measures of length and capacity. A dishonest man would have two sets of measure, one for buying and the other for selling. At both ends, the unscrupulous person walked his crooked way. This practice is frequently condemned in the Scriptures: "A just balance and scales are Jehovah's: all the weights of

the bag are his work." (Prov. 16:11.) The person who gave false weights was like the impure judge who undermined social stability.

The summation of all this is stated: "I am Jehovah your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," with the exhortation and

summation to be honest. The people were firmly enjoined to practice the commandments of Jehovah. Justice is required of all and especially was it so of Israel who had suffered a long period of injustice when they sojourned in a land of unfriendly people.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Justice is the keynote of dealing fairly with one's neighbor.

2. Solicitude for the poor is broadly expressed in the Scriptures.

3. The golden rule is a form of distributive justice which gives to each his own rights.

4. The motivation of the golden rule is love for our neighbors.

5. The methods for caring for the poor is stated generally in principle. The methods are left to intelligent planning on the part of those concerned.

6. The poor and the rich were

entitled to live from the land which belongs to God and is a part of his bounty for man.

7. Emphasize the different ways a person can steal from another.

8. The poor, the deaf, and blind are entitled to special concern because of their handicaps.

9. A talebearer robs a person of one of his most precious possessions—his good name.

10. The law emphasized, not only the good we do for our friends, but also the good we ought to do for our enemies.

Questions for Discussion

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

When was a person forbidden to bring a sacrifice to the altar?
How was the name of God dishonored in an act of theft?

Introduction

What may be said about dividing the Mosaic law into moral and ceremonial commandments?

What is meant by "distributive justice"?

What importance is given to the care of poor people in the Mosaic law?

What different things did Job do for poor people?

Golden Text

What is meant by this statement of Jesus that the "law and the prophets" are summed up in the golden rule?
What did Moses say about loving one's neighbor?

How are we to understand Paul's statement that love is fulfilling the law?

How did Jesus add meaning to loving one's neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan?

Concern for the Poor

How does Moses relate the cultivation of land to poor people?

Why were not the corners of the grain fields reaped?

What was Ruth doing in gleaning in the field of Boaz?

Was Boaz related to Ruth in any way?

Could a person lawfully gather grain and gather grapes which belonged to another?

What is a deed of loving kindness?

Respect for Human Rights

In what different ways can one person steal from another?

How could a person steal a deposit which belonged to another person?

Other Humane Considerations

How was withholding a neighbor's hire robbing him?

What advantage was a strong person denied in relation to the poor?

What concern was shown for the sojourner in the land?

What are some reasons for not cursing the deaf?

Why is it wrong to put a stumblingblock in the path of the blind?

Justice

How did the Mosaic law regard the rich and poor in matters of justice?

What attitude do the Scriptures have for the judge who perverts justice?

How would you explain God's justice is tempered with mercy?

How is talebearing a form of merchandising?

What warning was given judges for believing lies?

Thy Neighbor and You

How many commandments are in the law of Moses?

What does James describe as the royal law?

What should a person do if his brother sins against him?

Laws of Respect

What are some of the reasons why we should respect elderly people?

How were the sojourners in the land shown respect?

How would a dishonest man use a double standard with weights and measures?

Who is compared to an impure judge?

Lesson X—March 10, 1974

RELIGION IN THE HOME

Lesson Text

Deut. 6: 4, 5; 11: 18-25

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah:

5 And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.

19 And ye shall teach them your children, talking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

20 And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates;

21 That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah swore unto your fathers to give them, as

the days of the heavens above the earth.

22 For if ye shall diligently keep all this commandment which I command you, to do it, to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

23 Then will Jehovah drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves.

24 Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness, and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the hinder sea shall be your border.

25 There shall no man be able to stand before you: Jehovah your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath spoken unto you.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord.*” (Col. 3:20.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—PROV. 22:1-6.

March 4. M.....	Respect for Parents (Lev. 19:9-18)
March 5. T.....	Respect for the Bible (Deut. 6:1-9)
March 6. W.....	Respect for God's Laws (Deut. 11:18-25)
March 7. T.....	Blessings of Home Life (Prov. 17:1-8)
March 8. F.....	Influence of Christian Home (2 Tim. 1:3-6)
March 9. S.....	Training in the Home (Eph. 6:1-9)
March 10. S.....	Timothy's Early Life (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

TIME.—1451 B.C.

PLACE.—Mount Sinai.

PERSONS.—God, Moses, and the children of Israel.

Introduction

Religion in the home of the Israelites may be understood better when we realize the home is the oldest institution of man and was ordained by God. An understanding of religion in the Hebrew household grows out of our understanding the character of such a home, and this grows out of the commandments in the law of Moses concerning the home. Marriage was regarded, not only as normal, but a divine ordinance: “And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God

said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (Gen. 1:27, 28.) The prophet, Isaiah, said that God “formed the earth and made it . . . and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited.” (Isa. 45:18.) And God declared: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.” (Gen. 2:18.)

An old rabbinic saying surmises: “One who has no wife remains without good, and without a helper, and without a joy, and without a blessing, and without atonement.” Another said “he is not a whole man” because the two of them to-

gether were called "man." (Gen. 5:1.) Others still say that the unmarried man diminishes the likeness of God, for "in the image of God created he man." (Gen. 1:27.) And, thereafter, man is spoken of in the plural: "And God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Gen. 1:28.)

The sanctity of the home was secured from the sixth day of creation: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24.) The Pharisees came on an occasion to ask Jesus a hard question: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" (Mark 10:2.) Jesus reminded the Pharisees that because of the hardness of their hearts, Moses allowed a man "to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away." Jesus then reminded his interrogators that God made man and woman "one flesh" in the beginning; and he concluded with words as lasting as time: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Mark 10:9.) An old Jewish saying sums up the pious Hebrew's feelings: "Even the altar weeps tears when a man puts away his wife."

A father was expected to support his children during their early years. The father owed certain obligations to his sons. He must circumcise him and redeem him. (Gen. 17:11; Num. 18:15, 16.) The father taught his son a trade. An old Hebrew saying was: "A man who does not teach his son a trade teaches him robbery." The girls were brought up in domestic occupations and were thus prepared to assume their duties in the home. Parental responsibility was a sacred thing with the people of Israel. Marriages were arranged by the parents. It was the duty of a father to get his son a wife, and to get a husband for his daughter as soon as she was old enough to be wedded.

Among all the commandments, "the weightiest of the weighty" was

filial piety: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land." (Ex. 20:12.) In this verse, the father is named first; but in another place: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father." (Lev. 19:3.) It is clear here that both parents were to be honored.

The dominant note to the life of the children of Israel, in every aspect, is religion, or at least religious observance. Religion pervaded the worship in the tent of meeting in the desert, later in the temple and in the synagogue, but more especially in the home. In many respects, the home was the most important center of religion. The great passover commemoration, for instance, was mainly a home festival. The passover holidays were eagerly anticipated. The memorial played an immensely important role in the binding ties of home and nation of the Israelites. Even today, many a Jew has yielded to the disintegrating influences of modern culture, but he still finds the memories of old family associations around the festal board strong enough to draw him back to his family.

Home has been throughout history where the affections of the Hebrew people is mainly centered and where the strength and life of the children of Israel are strongest. The beauty of the Hebrew home has always struck the outsider, which is primarily due to its religious influence. The Mosaic law consecrates and hallows the home. Every Friday evening, which ushers in the sabbath, is a treasured family occasion. The children and the parents gather around the table when the sabbath lamp is lighted. It is no exaggeration to say that the happiest hours of a Hebrew's life are those spent within the family circle. The family ties among the Hebrews is stronger than those of any other people in the world, past and present, and are continually strengthened by early association and continuing paternal love.

The Golden Text

Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. (Col. 3:20.)

The Scriptures are abundant and clear that obedience to parents is of the greatest importance. An unruly

son was hateful to the people of Israel. A rebellious and stubborn son could be brought to the elders and charged by the parents with being a drunkard and a glutton and who refused to hear their voice. The

penalty in the law stipulated: "All the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones: so shall thou put away the evil from the midst of thee." (Deut. 21:21.) The principle of filial obedience is set forth in numerous places throughout the Scriptures: "My son, keep the commandment of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." (Prov. 6:20.) The Christian attitude is best exemplified in the growing up of Jesus. When Jesus was twelve years of age, Luke describes his growing up in the following words: "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them." (Luke 2:51.) The importance of parental respect may be summed up in the fact that no church, no community, no nation can rise any higher than the character and the moral quality of the homes. We have listened too long to certain educational circles in this nation who deplore physical punishment for unruly children. The deplorable breakdown of parental authority in this nation is

traceable to the doors of those who have deliberately brought it about through their teaching. Solomon advised: "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die." (Prov. 23:13.)

The obedience which children are required to give to their parents is not contrary to conscience and to right. Paul makes this clear: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." (Eph. 6:1.) And on the other hand, the admonition was given to the fathers—"provoke not your children to wrath." (Eph. 6:4.) One point is clear at this place, the obedience the parents may rightfully expect from their children is total. It may not be governed by the child's wish, but by the very fact that he is the child of his parents. If the child must render such obedience, the parents should be on double guard not to make unreasonable demands on their children lest they be humiliated in the presence of others, or have their spirits crushed.

The Text Explained

Hear, O Israel

(Deut. 6:4, 5)

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The importance of early training is a constant theme in the Old Testament Scripture. In the words of the Talmud, which contains the essence of Judaism: "If we do not keep our children to religion when they are young, we shall not certainly be able to do so in later years."

As a matter of fact, the religious training of a Hebrew child began as soon as he could speak. Among the first words a child began to speak were: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one"; or the words: "Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob." (Deut. 33:4.) The obligations of the parents were to teach the law to their children in all the religious activities of their parents.

The verses of our lesson text are of especial importance since they form the universal prayer of Israel. The recitation of the *Shema* (meaning *hear* is undoubtedly one of the

most significant features of the religion of the Israelites. These were certainly the first words a child heard, not only from the time of his birth, but to the end of his life. A Hebrew in his daily prayers bore witness to his belief that "God is one"; and with his last breath, he would make this confession of his faith. The *Shema* (Hear, O Israel), not only uttered the unity of God, but expressed a hope and belief in the ultimate universal kingdom of God.

The significance of Deuteronomy 6:4 is alluded to in the New Testament: "And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he answered them well, asked him, What commandment is first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark 12:28-30.)

The expression to love God "with all thy heart" is an oft used word in Deuteronomy. The Hebrew meaning is that the *heart* is the seat of one's mind and will with all the at-

tendant human emotions. The *soul* (Hebrew, *nephesh*) is the principle of life. At the time of creation of man, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Gen. 2:7.) And the words that thou shalt love God "with all thy might" means that one is to love God with all of his strength—his emotional, spiritual, moral and material forces. It is clear that love so defined made it the practical basis of daily religion.

God's love for his people Israel is a frequent topic in the Old Testament, especially in the prophets from the seventh century on. Hosea said: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." (Hos. 11:1.) Love is the power that holds and will not let go. Love is the power which shall reclaim the erring, bringing them to repentance, and renewing their love. The peculiar love of God for Israel is the ground of his choice of Israel to be their God and they his people, and God required the love of his people in turn.

Admonitions of God (Deut. 11:18-21)

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, talking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens above the earth.

The important moments in the life of an Israelite from birth to death were all invested with a religious sanction and a religious significance. Every Hebrew child grew up in an atmosphere crowded with memories, symbols, and instructions bound up in the past of the religious history of the race. This is pointed up on the evening of the passover supper. The youngest child present would ask his father, as a part of the ceremony, the

meaning of the occasion, which introduced the reply of the father, as he recounted the incidents of Israel's last night in Egypt. The history of the system of Hebrew education is a long and fascinating one. To them belongs the honor for having produced the world's oldest book of practical wisdom—the Book of Proverbs.

For the purpose of our lesson, we need to repeat that the training of every child which continues through old age and to death's door was the recitation of, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." A consequence of God's revelation of his law at Mount Sinai was of the utmost significance in all the endeavors of Israel to educate the whole people in its religion. Not only was Israel convinced that the scriptures revealed the character and will of God, they believed that the spiritual, moral, and material welfare of the people depended upon their conformity to the divine will expressed in the law of Moses.

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul." This statement is bound up with the promise: "that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah swore unto your fathers to give them." Israel was promised they would never perish from the land if they kept the words of Jehovah. The admonition was to reflect on the words in their hearts and minds and to obey them willingly.

The law specifies a commandment which has provoked curiosity—the wearing of "frontlets" and "phylacteries": "and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes." A large body of information has been handed down in Israel's history concerning this law. The "hand" phylactery and the frontlet was a small black box made of the skin of a "clean animal." Fastened to each box underneath was a piece of thick leather, and this was sewn to the box with threads made from the veins of clean animals. To each box, there were also fastened long leather straps, likewise made from the skins of clean animals. Each box contained the following passages written upon parchment: Ex-

odus 13:1-10, 11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21.

The arm phylactery was fastened on the inner part of the left arm just above the elbow. The strap was wrapped seven times around the arm and three times around the middle finger of the left hand. The head piece was laid in the middle of the forehead, the strap going around the head, and the ends of the straps falling over the shoulders in front. These were worn on week days, especially in the daily prayers; but not on sabbath and holy days. Such were the "signs" named the "frontlets" and "phylacteries." (Ex. 13:9, 10.)

The importance of the scriptures carried in the small leather containers is bound up in the fact that they were the very essence of the law. The scripture in Exodus details the saving of the firstborn sons of all the Hebrews, the institution of the passover supper, and the promises of a land flowing with milk and honey to be their home. (Ex. 13:1-10, 11-16.)

The first scripture begins with Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel." Another commandment followed close upon this one: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." (Deut. 6:4, 7.) The third section of scripture in the *Shema* beginning with Deuteronomy 11:13 promised the people of Israel rain and harvest wine if they would only hearken to his commandments; they were warned in converse about serving other gods. (Deut. 11:13-17.)

Religious observances are often called the externals of religion. Reformers, from time to time rebel against what they term doctrine, and have sometimes endeavoured to abolish them altogether, thinking thus to make religion purely spiritual. The Quakers have done this in rejecting all historical forms, but they have created an even more rigid form of worship. Today in the church, we have misguided teachers who speak disparagingly of the church of Christ, and the four steps of salvation: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. We need to take a lesson here from the commandments of the law and the externals of the devotions and worship of Israel. As a simple matter of fact, the whole sphere of

practical religion, positive and negative, is contained in doctrine and observance. Just as it was true in the life of the Hebrew people, Christians are held together in sound doctrine, fellowship, in visible acts such as baptism, and communion on the Lord's day. Paul admonished the Galatian Christians: "If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:9.) The lasting unity of the church is only possible when its beliefs and practices embody the doctrine of the New Testament.

Following the statement to bind for a sign upon the hand and a frontlet between the eyes we read: "And ye shall teach them your children, talking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The following words command our attention: "And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thy house, and upon thy gates." (See also Deut. 6:9.) On a piece of parchment made of the skin of a clean animal were written parts of the *Shema*, namely, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21, in twenty-two lines, and enclosed in a wooden tube and fixed on the right hand door-post of the house. A faithful Israelite would touch the object and kiss the hand that did so each time in entering and upon leaving the home.

The promise for obedience is couched in the statement: "that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens above the earth." The promise to give the land to Israel forever as long as the days moved under the heavens was given conditionally. This is precluded by the words, "that your days may be numbered." If Israel kept diligently the commandments of Jehovah and taught them diligently throughout the generations, then God would keep his promises to them.

The Rewards of Obedience (Deut. 11:22-25)

For if ye shall diligently keep all this commandment which I com-

mand you, to do it, to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; then will Jehovah drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness, and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the hinder sea shall be your border. There shall no man be able to stand before you: Jehovah your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath spoken unto you.

In the concluding verses of the lesson text, God sets forward four conditions upon which his promises are dependent: First, that Israel was to keep all the commandments which he had commanded them; second, that they were to love Jehovah; third, the people were to walk in all his ways; and fourth, the children of Israel were to cleave to him. Israel was charged to love God with their hearts; they were to walk in his ways by imitating his attributes of mercy and loving kindness; and they were to cleave to the Lord in all their actions in steadfast allegiance.

The attendant promise upon such a character of obedience followed: "Then will Jehovah drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall dispossess nations greater

and mightier than yourselves." For if they adhered faithfully to the Lord, then he would drive out before them all the people that dwelt in the land in the length and breadth of it. "Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours." From the wilderness where they were then, to Lebanon, and beyond to the Euphrates River; and even unto the hinder sea, the Mediterranean. They would be so strong that the Canaanites would be filled with fear and terror of them. "There shall no man be able to stand before you."

We have been studying parental responsibilities in the home. Here the instructions in the law of Moses began. Every commandment in the law was holy and was enjoined upon Israel. The fulfillment of the promises of God was attendant to the obedience of "the lightest of the light commandments": the prohibition of taking the mother bird from the nest with the nestlings or the eggs (Deut. 22:6ff); and "the weightiest of the weighty" was the injunction to honor one's parents. (Ex. 20:6.) To be cut off from God and denounced by his people because of filial impiety, incest, or the neglect of a fundamental service, such as circumcision, was feared as the most hateful doom. And the honor the children owed their parents presupposed a worthiness on the part of the parents to receive such high respect.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The home, which is the oldest institution on earth, was ordained of God in the beginning.

2. Marriage is a divine ordinance and the home is a sacred institution, and God commanded the first husband and wife to multiply and replenish the earth.

3. Jesus taught that from the beginning God never intended that a man should give his wife a bill of divorce and send her away except for fornication.

4. Parental responsibility to the children and filial respect and honor to the parents were the weightiest of the weighty laws of God for the people of Israel.

5. No church, no community, no nation can rise any higher than the moral quality of the home.

6. A parent has the right to expect total obedience from his chil-

dren, and the parents should be on guard not to make unreasonable demands on their children lest they damage them.

7. If we hold our children to religion when they are young, they will hold on to religion when they are grown.

8. Actually, the religious training of a child begins at birth because everything he sees and hears issues from the character of the home.

9. The Christian's responsibility of teaching the children about God should be no less than the responsibility of the people of Israel, and even greater because of the Christian's increased knowledge of the Scriptures.

10. Parents are under the weightiest responsibility to deserve the respect they demand from their children.

Questions for Discussion

Introduction

Why is it so important that a man shall have a wife?
 Explain that marriage is both a divine ordinance and a normal relation between a man and a woman.
 What is meant by the expression that a husband and wife shall become one flesh?
 Why did Moses allow a man to put his wife away by giving her a bill of divorce according to Jesus?
 What responsibilities did a Hebrew father owe his son and daughter?
 What was the "weightiest of the weighty" commandments of the law?
 Describe the characteristics of a Hebrew home.

The Golden Text

What does the law of Moses say about an unruly son?
 What was the attitude of the boy Jesus to Mary and Joseph while he was growing up?
 Do you believe in physical punishment for children when they are disobedient?
 What does it mean for children to obey their parents in the Lord?
 What warning is given to fathers in correcting their children?

Hear, O Israel

What is the Shema?
 What were the words that a child heard from the time of his birth until the day of his death?

Where did Jesus find the first and most important law in the Old Testament?
 Describe the nature of the heart and soul as it is used in the Mosaic law.
 Is love an important teaching in the Old Testament?

Admonitions of God

Describe the importance of religion in the homes of the people of Israel.
 Why is it important to teach constantly both the young and old in the matters of religion?
 What is a *frontlet*? a *phylactery*?
 What was their importance in the training of the children of Israel?
 Do the externals of religion have any real importance?
 What did Paul say about perverting the gospel?
 What importance does the Mosaic law attach to the teaching of children?
 What rewards were promised to the children of Israel for obedience to God?

The Rewards of Obedience

What were the four conditions upon which the promises of God were dependent?
 What did God say about the nations mightier and greater than the people of Israel?
 What lands did God promise to the Israelites provided they were obedient?
 What was the "lightest of the light" commandments?
 What were the sins that cut a man away from God and brought separation from his people?

Lesson XI—March 17, 1974

RIGHT DECISIONS

Lesson Text

Deut. 11: 8 12, 26-32

8 Therefore shall ye keep all the commandment which I command thee this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go over to possess it;

9 And that ye may prolong your days in the land, which Jehovah sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land flowing with milk and honey.

10 For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs;

11 But the land, whither ye go over to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven,

12 A land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse:

27 The blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God, which I command you this day;

28 And the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

29 And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal.

30 Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?

31 For ye are to pass over the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Jehovah your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell

therein.

32 And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah."* (Josh. 24: 15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Deut. 11:1-5.

March 11.	M.....	The Choice of Moses (Heb. 11:23-31)
March 12.	T.....	Ruth's Choice (Ruth 1:11-18)
March 13.	W.....	Solomon's Choice (1 Kings 3:4-14)
March 14.	T.....	Israel's Choice (Josh. 24:14-19)
March 15.	F.....	Choosing the Right Way (Deut. 11:26-32)
March 16.	S.....	God Chooses His People (1 Pet. 2:1-9)
March 17.	S.....	We Must Choose God (Isa. 55:1-13)

TIME.—1451 B.C.

PLACES.—East of the Jordan in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

PERSONS.—Moses and the people of Israel.

Introduction

The book of Deuteronomy may likely present somewhat of a problem to the Bible reader who lacks an understanding of the fifth book of the Mosaic law. Deuteronomy is actually three addresses Moses delivered to the congregation of Israel. The first address of Moses surveys the providential guidance of Israel from the time they departed Sinai until they reached the east bank of the Jordan River.

The second address begins with chapter five as Moses recounts the Ten Commandments. The body of Moses' speech contains numerous and sundry laws and regulations. The address continues through chapter twenty-eight. The third address is an exhortation to Israel encouraging the people to accept the covenant which is actually a choice between life and death: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse: therefore choose life, that thou mayest live." (Deut. 30:19.) At the time Moses delivered the addresses a generation of time had passed since Israel ate the first passover supper in Egypt. Israel was standing on the threshold of the promised land. What Moses said seems to be a repetition of much which is related in the first books of Mosaic law. The title of the book. Deuteronomy, means the "repeated law," the second telling of the law. However, Deuteronomy contains not so much a recapitulation of the things related in Gene-

sis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as it is the summary of the whole law and wisdom of Israel.

The setting for the present lesson is forty years after Moses and Aaron had crossed the Red Sea with the children of Israel. They were planning to enter Canaan from the region east of the Jordan River. The king of Edom had refused passage to Israel through Edom along the king's highway compelling the Israelite tribes to circle his country. (Num. 20:14ff.) Likewise, unwilling to join battle with the Moab nation, Moses and Israel circled their territory to the east and crossed the River Arnon. They found themselves at the border of the Amorite kingdom of Sihon whom the Israelites defeated in battle. (Num. 21:1 Off.) Then followed the defeat of Og, the giant king of Bashan, north of the Jabbok. (Num. 21:33.) These were the first triumphs of the Israelite army. The people come into possession of lands of their own on the approaches to the Jordan River. The kingdoms of Edom, Moab, and Ammon were left unchallenged for the time being.

Moses spoke to the whole congregation of Israel beyond the Jordan in the Arabah. This was the name given to the land in which the Jordan River and the Dead Sea are located which extends southward to the east arm of the Red Sea which forms the present day gulf of Agabah. The specific place where

Moses addressed the people was somewhere in the plains of Moab east of the Dead Sea. (Deut. 1:1-5.)

Moses proclaimed on this occasion the faith that Israel was obligated to give to God who had delivered them from slavery. Moses proclaimed to the people the law which was the embodiment of God's will for a nation whom he had accepted to be his "chosen people." Moses would have the people to know they may only live securely in the

Promised Land provided they honor their covenant relationships with an all absorbing loyalty to God—a covenant relationship they had dishonored often in the desert because of disobedience. Moses warns them of the consequences of unfaithfulness and assures them that peace and safety will be theirs in the land if they will but keep the covenant because God will fight for them and protect them from all their enemies.

The Golden Text

But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah. (Josh. 24:15.)

Joshua became the leader of Israel after the death of Moses at the end of the wilderness sojourn. Joshua and Israel conquered and occupied the regions on both sides of the Jordan. Following the example of Moses, Joshua before his death, addressed the people. The address delivered with solemnity and dignity reviewed their history from Abraham to their mighty deliverance from the Egyptians. Joshua recited the victories over the Amorites east of the Jordan and the conquest of the Canaanites and the other inhabitants of Canaan. Joshua reminded the people that they occupied land whereon they had not labored and cities they had not built. The people gathered in olive yards and vineyards they had not planted.

Joshua admonished Israel: "Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River [Eu-

phrates], and in Egypt; serve ye Jehovah." (Josh. 24:14.) And in this last charge of Joshua to the people, he uttered these thrilling words: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah." (Josh. 24:15.) There could be no compromise. Joshua reminds the people that God demands undivided allegiance. (Josh. 24:19.)

Elijah issued a similar challenge to Israel immediately before his contest with the prophets of Baal: "How long go ye limping between two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (1 Kings 18:21.) A spirited note of defiance rings through these courageous words of Joshua's faith in God. Though every man should fall away from God, Joshua and his family would walk in the covenant.

The Text Explained

Condition of the Covenant

(Deut. 11:8, 9)

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandment which I command thee this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go over to possess it; and that ye may prolong your days in the land, which Jehovah sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Chapter eleven begins with the condition of the promise that God would settle the people and secure them in the land of Canaan: "Therefore thou shalt love Jehovah thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his ordinances, and

his commandments, always." (Deut. 1:1.) Moses reminded Israel of their relations with God, who both chastens and rewards, from the time they left Egypt to the very day he spoke to them. (Deut 11:2-4.)

The foregoing statements of Moses were intended to impress upon the people that they should keep the law. And this knowledge was to impel them to keep the law "that ye may be strong," not only that they might go into the land, but also that they might live long in it. This is less a prediction and promise from God than it is a commandment: "When ye pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye shall drive out all the in-

habitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images, and demolish all their high places: and ye shall take possession of the land, and dwell therein; for unto you have I given the land to possess it." (Num. 33:51-53.)

The condition of their prolonging their days in the land flowing with milk and honey would be entirely dependent upon their obedience to God's commandments. (Deut. 6:3.) Hebrew wisdom was fundamentally a moral and ethical law spelled out in the Mosaic law, and the first dictum is, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." (Prov. 1:7.) And their failure to honor their covenant relationship was countered with the statement: "And the anger of Jehovah shall be kindled against you, and he shall shut up the heavens, so that there shall be no rain, and the land shall not yield its fruit; and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which Jehovah giveth you." (Deut. 11:17.)

The Promised Land (Deut. 11:10-12)

For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land, whither ye go over to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven, a land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

"It, is not as the land of Egypt." Moses adduces an additional reason for the obedience of Israel founded upon the peculiar nature of the land. Canaan was a land of fertility whose harvest in its seasons was watered by the rains from heaven in their seasons. Egypt is described as a land "where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot." The Nile River flows along a crooked path through Egypt for six hundred miles of the Sahara Desert moving north to the Mediterranean Sea under a copper sun shining in a cobalt blue sky. Rains almost never fall and almost every foot of the land in Egypt was

watered by man who drew the water from the Nile in one fashion or another. The Nile River from the equator as the crow flies is 2,450 miles. The actual length of the Nile including the numerous twists and turns in its tortuous route is about four thousand miles making it the longest river in the world.

The land of ancient Egypt to the sea comprised an area of cultivable land of 13,300 square miles, about the size of Massachusetts. Only the northern region of the Nile Delta lies in reach of the winter rains of the Mediterranean. Rains are so rare in southern Egypt that it is looked upon as a miracle. Often years go by with no rain at all. The land of Egypt, when the seasons were normal, would be flooded by the Nile. The Nile would begin to rise on the Upper Nile around the end of May and continue to rise until September. As the waters receded, the people planted their land and impounded the water in reservoirs; while the grains and vegetables were growing, every drop of water was brought to the land.

There were indeed water wheels in Egypt that were powered with foot pedals. Probably all that we are to understand by the expression to water "with thy foot," is that irrigation was done mainly by man power.

When Jacob and his sons were settled in Egypt, Joseph settled his people in Goshen—"in the best of the land." (Gen. 47:11.) Even the best of the land in Egypt was inferior to Canaan. Moses told the people the land where they were going was a "land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven." In this land crops would grow through God's natural bounty, and not by the endless toil of man. The farmer lives close to nature and waits and prays to God for rain in its seasons.

Canaan was portrayed as the land "which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah are always upon it." The condition is set forth by Moses that the enjoyment of the land "flowing with milk and honey" would be conditional on their obedience. Whereas God cares for all lands (Job 38:26), he promised to care especially for Israel in the land where he would settle them. And he would constantly observe the

deeds of the inhabitants, withholding or sending rains in their seasons. (Deut. 11:14.) In case of disobedience, God threatened "to shut up the heavens, so that there shall be no rain." (Deut. 11:17.)

A Blessing and a Curse (Deut. 11:26-28)

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God, which I command you this day; and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

"I set before you this day a blessing and a curse." It is consistently affirmed in the Scriptures that God has taught man what is right and what is wrong and for him to choose between the two alternatives of right and wrong. God did so in the Garden with Adam and likewise with Noah. (Gen. 9.) A similar warning is found in another place: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." (Deut. 30:15.) Moses further declared: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death." (Deut. 30:19.)

That man is capable of choosing between right and wrong and carrying that decision into action is set forth in the Scriptures. God made man unrestrained and free; and being acquainted with good things as well as evil, he has adequate knowledge of both honorable and shameful conduct. Man thinking clearly about right and wrong and all that has to do with virtue and vice, he may, as a matter of nature, accept the good and reject the evil. To man alone is this alternative presented, with all of the consequences for good or bad, for blessing or cursing.

God since the beginning has made his will known through the spoken word. It was by divine fiat that "God said, Let there be light." (Gen. 1:3.) "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made. . . . For he snake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:6, 9.) A word is not a mere articulate sound; it is a thing and does things. A blessing or a curse is

not the expression of a good or bad wish which has no power. Once spoken it is beyond the speaker's power to revoke it or reverse it. When blind Jacob was deceived by Rebecca's ruse and Jacob's falsehood, he could not deny the blessings he had bestowed upon Jacob. He could only create another second best blessing for his son, Esau. (Gen. 27.) All of God's words are similarly effective. As the rain and snow fall from heaven, the Lord said, and do not return until after they have refreshed the earth, "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." (Isa. 55:11.)

"A blessing and a curse" refers to the blessings and the curses which were to be pronounced on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The blessing was to be for obedience and the curse for failing to heed. "To go after other gods" compares idol worship to the denial of the whole covenant between the Lord and Israel.

The Blessing and The Curse (Deut. 11:29-32)

And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? For ye are to pass over the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Jehovah your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day.

After entering Canaan and following the conquest of the land, the people were enjoined to set symbolically the "blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal." The two low lying mountains (2500 feet elevation) are in the heart of the country that was once Canaan. The fertile valley of Shechem separates the two mountains. Mount Gerizim is located south, and mount Ebal north of the valley. The blessing was to be proclaimed upon mount Gerizim and

the curse was to be uttered from mount Ebal. The small well-watered and fertile valley between is about 1600 feet in breadth. The mountains to this day are especially marked by their barrenness.

The ceremony for that day lay still in the future. Moses set forth to order the location of the tribes. Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin would assemble over against Mount Gerizim for the blessing. Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali would assemble over against Ebal for the reading of the curses. The curses and the blessings are detailed in chapters twenty-seven and twenty-eight of Deuteronomy.

The circumstances of what happened are detailed in the book of Joshua. The conquering army of Israel crossed the Jordan before the city of Jericho. Following victorious battles over the Canaanites, Joshua led the people to the site of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal of unhewn stones with the law written upon the stones, so the people should know their duties and their rights. Both were set forth in the law.

The people with their elders, officers, and judges, assembled in front of the two mountains with half of the people on one side and half on the other. The priests and the Levites were in between with the ark of the covenant. The sojourner along with the home born were all in the assembly. Moses had commanded the people in the desert to read the blessing and curse of the law once they were entered into Canaan: "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not be-

fore all the assembly of Israel." (Josh. 8:35.)

The pronouncement of the curse of the law was a terrifying experience for the people. No neutral ground existed and no compromise was possible. A Christian with similar obligations cannot play in the backyard of the devil and worship God in the front yard. Jesus said as much: "For he that is not against us is for us." (Mark 9:40.) And "He that is not with me is against me." (Luke 11:23.)

The counterpart of the "blessing and curse" is included in the warnings of John to his contemporaries: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." (Rev. 22: 18, 19.) And the nearest meaning of the "curse" in the New Testament is to be discovered in Paul's statement to the Galatians: "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." (Gal. 1:8.)

There are only the "two ways" of the Bible: one is the broad way enticing the heedless travelers to destruction in the world to come. The other is the high road of service to man and devotion to God—a road that is straitened and narrow that leads to somewhere. (Matt. 7:13, 14.) The way back is clear, and the journey ahead may be traveled with confidence.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Deuteronomy is composed of three speeches of Moses charging the people that their success in all their lives and future generations would be dependent upon their remaining faithful to God's instructions.

2. Each day a person's life is a day of decision—some important and some are not. To go with God or to live one's life apart from him is a decision that every person must make. The words of Joshua thrill

us: "Choose you this day."

3. God's bountiful blessings are available to all people who fear him and keep his commandments. The good things of life are soured and even contaminated because of the failure to honor and to obey God.

4. Life teaches one lesson no person shall ever escape. The misuse of the gifts of God will bring hurt and sorrow. The blessings of God

grow naturally out of the goodness of the heart just as a seed will take root in good soil and grow. The law of sowing and reaping for good

and for bad is inexorable.

5. God's blessings are beautifully set forth in the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

State briefly the content of the first speech of Moses. The second and the third addresses.

What is the meaning of the word Deuteronomy?

How many years had passed since Moses and the Israelites left Egypt?

Why would you say the kings of Edom refused passage to the people of Israel through his country?

Why was it important for Israel to obey the laws of the covenant?

Golden Text

Who became the leader of the people of Israel after the death of Moses?

What choice did Joshua charge the people to make?

At what time in Joshua's life did he make the proposition?

What kind of decision did Elijah call upon the people of Israel to make?

Condition of the Covenant

What were the conditions set forth for the people of Israel to settle and to enjoy the Promised Land?

What relationship did the Mosaic law bear to the people's remaining strong?

What commandments were directed toward idol worship?

Explain why the "fear of the Lord" is the beginning of all wisdom.

The Promised Land

Explain what it means to "water with thy foot."

Describe the land of Egypt.

Why was Canaan described as a land "flowing with milk and honey"?

What did God threaten to do in case of disobedience?

Why is nature such a good teacher of God's providential care for mankind?

A Blessing and a Curse

Explain the meaning of the "blessing" and the "curse" in the lesson text.

Does man have the freedom to make the choice between the good and the evil?

Does a "blessing" or a "curse" have a power in ordinary language?

The Blessing and the Curse

Where was the blessing of the law to be read once the people were in Canaan?

Where was the curse to be read?

Was Moses present for the reading of the blessing and the curse?

What did Joshua write on the stones of the altar?

Is there a counterpart to the "blessing" and the "curse" in the New Testament?

Discuss the two ways of the Bible.

Lesson XII—March 24, 1974

REBELLION IN ISRAEL

Lesson Text

Num. 21: 1-9

1 And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive.

2 And Israel vowed a vow unto Jehovah, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

3 And Jehovah hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and the name of the place was called Hormah.

4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt

to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

7 And the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, because we have spoken against Jehovah, and against thee; pray unto Jehovah, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live.

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the standard: and it came to pass, that, if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. . . ." (John 3:14.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING. — Num. 20:10-13.

- March 18. M..... Israel Complains (Num. 20:1-5)
 March 19. T..... Israel Is Punishing for Complaining (Num. 21:16)
 March 20. W..... Land Lost Because of Disobedience (Deut. 28:47-68)
 March 21. T..... Destiny of the Disobedient (Ezek. 18:19-32)
 March 22. F..... Reward of Obedience (Deut. 11:8-12)
 March 23. S..... Israel's Disobedience a Warning to Us (Heb. 4:1-13)
 March 24. S..... "Beware Lest Thou Forget Jehovah" (Deut. 8:11-20)

TIME. — 1452 B.C.

PLACES. — Hormah in the Negeb, Mount Hor, Edom, and the Arabah.

PERSONS. — King Arad, people of Israel, and Moses.

Introduction

The aftermath of the report of the twelve spies was of tragic import. The position of the people seemed hopeless. Egypt lay behind them and the land of Canaan with its hostile people and walled cities lay before the people. The desert had been their home for a year. Because the Israelite people refused to heed the admonition of Caleb and Joshua to go in and possess the land, God turned them back into the inhospitable desert to move from one encampment to another for forty years.

The ordeals of Moses never ceased. The people angrily complained, "Would that we had died in Egypt," (Num. 14:2.) They talked electing a leader other than Moses to lead them back to Egypt. (Num. 14:4.) The wrath of God was turned against Israel. How fickle is man! A group of Israelites, contrary to Moses' advice, attempted to storm the land of Canaan through an attack on the Amalekites and Canaanites, and were driven back in defeat into the desert. (Num. 14:40-45.)

The word "rebellion" is the word to describe the people of Israel during the troubled years they moved in the Sinai desert. The next major rebellion against Moses erupted when Korah and a company of other Levites challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron to govern. "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy . . . wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah." (Num. 16:3.) The rebellion came to an end when "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up." (Num. 26:10.) The day after Korah and his company met

their death under the avenging wrath of God, the people again complained and accused Moses with being responsible for the death of Their brethren: "Ye have killed the people of Jehovah." (Num. 16:41.) As visual proof of God's choice of the priestly office, Moses called for twelve rods—one from each tribe—to be brought and deposited in the tent of meeting; and Aaron's rod budded. (Num. 17:1-11.) In this way Aaron's appointment as high priest was confirmed in the presence of all the people.

As we say, if it is not one thing, it is another. Moses seemed to have lived his days in never ending crises. When the people lacked water, they again murmured against Moses. On that occasion, God commanded Moses: "Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water." (Num. 20:8.) Moses' meekness and patience broke under the stress and he angrily charged the people: "Hear now, ye rebels; shall we bring forth water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10.) Moses smote the rock twice and water came forth in great abundance. We could say, at this place, that Moses rebelled against God because he disobeyed a simple command. However harsh we may think the penalty, Moses was denied the privilege to go into Canaan because he had not sanctified God on that occasion. The cost of the rebellions of the Israelite people was great and painful. Not only did they fall one by one to be laid in desert graves, they brought immediate and tragic consequence upon themselves because of their rebellions.

The Golden Text

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of God be lifted up. . . . (John 3:14.)

The fate of the wilderness wanderings is detailed in Hebrews: "For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?" (Heb. 3:16, 17.)

In a similar context, Paul describes the wilderness trek: "Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were for our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." (1 Cor. 10:5, 6.) In this connection, the apostle warned: "Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents." (1 Cor. 10:9.) The setting for our golden text and the statement of Paul is to be found in Israel's anger against Moses because of inadequate food and water. They encountered a plague of venomous serpents whose bite killed many of them. The Lord ordered Moses to set up a bronze figure of a serpent on a pole that those who were bitten might look upon in faith and live.

The golden text is related in the

conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus who was puzzled about the meaning of the words: "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:2.) In one day a great many patients enter and leave a doctor's office. Perhaps one will inquire about the nature of the medicine that will bring about the cure, and even then may not fully understand. There is at the heart of the Christian that element which still remains a mystery beyond human understanding, which, nevertheless, must be accepted; this was Nicodemus' problem. Because he could not understand, Nicodemus could not believe.

Jesus used the example of the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. It was not the brazen serpent who healed them. The healing power lay not in the brazen serpent which was just a sign; but in God to whom the people turned their thoughts and directed their faith. "And so must the Son of man be lifted up." What this meant, Nicodemus could not have known, but he would remember when Jesus was raised on a cross. The whole episode is related to eternal life. And we believe that in believing that Christ was both lifted to the cross and into heaven that the promise of eternal life shall be ours. (John 8:28; Acts 2:33; Phil. 2:9.)

The Text Explained

Victory in the Desert (Num. 21:1-3)

And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive. And Israel vowed a vow unto Jehovah, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And Jehovah hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and the name of the place was called Hormah.

Had the Israelite people heeded the advice of Caleb and Joshua, the army of Israel could have entered into the heart of Canaan from the

south. Because they did not, they were turned back into the wilderness to pass a generation in the desert wilderness. With the passing of that generation, a new generation of Hebrews had grown to maturity in the desert. (The reader should at this juncture look at a Bible map of Canaan at the time of the conquest.) Joshua, chose to enter Canaan from the east beyond the Jordan. To do this, Joshua was compelled to lead the people away from the southern gateway to Canaan.

The shortest route was for the Israelite people to go around the southern shores of the Dead Sea, then go through Edom territory along the King's highway northward to the plains of Moab. Moses sent word from Kadesh to the king

of Moab to let "thy brother" pass through Edom. The king of Edom answered with an angry threat that he would come out against them with a sword if they entered his land. (Num. 20:17, 18.)

Moses and the people turned southeastern from Kadesh. On the approaches to Edom, Aaron died and was buried at Mount Hor. (Num. 20:22-29.) The location of Mount Hor is disputed among biblical scholars. While still in the vicinity of Mount Hor, a Canaanite king of Arad who dwelt in the South (the region south of Canaan proper in the Negeb wilderness) attacked Israel and took some of the people captive. The place where the battle was fought was at a place called Hormah. The geographical location of Hormah is uncertain. Hormah (a place of this name) was located about thirteen miles south of Beersheba, a sizeable distance from the main encampment at Kadesh. The fact that Moses turned South from Kadesh to go around Edom left Hormah to the north, creates the problem; however, a great body of people would by necessity be spread over a wide area. The Israelites whom the king of Arad attacked may well have been the rear position of the Israelites.

The people were able to make a counter attack. "And Israel vowed a vow unto Jehovah, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people unto my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." The word Hormah means to place under a ban. We are to understand that the import of such a vow meant that the victory would belong to God and that God, the real victor, would be the owner of the booty of war. The significance of a vow was that the conditions of a vow once made had to be honored. "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt observe and do; according as thou hast vowed unto Jehovah thy God." (Deut. 23:23.)

The wise king reflected on a word once promised: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools." (Eccles. 5:4.) One of Israel's judges, Jephthah, made a foolish vow to offer as a sacrifice for a victory over Israel's foes whatever met him from the doors of his house

upon his return. His heart was crushed when he was first met by his virgin daughter. (Judges 11:20ff.)

Jesus addressed himself to the honoring of the vow and profaning of it. (This is a special emphasis to be made at this place in our lesson.) Moses commanded: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of thy God." (Lev. 19:12.) Jesus said, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet." And Jesus went on to add: "But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one." (Matt. 5:34, 37.) Jesus is not here discounting the law of Moses. He is simply saying—tell the truth. Let your "no" mean "no" and your "yes" be "yes." Why should a man take a vow and prefix it with an oath before he is believed?

But to return briefly to Israel in the desert, King Arad and the Canaanites were defeated; and the people of Israel made good their promise to Jehovah.

The Plague of Serpents (Num. 21:4-6)

And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

After the people turned toward the Red Sea to encompass the land of Edom, the people were discouraged. The road to the promised land was becoming longer and more arduous. The desert was as inhospitable on that day as when they first left Egypt. And their complaint against Moses was another replay of what he had often heard—"There is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." We can well imagine the ordeal of the people as they trudged wearily through the

low lying plain of the Arabah which runs between steep mountains from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Red Sea. The land could furnish but little food for the people although the country was not completely destitute of vegetation. The wadys became rushing torrents with the winter rain and some vegetation grew along the stream beds that dry up with the coming of the spring. We must understand, however, the land is harsh, filled with loose sandy soil, drifts of granite, and other stones. Sandstorms are often occurrences from the winds coming from the Red Sea. And so it was that the want of food and the need for water caused another rebellion.

In consequence of their rebellion, the people were punished by a plague of fiery serpents. Many of the people died who were bitten by the snakes. Such snakes infest the Arabah to this day which are greatly dreaded by the Bedouins who live in the desert. One account described an encounter with perhaps the kind of serpent that attacked the Israelites. "In the afternoon they brought us a very mottled snake of large size, marked with fiery red spots and wavy stripes which belonged to the most poisonous species, as the formation of its teeth plainly showed." (Keil and Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*.)

The People Repent (Num. 21:7)

And the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, because we have spoken against Jehovah, and against thee; pray unto Jehovah, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

We have in a previous lesson studied the meaning of sin. Sin is an offense against God. The duty which God requires of man is obedience to his will. Sin is any lack of conformity to the law of God, or a transgression of it. The worst sin a person can commit is to despise the holiness of God. When David caused the ark of the covenant to be returned to Jerusalem which had been seized by the Philistines, a man by the name of Uzzah "put forth his hand to the ark of God" to steady it upon the moving cart. "And the anger of Jehovah was

kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and he died by the ark of God." (2 Sam. 6:6,7.)

When the people confessed their sins, they asked Moses to pray for them. The worst possible consequence of sin is its growing power over the sinner. Seemingly insignificant sins grow into larger ones. What if God allowed man to sin, and once he did, would never forgive him? And, furthermore, no man can confine the effects of his sins to himself. The Bible abounds in examples of the consequences that the sins of the few brought upon the many. Korah and his company led the rebellion against the authority of Moses: "And Jehovah spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." (Num. 16:20.) Not only do the many suffer for the one; but what is even worse, a sinner leads others into sin. Doubtless many who were bitten by the fiery serpents had no voice in the complaining.

"And Moses prayed for the people." An old Hebrew saying is, "Prayer is dearer to God than all good works and than all sacrifices." That God hears and answers prayers is set forth in a thousand places in the Scriptures: "Jehovah is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." (Psalm 145:18.) Man may be moved to repentance by punishment or warning from God, by the experiences of the consequences of sin in this world, and fear of worse consequences in the world to come. This is repentance induced by fear. But the repentance that springs from the love of God is from a noble motive.

The Serpent of Brass (Num. 21:8-10)

And Jehovah said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon the standard: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked unto the serpent of brass, he lived.

The Lord helped the people on this occasion; however, the help

which came from God depended upon their faith. At the command of God, Moses made a brazen serpent and put it upon a standard, or a pole, so it would be in plain view of all the people. All of the people suffering from the bite of the fiery serpents who looked upon the brazen serpent with the faith that God would heal them, lived. And we may assume those who would not, died.

The brazen serpent which Moses made was kept by the people and

taken by them into Canaan and kept until the reign of Hezekiah, who broke in pieces "the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." (2 Kings 18:4.)

But for our lesson, just as the Israelites had to turn their eyes to the brazen serpent to be cured of the poison bite, we must look with faith upon the Son of God lifted upon the cross, to be saved from the snare of the old serpent, from sin and death.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. We should learn from the experience of Moses. A problem is to be solved. We have the choice of being impaled on the crosses which life presents to us, or we may make ladders out of our crosses to surmount the obstacles along life's journey.

2. Man is in an act of rebellion when he willfully disobeys constituted law and becomes subject to its penalties. The rebellions of the people of Israel culminated not only in open rebellion, but in their loss of faith in God's power to deliver them into the promised land.

3. We can make trial of the Lord by desiring even things that are right and lawful in the wrong way with the wrong spirit. The people

of Israel sinned against God even in their thirst and hunger.

4. A Christian's word should be his bond. Truthfulness is a virtue that a Christian must wholly possess. Jesus discounted the need of an oath as prescribed in the Mosaic law.

5. The obedience which is acceptable to God is to conform to the laws. Sin is transgression of the law. The inexorable law of sowing and reaping is inflexibly discharged by nature in both the spiritual and natural realms.

6. The worst possible consequence of sin is its growing power over the sinner. Not only do the wicked suffer, but often the innocent as well.

Questions for Discussion

What is the text?

What is the golden text?

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Why were the people of Israel in such despair after the return of the twelve spies?

How did the Israelites react after God turned them back into the desert?

What was the sin of Korah and his company?

How were Korah and his company punished?

What charge did the people bring against Moses about Korah?

What use did Aaron make of twelve green sticks (rods)?

What privilege was denied Moses for his act of disobedience?

Golden Text

How long did Israel wander in the desert?

What lesson did the apostle Paul draw from the wilderness experiences of Israel?

How were the people healed from the venom of the snakes?

Explain the comparison that Jesus made between the serpent and himself.

Victory In the Desert

Did Joshua enter the land of Canaan from the east beyond the Jordan River?

Who was buried in the region of Mount Hor?

What did the king of Moab threaten to do to the people of Israel?

What is the importance of the place Horeb?

In what respect was a vow binding upon an Israelite?

What foolish vow did Jephthah make?

How did Jesus handle the matter of the taking of a vow?

Plague of Serpents

Describe the desert region of the Arabian.

Do snakes infest the desert region of Sinai in the present day?

What brought the plague of the serpents upon the people?

What was the extent of the harm of the plague of the serpents?

The People Repent

What is the meaning of sin?

What is one of the worst sins a person can commit? Why?

Who was Uzzah and what was his sin?

How do the many suffer for the sins of a few people?

The Serpent of Brass

Were the people advised to look upon the brass serpent to be healed?

What did Jesus say about the brass serpent?

What eventually happened to the brass serpent?

Lesson XIII—March 31, 1974

REPORT OF THE SPIES

Lesson Text

Num. 13: 17-33

17 And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way by the South, and go up into the hill-country:

18 And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many;

19 And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in strongholds;

20 And what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes.

21 So they went up, and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, to the entrance of Hamath.

22 And they went up by the South, and came unto Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

23 And they came unto the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it upon a staff between two; *they brought* also of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

24 That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

25 And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days.

26 And they went and came to

Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us; and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

28 Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

29 Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South: and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill-country; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.

30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said. Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

31 But the men that went up with him said. We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying. The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature.

33 And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."* (1 John 5: 4.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Num. 13:1-16.

March 25. M..... Spies Sent Out (Num. 13:17-24)

March 26. T..... Spies Return and Report (Num. 13:25-33)

March 27. W..... Advice of Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:1-10)

March 28. T. Moses' Prayer (Num. 14:13-19)

March 29. F. God's Answer

March 30. S..... Israel Excluded Because of Unbelief (Heb. 4:1-7)

March 31. S..... A Warning to Us (Psalm 95:1-11)

TIME.—About 1450 B.C.

PLACES.—Wilderness of Paran and the land of Canaan.

PERSONS.—Moses, Aaron, Caleb, Joshua, and the twelve spies.

Introduction

The Israelites stayed for around a year in encampment in the desert of Sinai. This period was a time of great importance for the unifying of Israel following their escape from Egypt. It was at Sinai that Moses met with Jehovah in the mountain to receive the Decalogue culminating in the solemn agreement for Israel to become the covenant people of God, a nation of people to be known as the "Chosen People of God."

During the year of the Sinai encampment, Moses communicated with God receiving directions for constructing the tent of meeting, the tabernacle. (Ex. 26-27; 35-38.) The tabernacle was an elaborate, beautiful and costly structure with materials consisting of silver, gold, and linen. The ark of the covenant containing the Decalogue on tablets of stone, the urn of manna, and the rod of Aaron that budded was put in the Most Holy Place. (Ex. 25ff.)

During the sojourn, Israel was numbered and organized into tribal groups with fixed places for the encampment of each tribe in the environs of the tent of meeting. The tribe of Levi was numbered and divided into family groups. Each levitical family was assigned duties or responsibilities. The priesthood was, likewise, organized for their multiple services in the tent of meeting. (Num. 1-5.)

The fourth book of Moses is named *Numbers*; the title was fixed in the Latin Vulgate Version of the Scriptures. A national census was made at Mount Sinai of Israel with 600,000 fighting men included in the numbering of what probably included a nation of between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 persons, hence the name of the fourth book of Moses.

Numbers includes far more information than the simple numbering of the people; it details the movements of Israel with Mount Sinai behind them and the promised land a little more than two hundred miles to the north of them. For a whole generation, the fourth book detailing the journey of the Israelites could be described as a tale of tragic errors. This multi-

tude of people by family and tribe was organized for march. Jehovah directed Moses to choose seventy elders of Israel to assist him in leading the people. (Num. 11:16, 17.)

As history so often tells the story, an altogether common human error is to expect the easy journey, when the rigors of the road ahead are more formidable than could have been imagined. The American frontiersman of the last century experienced the dangers of the great American desert on their way to the golden land of California. Many were unprepared for the ordeals and perished along the way. Israel who had been delivered from their recent enslavement were little prepared for the stern trials in the desert that would test their souls. The Mosaic law set up the guidelines for a stern discipline that demanded obedience on the part of the people to survive and to prevail.

About a year had passed when the people of Israel broke camp at the sign of the rising of the cloud from the tabernacle which was the signal to move in the direction of Canaan. Moses had changed from the role of a shepherd in a quiet and vast desert, to become the leader of a people that had been fed and worked as slaves in Egypt, where they worked and waited for the bread brought to them. In the desert, the people wept and complained and charged Moses: "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, we did eat in Egypt for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all save this manna to look upon." (Num. 11:5, 6.)

Another crisis arose when Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses for marrying a Cushite woman. The anger of Jehovah was aroused against them, and Miriam was shut outside the camp for a week with leprosy because of her rebellion. (Num. 12:1-15.) The character of Moses was graphically brought out at this time: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men

that were upon the face of earth." (Num. 12:3.)

Moses was such a man who did not fight for status with his peers. His main concern was to be a faithful servant of God to better serve the people, and Moses waited for God to justify him against his accusers. We remember the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5.) And Jesus said of himself "for I am meek and lowly." (Matt. 11:29.) We recall the commanding presence of Jesus among the money changers, before Pilate and King Herod, and his matchless dignity upon the cross. Indeed, Moses was sorely tried in the initial months he became the saviour of Israel; and these harassments fore-

shadowed the grueling responsibilities that lay ahead.

Moses made intercessory prayer for Miriam's illness to be healed. Aaron repented of his sin challenging the authority of Moses. After seven days had passed with Miriam shut outside the camp, Israel resumed their march north in the Sinai desert leaving Hazeroth for the wilderness of Paran. On the northern border of the wilderness of Paran is Kadesh Barnea, some forty miles south of Beersheba. Kadesh was the southern gateway into Canaan. Kadesh Barnea served as headquarters for the Israelite tribes for thirty-eight years of their wilderness experience. (Deut. 2:14.)

The Golden Text

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:4.)

The national tragedy of the Israelite tribes grew out of their lack of faith in God to keep his promise to settle them in Canaan. What is this faith which overcomes the world? "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world." (1 John 5:4.) The Christian faith affirms the deepest truths of man's nature in that he finds the deepest meaning and the peace passing all understanding, when he submits to the will of God. The world is man's battlefield. It is here that Satan assaults man through evil from within and without.

The human situation is full of things to take away our faith. We are faced with sorrows beyond human comprehension and stalked

by dark and terrible tragedy. We are met with failures and robbed of life's brightest promises. After Satan failed when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, "he departed from him for a season." (Luke 4:13.) Satan who had the kingdoms of the world to offer Jesus, had the world to slander Jesus and to hang him to the cross. He was branded as a winebibber and a glutton. A friend betrayed him and the other deserted him. And finally the world tried to erase him from the earth. The world which did its sordid worst to overcome the saviour of mankind failed.

The Christian is made to believe that no matter whatever incarnation evil may take, that he will be able to overcome the world. The way of faith is not always the easy way, but it is the only right way.

The Text Explained

Sending: of the Spies
(Num. 13:17-20)

And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way by the South, and go up into the hill-country; and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in strongholds; and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether

there is wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes.

From the wilderness of Paran, Moses chose twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. A man from each of the twelve tribes was chosen. The spies were instructed to survey the land itself, to note the fortifications, and to observe the people. The spies performed well the tasks which Moses assigned to them. They returned with enthusiastic reports. It was indeed a

prominent land of goodness flowing with milk and honey. They brought back with them fruits from the valley of Eshcol, grapes, pomegranates, and figs gathered along the way which was proof of the bounty of the land.

The twelve spies all agreed indeed that it was not only a beautiful land, but they all brought back glowing reports of its habitable qualities. Although the twelve agreed the land was all they hoped for, they disagreed about the possibility of taking the land. The majority were frightened by the high walled cities and the fierce looking people who lived in the land. Ten of the spies were fearful and unwilling to risk an attack on the Canaanites, in spite of the fact that Joshua urged the people to go up to possess the land assured with God's help they could do so. The majority, however, prevailed and Israel was turned back into the wilderness.

May we examine the text for significant information. What were the qualities of the men chosen to spy out the land? As a matter of fact, they were extraordinary men: "Send thou men . . . every one a prince among them." (Num. 13:2.) All were distinguished men of rank noted for their courage and intelligence, especially suited to the mission to observe the land of Canaan and its inhabitants. It is interesting to note that only the names of Joshua and Caleb are mentioned and the reason is obvious. Joshua and Caleb were worthy men deserving to be remembered.

Moses instructed the spies: "Get you up this way by the South, and go up into the hill-country." Travelers today in Palestine observe that upon reaching Hebron and Beer-sheba in the south that at this place the transition is made from the hill country and the cultivable land to the country which fades away into the desert of sand intermixed with desert, shrubs and grass fitted only for desert nomads and pastoral life.

The twelve spies were instructed to take notes on the people in the land: Whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. The Canaanites manufactured purple dye. The Canaanites of Syria discovered the shellfish from which a dye of a deep crimson

color was derived. This became the most famous and coveted textile dye of the ancient world. (Acts 16:14.) The original meaning of Canaan was probably "land of the purple."

The Canaanite people included the Amalekites, whom we have met in a previous lesson in southern Palestine, the Hittites, the Jebusites who dwelt in the hill country, and the children of Anak. The Jebusites were probably Canaanites who lived in the city of Jebus (Jerusalem); the Hittites, of Gentile origin, came from Asia Minor, the Amorites were the survivors of an invasion of people from the Arabian Desert. The Canaanites were indeed a formidable people.

The spies were also instructed to observe, "what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein." Moses admonished the men to be of good courage and to bring back fruit from the land.

The Spies in Canaan (Num. 13:21-24)

So they went up, and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, to the entrance of Hamath. And they went up by the South, and came unto Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) And they came unto the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it upon a staff between two; they brought also of the pomegranates, and of the figs. That place was called the valley of Eshcol, because one cluster of grapes, and they bare Israel cut down from thence.

"So they went up, and spied out the land" from the wilderness of Zin beyond Hebron into the hill country in the region of present day Jerusalem, to Rehob which was near Dan in northern Canaan. This means that the land was searched out from Negeb in the south beyond the well-watered plains of Jordan to the slopes of Mount Hermon in the north.

The twelve spies indeed saw the people in the land, and among them were the children of Anak. The more fearful of the spies said, "We saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who came of the Nephilim: and we

were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Num. 13:33.) The origin of the children of Anak is involved in obscurity. They were a very tall people. Living in the vicinity of Hebron were three other tribes—Ahi-man, Sheshai and Talmi. "Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt." The Greeks knew of this city of Zoan in Egypt near the mouth of the Nile built in the second millennium B.C., which indicates the antiquity of Hebron.

In the valley of Eshcol, north of Hebron, the twelve spies "cut one cluster of grapes." Even to this day the grapes of Hebron are especially celebrated. As one passes north to Jerusalem he travels through the valley with hills on both sides, containing the largest and finest grapes that grow, and pomegranates, figs and other fruits in great profusion. The valley was called Eshcol (cluster of grapes) from the cluster of grapes cut down by the spies and carried upon a staff between two men.

The Return of the Spies (Num. 13:25-29)

And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us; and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified, and very great; and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South: and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill-country; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.

In forty days the spies returned to the camp into the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh, and they reported the great fertility of the land and showed them the fruit of the land. Their description about the land

was, it "floweth with milk and honey." In a previous lesson it was brought out that a fertile land enjoying the rain in its season produces grass for cattle on a thousand hills teeming with flowers, producing milk and butter from the herds and honey from the hive.

The people who lived in the land were named previously. The people of Canaan whose name was given to the country as a whole lived by the sea and along the side of the Jordan. They may probably have been descendants of the biblical Horites though nothing about their origin can be definitely ascertained. The Canaanites who dwelt in the land were described as being strong and the "cities very fortified and very great."

The word *howbeit* is translated from the Hebrew word *ephes* which denotes human impossibility. This one word revealed the unpardonable offense of the majority of the spies. Had they simply said that the people of the country were very mighty and their cities were fortified with high surrounding walls, they would have merely stated the facts and thus discharged their duty as prescribed by Moses. But in this word *ephes* (impossibility) in describing the mighty people guarding the frontiers, they gave their own verdict that it was beyond Israel's power to take the land.

Israel Rebels (Num. 13:30-33)

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

The people were terrified. If

they could not stand up against the Canaanites on an open battlefield, what hopes would they have in conquering them in their fortified cities? Caleb intervened to offer his judgment: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Only Caleb voices this confidence; however, Joshua must have joined with Caleb in the minority opinion (Num. 14:6) and was standing by his side when Caleb spoke. The spies countered Caleb and Joshua because of the fierceness of the Canaanites, and they said: "We are not able to go up against the people."

Then the ten fearful spies committed an inexcusable offense, "And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out." We are to understand that the Hebrew word means more than "to spread"; it means they "invented a lie" concerning the land. The people were thrown into a state of panic bringing terror and despair into their hearts.

The spies seemingly changed their glowing report of the good land from which they had returned. They described it as a land "that eateth up the inhabitants thereof." They now tell the people the land

devours its inhabitants and that it does not produce sufficient food to sustain the people. The impression was left that the country was a graveyard for ordinary people. The land was such that only very strong people physically could manage to live in the land. The spies went so far as to say that the Nephilim, who were the sons of Anak, were men of superhuman nature and strength.

The people of Israel wept all that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses: "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would that we had died in this wilderness!" (Num. 14:2.) God was angered with Israel who had brought them with mighty works up to that day. He turned them back into the desert to wander a year for each day of the time the spies had been gone. And because Caleb "had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully," God promised to bring him and Joshua into the land. But Israel, all above twenty years of age, would perish in the wilderness. Forty years later the sons of the Hebrew slaves, tempered with the disciplines of the desert, with hearts of faith and great courage like Joshua and Caleb, would take the land.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. A common human error is the failure of taking into consideration the rigors of the road ahead. The gifts of God are not free will offerings. The gifts must be appropriated with heart and hands.

2. Life will often hand us challenges for which we may think ourselves ill prepared. Moses so thought, but he became one of the earth's greatest leaders of men. Moses led a people from slavery to a special relationship with God.

3. Life is filled with endless obstacles and minor and major crises. We need not look for our trials and crosses. Life will present them at times in most unexpected ways. Here we find the great testing grounds of character: "I slept and dreamed that life was beauty; I woke and found that life is duty."

4. Man's greatest problems grow

out of a lack of faith or a loss of faith. Moses knew better than anyone his weaknesses, but God knew his strength. God led Moses to believe in himself.

5. Every man of the twelve spies was a prince in Israel, but ten of them failed in the greatest test of faith and character. Their failure was to see themselves small and the enemies of God large.

6. Too often our fears and misgivings loom as a great truth in our minds, and we commit a trespass against our neighbor when we mislead him to share our fears and anxieties.

7. God is not slack to keep his promises as men count slackness. The seasons come in succession, and God will work out his purposes in due course of human events.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What three important things happened during the one year encampment before Mount Sinai?
 How many fighting men were counted among the Israelites?
 Describe the change of Moses from a quiet shepherd to a mighty leader of men.
 What caused a difference between Miriam, Aaron, and Moses?
 Explain the meaning of the word *meek* as set forth in our lesson.

Golden Text

What does it mean to overcome the world?
 What circumstances in life are always present to take away our faith?
 How did the world slander Jesus?

The Sending of the Spies

Describe the habitable qualities of the promised land?

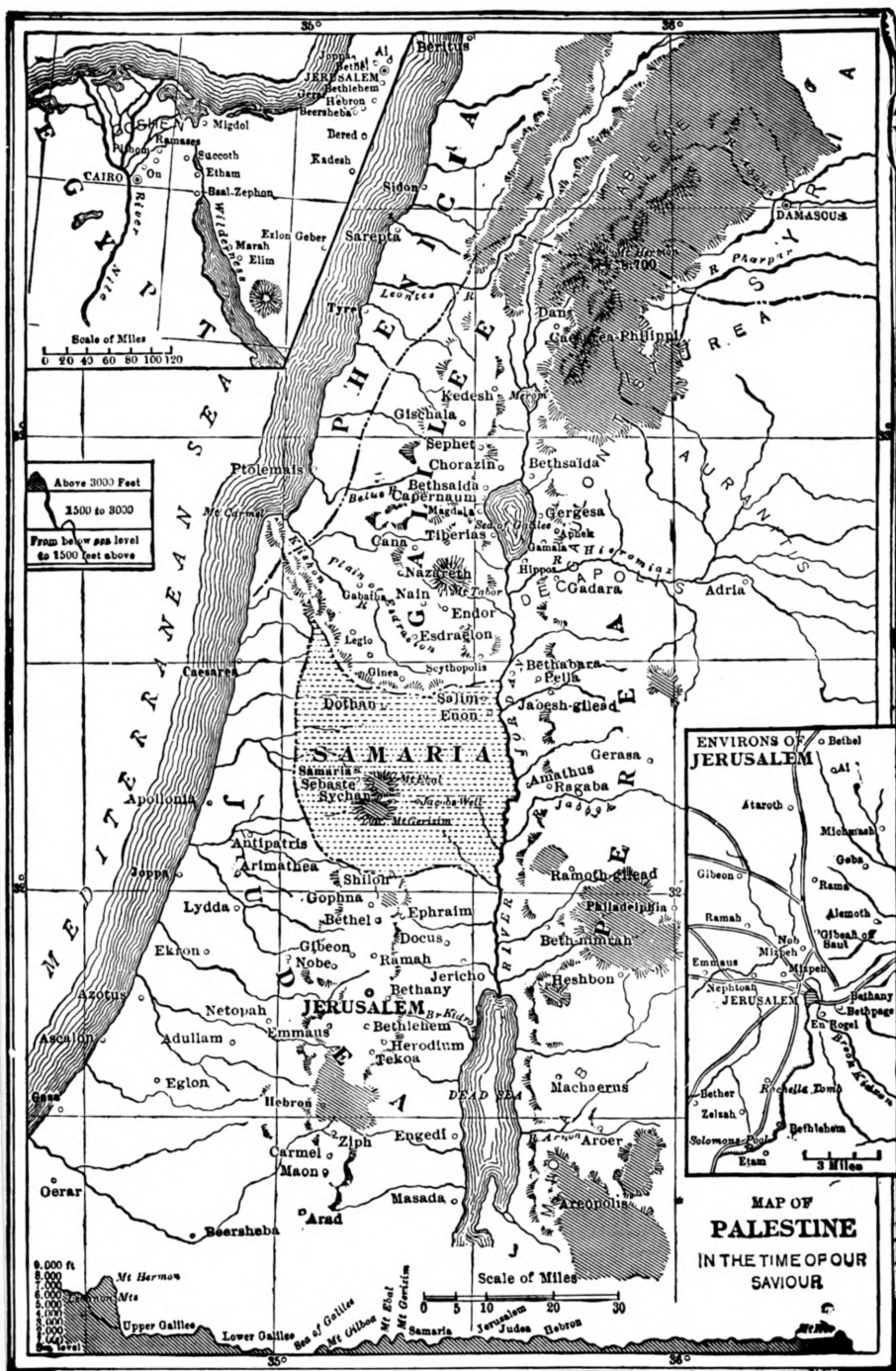
Were the twelve spies in agreement as to the goodness of the land?
 What were the personal qualities of the men sent to spy out the land?
 Who were the Jebusites?

The Spies in Canaan

What is the meaning of the word *anak*?
 Who were the children of Anak?
 When was Hebron built?
 Where is the valley of Eshcol?
 What is special about the valley?
 Why is Canaan described as a land flowing with milk and honey?
 Describe the cities of Canaan.

Israel Rebels

What is the "grasshopper complex"?
 How did ten of the spies invent a lie about the land?
 What is meant by the expression, "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof"?
 Describe the people who lived in Canaan.
 How did the people react to the report of the spies?



SECOND QUARTER

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

AIM.—To examine basic teaching of the Scriptures regarding the Providence, the Love, and the Grace of God: the Authority, Sovereignty and Sacrifice of Christ: a7id to consider our responsibility to God as his children.

Lesson I—April 7, 1974

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Lesson Text

Matt. 6:24-34

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

26 Behold the birds of the heaven that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?

27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?

28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they

toil not, neither do they spin:

29 Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven shall he not much more clothe you.

O ye of little faith?

31 Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

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

34 Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.” (1 Pet. 5:7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 12:28-35.

Daily Bible Readings

April 1.	M.....	God, the Creator of All Things (Gen. 1:1; Eccles. 1:1)
April 2.	T.....	God, Preserver of All Things (Psalm 147:1-9)
April 3.	W.....	God, Ruler of All Peoples (Job 12:13-25)
April 4.	T.....	God, Provider of All Things (Matt. 6:24-34)
April 5.	F.....	God, and His Love for Mankind (John 3:14-21)
April 6.	S.....	God, Our Faithful Father (1 Pet. 4:12-19)
April 7.	S.....	God, and His Attitude (Rom. 11:22)

TIME.—A.D. 31.

PLACE.—On a mountain side in Galilee probably overlooking the city of Capernaum.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and a multitude of people.

Introduction

The key to this lesson is the meaning of God's providence. We speak of natural providence and of super-

natural providence. We make the distinction between the “natural” and the “supernatural” with the im-

plication we understand the first through the operations of laws, and the other we do not because it lies in the realm *beyond nature*, which is hidden in mystery. Yet both are beyond the power of human understanding despite our most updated scientific technology.

As Christians who believe in God and as citizens of the universe, we should be convinced that God who created the universe and fashioned man in his own image is both the Lord of heaven and earth. To believe in the providence of God, is to believe that God who gave being to the world continues to govern its affairs and to move in both realms. Belief in God is like belief in creation itself. We believe from the period of creation, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and to the cross of Christ that we are witnessing the providential care of God. The clearest account of God's operations in the affairs of men occurs in the story of Joseph. His brothers had sold him into slavery; and Joseph was confident of God's providence in his assurance to his brothers: "And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So it was not you that sent me hither: but God." (Gen. 45:7, 8.)

The Christian's individual conviction is that God's grace is experienced both in the personal events of one's life and in God's providential rule over both history and nature. Paul was certain of God's providential care: "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that

are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.)

It is clear from what precedes that providence is to be distinguished from what we usually call fate. A belief in fate accepts whatever happens as predetermined by the sovereign power of God, or the blind forces of nature. The first doctrine is called "predestination" in the theology of Calvinism. Belief in "predestination," "foreordination," "election," and such excludes free will and thus human responsibility. We may regard such Calvinistic doctrines as unworthy of man and completely reject them on scriptural grounds. The belief in fatalism is a pagan concept.

Miracles are closely interrelated with divine providence. A miracle is not just something which excites wonder. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1.) The traditional view is that a miracle has its distinctiveness because it is an event which breaks into the order of nature on an occasion so stupendous that it may be explained only through the supernatural intervention of God.

We believe that the providential crossing of the Red Sea by the people of Israel was a miracle; we cannot explain it, but we believe it. We believe in prayer and God's power to deliver us from sickness and harm's way in ways beyond nature's ability to provide understanding. We believe God still moves and works wondrously beyond even power to understand, and we believe in his divine providential arrangement to reach us in our needs.

The Golden Text

Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. (1 Pet. 5:7.)

In the preceding chapter, the apostle Peter said: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials among you, which cometh upon you to reprove you." (1 Pet. 4:12.) The point made here is the testing of gold in fire: "The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold." (Prov. 27:21.) The church suffered and endured bitter persecutions beginning with the newly established church in Jerusalem until the reign of Constantine

Caesar in the fourth century A.D. The intermittent persecutions were numerous and ten major persecutions were especially cruel. Nero Caesar crucified and burned Christians on the stake and clothed others with the skins of wild animals and turned hunting dogs upon them under the false accusation the Christians had set the city of Rome on fire. (Tacitus, *Annals*.) Vespasian, who began the siege of Jerusalem that fell to Titus in 70 A.D., built the Coliseum where Christians fought wild bears. The Christians took refuge in the catacombs of

Rome to escape bitter martyrdoms.

The apostle encouraged the disciples: "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." (1 Pet. 4:15, 16.) The Christians were admonished to think of their fiery trials as *not strange*. The followers of Christ must suffer at the hands of men who hated Christ and crucified him. Peter gave them neither reason nor hope that the disciples would escape persecutions. There were three crosses on Calvary. Two were criminals the Romans would no longer allow to live. On the middle cross, Jesus hanged for the love of man, and they crucified him

because he troubled the guilty consciences of man.

In the golden text, we are made aware that when troubles come, we cannot cast them aside as though they did not exist. The "fiery trials" Peter mentioned were real. Paul's legs were bound with chains, but not his will; his body was cast into prison, but not his spirit. A man may be whipped, but he cannot be demoralized unless he consents. Peter is admonishing the Christians to let God shoulder their burdens: "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." (Rom. 8:32.) "Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and he will sustain thee: he will never suffer the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22.)

The Text Explained

The Two Masters (Matt. 6:24)

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Our lesson text is a part of the Sermon on the Mount. Tradition places the site where Jesus preached the sermon, on Mount Tabor. The mountain overlooks the remains of the ancient city of Capernaum which became Jesus' second home after he was rejected by the synagogue in Nazareth. (Luke 4:25.) From the mountain side, a beautiful view is had from the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and southward over the Jordan Valley.

Jesus is set forth as the proclaimer of the highest morality, the perfect law of God for man. Just as Moses received the old law on Mount Sinai, Jesus proclaimed the perfect law of liberty on a mountain. Prior to this, Matthew records: "Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." (Matt. 4:23.)

The word gospel is the modern form of the ninth century A.D. Anglo-Saxon word, *god-spell*, simply meaning good tidings or good news. The Greek word, *evangelion*, which is translated *gospel*, originally meant "a reward for good news."

Matthew records that a great multitude followed Jesus to the mountain from the regions lying south and both east and west of the Jordan River including the province of Galilee where Capernaum is located. (Matt. 4:25.) And seeing the multitude, Jesus went further up the mountain and sat down to command a position to speak. Incidentally, it was customary for a Jewish rabbi to sit while teaching. Jesus "stood up to read" in the synagogue at Nazareth and "sat down" to speak to the people. (Luke 4:17-20.)

Matthew's gospel is essentially Jewish in outlook, designed to strike responsive acceptance in the minds of Jews brought up in the Mosaic Law. The gospel of Matthew emphasizes Christian worship and doctrinal forms such as baptism and the Lord's supper. The discipline of an unruly brother in the church is detailed. (Matt. 18:18-20.) The gospel of Matthew, more so than the other gospel accounts, presents the fullest set of moral instructions and regulations for the church. The Sermon on the Mount is crystal clear in its presentation of the highest virtues of Christian character, courtesy, marriage, oaths, retaliations, love of one's enemies, outward display in almsgiving and prayer, and God's providential care. Matthew proclaims the missionary spirit—"to teach all nations." (Matt. 28:18, 19.)

Our lesson text grows out of the

statements of Jesus in the preceding verses: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal." (Matt. 6:19.) Jesus is saying that heavenly wealth is incorruptible, whereas the increasing of earthly wealth adds worry even to despair as the fear of losing earthly possessions increases.

The Jewish character is especially outstanding here. The Hebrews believed that a good man was rewarded with material possessions and a wicked man, though rich, would be despoiled. This is the accusation Job's friends leveled at him that his great sorrows resulted from secret sins. Eliphaz reminds Job: "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent?" (Job 4:7.) Jesus did not accept the principle, for as the rain from heaven falls on the just and unjust, in a like manner, misfortune befalls both the good and the bad. Rather Jesus admonished that the good a person does becomes treasures laid up in heaven. Jesus never advocated taking the vows of poverty. His whole warning is directed against those "who trust in riches." (Mark 10:24.)

In connection with this and the following verses, Jesus admonishes: "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." (Matt. 6:22.) To lay hold on treasures in heaven, one must have an inner "spiritual eye" which is healthy. Just as the sound eyes illuminate the body with light, spiritual eyes illuminate the soul. In the hour of one's departure, neither silver nor gold nor precious stone accompany a man, but the good that he has done will live on.

The next words of Jesus follow in natural order: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We need to understand the status of a master and servant. The Greek verb for "to serve" is *douleuein*. The Greek name for one who serves is *doulos*, a slave. The slave in imperial Rome and earlier Greece was the absolute property of his master, who had unquestioned rights of life and death over him. Every moment of his life belonged

to his master. He could beat him or throw him unto prison.

Jesus is here stating our real relationship to God. We belong to him because he made us, and we are sustained by the rain from heaven and the bread from the land. Jesus describes the two masters. One is "our Father who art in heaven." Our address in prayer begins with adoration and a request for the hallowing of his name. The use of the word "father" was a sacred utterance of the Hebrew when it related to God, and with the deepest respect when used to address a parent. "Honor thy father and thy mother" was the first commandment with promise.

The second choice a Christian may take is to serve "mammon." Money is sometimes the translation of mammon. This is the Aramaic word for wealth or worldly riches. The service of God and material riches are incompatible: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." (1 Tim. 6:10.) Jesus sets up only two masters for man. There are only two ways: the "blessing and curse," the good and the evil, and the broad way and the straight and narrow.

Wealth makes a fiendish master, and a wonderful servant if used as God would have it. One fact is clear. The possession of material wealth is nothing evil, but it is a great responsibility. It can become an intolerable burden if it is not used wisely. And money can drag a person into hell. Some people think that money can buy a person into or out of any situation, but it cannot buy the love of a wife, the affection of children, or respect of a friend. At the best, material wealth is but a subordinate good.

Be Not Anxious

(Matt. 6:25-31)

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?

"Be not anxious for your life." This is a difficult passage to accept in our day because it is so little understood, but it ought not to be. Jesus is simply calling for complete confidence in God and trust in his providence. Jesus would have us to believe in God's love for his children and his will to rule providentially for man's good. The ideal of life is here set forth that worry and preoccupation with the cares of life actually profit a man nothing. A man sits and studies, and that he have bread to eat is no, his worry. Another occupies himself with trade all day, and he does not worry about his daily bread. The people of Israel constantly chided Moses because they lacked bread in the wilderness. Jesus' teaching is something for greater than satisfying the hunger: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.) To Jesus, the needs of life are broadly human and spiritual. He places the primary emphasis on the moral excellence of life.

Indeed, these verses are linked with the foregoing verses about possessions and our inordinate ambition to attain them, and the false hopes that we build up about the blessings of material wealth.

The King James Version translates anxiety as "take no thought." and the original Greek uses a stronger expression, "be not distraught by many cares." But how can man help being anxious since life offers man the two ways of life and death, and each is certain after the other. If we did not know our common fate and the tomorrows with their precarious uncertainties, then like the birds of the heavens

and the beasts of the fields, we could live untroubled lives. The root meaning of the word "anxious" is "to choke": our food won't go down.

What are we to understand by the command, "Be not anxious?" Anxiety seems to be almost an instinct in man. Surely Jesus is not ruling out concern that we should have for the ill, the poor and dispossessed, the prisoner, and the broken hearted. Calloused disregard for those in need is condemned in the harshest language of the New Testament because such "shall go away into eternal punishment." (Matt. 25:46.)

Jesus never advises against intelligent measures for the prudent ordering of one's life. The responsibility of a Jewish father to his son was to circumcise him, get him a wife, and teach him a trade. A rabbinical saying was, "A man who doesn't teach his son a trade, teaches him robbery."

The purpose of Jesus, as expressed in this verse, is to provide the dimension of trust, prudence and confidence in the goodness of the providence of God. Surely God who has given us a body—as David described it—"wonderfully and fearfully made," he will also make provisions for clothing and food for the body. Worry is worse than useless because it saps the spiritual energy of man and defeats him by fears that almost never materialize.

"Are ye o' not much more value than they?" In verse twenty-six, Jesus speaks about the birds who have no worry. No bird or animal has an occupation, and they are nourished without worry. God fashioned all creation to serve man and to meet his needs. If creatures who are created to serve man are not anxious, why should man corrupt his daily bread with needless worry? We should keep constancy in mind that Jesus is emphasizing the constancy of God's providence to provide man with his needs and the unfailing trustworthiness of his love. We are not to understand that in times of famine, natural disasters, and plagues, one's complete faith in God will immunize him from disaster because all suffer in such times. However, Jesus is speaking of the circumstances of

the vicissitudes of life on a normal day by day existence. A rabbinical statement of Eliezer the Great said. "He who has bread in this basket and says, What shall I eat tomorrow, belongs to those who are little in faith." (C. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teaching*, p. 142.) Jesus takes the principle of casting out anxiety and purifies the reason in Christian teaching.

"Behold the birds of the heaven." Jesus would have us know that birds do not count the length of their days on the calendar. The Jewish rabbi, Simeon Elazar said. "In my life I never saw a stag as a dryer of figs, or a lion as a porter, or a fox as a merchant, yet they are all nourished without worry." (See C. Montefiore above, p. 141.)

Actually, Jesus is offering, not a remedy, but a cure for the cankering worries of life for daily sustenance. There is also the sobering thought that there is no freedom for care if we use our freedom to fulfill our own evil designs. We cannot escape suffering and death, but we do have the choice of *wisdom* and *folly*. "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. The person that keeps are in his head, and the fool walketh in darkness." (Eccles. 2:13, 14.)

"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?" The word cubit is translated from *pechus* which means a measure of space and may be a measure of stature or a span of life. A cubit measure is eighteen inches. So what man could add eighteen inches to his height by worrying or an extra day to his life? In either case, the impossibility is transparent. Luke helps us at this place: "And which of you be being anxious can add a cubit unto the measure of his life?" (Luke 12:25.) A man cannot with anxious care alter the unalterable factors of life. With worry, man's judgment is impaired and he becomes a menace to himself, a threat to his family, and a nagging annoyance because of his unnatural concern for his livelihood.

"Consider the lilies," Jesus goes

on to talk about flowers, and he must have loved them. The lily *anemones* named in the text was a small scarlet flower. They blossom on the hillsides of Palestine for one

brief day and are clothed with such a breathtaking beauty that even Solomon in all of his glory could not equal. The day after, the "flowers of the grass" are cast into the banking ovens for fuel.

The meaning of Jesus is something deeper than the transience of the days of man. The tender flower is like a prayer of faith living in the care of God's providence with the sun and rain, day and night, and turning seasons. The whole order of the universe schemes to bring both to fruition. The life of man is fragile tied to a mortal thread.

The lilies of the field are sustained in their proper course of life and all fulfill their nature. If man will fulfill his nature and discharge his duties in trust to God, though death eventually overtakes him, God will not fail him. Jesus again addresses "anxiety" which is essentially a distrust of God. To the Christian who addresses God as his father, surely he should know that cankering worry will destroy the very spiritual marrow of his nature. Worry is useless and may become a positive evil. Illnesses cripple. The person that keys and heart attacks often result directly from fretting worry. Yes, man will grope his way blindly in spite of the fact that God gives a breathtaking beauty to a flower which live; but a day. Worry denies the truth of nature and turns man away from God. Jesus describes the chronic worrier as, "Ye of little faith."

Seek First the Kingdom

(Matt. 6:32-34)

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.

"For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." Jesus offers a cure for the destructive force in a Christian's life. Food, clothing, and shelter, the three essentials of life, are only means to life—not life itself. An undue concern for such, Jesus said, is the main preoccupation of the heathens (Gentiles),

who have an inordinate desire for material things.

We need to keep in mind that Jesus is not advocating a shiftless, irresponsible, and improvident attitude toward life, and the responsibilities attendant to its demands. Another contemporary Jewish attitude in the lifetime of Jesus says: "Who ever attends to his personal affairs before offering his prayers is as though he had created an idolatrous altar."

"Seek ye first his kingdom." To seek the kingdom of God is to know the will of God whether found in the Scriptures or discovered in the laws of nature. Joshua was instructed to seek God's knowledge and will in all things: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." (Josh. 1:8.)

God's promise is to all who will make his will their first concern and their other work only occasional, and both will flourish in their hands. The kingdom of heaven is God's kingdom on earth. If we would do God's will in heaven.

we must perform it first here on earth in the church. To do the will of God is to submit to the will of God. To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness will bring about the additions of the earth and the fulsome enjoyment of it.

"Be not therefore anxious for tomorrow." The Jews in the lifetime of Jesus had a saying: "Do not worry over tomorrow's evil, for you know not what today will bring forth. Perhaps tomorrow you will not be alive, and you have worried for a world which would not be yours." This is another way of saying that the day of itself has sufficient evils, so why should we borrow troubles from the uncertain future. This is the confidence of the twenty-third Psalm: "Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1.) The shepherd boy could not have known the future. The king looking back over his vast was confident of the future that God would lead him safely through all the vicissitudes of life in the future as he had in the past. Is it thinkable a Christian should have less faith than Israel's shepherd king?

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God works in ways too wonderful for man to comprehend. We often speak of natural laws as if we understood them which are wrapped in mystery beyond man's power to comprehend.

2. Just as surely as God moves in the natural realm, he moves as certainly in the spiritual realm. The smallest flower that grows and the brightest star in the universe are the work of God.

3. To believe in fate is unworthy of a Christian because this is belief that the laws of nature are working through blind necessity.

4. To believe in "election" or "predestination" in any form makes God a respecter of persons and denies salvation to great numbers of

people and strips man of any pretensions to personal freedom.

5. Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount the highest level of morality that the human race has ever known. This includes the Law of Moses and all the great world systems of jurisprudence.

6. Jesus did not condemn material things if used in a right way. He enjoyed them in the presence of his friends. Money makes a wonderful servant, but it makes a fiendish master.

7. Jesus never condemned intelligent concern for one's needs and responsibilities. He condemned the cankering and fretting worry which saps away a person's life.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Golden Text

What were the "fiery trials" about which Peter spoke?

When did the persecutions of the Chris-

tians at the hands of the Romans cease?

How did Nero Caesar persecute the Christians?

What did Peter say about suffering as a Christian?

Explain the statement: "A man may be whipped, but he cannot be demoralized unless he gives his consent."

The Two Masters

Who are the two masters that Jesus is talking about?
What is the meaning of the word mammon?
Discuss the meaning of the word gospel.
Do you believe that the good people are always rewarded with material gain?
How does this "spiritual eye" illuminate the sou i?
Was it possible for a slave to serve two masters in the Roman world?
What does it mean to serve mammon?

Be Not Anxious

What does Jesus mean by the statement —"be not anxious"?
Does Jesus advise against intelligent measures for the prudent ordering of one's life?

How does Jesus compare a man's life to that of the creatures?
Discuss how Jesus uses the word *cubit* in relation to man in two ways?
Discuss the two choices of *wisdom* and *folly* that a man has the option to make.
How does Jesus use the lilies that grow on the hillsides of Palestine to describe a man's life?
Why is anxiety essentially a distrust of God's providence?

Seek First the Kingdom

Does Jesus advocate a shiftless and irresponsible attitude toward life?
What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God first?
Why is it so useless to worry about the issues of tomorrow?

Lesson II—April 14, 1974

THE GRACE OF GOD

Lesson Text

Eph. 2:1-9; Tit. 2:11-14

1 And you *did he make alive*. when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins,
2 Wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience:
3 Among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest: —
4 But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
5 Even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved),
6 And raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus:
7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches o

his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus:
8 For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;
9 Not of works, that no man should glory.
11 For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
12 Instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world;
13 Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus. . . ." (Acts 15: 11.)
DEVOTIONAL READING. — 2 Cor. 12:1-9.

Daily Bible Readings

April 8.	M.....	Saved By Grace Through Faith (Eph. 2:1-10)
April 9.	T.....	Grace and Truth Came By Jesus Christ (John 1:14-17)
April 10.	W.....	Grow in Grace (2 Pet. 3:1-18)
April 11.	T.....	Partakers of Grace (Phil. 1:1-7)
April 12.	F.....	Strong Through Grace (2 Tim. 2:1-15)
April 13.	S.....	Under Grace. Not the Law of Moses (Rom. 6:1-15)
April 14.	S.....	Riches of Divine Grace (Eph. 1:1-7)

TIME.—Ephesians, A.D. 64; Titus, A.D. 65.

PLACE.—Rome.

PERSONS.—Paul, the Ephesian Christians; Titus.

Introduction

Our present lesson is built around the "grace of God." The Greek word Paul used in the Ephesian letter for grace is *charis*. The common Greek greeting was *chairein*. The apostle declared: for by grace have ye been saved through grace." The Christian salvation (*soteria*) means many things. It was a salvation from illness (Matt. 9:21), physical danger (Matt. 8:25), from "this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40), from lostness (Matt. 18:11), a salvation from sin (Matt. 1:21), and the wrath of God (Rom. 5:29).

The salvation is such that a Christian will be kept safe in time and eternity. Faith means belief in what we believe is true. (Heb. 11:1.) Faith is a part and parcel of justice. Under the law, every man stood condemned and was proved wrong. Under Christ, the sinner is justified by faith. (Rom. 5:1.) We are to understand that God does not treat the sinner as one to be destroyed, but he is treated as a child whom God loves. Justification through Christ means that we are not reckoned as the enemies of God, but as his children. As Christians we enter into a new covenant relationship with God based upon love and confidence.

What is the meaning of grace? It is the free and unmerited loving favor of God bestowed through Christ. The grace of God is an act of love that no depth of faith or qualify of work could merit from God. The source of our salvation springs eternally from the love of God

which we may lay hold on through faith.

The supreme need of man is to get into a right relationship with God. Paul clearly stated, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20.) As a grieving child comes to his father in trust and repentance, we are enabled to come to God if we believe with all of our hearts what Jesus tells us about God.

The great morass of confusion in Protestant theology is confusing simple acts of faith, such as Christian baptism and the Lord's supper, with the works under the Mosaic law. Since Martin Luther triggered the Protestant Reformation, a campaign for almost five hundred years has been underway to discredit the need to know and obey Christian doctrine. Simple Bible teachings about faith, repentance, confession, and baptism have been discredited; the church of the living God has been downgraded to be non-essential to salvation. The Scriptures have been wrested and perverted. We are not surprised that many Protestants no longer profess faith in the existence of God and the infallibility of the Bible. We need to be on our guard because there are brethren among us, who are not with us, who would pervert Christian doctrine and practice open fellowship without regard for Bible teaching.

The Golden Text

But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 15:11.)

Certain Jews with Christian persuasions of a dubious character had gone to Antioch in Syria and began teaching that the Christian faith is an adjunct of the Mosaic Law. They asserted, "Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1.) This resulted in a serious controversy between Paul and Barnabas and these "brethren" from Judea.

The Christians in Antioch thought it necessary for Paul, Barnabas, and some others of the brethren to go to Jerusalem and put the matter to the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church.

The apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church listened with great interest to Paul and Barnabas as they "rehearsed all things that God had done with them." (Acts 15:4.)

The apostle Peter summarized the matter declaring that it was clearly evident that God had shown favor

also to the Gentiles, and now the grace of God would be freely be-

stowed upon all men apart from the law. (Acts 15:7, 8.)

The Text Explained

Life in Christ

(Eph. 2:1-9)

And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:—but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: 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.

The Ephesian letter reads like a sublime sermon on the eternal purpose of God to secure the salvation of man. The apostle explains that God is accomplishing this through the church: "Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:2, 3.) We may also declare with confidence that the great doctrines of the Christian faith are in the epistle to the Ephesians.

"And you did he make alive." First of all, the apostle describes the Ephesians as once being "dead through your trespasses and sins." To be dead in this respect meant to be cut away from God. The theme of the Ephesian letter is set forth in Ephesians 2:19-23, wherein God through his infinite power resurrected Christ to sit at his right hand in heavenly places and "put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." In the following verses. Paul sets forth that Christians are in a grand alliance with Christ in

his church, having been rescued from their trespasses and sins.

In the expression, "and you did he make alive," Paul is demonstrating the desperate need of man in his sinful condition, which he describes in another place: "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouvable before him." (Col. 1:21, 22.)

We are too often overwhelmed by the wickedness of our age. Paul lived in a period when human depravity was the order of the times. In Acts 19, we learn something of Paul's preaching efforts in Ephesus over a three year period. Ephesus in Paul's lifetime was a city of great commercial importance in Western Asia Minor. The beautiful city of marble and stone was located on the Cayster River which flowed out to the Aegean Sea. The city was called the "Supreme Metropolis of Asia." The Romans favored the Ephesians by making Ephesus a free city with great political importance and with the right of self government.

A temple to the goddess Diana stood in the city. The second great temple standing when Croesus was king of Lydia, burned the night Alexander the Great was born. The temple that Paul saw was one of the "Seven Wonders" of the ancient world. There was a saying that, "The sun sees nothing finer in its course than the temple of Diana." The temple had 127 pillars of Parian marble, each the gift of a king. Thirty-six pillars were overlaid with gold and jewels. A great altar carved by the Greek sculptor, Praxitiles, was there. The statue of Diana was in the temple.

Worship to Diana was a weird, ecstatic, and hysterical business where the darkest and most shameful things could and did happen. The priests were eunuchs, and there were large numbers of female priestesses.

Heraclitus, one of the greatest of the great Greek philosophers, was an Ephesian. The "weeping" phi-

losopher described the character of the people as being notoriously bad, with the morals of beasts and promiscuous dogs, fit only to be drowned. It was said of Heraclitus that he never smiled and we may surmise why.

Man's trouble is that he is hopelessly separated from God. Paul here brings out the great truth that both Jews and Gentiles stand under equal condemnation of sin, and both are brought together in Christ to receive a new life in Christ.

"Ye once walked according to the course of this world." To say that they "once walked," the apostle means that the Ephesian Christians once lived worldly lives. The figure here used is that of the path of life where one step after another is taken. The Pharisees and scribes charged Jesus: "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders; but eat their bread with defiled hands?" (Mark 7:5.) Another example of this was the accusation that the Jews made against Paul. "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." (Acts 21:21.)

As Paul uses the term in the Ephesian text, he is describing a walk that is contrary to the will of God. The apostle describes the walk as "according to the course of this world." Paul is contrasting the life of man apart from God.

Paul describes a second way that man walks which is contrary to God's way—"according to the prince of the powers of the air." The essential meaning of this expression is quite clear. The devil is meant here and his authority. Paul is not subscribing to the accepted beliefs of the pagans that the air is the abode and realm of the evil spirits. Instead Paul was thinking of the sinister forms of evil current in the world running counter to the spirit of God. Satan's aim is to blind the spiritual outlook of man. Paul wrote in this connection: "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;" (2 Cor. 4:3, 4.)

Paul speaks next of "the spirit

that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." A life which has shut out the power of God is open for the powers of evil to enter. The apostle John gives an example of this: "And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." (John 13:2.) All who surrender to the power of Satan live a life contrary to God and are rightfully called "the sons of disobedience."

"Among whom we also once lived." Paul turns away from the Gentiles and their habitual sinning, to speak in the first person including himself and all his people, as also having been among the children of disobedience. This is another way the apostle expresses that the Ephesians had at one time been dead in their trespasses and sins.

The word "flesh" pertains essentially to the body. However, the body is not inherently evil. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14.) But "flesh" as used in the Ephesian text is referring to the lower nature of man apart from "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21.)

The "lusts of the flesh" is more comprehensive than just the gratifications of animal desires. The selfish, self-centered man has a biblical description: "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." (Rom. 8:5.) A similar statement advises: "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16.) The works of the flesh are described. The apostle's list includes idolatry, strife, fornication, drunkenness, and such like. (Gal. 5:19-21.) And Paul warned "that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21.) We are not to conclude that the lusts of the flesh are reserved just to the desires of the body; but the intellect as well: "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works." (Col. 1:21.)

Paul means by the expression "the rest," the Gentiles. Paul naturally concludes that the Jews along with the Gentiles were children of

wrath. The apostle's statement that both Jew and Gentile "were by nature children of wrath" is not to be construed as man's inheriting the sin of Adam, but they had "been brought into this state of condemnation by walking in sin, not by their birth." (*The People's New Testament With Notes*, Johnson.) The Scriptures are replete with warnings against turning aside. Moses offered the children of Israel life and death, the blessing and the curse. Jesus also described two ways, life or death, for man and gave the choice to him.

"But God being rich in his mercy," Paul would have us know that because of God's great love with which he loved us that God acted in our behalf. God out of his love and pity came to rescue man from the hopeless snare of sin. Christ was resurrected from the dead, through the power of God.

"Made us alive together with Christ." Paul described the Ephesians who had been dead in their trespasses and sins. In a parallel reading Paul describes the state of both Jew and Gentile: "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. . . . But God commended his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:6-8.) Man's position is described by Paul as being a spiritual death. Man in his lost state was faced with a desperate need, and that need was nothing less than a new life: and so Jesus "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) This new life in Christ is salvation from sin. Paul said, '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.)

The apostle is moved to exclaim, "by grace have ye been saved." Man's salvation is undeserved and freely procured through the infinite love God has for mankind. The procurement of salvation is one thing, and the actual enjoyment of salvation is another thing. God's grace procured salvation for man, and man by faith accepted it.

"Made us to sit with him in heavenly places." Christ was not only raised from the dead by the power of God, but he also "made him to sit

at his right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1:20.) And in the lesson text Paul adduces from the fact of our new life in Christ that God "raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."

"He might show the exceeding riches of his grace." Paul's faith in God through Jesus reaches into future ages and eternity. Each sinner who has been washed white in the blood of the Lamb will become God's exhibit to witness to the world the riches of God's grace toward the Christian, and the eternal riches that are being laid up in heaven for him.

"For by grace have ye been saved." Martin Luther found such a dislike of "works" having to do with salvation that he discarded James from his translation of the New Testament, and referred to it as an "epistle of straw." We need to be reminded here that James wrote: "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith." (James 2:24.)

We turn to Paul's statement, "by grace have ye been saved through faith." The apostle declares that the procurement of man's salvation is entirely God's work. Man has undone himself through sin, and as a result, cut away his life from God. There is no work that man has ever done that can provide salvation for him. Only God can provide salvation. The grace of God is the free unmerited favor that he bestowed upon man, when he gave his Son to die for sinful man.

But man must accept the salvation that God's grace provided, and Paul says he does that "through faith." God's grace procured salvation for all men, but only those who by faith accept salvation by obedience to the gospel will be saved.

Grace and the Christian Life

(Tit. 2:11-14)

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us

from all inquiry, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works.

In the preceding verses of Titus, the apostle sets forth some moral principles of the Christian life "which befit the sound doctrine." Paul admonishes elder men to be temperate, sober-minded, and sound in the faith; aged women are to be reverent in demeanor and teachers of that which is good; young women were admonished to love their husbands, to be chaste, and workers in their own home; young men were to be ensamples in good works. (Tit. 2:1ff.)

The apostle sets forth the principle that it was the precise purpose of God to elevate man to the highest possible moral standards by sending Christ into the world. As the Sermon on the Mount does, Paul stresses the moral power of the gospel over the lives of men.

"For the grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation." What is clearly implied is that man left to his own resources would have failed in his moral efforts to be well pleasing unto God. As we have learned, grace is God's free favor: and apart from the revelation of the Scriptures, man could have never come to the knowledge of the truth. God made the marvelous disclosure of his love for man in the whole earthly career of Jesus from his birth in Bethlehem, to and beyond Calvary, and the promise of his second coming. Christ is able to purify us from our sins when we "walk in the light, as he is in the light." "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8.)

"Instructing us to the intent . . . we should live soberly and righteously." Paul is emphasizing the disciplinary aspect of God's training

the moral nature of mankind. Through the dispensation of God's grace, the Christian is enabled to make a clear break with worldly things. If a person spends his life amassing earthly things, he has had no time to lay up treasures in heaven. As a consequence of divine grace, the Christian may learn to live prudently and with self control above the power of his lower nature and to give to God the reverence due him. Paul is speaking of life in "this present world." In a similar fashion, Paul admonished the Christians in Rome: "And be not fashioned according to this world." (Rom. 12:2a.)

"Looking for the blessed hope." The Christian lives his earthly existence in heavenly hope: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds." (Matt. 16:27.) "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope." (1 Thess. 4:13.)

"Who gave himself . . . that he might redeem us." Christ has redeemed us from the thralldom of the slavery of sin. Through his grace, we are enabled to escape the stern demands of justice and the penalties of the law. We may compare ourselves to an unlettered person who escaped the world and who said: "By the grace of God I ain't what I was, but I ain't as good as I am goin' to be." Through the work of Christ we have become the special people of God. Although we cannot be perfect, we can still out think, out live, and out love the world. Through God's grace we are now fit to be called the children of God. Many good people are in the world, but the best people in the world are faithful Christians.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. A Christian is not saved by grace only or any other one thing. We are saved also by our faith and good deeds. A man does not nourish his body with food only. He needs water, air, food and shelter. Man does not live by bread alone, nor without it.

2. The grace of God is expressed in the salvation which God has procured for each of us, that we do not

have to merit, but we accept through our expression of faith and obedience.

3. We need to be on our guard against those, in or out of the church, who would pervert the word of God no matter how sincere their intention or good their motives.

4. The gospel saves man from the

tragic consequences of evil in this present world and beyond.

5. The grace of God is evidenced

in a person through fruits of Christian character exemplified in righteous behavior.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the Greek word for grace?

What are the meanings of salvation in the New Testament?

Why is the Mosaic law thought of as lacking grace?

Discuss the meaning of the grace of God as related to man.

Is an act such as the Lord's supper to be thought of like works set forth in the Mosaic Law?

Golden Text

What were certain Jews with Christian persuasions teaching in Galatia about circumcision?

What did Paul and Barnabas do to counter the false teachers?

How did Peter respond to the problem presented to the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church?

Life in Christ

What does it mean to be dead in trespasses and sins?

Explain Paul's statement, "And you did he make alive."

Describe the city of Ephesus in Paul's day.

What did Heraclitus say about his fellow Ephesians?

What does it mean to walk after the "counsel of this world"?

Who is the "prince of the powers of the air"?

How many are described as sinning against God?

How is the word "flesh" used in the Ephesian letter?

Name the works of the flesh.

Explain how we are saved by grace through faith.

Grace and the Christian Life

How did Paul advise aged men to behave? aged women?

What advice did Paul give to young women?

What did Paul say about grace in his letter to Timothy?

Lesson III—April 21, 1974

THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Text

Deut. 6:4-9; John 5:38-40; 1 Tim. 4:13-16

4 Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah:

5 And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart;

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.

9 And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

38 And ye have not his word

abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not.

39 Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me;

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.

13 Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all.

16 Take heed to thyself, and to thy leaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I will meditate on thy precepts, and have rasped unto thy ways." (Psalm 119:15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—1 Tim. 3:14-17.

Daily Bible Readings

April 15.	M.....	Usefulness of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:12-17)
April 16.	T.....	Proficiency in Scripture Necessary (1 Tim. 4:13-16)
April 17.	W.....	What Israel Thought of the Word of God (Deut. 6:4-9)
April 18.	T.....	Ezra Taught the Law of God (Ezra 7:6-12)
April 19.	F.....	Ezra Reads the Law of God to the People (Neh. 8:1-8)
April 20.	S.....	Jesus Reads the Bible in the Synagogue (Luke 4:14-21)
April 21.	S.....	Bible Does Not Contradict Itself (John 5: 45-47)

TIME.—Deuteronomy, 1451 B.C.; John, A.D. 31; First Timothy, A.D. 65.

PLACES.—Sinai wilderness; Jerusalem; Rome.

PERSONS.—Moses and the people of Israel; Jesus and the Jews; Paul and Timothy.

Introduction

In the Bible, every word centers in the idea that Jehovah, the God of Israel is one, and God's will is made known by his word revealed through the Spirit. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him." (John 1:1, 2.) God created the earth and the starry heavens above. "And God said. Let there be light: and there was light." (Gen. 1:1.) How shall we make clear to the mind that the Word of God is not just a sound. The Word is the form, the clothing of God's thought. Jehovah spoke the universe into being and gave his spoken law to Moses.

When a man utters words in truth to another man, he lays bare his thoughts to him who hears. He who speaks good words to another creates something good in his soul: and he who speaks evil words creates unhappiness in another.

The Word of God expresses to man that part of God's will that he would have man to know of what is both his right and duty. The law (*torah*) required of the older to give instructions to the younger: "Thus saith Jehovah, 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: Jehovah of hosts is his name: If these ordinances depart from be-

fore me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." (Jer. 31:35-36.) And we may paraphrase these words that, as Christians, if we cease to respect the Bible as the word of God, we may well become a guilty party to dismantling the church in our days.

The emphasis on the importance of God's Word could be repeated in hundreds of places: "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments and live." (Prov. 7:1, 2.) Ezra the priest, restored the Mosaic law after the Jews' return from Babylonian Captivity. "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances." (Ezra 7:10.)

As we approach our lesson text, we shall be made aware that Moses set forth to the Hebrews that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is one, and that they were to fear him and love him. The Israelites were to keep his *torah* (instructions) and to carry his commandments in their hearts: and they were to bind them to their hands and foreheads, and to affix them to their door posts. The people were admonished that upon entering Canaan, they should not forget God who brought them out of bondage: "Thou shalt fear Jehovah thy God; him shalt thou serve: and to him shalt thou cleave, and by his name shalt thou swear." (Deut. 10:20.)

The Golden Text

I will meditate on thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.
(Psalm 119:15.)

The Psalmist describes a student who has set himself to learn those things that are worth knowing, so he

may order his life thereby. And in so doing, he will delight in the treasure that is above all treasures. Paul advises Timothy: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe in the word."

The Text Explained

Thou Shalt Teach (Deut. 6:4-9.)

Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." What is uppermost in the meaning of this verse is the essential unity contained in God's nature. It is true that Jehovah is the God of heaven and earth, to whom idols are nothing. And Jehovah, as the ruler and creator of heaven and earth, means that he alone is in possession of divine qualities. The description of a heathen idol carved from wood is treated with biting satire by Isaiah who described how such a god comes into existence. The tree grows up and is cut down. Various master craftsmen take a turn with the felled tree: part of the wood is burnt, people bake bread and warm themselves at its fire, and another part of the tree is made into a god to whom they kneel down. (Isa. 40:12ff.)

The "oneness" of God is expressed in the prayer Jesus prayed: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also who believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." (John 17:21.) The meaning of Jesus' prayer is that all Christians may be one in Christ so the world may believe as a result. The unity for which Jesus prays is made possible by the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father. Closely kin to this prayer is the address to God in the opening statement of what is commonly referred to as the "Lord's Prayer"; "Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name."

(Matt. 6:9.) By addressing God in this way, man fully acknowledges the unity of the rule of God and God's name is fully sanctified.

"And thou shalt love Jehovah thy God." The basis of the character of the people of Israel was love; and in its innermost essence, it was a family love. The Mosaic law of law of love finds its simplest expression in the place where it is said: "But thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Lev. 19:18.) This expression contains the idea of the mutual love with the family and those whom the family receives in peace.

Love and justice are mutually necessary. If one has love, he will act according to the law of the covenant relationship with God. Mercy and truth met together between God and man are set forth in these words: "But the loving kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." (Psalm 103:17.) The Mosaic law was never able to sum up the fullness of God's love for man. However, this law of love in the covenant bypassed an obedience based upon necessity and duty, and established love as the primary relation between God and man: "We love, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19.) Hosea used the expression of love to show God's care for Israel by comparing a husband's love for his wife (Hos. 3:1ff), and the love of a father for a son (Hos. 11:1).

Three words, *heart*, *soul*, and *might*, are used to undergird the character of man's love for God. In the Scriptures, Jehovah is the potter and man is the clay; and into man's molded figure he breathed the breath of life and man became a living soul. So man in his total essence is a soul. To love God with one's soul means to love God with the absolute totality of one's being. The Hebrew language has other words denoting the soul. The ones most frequently used are *ruah*, spirit, and *lebh*, the heart. The three expression are not the same, but the likeness is greater than the difference.

Caleb was permitted to enter Canaan because he had a "different spirit" from the other spies sent into Canaan. (Num. 14:24.) The heart defines the stamp and character of a man. We are to understand

that it is from the heart that the issues of life come. The heart of man is the central element which determines the character and actions of man. We are to understand in Deuteronomy 6:5 that man owes absolute and undivided love and loyalty to God.

Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 is sublime in its impact. It is significant that when Jesus was questioned about the greatest law of the commandments, he responded, "Hear, O Israel." (Mark 12:29ff.) The Jews began the day by reading these scriptures and used them twice daily in their prayers to God. There were perhaps no particular words heard by Jesus with greater frequency than these.

"These words . . . shall be upon thy heart." The words meant were the entire teachings of the law to be imprinted on their hearts. The will of God is summed up in the following words: "And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God. to walk in 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 good?" (Deut. 10: 12, 13.)

"Thou shalt teach . . . thy children." The very heart of the people of Israel was the home: the husband and wife, sons and daughters, servants, and everything that belonged to the household. The house stands or falls as a whole. The family goes deeper than one generation. It extends backwards as well as forwards into history. From father to son, from generation to generation, the soul grows. The blessings bestowed upon Abraham continued through Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. God praised Abraham for having commended his sons and his household after him to do justice. (Gen. 18:19.) Whatever the good or evil the fathers do will live on in other generations. This is the iniquity that Moses said God would visit upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

We may ask ourselves at this juncture in our lesson, as Christians, if we can afford to do less in living exemplary lives before our children and teaching them by pre-

cept than the Israelites? Isaiah graphically describes the Hebrew method of instructions: "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 . . . line upon line. . . here a little, there a little." (Isa. 28:9, 10.) The prophet pronounces a curse against all who dishonor their covenant with God.

The important moments in the life of the Israelite from birth to death were invested with events of religious significance. The very atmosphere into which a Hebrew child was born was crowded with religious observances and ceremonies which were bound up in all the past history of the people. Moses set forth in the Law of Moses the supreme importance of education. This emphasis is still maintained by the Jews. A Jewish boy entering school for the first time will have a drop of honey put upon his tongue to symbolize the sweetness of learning. The oldest work of ethical and moral principles on earth is the book of Proverbs. Learning the law was a part of the Israelites' religion. The learned class has been awarded the highest honor in the life of the people of Israel. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6.)

Moses commanded that every waking moment should be concerned with teaching the law while sitting or walking, lying down or rising up. The people did this by inscribing passages of scripture on small scrolls of parchment which were then enclosed in leather cases with leather thongs attached and bound on the forehead and arm. They were worn when prayers were being said in the temple and synagogue. In a like manner, they wrote scripture on a small scroll of parchment placing it in a small leather container and fastening it on the right hand door post. Every Hebrew as he passed through the door would touch it and kiss the finger that did so while reciting Psalm 121:8. (Turn to lesson for March 10, "Religion in the Home," for more details on this.) In view of such religious devotions which

are still practiced among the Jewish people, should we have cause to wonder why the devoted religious Jew is little impressed with the indifferent Christian?

Search the Scriptures

(John 5:38-40)

And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not. Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.

We need to keep uppermost in our minds what Jesus means by "scriptures." Jesus fell into the company of two men who were journeying to Emmaus after his resurrection. They were puzzled over all that had happened. The two men did not know the identity of Jesus who explained the Scriptures to them. "And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27.) The Old Testament Scriptures from beginning to end are filled with messianic prophecies.

The first prophecy is Genesis 3:15, wherein God said that through the "seed of woman," he would bruise the head of the serpent. The promise of the virgin birth of Jesus is set forth in Isaiah 7:14, and his birth place is declared in Micah 5:2. The nature of the messianic kingdom is detailed in chapters nine and eleven of Isaiah. Such citing of messianic verses would require a great amount of space.

We are reminded that Paul went into the synagogue in Thessalonica and "reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead." (Acts 17:2, 3.) Paul was driven from Thessalonica to Berea where he was welcomed into the synagogue. "Now these were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11.)

Jesus wanted the Jews to believe in him as the Messiah, the Son of God, and most did not. The lesson text singles out one of the encounters that Jesus had with unbelieving

Jews. He declared to them, "The Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me." (John 5:37.) The charge of Jesus against them in substance was unbelief. They had covered their ears that they might not hear, and closed their eyes that they might not see. And in this connection, Jesus declared unto them: "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not." John wrote in another setting: "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." (1 John 5:9.)

Jesus is saying that their refusal to hear his voice was nothing new. They did not believe Moses; and had they done so, they would have believed in him, for Moses had written of him. (John 5:46, 47.) Paul charged his unbelieving countrymen: "But unto this day, whosoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart." (2 Cor. 3:15.) And because of their spiritual blindness and deafness, they could not learn from Moses and the prophets.

"Ye search the scriptures, because ye think in them ye have eternal life." The Jews did not need to be exhorted to study the Scriptures because they religiously did so. The extent of their studying the Scriptures was set forth earlier in this lesson. Their problem was understanding. Their great mistake was believing that eternal life was in the Scriptures, the depository of their faith. Jesus said they could not accept the basic truth of the Scriptures: "and these are, they which bear witness of me."

The contemporaries of Jesus would not hear him, nor would they heed his disciples. Stephen charged the people of Jerusalem: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51.) They read the Scriptures with shut minds and hardened hearts. They believed in their own ideas about God, and not what the Scriptures stated. The only way to read the Bible is with every word pointing to Jesus. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob spoke and acted, and entered the stream of human history in the person of Christ and acted through the Word which became flesh. And

John said, "We have seen and heard" him. (1 John 1:3.)

Jesus added: "And ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." The Jews could not accept Christ because he did not say what they wanted to hear, nor show them what they wanted to see. Had he demonstrated his power to drive the Romans from Palestine and to re-establish David's throne, the Jews would have followed him. Instead, he offered them a spiritual kingdom and the way of the cross. Jesus offered them the straight and narrow and difficult way to God.

Work of an Evangelist

(1 Tim. 4:13-16)

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.

The keynote of Paul's charge to Timothy is "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season." (2 Tim. 4:2.) There are set forth in the lesson the urgent responsibilities of an evangelist, and also every Christian. Timothy was commanded to do three things in the church. First, the Scriptures were to be read before the church for their edification. Luke records that Philip heard the Ethiopian "reading Isaiah the prophet." (Acts 3:30.) The knowledge of reading was not as widespread in that age as now, and copies of the Scriptures were few and precious. People gathered to hear read the word of God. (Neh. 8:1-8; Rev. 1:3.) There were many false teachers among the Christians in that age and every age since. The public reading of the Scriptures counteracted the false teachers. Incidentally, this is the first time in the New Testament that we find he commanded to read the Scriptures publicly.

Secondly, the young evangelist was told to engage in exhortation. By this, we are to understand that preaching to the people was required of Timothy. Pleaching is to

be distinguished from teaching, though the two shade into each other. Timothy was urged to read the Bible and to preach. Paul and Barnabas went into a synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia in Asia Minor during Paul's first missionary journey. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Acts 13:15.) Exhortation no doubt included an exposition of the Scriptures. The writer of the Hebrew letter described his letter as an exhortation. (Heb. 13:22.)

Thirdly, a very important part of Timothy's work as an evangelist was teaching. Teaching was most important because false teachers and their doctrines could be exposed. One of the qualifications of an elder is set forth as "apt to teach." (1 Tim. 3:2.) Paul reminded Timothy that "the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:3.) The importance of the teacher is detailed by Paul: "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:2.)

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. Paul wrote in another place: "For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands." (2 Tim. 1:6.) The first instance of an apostle laying his hands upon oilier disciples is found in Acts when Peter and John imparted gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands. (Acts 8:17ff.) The first account of Paul laying his hands upon others to impart gifts of the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 19:6. In these instances, there was a bestowal of a gift for which a task was defined.

The Greek word for *gift* here is *charisma*. This is the same word for *spiritual gifts* in 1 Corinthians 12:1; a list of the spiritual gifts follows. Such spiritual gifts were bestowed by the apostles in the apostolic church and ended with their passing. (1 Cor. 13:8-10.) We need to be especially on guard against the false claims of modern

day "tongue talkers," "faith healers," and "miracle workers" who are present in many places in the contemporary "Jesus movement" and "neo-pentecostalism" scenes. Many are trying to infiltrate churches of Christ.

There is no evidence anywhere in the Scriptures that the eldership was empowered to impart spiritual gifts. Perhaps we have here a current practice in the first century church of an eldership giving their approval to a Christian appointed to a particular ministry in the church. Only the apostles could bestow a gift of the Holy Spirit upon another. The laying on of hands was appropriately accompanied by prayer. (Acts 13:3.)

The use of hands as a symbolic gesture is found in other places. Jesus used his hands to pronounce a benediction (Luke 24:50), and placed his hands upon an individual upon whom he pronounces a blessing (Mark 10:13-16). The gift that was given Timothy by prophecy may be understood as a prophecy made concerning his work as an evangelist.

"Be diligent in these things; give

thyself wholly to them." These things refer back to the whole of verses eleven through thirteen. Furthermore, Timothy was to keep a close watch on himself and his teachings. Paul emphasizes the aspects of his ministry which would be most vital to him: the character of the minister and the purity of his life. The zealous concern of Paul for Timothy is the insistence that the ministry calls for the dedication of every gift.

The reason for this was to save "both thyself and them that hear the e." Paul did not mean that Timothy's ministry was the saving instrument. God only saves, and salvation may only take place through faithful teaching and preaching, and this no faithful Christian dare forget. (Heb. 10:28-31.) We need to be reminded in our age that the church is blessed with an "educated ministry" of teachers, preachers, elders, and deacons. The danger is always present that "much learning" can make a preacher "mad"; and for this reason, the apostle warned Timothy to be diligent and to take heed.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God is not one, two, three, or a multitude. God is one who became the incarnate Word (fleshly state of Christ) and dwelt among man.

2. When a man utters words to another man in truth, he lays bare his soul to him who hears. The word of God expresses to man that part of God's nature that he would have him know.

3. The basis of character of the Hebrew people was their love for God, and Christ laid down the identical principle for Christians.

5. Love and justice are mutually necessary. If a person has love for God, he will act according to the principles set forth in his covenant relationship with God.

6. To love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind, simply means that a person loves God with the

total of his intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers.

7. The very heart of the teaching of the Mosaic law was in the home, and the moral and spiritual training of the child today begins in the Christian home. All other teaching is supplemental.

8. Just to study the Scriptures is not enough. The important factor is the understanding of the Scriptures.

9. To preach the gospel in all seasons is a way of setting forth the urgency to be not slack in teaching the gospel whenever possible.

10. Timothy was urged to use the gifts of God in the work of his ministry. The finest tools will become rusty and worthless if they are not used.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the importance of words spoken by both God and man to others?

What was the attitude of Ezra toward the Mosaic law?

Golden Text

What will the student of God's word do? Why is it that a young man may sometimes be despised because of his youth?

What is the importance of being a student of the Word?

Thou Shalt Teach

Discuss the unity of God's nature.
How is it that we can say that an idol is nothing—that it does not even possess existence?
Why are, love and justice mutually necessary?
Explain that Caleb had a "different spirit."
What importance did the people of Israel attach to the home?
Do Christians, as a general practice, devote as much attention to the home training of their children?
What importance did the Israelites attach to the school training of their children?
Can Christians afford to be less interested than the Israelites in the training of their children?

Search the Scriptures

How do the Old Testament Scriptures testify that Jesus is the Christ?
What is the first messianic scripture in the Old Testament?
What did Jesus mean by saying if the Jews had believed Moses then they would have believed him?
Was it necessary for the Jews to be exhorted to study the Mosaic law?
What mistake did the Jews make in studying the law?
What are some of the reasons for the Jews refusing to accept Jesus to be the Christ?

Work of an Evangelist

What does Paul mean by preaching the word of God in all seasons? Would there not be a time when it would be inappropriate to do so?
Discuss the three parts of Timothy's ministry that he was ordered to fulfill.

Lesson IV—April 28, 1974

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Mark 14:24; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:18-22; 10:28, 29; Rev. 7:14

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

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

18 Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood.

19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

20 Saying. This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward.

21 Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the

blood.

22 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.

28 A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion 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?

14 And I say unto him. My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* (1 John 1:7.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 9:11-15.

Daily Bible Readings

April 22. M.....	The Blood of the Covenant (Heb. 13:18-21)
April 23. T.....	The Blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:13-17)
April 24. W.....	The Blood of the New Testament (Luke 22:14-20)
April 25. T.....	Redeemed By His Blood (1 Pet. 1:17-21)
April 26. F.....	Saved By His Blood (Eph. 1:3-10)
April 27. S.....	Communion of His Blood (1 Cor. 10:14-21)
April 28. S.....	Faith in His Blood (Rom. 3:21-26)

TIME.—Mark, A.D. 33; Acts, A.D. 60; Hebrews, A.D. 64; Revelation, A.D.

96.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Hebrews not known; the Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples; Hebrew Christians; John and the seven churches of Asia.

Introduction

Jesus Christ died upon a Roman cross which was a uniquely designed method of torture and brutality. The significance of the cross is declared by Paul: "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross." (Col. 1:20.)

The Romans from the time of the Carthaginian wars had used the cross to execute criminals and non-Romans who were most odious and hateful to the Romans. The cross of Christ has become the most single important fact in the entire course of human history due to its influence on all of mankind.

The cross to the Romans was the ultimate act of human degradation; but for each Christian, the cross became God's instrument of salvation. To the Romans, the cross was used as an instrument of punishment;

but to Christians, it was the supreme gracious act by which God entered into a new covenant relationship with man. Jesus spoke of his own death on the cross in the cup he blessed in the last supper as "my blood of the covenant." The blood offering of Jesus was of the highest sacrifice because we are brought by it as forgiven people into the presence of God. We are members of the blood-bought institution, the church. Because God loved us he gave his Son to die in our stead.

This lesson is planned to help us understand that there is a reason why Jesus had to die and why it was needed that his blood should be shed. Indeed, it is the height and depth of God's love for him to give his Son for us. And Christ was willing to pay the supreme price in our stead that we might know the destructive enormity of sin.

The Golden Text

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7.)

To walk with God is to walk according to his will. To walk with the forces of evil is to walk in moral and spiritual darkness. To walk with God is to discover fellowship in the church. There are many good people in the world doing good things through good organizations. But the best people on earth are Christians doing the greatest good on earth as Christians. The good

they do is that form of goodness which comes only from God, and God does not set limitations on the goodness of the individual and his deeds.

To walk in the truth is to walk in Christ. We are saved from our sins through the blood of Christ, and we are daily cleansed and saved from our sins because we are in Christ. Christian fellowship is based upon truth. Christians are the "people of the Book." No belief can be fully Christian if he belief fails to promote fellowship among Christians.

The Text Explained

The Last Supper (Mark 14:24)

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

The importance of what Jesus said and did the night of the last passover supper occupied a central position of worship in the apostolic church and does so now. The apostle Paul expressed the significance

of the Lord's supper which was established during the "Last Supper": "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Cor. 11:26.)

Jesus said to his disciples, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." This may only be understood against the background of the passover supper.

Paul expressed the relation of Jesus to the passover: "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ." (1 Cor. 5:7, 8.) The apostle is referring to the ceremonies of the ancient Israelites which they had to perform before eating the passover. They removed every trace of leaven in the home before the passover, and they ate unleavened bread the first day and for seven consecutive days. (Ex. 12:15.) The thought is clear that Christ is both the priest and the sacrifice. He gave himself as the passover lamb. Christ gave himself as a sacrifice to propitiate for our sins.

The practice of eating the passover applied to every Hebrew family dating from the Egyptian period. The feast of the passover falls in the "first month of the year" which is the month of Abib. (Ex. 12:2; 13:4.) According to the biblical commandment, the lamb was to be slain on the evening of Abib 14 and had to be eaten the same evening which would be after sundown on the beginning of Abib 15.

In the time of our Lord, elaborate preparations were made for the passover season which included the repairing of the roads and whitening of the roadside tombs lest the pilgrims be made ritually unclean by touching them. Every adult male among the Israelites was required to show three times each year in Jerusalem for the passover, Pentecost, and the feast of the tabernacles. The pilgrims would make up temporary groups to provide for the supper, e.g., Jesus ate the passover with his disciples. (See Luke 22:12.) The passover was essentially a family festival and observed in every Jewish home. The passover commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the sparing of every first born.

Mark explains what Jesus said and did during the passover when he instituted the Lord's supper. The rite with all of its essential features is described in the *Mishnah* (Pesahim 10). The head of each family conducted the services as a priest of his own household. The procedures of the passover come in this order: The father takes the Cup of the Kiddush which means

"sanctification" and prays over it, and then all the members of the family drink of it. This was followed by a hand washing ceremony. A piece of parsley was taken and dipped in a bowl of salt water and eaten. The parsley stood for the hyssop used for sprinkling of the blood upon the door post, and the salt water stood for the tears shed in Egypt and for the waters of the Red Sea which the Israelites had safely passed.

Then comes the ceremony of breaking the bread with the appropriate prayers. Three circles of unleavened bread lay on the table. Only the middle one was broken at that time. This was to remind the family of the bread of affliction they ate in Egypt and to remind them that the slaves had only a partial loaf of broken crumbs to eat.

Among the children gathered around the table, the youngest would ask the question: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" This provided the father with the occasion to explain the memorial of deliverance from Egypt, followed by an exposition of Deuteronomy 26:5-9. In every age a Hebrew was to regard himself as if he went forth out of Egypt: "And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, It is because of that which Jehovah did for me when I came forth out of Egypt." (Ex. 13:8.) The key words in this part of the ceremony were: "passover," because the destroyer passed over their houses in Egypt; "unleavened bread" because their fathers were delivered from Egypt while the dough was still in the kneading troughs; and "bitter herbs" because the Egyptians made bitter the lives of their fathers in Egypt.

Next, Psalms 113 and 114 were sung. The Second Cup was drunk which was the cup of explaining. Other parts of the service included the washing of hands in certain places, the second, third, and fourth drinking of the cup, the eating of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and the meal proper. A final psalm was sung. Psalm 136, followed by two short prayers. Psalm 136 must have been the one sung by Jesus and his disciples before he went to the Garden of Gethsemane.

We may envision the events

which transpired during the course of the passover which Jesus ate with his disciples. At some place in the meal Jesus "took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body." And the cup for which Jesus gave thanks and gave to his disciples, he declared to be "my blood of the covenant." The covenant is not that old covenant set forth in Exodus 24:3-8 and agreed to by the people. This was a new obedience entirely dependent on a new covenant. The prophecy of the new covenant is stated in Jeremiah 31:31; and its fulfillment is affirmed in Hebrews 10:16-17. The saving efficacy of the blood of Jesus is declared in this connection: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way." (Heb. 10:19, 20.)

In the land of Egypt it was the blood of the paschal lamb that delivered those on whose house it was sprinkled. Jesus led his disciples to understand that what the passover could not attain, his death would.

The form and procedure of the Lord's supper instituted by Jesus on this evening, is described by Paul: "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed. . . ." (1 Cor. 11:23.) Paul repeats the words of Jesus: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:25.)

The importance of the Lord's supper in the church during the first century is compellingly set forth by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth. From the earliest days, the church met around the Lord's table. Luke writes of the church in Jerusalem after its beginning on Pentecost: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42.) The apostle met with the disciples at Troas on the first day of the week "to break bread." (Acts 20:7.)

The Blood-Bought Church

(Acts 20:28)

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy

Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.

Matthew and Luke record the purpose of the shed blood of Jesus: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20.) "And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." (Matt. 26:27.)

Life is very closely connected with the blood which flows through the body. If it runs out, the life of the body ebbs away. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life." (Lev. 17:11.) The Mosaic law deliberately states—"for the blood is the life." (Deut. 12:23.) Under the Law of Moses, vengeance is the first and foremost claim of justice on the part of the person offended. If he is killed, then his blood cries for vengeance from the ground as it said of Abel in Genesis 4:10.

The significance of the blood to the life of the body becomes especially meaningful in Paul's charge to the elders at Ephesus "to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." The church is a blood-bought institution. The church is the body of Christ through which the saving power of his blood flows. We are living members of his body, and he is the head of the body.

Paul met with the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, on his final journey to Jerusalem. He was hurrying so as to arrive in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. After Paul landed at Miletus, he sent word to Ephesus, some thirty miles away, for the elders of the church to meet him in Miletus. With such information as we have, Paul had stayed longer in Ephesus preaching than in any other place. (Acts 20:31.)

Paul purposed to give the Ephesian elders such encouragement and exhortation he knew they needed. The speech that Paul made to the elders is continued in verses 18 through 35. This is the only speech which Luke records in Acts that

Paul delivered to a group of Christians.

In the first part of his speech, Paul reminds them of his manner of life while he lived among them at Ephesus, of his humble service, the dangers and troubles to which he was exposed because of the hatred and conspiracy of the Jews against him. Notwithstanding, Paul courageously and untiringly preached the gospel publicly and from house to house.

Paul expressed his apprehensions that imprisonment and even worse things awaited him in Jerusalem. But he was prepared to surrender his liberty and even his life if it need be. Self preservation was not what Paul esteemed most, but that he might fulfill the course which Christ had marked out for him.

Paul knew that he was speaking for the last time to the leaders from Ephesus. They would see his face no more. Paul declared to them on that day that he was free from the blood of all men, for, he had not failed to preach to them the whole counsel of God.

The lesson text (Acts 20:28); contains the last words and final charge of Paul to the Ephesian elders. The Holy Spirit had entrusted to their care the responsibility of the church at Ephesus. They were the shepherds of the church of the Lord and the overseers of its worship and work. The word translated bishop comes from the Greek word *episkopoi* which means "overseer." The word appears five times in the New Testament; and in four of the occasions (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7 and the present passage), it applies to elders of the church. In 1 Peter 2:25, the word is applied to Christ.

The leaders of the church of Ephesus were men recognized and qualified by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to assume their responsibility to tend to the church of the Lord which he had purchased with his own life blood. And Paul warns the elders to be on guard unceasingly lest the flock be invaded by unscrupulous teachers who would not spare the church

The Blood of the Covenant

(Heb. 9:18-22)

Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without

blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. 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.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews relates the covenant which God made with the people of Israel by Moses with the covenant which God has made with all people through Christ. He calls the Mosaic law the first covenant, and the covenant established through Christ is called the new covenant. The first covenant was imperfect because the law could not save: "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10:4.) On the other hand, the blood of Jesus cleanses man forever more: "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.)

The verses of the lesson text (Heb. 9:18-22) refer to a description of the sacrifices which were made in the inauguration of the first covenant as recorded in Exodus 24:3-8. "Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do." (Ex. 24:3.) And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah, and rose up early in the morning and builded an altar under the mount, and erected twelve pillars according to the number of the tribes of Israel, so as to prepare the place where God would soon enter into a covenant relationship with the people.

Moses sent young men of the children of Israel to prepare the sacrifices, and directed them to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings to Jehovah.

Moses then took half of the blood and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

Moses then took the book of the covenant and read it in the audience of the people. And they said: "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." (Ex. 24:7.) Verses 19 and 20 of Hebrews 9 present, for the most part, the content of these aforementioned verses in Exodus." The account in Hebrews contains certain elements not in the Exodus narrative. It is recorded that Moses "took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people." (Heb. 9:19.)

The words which Moses spoke next remind us of the words used by Jesus at the institution of the Lord's supper. Moses said in sealing the covenant with blood: "Behold the blood of the covenant, which Jehovah hath made with you concerning all these words." (Ex. 24:8.) Jesus said: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." (Mark 14:24.)

It was a fixed principle of the law that, almost without exception, all things were purified by blood, and that without the shedding of blood, there was no redemption. The exception was that an impoverished Israelite could offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour to the priest for his sin offering in lieu of a lamb or even a pair of turtledoves. (Lev. 5:11.) The blood which Moses sprinkled upon the altar stood for the natural life of the people which was given to God as a life which had passed through death; and through the sprinkling of the blood on the people, they were restored back to life through the grace of God. In this way, the blood established the covenant between God and the people, and was a renewal of the life of the people of Israel as they entered then into God's assembly as his "chosen people."

Nor was the ratification of the first covenant the only occasion for the sprinkling of blood: "Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood." Similar services are described in other places in the Mosaic law. The horns of the altar of burnt offering were smeared with sacrificial blood (Ex. 29:12); and on the Day of Atonement the mercy seat and the

horns of the altar of the burnt offering were to be sprinkled with sacrificial blood (Lev. 16:14-19). And Hebrews 9:21 says that the tabernacle itself and all the vessels were sprinkled with blood. The principle is explicitly set forth in Hebrews that "apart from the shedding of blood, there is no remission."

Now we turn back for a moment to the Hebrew sacrificial system: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls." (Lev. 17:11.) Christ made atonement for us through the shedding of his life's blood in being our own and so insured for each of us the divine forgiveness of God. (Heb. 9:26,27.)

Blood Guilt

(Heb. 10:28)

A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses.

The law of the "blessing and the curse" is not set forth as such in the new covenant, but the principle, nevertheless, is present. The law is set forth early in the life of the Hebrew people: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." (Gen. 9:6.) In Hebrews 10:28ff, the writer speaks with a sternness that is almost without parallel in the New Testament.

The Mosaic law was inexorable in spelling out punishment for the person who despised the law. The law condemned to death any of the people of Israel who were guilty of the sin of idolatry. On the ground of the evidence of two or three people, the guilty person was condemned and no mercy was shown to him. (Deut. 17:2-7) The writer now sets forth in the most solemn and impressive language the serious nature and consequences against the wilful rebellion of the individual who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath "counted the blood of the covenant ... an unholy thing." Christ made the final sacrifice for the sins of man. When a man denies the Lord after having once accepted him, there is no other sacrifice for him. This is a repudiation of the sacrifice of Christ and all the blessings which flow from it.

Washed in the Blood of the Lamb

(Rev. 7:14)

And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

John relates that he beheld God on this throne holding a scroll fastened with seven seals. The lamb standing before God's throne as though it had been slain takes the book from the hand of God to break the seals. With the breaking of the fifth seal, John sees a great host of martyrs arrayed in white robes who had been slain for the word of God. (Rev. 6:9.) One of the four and twenty elders who stood in the presence of God asked John who

were those arrayed in white robes. John answered, My Lord, thou knowest." The elder informed John: "These are they that have come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

John talks about the blood of the Lamb here which is the blood of Christ often mentioned in the New Testament. His blood is offered as a sacrifice to God. But we must keep in mind both the life and death of Christ. The blood of Christ stands for his death and a guarantee of life to his disciples. The blood of Christ cleanses us from our sins (1 John 1:7), and it is through his blood that we have redemption (Eph. 1:7).

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The cross of Christ has become the most important fact in the history of mankind due to the influence of Christ and his teachings upon the whole of the human race.

2. The Roman cross which brutalized and dehumanized man became the means of bringing the grace of God through which salvation was provided for man.

3. There are many good people in the world doing good things; but the best people in the world doing the best things are Christians because their acts honor God.

4. The Lord's supper brings Christians together upon the first day of the week.

5. Christ is the Christian's *passover*, and the Lord's supper is a memorial supper to remind us that Christ died as a sacrifice in our stead.

6. The church that Christ built and which he purchased with his own blood should wear only his name and members of his body should be called Christians only.

7. Elders are the overseers and shepherds of the church.

8. Blood is the life of the flesh and life is God's most precious gift to man. Jesus shed his blood and gave his life that we might live eternally with God.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

When did the Romans begin using the cross as a means of executing criminals?

Why is the cross of Christ the most important fact in human history?

Golden Text

Why is darkness such an apt figure of speech to describe people who live in spiritual darkness?

Discuss the statement that the best people on earth doing the greatest amount of good are Christians.

Should we oppose people who are doing good though they are not Christians?

The Last Supper

What is the importance of the Lord's supper in Christian worship? What does the Lord's supper do for Christians?

Should we regard the Lord's supper as replacing the passover supper?

Who is the Christian's "passover"?

The Blood-Bought Church

What is the relation of life to blood in the body as set forth in Leviticus 17:11?

What was the purchase price of the church?

How does a leader differ in character from the person who gives orders out of authority to his subordinates?

The Blood of the Covenant

Why was the first covenant imperfect?

Discuss the fact that almost all things in the worship of the Hebrews under the Mosaic law was purified by blood.

What was the exception?

Blood Guilt

What happened to the person who despoiled the Mosaic law?

What will happen to the person who despoiled the blood of Christ?

Washed in the Blood of the Lamb
Who were the great host of people whose robes had been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

How does the shed blood and death of Christ stand as a guarantee of life to his disciples?
How are we made nigh to God through the blood of Christ?

Lesson V—May 5, 1974

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 3:22, 23; Eph. 1:19-23; Rev. 19:11-16

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

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

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

22 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.

23 And it shall be, that every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.

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

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

21 Far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only

in this world, but also in that which is to come:

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

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

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself.

13 And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.

15 And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.*” (Matt. 17:5.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 1:21-28.

Daily Bible Readings

April 29. M.....	Christ Has All Authority (Matt. 28:16-20)
April 30. T.....	Christ Spoke with Authority (Matt. 7:24-29)
May1. W.....	Christ's Authority to Execute Judgment (John 5:24-29)
May2. T.....	Christ's Authority to Forgive Sins (Matt. 9:1-8)
May 3. F.....	Christ's Authority Over Unclean Spirits (Mark 6:7-13)
May 4. S.....	Christ's Authority from God (Matt. 17:1-5)
May5. S.....	Christ Predicted By Moses (Deut. 18:1-18)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 33; Acts, A.D. 33; Ephesians, A.D. 64; Revelation, A.D. 96.

PLACES.—Galilee; Jerusalem; Rome; the Isle of Patmos.

PERSONS.—Jesus and his disciples; Jesus and the Jews; Paul and Timothy; John and the glorified Christ.

Introduction

In the early part of the ministry of Jesus, he entered the synagogue in Capernaum on a sabbath day and taught. "And they were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22.) No scribe would dare give a decision on his own. Instead, the scribe would always begin, "There is a teaching." The revelation to Moses in the law was final and complete. All the other scripture neither added to nor took anything away from the Mosaic law.

The scribes in their teaching would usually read three proof texts, one from the law, another from the prophets, and a third proof text from the *hagiography* (other scriptures such as the Psalms). The books of the Old Testament were designated "The Scripture" or "The Holy Scripture," and were by this meaning separated from all other books. The New Testament agrees with this usage, as in Paul's statement to Timothy: "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 3:15.)

Since the scribes were chief opponents of Jesus, we need to know something about them. The scribe in the time of Jesus was a man learned in the Scriptures. The scribes were also called lawyers (see Matt. 22:35, Luke 7:30); lawyer and scribe are equal terms in the New Testament and are never mentioned together. "And it came to pass on one of those days, that he was teach-

ing; and there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by." (Luke 5:17.)

Although Jesus directed his criticism against the scribes and Pharisees, he recognized them as the legitimate interpreters of the law, and he instructed his disciples to obey their injunctions: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:3.) Jesus was directing attention to the fact that the scribes emphasized the oral "traditions of the fathers" (unwritten law) to the extent of making the Mosaic law secondary.

Now we may ask wherein the teachings of Jesus differed so from the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus spoke as one having authority, for he needed no authority beyond himself. He cited no authority, and he spoke with the finality of God's voice. (Heb. 1:1-3.) "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitude were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." (Matt. 7:28.)

Late in his ministry, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Jesus in the temple with the question, after he had driven the money changers from the temple: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21:23.) Suffice it to say that the authority of Jesus came from God.

The Golden Text

This is my beloved. Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. (Matt. 17:15.)

The golden text finds its setting on a mountain top somewhere in northern Palestine. Tradition has placed the Mount of Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in south Galilee. But this is an unlikely setting. Jesus traveled with his disciples to Caesarea Philippi on the southern

slopes of Mount Hermon. At this place, Peter confessed Jesus to be the "Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.) Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain. Mount Hermon, some fourteen miles north of Caesarea Philippi, qualifies as a high mountain, being 9,200 feet high. And he was transfigured before them; "and his face did shine as the sun." And

Moses and Elijah appeared before them talking with Jesus. Luke says the subject of their conversation was his death on the cross and what he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:33.)

Peter suggested building three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. "While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them."

In the meeting on the mountain

The Text Explained

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Matthew records some of the last words of Jesus spoke on earth in what we call the Great Commission. Jesus began by saying: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on earth." The authority is based upon the messiahship of Jesus as stated by the apostle Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.) God "hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." (Heb. 1:2.)

There can be no doubt that the Great Commission was contained in the original text of Matthew. The words are found in all the ancient manuscripts and versions.

That Jesus possessed "all authority" means that he has full authority to command and to require obedience to his command. Jesus commanded his disciples: "Go . . . make disciples of all the nations." The scribes and Pharisees questioned the authority of Jesus. A certain lawyer inquired of Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replied with the first and greatest commandment, to love God, and the second, to love thy neighbor as thyself. A lawyer wanting the neighbor identified, was told about him in the story of the "good Samaritan." (Luke 10:25ff.) It was difficult for the Jew to accept the Gentile on equal

top came a voice out of the bright cloud: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Moses was the great law giver of Israel to whom God had given the law from Mount Sinai. Elijah was one of the great prophets of Israel. God had spoken his judgments to the people through the prophets. (Heb. 1:1.) Now they were to hear and obey the Son.

terms; but under Christ, it must be so. "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is the Lord of all." (Rom. 10:12.)

Jesus further said, "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." At the time Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, and God acknowledged him as his Son in whom he was well pleased. (Matt. 3:16, 17.) "Those who are 'discipled' are to be baptized. They were not to baptize 'all the nations,' but those of 'the nations' who were 'discipled.' . . . The baptism is to be done 'into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means the combined authority of the Godhead. To be baptized into this is to be brought by baptism into actual subjection to the combined authority of heaven." (*Commentary on Matthew*, by H. Leo Boles.)

The words of Jesus are without compromise: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." The apostle Paul delivered the curse against anyone who changes the gospel and preaches a different message. He said, "Let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:9.) And the last words of Jesus have a special meaning: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

A Prophet Like unto Moses (Acts 3:22, 23)

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.

God made a promise to the Israelites in the desert: "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deut. 18:15.) The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John the Baptist to ask him, "Who art thou?" John confessed that he was not the Messiah. The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to come. They believed they were God's chosen people, and longed for the day when God would intervene to drive out the Romans.

They also asked John the Baptist if he were Elijah. The Jews believed that Elijah would return to earth to precede the coming of the Messiah. (See Mal. 4:5.) Again John answered in the negative. And then they asked, "Art thou the prophet?" And he answered, "No." (John 1:19-21.)

The answer to the question is that Jesus is "the prophet" who is likened unto Moses. The children of Israel hearkened unto Moses, and so must we give heed to Christ who is our lawgiver. The confusion over the identity of the prophet centered in the fact that Moses was a member of the tribe of Levi. The Scriptures explicitly state that the Messiah would come forth from the tribe of Judah: "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse." (Isa. 11:1.) And of the Messiah, it was declared: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it." (Isa. 9:7.) The analogy of Jesus with Moses then must be in the role of a lawgiver, not a king.

This passage from Deuteronomy was set forth as a Mosaic prophecy of Christ. Stephen quoted Deuteronomy 18:15 to prove the messiahship of Jesus. (Acts 8:37.) Moses spoke of and looked for the coming of Jesus: "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46, 47.) Jesus spoke the preceding words to unbelieving Jews.

At God's Right Hand

(Eph. 1:19-23)

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

The Ephesian letter is one of Paul's prison epistles. Paul gathers all of the great Christian doctrines together in the Ephesian letter as they find their vital center in Christ and the church which is his body.

The lesson text has its setting in a prayer which Paul gave for the Ephesian Christians. He prayed that they might have wisdom, and it is not possible to know about God unless one is taught. An understanding of the revelation of the knowledge of God becomes a spiritual matter when the eyes of the heart have become enlightened. Only then is a disciple of Christ able to grasp the hope of his calling and to comprehend the glory of his inheritance as a Christian.

Paul gives special emphasis to part of that inheritance in his reference to the power of Christ: "and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might." Paul is using the strongest possible words to point up the infinite magnitude of God's power to work out the salvation of man through Christ.

The power of God is available to all men. God wrought (worked) this power through Christ when "he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." We are dealing with facts of history. Peter said of Christ on the first Pentecost, God "raised up, having loosed the pangs of death." (Acts 2:24.) And the raising of Christ from the dead is a further mark of his approval of Jesus Christ as his Son: "Who was declared to be the Son of God with

power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4.) God's power is further shown in that he made Christ "to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." Although the ascension of Christ is not often described in the New Testament (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9), the significance of the ascension is stressed (Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:22). The cross, the resurrection, and ascension are set forth in Paul's writings as three parts of one great act of God. The measure of God's power is declared to indicate his divine strength to raise us up to live in heavenly places: "God both raised the Lord, and will raise us up through his power." (1 Cor. 6:14.)

The keynote of this lesson is sounded in these words that Christ's rule is "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion and every name that is named." To this place he was exalted after he humbled himself to become flesh to accept the cross and the grave.

God also gave him a name which is above every name: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave him the name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:9.) Paul asserts the powers of evil are now made subordinate to the authority and power of Christ. (Col. 2:15.)

Paul brings all these matters together declaring that God has put "all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church." Christ took upon himself full humanity and restored what man defaulted through sinning in Eden. Man may stand now in full dignity, restored by Christ.

Christ is now Lord of all, and this is particularly true in relationship to the church which is his body. He is the head of the body, the church. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. 3:17.) To do a thing in the name of the Lord Jesus is to do it by his authority and as he authorizes it to be done. We have far too long been exposed to sectarian religious jargon. Too often the statement is made that "the church never saves anybody." An honest look here is needed. Christ indeed is the saviour of man and salvation is promised only in

Christ. The saved of the earth constitute the church. Christ is "the saviour of the body," the church. (Eph. 5:23.) Christ adds all of the saved to the church. (Acts 2:47.)

"The fulness of him that filleth all in all." The apostle is saying that the fullest measure of Christ that man may comprehend on earth is in the church. The church is the body of Christ bought with his blood.

King of Kings

(Rev. 19:11-16)

And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes are the flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

The Book of Revelation is probably the least read book in the New Testament, and the most often misinterpreted. The theme of Revelation is centered in the age old struggle between good and evil, and during a fiery period of persecutions against the Christians within the Roman Empire. The defeat of Satan is pictured in the Apocalypse (Revelation) of John at the end of the ages. Satan invaded Eden and planted the seed of sin in the heart of Eve. The struggle has not ceased; but with the coming of Christ and the establishment of his church, the end is foretold in Revelation. The Christian martyrs were being put to death in ever increasing numbers because they refused to offer sacrifices upon pagan altars.

John saw mounted on a white horse one who is called "Faithful and True" and who in righteousness

did judge and make war. This is a triumphant picture of the conquering Christ. John sees the Christ as the warrior who smites and destroys his enemies. The white horse is a symbol of victory. Christ is given the title of "Faithful and True" because the judgments of God can be no other than just and true. Man may stake his life on the faithfulness of Christ to accomplish his promise, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"And in righteousness he doth judge and make war." Justice was not expected from the tyrants of Rome who ruled with capricious will. Wars were a matter of tyranny and waged for gain and glory. Pagan justice was a synonym for corruption and bribery. The triumphant Christ, on the other hand, would dispense justice and wage relentless war against the unjust.

His eyes were a "flame of fire." (Rev. 1:14.) Many diadems were upon his head. The Crown worn by Christ was a royal crown. He is the King of kings over all the kingdoms of the world. And the name which he wears, which no one knoweth but he himself, is such a mysterious name that humanity cannot fathom its width and depth.

His name is "The Word of God." We are reminded here that the Word became flesh and dwelt on earth. (John 1:4.) This picture is much closer, however, to the sharp, two-edged sword described in Hebrews 4:12. The Messiah appears as an invincible warrior against whom his foes cannot stand.

The armies of heaven followed close upon him clothed in linen, white and as pure as the righteous judgment of God. "And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword."

This symbol first appears in Revelation 1:16. This is the weapon the Messiah will use to destroy the enemies of righteousness. "And he shall rule them with a rod of iron." (This was foretold in Revelation 12:5.)

"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalm 2:9.) The Messiah is pictured as trampling out the vintage where the wrath of God is stored. A wine press is used as the example. Ripe grapes were put in stone troughs and trampled with the bare feet until the troughs ran red with the crushed grape. The enemies of God will be forced to drink of the wine of the wrath of God to their own doom and destruction.

The power and conquering might of the Messiah are in the words inscribed upon his thigh and upon his garments: "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Christ is singled out as the King above all kings with an authority which is above all authorities. He is the Lord above all other lords to whom complete obedience is owed as to one whose authority is beyond question. This picture of the conquering King of kings in Revelation precedes the final and universal destruction of evil and all its forces in this world. (Rev. 20.)

This lesson has proposed to define the meaning of the authority of Christ in the Christian's life, in the church and in all the earth. Christ will not be content with divided loyalties to his authority, nor a perversion of the New Testament Scriptures regardless of how pure a person may claim his motives to be.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The authority of Jesus did not come from written Scriptures as was true of the scribes. The authority of Christ came from God.

2. The scribes were students of the Mosaic law, but they misinterpreted the Scriptures through their own opinions and the traditions of men. Christians can be guilty of the same practice.

3. Christ and his teaching take precedence over Moses and the law and the prophets and their teachings. Moses and the prophets fulfilled

their mission in bringing us to Christ.

4. The authority of Jesus is not divided with the past or the present. No one has the authority to speak for Christ. He speaks for himself in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are wrested if a Christian does more or less.

5. The words of Jesus are without compromise, and Paul pronounced the curse of God on anyone for altering the Scriptures.

6. We may say, in a sense, that

Jesus was a lawgiver, priest, prophet, and scribe, because he filled

all these roles through his authority as the Christ.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Why were the people in the synagogue at Capernaum astonished at the teachings of Jesus?

Why were the scribes the chief opponents of Jesus?

Did the lawyers form a special class of professional men from the scribes?

Did Jesus acknowledge the right of the Pharisees and scribes to interpret the law?

What were the "traditions of the fathers"?

Why were the chief priests and elders unable to understand the authority of Christ?

Golden Text

Locate the Mount of Transfiguration.

Who appeared with Jesus on the mountain?

What did Peter suggest to Jesus that they do?

What is the lesson that we are supposed to get from the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the mountain top?

The Great Commission

Who gave to Jesus all authority in heaven and on earth?

Whom were the apostles to baptize?

How are the Gentiles included in the great Commission?

Into what were they to be baptized?

A Prophet Like unto Moses

Discuss the fact that Moses was a prophet as well as a lawgiver.

Whom did Moses have in mind when he spoke of "that prophet"?

Discuss the relationship of Christ to Moses as a lawgiver and a prophet.

How is the power of God made available through Christ?

What does it mean that Jesus has a name which is above every name?

How is the church to be thought of as the body of Christ?

Are all the saved in the church?

King of Kings

Describe the "King of kings" as set forth in the book of Revelation.

What is the theme of Revelation?

What is the nature of the method of warfare of the Messiah as presented in Revelation?

How is it that no man can know the name of Christ except Christ himself?

How is Christ to be thought of as the King above all other kings?

Lesson VI—May 12, 1974

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Isa. 9:6, 7; Matt. 19:28, 29; Heb. 1:1-4; 12:1, 2

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

28 And Jesus said unto them. Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

29 And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall re-

ceive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.

1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners.

2 Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

4 Having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

1 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,

2 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne. . . ” (Acts 2:30.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1:18-20.

Daily Bible Readings

May	6.	M.....	Christ in Genesis (Gen. 3:15, 16; 49:10)
May	7.	T.....	Christ's Throne in Heaven (Psalm 11:1-7)
May	8.	W.....	Christ Raised Up to Sit (Acts 2:29-36)
May	9.	T.....	Christ Promised David's Throne (2 Sam. 7:13-17)
May	10.	F.....	Christ's Throne, A Throne of Justice (Isa. 9:6-8)
May	11.	S.....	Christ, At the Right Hand of God (Heb. 12:1-4)
May	12.	S.....	Christ Now Reigning (1 Cor 15:23-25)

TIME.—Isaiah, 740 B.C.; Matthew, A.D. 33; Hebrews, A.D., not known.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; not known for Hebrews.

PERSONS.—Isaiah and people of Judah; Jesus and the twelve apostles; Hebrew Christians.

Introduction

To speak of the reign of Christ presupposes the existence of his kingdom. “Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.” (Mark 1:14.) The good news that Jesus preached was that the hour had struck for the coming of the kingdom. The “kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” are used interchangeably. The kingdom involves God's rule and kingship. The kingdom is that place where God's will is done upon earth. (Matt. 6:10.) To be in God's kingdom now is to be in the church.

The central theme of Christ's personal ministry was the good news of the kingdom which was near at hand. Jesus spoke of the kingdom in different ways: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17): “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). Christ promised Peter: “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

(Matt. 16:19.) Simon Peter had previously confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus said in response—“Upon this rock I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:16-18.)

The kingdom of heaven was understood by the Jews to mean the authority of God on earth. The kingdom of heaven on earth provides a striking contrast with the wicked kingdoms of the world. Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3.) To inherit the earth meant explicitly entering the messianic kingdom. (Isa. 60:21.)

The identifying of the kingdom of God with the church is stated by Luke: “But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized.” (Acts 8:12.) We need to be on guard against the false and misleading doctrines which separate the kingdom of God and the church.

The Golden Text

God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne. (Acts 2:30.)

In Acts 2:25-29, Peter quotes from Psalm 16:8-11. “Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul into Hades.”

Peter pointed out that David was dead and his sepulchre was in their midst. Peter relates the prophecy concerning Christ whose soul was not left in Hades, nor did his body see corruption. David was speaking of Christ, the fruit of his loins, who was raised up to sit on his throne in the kingdom of God.

The Text Explained

The Messianic Kingdom

(Isa. 9:6, 7)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this.

The name Isaiah means "the Lord is salvation," or "the Lord is the source of salvation." Isaiah sets forth in many places the nature of the Messiah, and the messianic kingdom is drawn in clear and graphic terms unmatched by other prophets.

We have learned in previous lessons that it was the purpose of God to raise up a great nation of people from the loins of Abraham, to bring them up out of the land of Egypt, and to settle them in Palestine. Jerusalem became in time the capital of the kingdom of Israel. Saul was Israel's first king and ruled forty years. He was followed by David and Solomon who each ruled forty years. God promised in David's reign to set up a messianic kingdom to be ruled by the Messiah.

Jehovah commanded the prophet Nathan to say to David: "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." (2 Sam. 7:12, 13.)

The Messiah of whom Nathan spoke is described in great detail in Isaiah beginning with the prophecy of his virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14, and the noble description of him in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. This great king was Jesus who would accomplish his mission in Jerusalem, be crucified on a cross, and raised from the dead. The Messiah would mount to the throne of David at God's right hand. (Acts 2:32-36.)

Daniel spoke of the messianic kingdom: "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." (Dan. 2:44.)

Isaiah began his prophetic career as a young man when Uzziah was king, and his ministry lasted about forty years. Isaiah lived in what were seemingly propitious times. The kingdom of Judah had grown into a strong commercial and military state. Such a state of prosperity had not been enjoyed since the days of Solomon. During his fifty-two year reign, Uzziah had built a strong standing army with strong walled cities for fortifications. The king dismantled the Philistine strong holds at Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod. The Edomites and Ammonites became his vassals.

Isaiah saw no cause for rejoicing in the false prosperity. As Amos and Hosea had denounced the idolatry and hypocrisy of Israel, Isaiah spoke the judgments of God against a proud and arrogant Judah. Isaiah lived to see Samaria put under siege and watched the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Although Isaiah did not live to see Jerusalem fall, he lived on the edge of this fateful day. Isaiah tried in vain to awaken Judah to a consciousness of her sins. He warned of Judah's doom and spoke of a salvation that was to come.

In the first two verses of the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the people are pictured as walking in a great darkness. Judah was living under the shadow of a threatened Assyrian invasion. But they were living in an even greater darkness of sin, ignorance, misery, and depravity. In the midst of this darkness the people were living in, the prophet saw a great breaking through upon the people. This darkness of death would hang over them for centuries. Only a great light could dispel this great darkness. Matthew spoke of that light: "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up." (Matt. 4:16.) The light that came which dispelled the darkness and brought life and immortality appeared in the person of Christ: "There was

the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." (John 1:9.)

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah who is the source of light.

"For unto us a child is born." Isaiah speaks of this birth as if it had already occurred. The birth was predicted earlier: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14.) This child is a son of David. "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isa. 22:22.) Furthermore, the Messiah, the son of David, was known also as the Son of God: "Jehovah said unto me. Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." (Psalm 2:7.)

"And the government shall be upon his shoulder." The responsibilities of the messianic kingdom would be upon his shoulder. This child, of course, would become in due time a ruler, and the full burden of his duties would be carried with honor. The child is to be a ruler, a king, a mighty sovereign.

His kingdom would be a rule of grace, but his power and authority would extend from earth to heaven. (Matt. 18:18.) We may remember at this place that Judah's very existence in Isaiah's time was being threatened by the Assyrians. This child who would be a king would have a kingdom not of this world. (John 18:36.)

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor." What is the importance of these beautiful and glorious names? The word "wonder" is associated with the wondrous acts of God who created the starry heavens above and parted the waters of the Red Sea. All such mighty works of God are characterized as wonders. The child "shall be called Wonderful," that is marvelous, astonishing.

To sit upon David's throne in the messianic kingdom without end requires a form of wisdom not possessed by ordinary man. In this king will be found the veritable wisdom and knowledge of God. (See Isa. 11:1, 2.) The Messiah will have no need to be surrounded with officials and advisors in one capacity or another as is natural for human kings. The Messiah will

give counselling as only God is able, because he is the Son of God.

"Mighty God." In this name, we are brought to a confrontation with the deity of the Messiah. In the child, we come face to face with his humanity. (John 1:1, 2.) The prophet is giving us an insight into the divine nature of Christ centuries before he came into this world.

"Everlasting Father." The name "Father" reminds us of the patriarchs. The Messiah would act like a father to his children. "Thou O Jehovah, art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name." (Isa. 63:16.) Forever he will be a good shepherd to his people.

"The Prince of Peace." His kingdom and rule will not be summed up in "war and peace." Rather his rule shall be in peace because it is his nature to seek peace and pursue it. The messianic rule of peace does not only mean a cessation of war, but even the removal of the causes of war. Sin must be countered and destroyed. The enmity between God and man wrought by sin must be removed. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.) Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God." (Matt. 5:9.)

"Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end." There would be no end to this character of government. David extended the kingdom of Israel over forty years and Solomon ruled in peace for the same period. But the Messiah's kingdom would perpetually grow in both size and peace. The kingdom will be ruled in justice because the king is just. To this form of justice, man will be willing to submit. The word "righteous" means "to be full of right." Justice and righteousness go hand in hand. Injustice and oppression will have no place in the Messiah's kingdom. The foundation of the kingdom would be righteousness and justice.

Luke describes this kingdom and its ruler: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his

kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32, 33.)

"The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this." We need to keep in mind that the Assyrians were poised to the north ready to swoop down upon Judah like "a wolf upon the fold." Only God's zealous concern could save them: Isaiah prophesied. "Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there." (Isa. 37:33.)

And of the messianic rule, the zealous concern of God and his deep love of the people shall bring it to pass. Furthermore, God is jealous of his honor and will bring to pass all he has purposed in the child that is to be born and his kingdom to be established. He was called Immanuel (God with us) (Isa. 7:14); and his mother named him Jesus, which means saviour (Matt. 1:21-23).

The Messianic Throne (Matt. 19:28, 29.)

And Jesus said unto them. Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and shall inherit eternal life.

The kingdom of Christ had not been envisioned by the scribes. They looked for the kingdom to come in a spectacular manner. The scribes looked forward to a time when the Jewish kingdom would become a reality. The Jews would be emancipated from their oppressors and they would be happy and prosperous forever. Happiness and prosperity would be the marks of the kingdom, and to these would be added peace and justice and righteousness and a knowledge of God. The Jews never lost hope that they and all other men would one day constitute a kingdom with one eternal king: "And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall Jehovah be one, and his name one." (Zech. 14:9.)

Not even the disciples of Jesus understood the nature of his kingdom. They had been trained in

Jewish thought and thought that Jesus would enter Jerusalem to set up a visible throne. The mother of James and John requested that her sons might sit, one on his right hand, and the other on his left hand, when he came into his kingdom. (Matt. 20:20, 21.) The disciples of Jesus came in great numbers to welcome him into Jerusalem in the week of his crucifixion: "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David." (Mark 11:10.) Jesus, however, did not subscribe to the Jewish ideal of a future golden age with a scion of David seated on an earthly throne in Jerusalem. Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was something that would be realized from within.

Jesus promised the disciples that if they followed him, in the regeneration they would "sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The use of the word regeneration as used in this context is found in only one other place in the New Testament. Paul wrote to Titus, "According to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Tit. 3:5.) The word literally means "being born anew." As applied to the human heart, it means a great change such as a sinner becoming a Christian.

We should understand in the words, "when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory" that Jesus means when the kingdom of God shall be established on earth. Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come." (Matt. 6:10.) Luke records: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32.) The kingdom was not spoken of as being in some far distant age. Following the baptism of Jesus and his encounter in the wilderness with Satan, Jesus began to preach "and to say, Repent, ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17.) The kingdom of God came with power on the Pentecost after his crucifixion. (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:3, 6-8; 2:33-35.)

Jesus promised his disciples that when he came into his kingdom "ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." By this, we are to un-

derstand they were to have the jurisdiction over doctrine, faith, and practice in the kingdom. Jesus promised the "keys of the kingdom" to the apostle Peter. (Matt. 16:19.) During their lifetime, they spoke, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, the judgments of God in person; and since their deaths, the judgments of the apostles are set forth in the New Testament. We are to understand the kingdom of heaven is the church of Christ, which is the true Israel of God. The twelve tribes of Israel implies the completeness of the people of God and their judges.

Peter had earlier said to Jesus that they had left all to follow him. Jesus responded by saying that whoever had left homes and relatives for his name's sake would receive a hundred fold and would inherit eternal life. The rewards of the disciples are put in two categories—the temporal and eternal. The Christians who march under the banner of Christ and bear their crosses, will wear crowns at some future time.

God Speaks to Man (Heb. 1:1-4)

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, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the world; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

These verses set forth in a few words that the Son is now God's spokesman in this last age of man. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews sets forth the absolute supremacy of God's revelation to his Son as written in the gospel in contrast to the revelations of the prophets.

God had spoken in times past in the prophets by "divers manners." God addressed Moses from a burning bush. He spoke to Elijah in a "still small voice." (1 Kings 19:12.) And Abraham entertained angels unaware. (Gen. 18:1ff.)

The crowning statement of the

Hebrew letter is that God "hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." The basic idea of the epistle is that God in these last days has brought the full, final, and complete revelation to man through Christ. The writer is contrasting the revelation of Jesus with the revelations of the dead prophets. As a matter of fact, Malachi, the last of the prophetic order had been dead four hundred years before Christ came.

The supreme worth and dignity of Christ is expressed in the word Son. The prophets had been sometimes weak and sinful men with neither the authority nor the power of the Son. And the messages of the prophets had neither the excellency nor the saving power of the gospel.

The majesty and greatness of the Son is illustrated through his relation to the universe, to God, and to mankind. There are seven facts to describe the supreme greatness and worth of the Son.

1. *The heir of all things.* This phrase expresses the ultimate purpose of God in creation and Christ is set forth as the sovereign master of the universe. The Son's inheritance is not just limited to this earth, but includes the whole universe, and the world that is to come. He is the heir of man's suffering, defeat, and human misery and also he becomes the author of man's salvation.

2. *He made the worlds.* We are to understand by these words that the whole created worlds in time and space are included and that God brought the universe into existence through the agency of his Son. (See John 1:3; Col. 1:16.)

3. *He is the effulgence of his [God's] glory.* Christ is here described as the "brightness" of God's glory. Just as the rays of the sun reveal the glory of this celestial body, so the Son reflects the glory of God. This statement involves Christ with the very wisdom of God which is the source and light of all knowledge.

4. *He is the very image of his substance.* He is the very counterpart of God. His image is of the very substance of God. He bears the stamp of God's divinity upon his person. Christ is the exact embodiment and representation of

God. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9.)

5. Upholding all (kings by the word of his power. God spoke the heavens and the earth into existence by the word. The very sustaining power which upholds the world is the word spoken through Christ: "and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." (Col. 1:17.)

6. Made purification of sins. Christ becomes the saving high priest for man through his own blood shed upon Calvary. By one sacrifice he has brought about the eternal purification for sins. The wisdom which spoke the worlds into existence has extended by the grace of God a remedy to save man from the guilt of his sins. The Son who made a propitiation for our sins was the only one capable in heaven and earth to accomplish this.

7. Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. That Jesus the Christ is now seated at the right hand of God is an affirmation of the Christian faith: "But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right of the power of God." (Luke 22:69.) The completeness of the purification of Christ's shed blood for the sins of humanity leads from the cross to the crown, from earth's footstool to heaven and the right hand of God's throne. He died on the cross, and in so doing opened the portals of heaven for mankind. He ascended into heaven and now reigns as King of kings and the sovereign of the whole universe.

The Cloud of Witnesses (Heb. 12:1, 2)

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.

The "great cloud of witnesses" who watch us run the Christian race to win the eternal crown which fades not away are more than mere spectators. The great heroes of faith are enumerated in Hebrews 11 beginning with Abel. They had run the course of life under the greatest of obstacles and had won.

The writer to the Hebrews encouraged them to stay in the race to the end of the course and to lay aside every weight and to eliminate every excess ounce of fat and every garment that would impede free movement. This means the Christian should throw off every distraction, pride or whatever, in order to run the race to the end. Christians do not compete with each other because the crown is promised to all.

As we strain every muscle and nerve and as we run with determined perseverance, we are to look always ahead to Jesus who is the "author and perfecter of our faith." Jesus is our exemplar, for he suffered on the cross and endured the shame. And this he did because of his joy in anticipation of the reward he would receive. Christ ran his course first and won his crown, "and hath sat down at the right hand of God." The persevering Christian is promised to share in his triumph if he will be faithful to the end.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The rule of God is now taking place in the kingdom of heaven on earth, which is the church.

2. Christ is sitting now on his throne in heaven at the right hand of God exercising control and authority over his kingdom which is in this world, but not of this world.

3. The "seed of David" who was to sit upon David's throne without end is Jesus the Christ.

4. The kingdom of the Messiah is

a rule of grace, and its power and authority extends from earth to heaven.

5. The rule of the Messiah in his kingdom shall be in peace because it is his nature to seek peace and to pursue it.

6. Jesus promised his disciples they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. We are to understand that the Scriptures which they wrote under

inspiration embody the will of God for us.

7. God speaks only to man

through his Son and that is done through the pages of divinely inspired Scripture.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What is the good news of the kingdom of heaven?

What was the central theme of Christ's personal ministry?

When did the rule of Christ in his kingdom begin?

Golden Text

What did David mean when he said his body would not be left in Hades nor would his body see corruption?

Where was David's body at the time Peter preached on Pentecost?

The Messianic Kingdom

What did the prophet Nathan say to King David about the nature of the Messiah?

How long did Daniel prophesy that the messianic kingdom would last?

Describe the nature of the darkness the people of Judah were living in as described by Isaiah.

Discuss in turn the eight descriptive terms contained in chapter nine of Isaiah.

The Messianic Throne

How did the scribes expect the kingdom of heaven to arrive upon the earth?

Why were the disciples of Jesus unable to understand the nature of his kingdom?

Why were so many people on hand to welcome Jesus into the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of the week of his crucifixion?

What did Jesus mean by saying that the twelve apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel?

God Speaks to Man

How has God spoken in times past to his people?

How is Christ the heir of all things?

In what respect is Christ the effulgence of God's glory?

How does Christ uphold all things by the word of his power?

The Cloud of Witnesses

Who is the great cloud of witnesses?

How should Christians prepare to run the Christian race?

What did Christ receive for having run his race?

Lesson VII—May 19, 1974

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Matt. 16:18-20; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:10-17

18 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

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

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

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

12 Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

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

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius;

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

16 And I baptized also the house-

hold of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
17 For Christ sent me not to bap-

tize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"All the churches of Christ salute you."* (Rom. 16:16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Col. 1:9-17.

Daily Bible Readings

May 13.	M.....	Church in the Eternal Purpose (Eph. 3:8-21)
May 14.	T.....	Christ, Builder of His Church (Matt. 16:18-20)
May 15.	W.....	Church, the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:9-17)
May 16.	T.....	Church, One Body (Eph. 4:1-4; 1 Cor. 1:10-17)
May 17.	F.....	Church Identified (Rom. 16:16)
May 18.	S.....	Church, All-Sufficient (Col. 2:8-11)
May 19.	S.....	Salvation in the Church (Acts 2:47; Rom. 6:1-11)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 32; Ephesians, A.D. 64; First Corinthians, A.D. 59.

PLACES.—Jerusalem; Rome; the First Corinthian letter was written while Paul was in Ephesus.

PERSONS.—Jesus and the twelve apostles; the Ephesian Christians; the Corinthian Christians.

Introduction

Never was there a time, since the first century, needed more for a clear definition of "what is the church of Christ" than now. For almost two thousand years the biblical meaning of the church has been twisted, contorted, and strained through countless theologies of men; the most persistent being the theologies of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, and John Calvin.

We hear so much about the relevance or irrelevance of the church, the social gospel, and the institutional church. We are often disturbed by a new breed of the "defenders of the faith" whose slurs and innuendoes against the church of Christ are ill concealed. These members of the churches of Christ, who are "among us" but not with us, are striving to re-structure the organization and doctrine of the New Testament church according to the doctrines of men. They assert the church of Christ is just another denomination and they call for "open fellowship." Some out of jealousy, or some such spirit, are seeking to dismantle the church, while others, so confident of the infallibility of their wisdom are striving to move the church into the mainstream of Protestantism. The latter group are sincere, and their thrust against the doctrinal purity of the New Testament is greatly damaging.

The New Testament is clear and precise in relating the church and Christ. The divinity and humanity

of Christ is irrevocably biblical. The Word (logos) became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14.) Christ built his church upon the fact that he is the "Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:18.) Paul states in no ambiguous terms, "Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23.)

There is no warrant in tracing the organic unity of the church back to Israel, Abraham, or even Abel. The gospel is unique as was the Mosaic law which was nailed to the cross, and Christ is as superior to Moses as heaven is to earth. (Heb. 9:11.) The church is a new institution and founded on a new covenant relationship. While it is true that God has reigned on earth since the creation of man, his will is now expressed through the church.

In the church, Christ brought together, for the first time, the human and the divine. The church is rightly called the body of Christ. (Col. 2:19.) And the church is rightly designated as the "kingdom," for God "delivered us out of the Dower of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1:13.) This new creation takes place in the body of Christ: "Wherefore if a man is in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

The church of Christ is the kingdom of God on earth. The kingdom of God was established on Pentecost.

The Golden Text

All the churches of Christ salute you. (Rom. 16:16.)

Chapter sixteen of the Roman epistle may be called the chapter of greetings. Paul had not been to Rome; however, he sent greetings to at least twenty-six different persons. This is surprising since Paul had never visited the Roman church. Over the course of the apostle's long ministry, he would have made the acquaintance of many Christians who traveled to Rome for one reason or another. Commerce and travel throughout the Roman empire was quite common.

The apostle's expression, "all the churches of Christ salute you" is added to the already numerous personal greetings. This expression is much more comprehensive than Paul's usual greetings from a local church, e.g., "All the saints salute

you." (2 Cor. 13:13.) After Paul was in a Roman prison, he sent his customary greeting: "All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household." (Phil. 4:22.) In a broader sense, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "The churches of Asia salute you." (1 Cor. 16:19.) Paul's statement in the Roman letter that "all the churches of Christ salute you," could possibly mean that Paul sent greetings from all the churches with whom he had connections.

Paul's mention of *the churches* in no sense of the expression tones down the unity of the church. (Cf. Eph. 2:16; 4:4.) When a group of saints are gathered together in the name of Christ there is the local church of Christ. This is precisely the sense in which Paul uses the expression in Romans 16:16.

The Text Explained

Upon This Rock (Matt. 16:18)

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

The time of Jesus' meeting with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi was about six months before the ordeal of the cross. The city's name was changed from its ancient name Paneas of Caesarea Philippi by the tetrarch Philip in honor of Caesar Augustus. The city lay at the foot of Mount Hermon near the source of the Jordan River.

Jesus in the quiet seclusion of the town in the far north of Palestine was afforded an opportunity to discuss with his disciples the views that people had expressed about him. "Who do men say the Son of man is?" (Matt. 16:13.) The disciples expressed that which they had heard. The views were divergent, but they do not seem to have heard the view expressed that Jesus was just an ordinary itinerant Jewish teacher. Some expressed the belief that he was John the Baptist. Still others surmised he might be Elijah, and some concluded that he was Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. They all identified Jesus with a person of the past. It is apparent

that the people had not comprehended his unique person and had not recognized him as the long awaited Messiah.

And Jesus said to his disciples, "But who say ye that I am?" (Matt. 16:15.) Simon Peter made the great confession of the ages: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.) Simon Peter knew Jesus was not just another of a long line of prophets. He had seen the lame walk, the blind see, and Jesus walking on the water. Simon had heard the gracious words of eternal life come from Jesus. Jesus could only be the "Christ, the Son of God." Jesus pronounced Simon on that occasion to be highly favored of God. And he addressed him as Simon bar Jonah (Simon son of Jonah). Surnames in that age among the Jews were not used for family identification. A son was identified with his father in genealogical succession.

Jesus on that occasion gave Simon a new name. He called him Peter. The word Peter is translated from the Greek word *petros* which is grammatically masculine gender. A veritable storm of controversy has raged between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants over the statement of Jesus to Simon Peter: and upon this rock" (*petra*, feminine

form of the noun for rock) "I will build my church." The Roman Catholic church asserts that the church was founded on Peter, the "Rock Man," and traces the papal succession from the present back to Peter. An argument often raised is that since Jesus spoke in the Aramaic language, his use of the Aramaic word for rock *kepha* tells us nothing since the same spelling is used for both the masculine and feminine forms of the noun. The Roman Catholics' assertion may be laid to rest with Paul's simple statement: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11.) In no scripture in the New Testament is there the slightest shred of evidence to support the notion of papal succession.

Jesus informed Peter that no human agency (flesh and blood) had made the revelation of the identity of Jesus as the Messiah to him. The expression, "flesh and blood," is a common expression in Jewish writings to express humanity. (See Gal. 1:16, 17; Lev. 17:11.) Just as the apostle Paul had not received the gospel from Peter, James, and John, neither had Simon Peter received his revelation from any person other than God.

Jesus stated clearly and forcibly that the faith expressed by Peter declaring him to be the Son of God, was that bedrock upon which he would build his church and that not even death could alter the fact. The word for *church* is the Greek word *ecclesia*. The word occurs here and in Matthew 18:17 and many times in Acts, the epistles, and in Revelation. The word "church" may denote the universal body of Christians, or just the local congregation. The Hebrew word equivalent means a gathering or assembly of people. The word *church* takes a specific and unique meaning when it becomes the churches of Christ, or the church of God. (1 Cor. 1:2.) The church of Christ is the new people of God "called out of the world." (John 15:18-19; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15, 17; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10.)

The Keys of the Kingdom

(Matt. 16:19, 20)

I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth

shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven which Jesus promised Peter symbolize rule and authority: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." (Isa. 22:22.) In another place we read: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David." (Rev. 3:7.) Jesus is promising Peter that he will be entrusted with the "keys" of authority.

The authority of Peter is to be within the sphere of the kingdom of heaven. Peter will have the authority to declare the terms of salvation in the gospel of Christ. (See John 20:22; Acts 2:38.) That authority was not delegated to Peter alone, but equally to the other disciples. Jesus commanded in the Great Commission: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." (Matt. 28:18.) Peter was indeed privileged to preach the gospel on Pentecost, but this privilege is also assigned to every Christian on equal terms. (Acts 2.) The *kingdom of heaven* as used here simply denotes the place on earth where the reign of God does exist, and this is expressively in the church of Christ.

"Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ." The disciples were not ready to preach this doctrine; they did not understand that Jesus had to die, be buried, and be raised from the dead. Jesus was now moving into the shadow of the cross, and he needed no longer publicity of this kind carried among the people by his disciples. For three years, Jesus had gone throughout Palestine proclaiming the "kingdom is at hand." (Matt. 4:17.) The Pharisees, Sadducees chief priests, and elders were on a collision course with Jesus. He continued to preach and the opposition of the Jews toward him grew daily climaxing at Calvary.

Four Christian Virtues

(Eph. 4:1, 2)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.

The apostle refers to himself as a "prisoner in the Lord." Paul most certainly was not appealing for sympathy in his mention of imprisonment. Paul's life was not controlled by chains, but his life was truly controlled by the Lord. The power of Paul's appeal to the Ephesians was greatly intensified by his imprisonment. Paul had set before the Ephesians, God's eternal plan which he was working through the church in Christ. Now he addresses them and the whole manner of their lives. Paul beseeched them "to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." Paul is speaking of Christian conduct involving morals and whatever pertains to Christian behavior.

Paul enumerates four Christian virtues which merit a life worthy of the calling of God. The virtues are far more than exemplary Christian virtues: they are essential to the quality of spiritual fellowship in the church. The first virtue is called "all lowliness." Something new, is added. In the Greek world of that age, humility was not a virtue, but was regarded as a fundamental weakness. Such a spirit was usually associated with a slave or an ignoble person. In Christ, lowliness was the hallmark of character. He lived an unselfish life. He thought nothing of a worldly reputation as people were inclined to do: "He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8.)

The virtue of meekness was associated in that age with gentleness of character and a kind and even disposition. Meekness has its counterpart in the disposition of the person who was proud with a high opinion of his individual worth. The man who possesses the spirit of meekness does not display his power and authority. Moses is described as such a man: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth." (Num. 12:3.)

The third aspect of the Christian

life is "longsuffering." The Christian is engaged in a marathon of endurance no matter what suffering or other obstacles impede his progress. Also present is the quality of character which does not seek to avenge wrongs suffered or to retaliate when mistreated. God is longsuffering toward the sinner (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16), and a Christian should show a corresponding disposition toward an offender (1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:2).

Forbearance is the fourth characteristic of Christian behavior. This virtue is a part of patience and endures long the ill behavior of others. A Christian continues to love his neighbor when he is unlovable in his behavior. Paul offers no logic because logic is no substitute for love. Love is the spiritual cement which binds the ties of Christian fellowship which cannot be broken.

Christian Unity

(Eph. 4:3-6)

Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

Jesus condemned the wrong of judging each other which often is little more than carping criticism. Judging a tree by the fruit it bears is not abusive criticism. Jesus set un both principles in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. 7:15.) On the other hand, the world forever sits in the judgment seat and judges the church on two counts. Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one that the world may know that God had sent him into the world. (John 17:20ff.) And Jesus commanded his disciples that they love each other: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." (John 15:12, 17.) If the church fails in these two, the world has no patience to listen to the Christian message.

Paul sets forth the controlling principles of Christian unity that they give diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And if Christians can live in peace, Christian unity becomes and remains a beautiful reality.

"There is one body." To be in Christ means to be in his body, the church. The unity in the church transcends and surpasses every other community or organization on earth because God is working out his will through the church. The New Testament Scriptures irrevocably assert that Christ built only one church, which is his body.

And there is "one Spirit." A Christian is a member of the body of Christ by virtue of the fact that he received and obeyed the word, spoken by the apostles as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. They were all guided by the one Spirit, and therefore taught the same thing.

And all who follow the teaching of the Spirit, rejoice in "one hope" of eternal life. Paul writes in another place, "Through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:2.)

There is also "one Lord." There appears to be a unanimity that one Lord is enough, who will be Lord and Saviour of both the Jew and Gentile. And all mankind may be united through "one faith." Just as there is "one faith," there is only "one baptism." Christian baptism is an immersion in water administered to the believing sinner, who repents of his sins and confesses his faith in the Lord. Baptism is a condition of salvation. (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38.) Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female, for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:27, 28.)

There is "one God and Father of all." All Christians belong to the family of God, "which is the church of the living God." (1 Tim. 3:15.)

Divisions in the Church (1 Cor. 1: 10-17)

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you: but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe.

that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius; lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.

There is much unscriptural doctrine circulated freely which has been accepted by many, that sectarian disunity is not only right but spiritual and wholesome. This concept is generally argued in the name of religious freedom. This is done despite the plain biblical injunctions that through the "name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, that there be no divisions among you." The apostle adds, "that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The church at Corinth was divided, not it seems, over doctrine, but men. The schism grew out of their having favorite preachers. Word from the Corinthian church reached Paul at Ephesus. (1 Cor. 16:8.) The information about the church problems were perhaps brought to Paul "by them that are of the household of Chloe," who had come to Ephesus from Corinth.

Paul states that there should be no divisions (Greek *schismata*) among them. This refers to a fissure, or a rent or tear in a garment. The Christians were guilty of quarreling and bickering. We should note Paul's spirit in the matter. He addresses the Corinthians twice as "my brethren." Paul softens his remarks by the benevolent approach as he encouraged the church to heal their differences: "that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Paul declares there were contentions among them. He had even been slow to believe the reports about them but now he does. There is a difference between division and contention. The conten-

tious individual is one who holds his own opinion as being the only correct one, and he holds in contempt all who hold opposing views. The apostles get down to the facts of the case. "Now this I mean, that each one of you saith" that is, the whole church was divided. Each person held his own beliefs and condemned others who differed with him. Paul in saying "each one" included the entire congregation.

One party included those loyal to Paul. These people were perhaps the original converts of Paul because he had come first and planted the cause of Christ in that Greek city. Others asserted, "I of Apollos." We learn about the eloquent Apollos skilled in the interpretation of the Scripture in Acts 18:24-28. The apostle respected Apollos and commented, "I planted. Apollos watered." (1 Cor. 3:7.) Apollos was a Jew from the great cultural center of Alexandria whose persuasive and polished preaching must have pleased the Greek Christians.

Some identified with Cephas or Peter. Although Peter had never been to Corinth, his fame had gone there. His followers may have been Jewish Christians who migrated there from Jerusalem. The church of Corinth boasted in men in the worst forms of sectarian partyism. The great preachers of the church were pitted against each other. Sometimes a man's greatest hindrance may be his loyal friends and faithful followers.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. We need to be clear in defining what the church of Christ is. The church of Christ is a body of baptized believers in Christ, wearing the name Christian.

2. The church may be identified through our understanding that the church is the body of Christ, whose foundation is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

3. To assert that the church is built upon the apostle Peter or that the church is dependent for any human support, is to dishonor Christ who built the church and

And some claimed to be followers of Christ as all should have done. The real fault here is in the placing of Christ in the same category with Paul, Apollos, and Peter. Paul rebukes the church—"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" Obviously not. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were wedges driven by the members that divide the body of Christ.

Paul deplored the partyism, and we should do no less. Paul speaks of baptism and names the persons whom he had baptized. And he thanked God he had baptized no more lest some would say they were baptized into the name of Paul. Paul does not disregard baptism, for he thought it necessary. (Rom. 6:1-3.) We may assume that Paul preached and his companions baptized the converts. To be baptized into Christ means to be baptized into his body, and Christians belong to Christ as servants belong to a master.

Paul's great mission was to preach the wisdom of God. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16.) The gospel is the demonstration of God's power and God's wisdom as contrasted with the wisdom of this world which Paul describes as foolishness. (1 Cor. 1:18, 22, 23.) The philosophers of Athens could not for all their wisdom discover God, and so it is today.

purchased the church with his own blood.

4. The keys of the kingdom are the conditions of salvation laid down by his disciples, as they preached the gospel.

5. Christ prayed for the unity of his disciples and Paul sets forth the principles of Christian unity.

6. Church division and partyism was condemned by Paul in the church in Corinth and should be no less condemned in our own day, despite the fact that there are those who think it is a matter of personal preference.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why do some say that the church of Christ is just another denomination?

How does the New Testament relate the church to Christ?

What reason is there for asserting that the church was established during the days of Abraham?

By what other names' is the church of Christ called?

Golden Text

How did the apostle Paul make the acquaintance of members of the church in the city of Rome?

What are we to understand in the statement that Paul greeted the saints in Caesar's household?

What did Paul mean in his use of the expression that the churches of Christ salute you?

Upon This Rock

Where is Caesarea Philippi located?

What opportunities had the apostles to hear the opinions of the people about the identity of Christ?

Who did the people think that Jesus might be?

Discuss the meaning of these words—*petros, petra, and kepha*.

Can we find a scripture which states specifically that the church is built upon Jesus Christ?

The Keys of the Kingdom

What are the keys of the kingdom?

To whom were the keys of the kingdom of heaven promised?

Do we have access, to the keys of the kingdom of heaven today?

Was the authority to use the keys of the

kingdom of heaven given only to Peter?

Four Christian Virtues

What did Paul mean by saying that he was a prisoner in the Lord?

What is the character of the Christian virtue of lowliness? of meekness? of longsuffering? of forbearance?

Christian Unity

How do we separate judging in a way that can be distinguished from carping criticism?

On what two counts does the world judge the church? Would you say that the world has the right to so sit in judgment of Christians?

What does Paul mean for us to understand when he talks about the one body?

How would you explain that some people want more than one body and more than one baptism, but they are satisfied with one Lord?

Divisions in the Church

How do you account for the widespread belief that Christian disunity is not only good but also advisable?

What did Paul have to say about party divisions in the church at Corinth?

Who were the different persons members of the church in Corinth were following?

What did Paul say about Christ being divided?

Was Paul speaking against baptism when he thanked God that he had baptized only a few?

Lesson VIII—May 26, 1974

OBEYING GOD

Lesson Text

Matt. 7:21-27; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:8, 9

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock.

26 And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish

man, who built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

7 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,

8 Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus:

9 Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.

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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.”* (John 14:15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 12:1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

- May 20. M..... Obedient Blessed (Isa. 1:16-20)
- May 21. T..... Obedience of Faith (Rom. 16:25-27)
- May 22. W..... Christ, Our Example of Obedience (Heb. 5:1-9)
- May 23. T..... Must Be Obedient To Be Saved (2 Thess. 1:1-9)
- May 24. F..... Disobedient Lost (Rev. 22:1-21)
- May 25. S..... Love Prompts to Obedience (1 John 5:1-3)
- May 26. S..... Hebrews 11, A History of Obedient People (Heb. 11:1-40)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 31; Second Thessalonians, A.D. 54; Hebrews, A.D. 64; James, A.D. 60.

PLACES.—Galilee; Thessalonica; not known for Hebrews and James.

PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and the people; the Thessalonian Christians; Hebrew Christians; and Christians everywhere.

Introduction

The biblical doctrine of the person of Christ and the nature of the church are inseparable. The confession of the Christian is an acceptance of Christ as Lord, and his word as the will of God. Christ cannot be separated from either his teaching or work, or his life separated from his death. John declares that Christ is the Word become flesh. Jesus is the Word incarnate. And Paul preached the gospel “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day.” (1 Cor. 15:1-4.)

The unique characteristic of Christ was to do God’s will as he taught his disciples to pray, “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.” (Matt. 6:10.) The natural expression to this prayer is the demand of obedience: “And the world

passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:17.) The choice remains in every age. Are we to accept the enticements of the world, or shall we accept the standards of Christ?

Christ came into the world to do the will of God. The supreme example of Christ’s obedience to God’s will took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. In some respects, the obedience of Christ on the cross was not so crushing an experience as his agony in Gethsemane. As a child addresses his father, Jesus said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what, thou wilt.” (Mark 14:36.) We need to keep in mind that Christ becomes the author of salvation only to those who obey him.

The Golden Text

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. (John 14:15.)

The test of man’s love for God is obedience. The kind of love (*agape*) that Jesus commands is the kind of love God has for man—complete and perfect. This is the quality of love that seeks the good of man. This kind of love is not easy. To love another person for personal gain is a selfish love. We can love our husbands, wives, and

children even to the point of idolatry without promoting their greatest personal values. Such a love grows out of a selfish desire to enjoy the personal fruits of the objects of our love. The character of God’s love (*agape*) takes form in our hearts when we seek the greatest good of another and when we offer our gifts to his upbuilding out of the greatest sacrificial cost on our part.

The Text Explained

Doing God’s Will
(Matt. 7:21-23)

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 I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Concluding the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes the false prophets, who come in sheep's clothing as ravening wolves. (Matt. 7: 15.)

The importance of what Jesus is saying here lies in the fact that such false prophets may be identified and ought to be. The text identifies such teachers: "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:16-20.)

This section of the Sermon on the Mount teaches that the character of man is known by his conduct. Jesus expresses the same thought in another context: "the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matt. 12:35.) The emphasis in the concluding verses of the Sermon on the Mount is upon deeds done in obedience to the command of God. The noblest words of Christian doctrine must be followed by holy deeds.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Jesus is not disparaging the use of his name in worship or in discourse. Jesus is saying in the above words that right conduct is doing God's will. Jesus is addressing the judgment day when many will address him in that day as "Lord, Lord" to remind him of the wonderful things they have performed in his name.

Many will say to the Lord at the final judgment, "Did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?"

Jesus conceded that the false prophets were doing and saying some impressive things in his name. We regard such people as religious charlatans who render lip service to

Jesus and lead people to believe that they possess special miraculous gifts. Jesus condemned such people and their ministry and threatened their banishment from the presence of God. Jesus will say openly in the judgment to the false teachers, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." False teachers, pretenders to piety they do not possess, are no friends or Jesus.

The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matt. 7:24-27)

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 it smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof.

Jesus brought the Sermon on the Mount to a conclusion with the parable about the two builders. Under the Mosaic law, great stress was placed upon the importance of the study of the law—and doing the law—between learning and performing the law. The law could not be performed unless it was known. Jesus stressed hearing: "Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them." Jesus did not say it does not make any difference whether you call me Lord or not. He plainly commanded that in addition to calling him Lord, a faithful follower must both hear and obey him.

Jesus was a carpenter and the building art must have appealed to him. The story of the two builders is similar to such an account in Ezekiel. The prophet described false prophets who built walls with untempered mortar which would not hold in the day of testing: "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will rend it with a stormy wind in my wrath; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in wrath to consume it." (Ezek. 13:12, 13.)

The parable of the wise and foolish builders reminds us of Proverbs 10:25: "When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation." The point in the parable of Jesus is the folly of the man that "heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not."

The account of the two builders is also in Luke 6:47-49. Luke gives additional information about the circumstances. Palestine enjoys rain in the late fall and winter months. The spring and summer months are usually dry. Great torrents of water will rush down stream beds. The wise builder dugged down through the earth until he found bedrock. The foolish builder saw no need to take the necessary precaution, and this was to his despair when the storms came and his house was swept away.

This parable presents the importance which Jesus attached to hearing and doing his word. The paramount truth of the parable is that hearing is valueless in the spiritual realm without action. The only foundation of the Christian life is Christ himself. (1 Cor. 3:1.) Only the Christian who embodies his faith in action is found worthy to call Jesus "Lord, Lord." Building Christian character is not to be done indifferently. The storms of life are harsh. We will be assailed in course of time from every side with bitterness, cynicism, persecution, suffering, and just plain indifference.

Paul said that hearing is not enough: "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. 2:13.) James expressed the same idea: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." (James 1:22.)

When Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, the "people were astonished at his teachings." He did not teach as the scribes whose source of authority was the law. Jesus had not attended a rabbinical school of the time as Paul had done. Jesus spoke with authority and the gracious words which fell from his lips were words of life. The authority of Jesus came from God.

The Final Retribution (2 Thess. 1:7-9)

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.

Paul wrote two letters to the Christians in Thessalonica. The letters mirror what may have been a small church facing an indifferent and sometimes a hostile world. In Paul's day, Thessalonica was a great seaport. Thessalonica was an old city even in the Roman world of Paul's time. The city's ancient name had been changed to Thessalonica in honor of the step-sister of Alexander the Great.

Paul came to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. Thessalonica was located in Europe. Paul preached first in Philippi, where Lydia and the jailor and their households became Paul's first converts in Europe. (Acts 16.) The next center of Paul's missionary efforts was in Thessalonica some seventy miles from Philippi. Paul was threatened with physical violence by hostile Jews who objected to Paul preaching the gospel. Paul and Silas were compelled to leave Thessalonica to avoid an unruly mob. The brethren sent Paul and Silas away at night to Beroea. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11.) Paul was not allowed to have peace, for the trouble makers came from Thessalonica. Paul found it necessary to leave Beroea and move on to Athens.

Paul expressed the desire to return to the city, but said, "Satan hindered us." (1 Thess. 2:18.) The resistance to Paul continued, and his enemies sought to impugn his motives. Paul had sent Timothy to Thessalonica to comfort the brethren. (1 Thess. 3:1-3.) Paul wrote the letters to strengthen their faith and to encourage them against the opposition.

The apostle begins the second let-

ter in warm praise for the Thessalonians for their faith and "love of each one of you all toward one another." (2 Thess. 1:3.) This was despite their suffering at the hands of both Jew and Gentile who tried to turn them away from the truth.

The New Testament does not gloss over human sufferings. That the righteous do suffer is set forth in many places. Human suffering is not without meaning since this is life's testing crucible. Growing strength of character and valuable lessons are learned in suffering as in no other human experience.

Paul grapples with the problem of the Thessalonians as he assures them that it is a righteous thing to bring the faithful to salvation who have both heard and done the will of God. And it is also a righteous thing for God to bring to judgment the wicked. The New Testament speaks of the love and mercy of God; and with equal candor the judgment of the wicked is likewise detailed. (Mark 9:47, 48; Luke 13:3-5.) Paul describes the anger of God against all forms of evil. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.)

He encouraged the church at Thessalonica saying, "And to you that are afflicted," God will give "rest with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire." Suffering is as much a part of life as joy. But Paul declared that God will recompense to the wicked punishment for their evil, in the judgment.

The apostle describes the final judgments of God against such, "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire." The apostle is clearly looking to the final judgment in these verses when the evil doers shall reap the full bitter harvest of their wicked lives, and when the righteous who have suffered unjustly will be rewarded.

After picturing Christ returning in flaming fire, Paul pictures the administering of divine justice: "Rendering vengeance to them that know not God." The word vengeance has no relation with the idea of revenge. It carries the concept

of a firm and unwavering justice. As Paul spoke "of them that know not God," he means Jew and Gentile who willfully disobey God with their full consent and knowledge, "and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," those who reject the gospel of Christ. The wicked are described as those "who shall suffer punishment even eternal destruction." The word Paul is using has a legal background and denotes that form of justice where there is a just penalty meted out to make the wrong-doer pay for his misdeeds. The nature of that judgment is eternal punishment. Paul does not picture this judgment as annihilation, but an eternal loss and ruin. Life does not close at the judgment, but will continue to exist in ages without end.

The Learned Obedience (Heb. 5:8, 9)

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.

The Mosaic law prescribed the qualification for the office of high priest who officiated as a mediator between God and man. A high priest represents man in the obligations he owes to God, and for that reason must be a man himself. And they too were subject to all the temptations common to man. The writer of the Hebrew letter described the high priest as one "who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Heb. 5:2.) The "ignorant and erring" are those who through human weakness succumb to the temptations of the flesh. The Mosaic law made no provision for willful sinning which was premeditated and determined beforehand. The law, however, made provisions for those who sinned in the weakness of the flesh: "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying. If any one shall sin unwittingly, in any one of the things which Jehovah hath commanded not to be done . . . then let him offer for his sin." (Lev. 4:2, 3.)

The author of Hebrews declares the qualifications of Christ who serves as high priest under the new covenant and who met the require-

ments more perfectly than any human priest could have possibly done. In the first place he must be called of God as was Aaron. (Heb. 5:4.) And in the second place, he must have a common humanity to share with man. Jesus qualifies in both. He was not self-appointed, for God called him. Jesus suffered in his flesh as most of mankind can never do.

In the judgment hall of Pilate, Jesus was lashed with a heavy whip until his body was torn and bleeding. He was made a spectacle to be mocked. A crown of thorns was pushed over his head inflicting painful wounds.

"Though he was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered." The full import of what is said here is signifi-

cant when Christ is thought of—not as just the son of man—but as the Son of God. "He submitted willingly to all that was required of him as the Redeemer of the world. And thus he not only magnified God's law . . . but he also, as a man, learned experimentally both the duty and the necessity of obedience, from what he suffered." (*Commentary on Hebrews*, Robert Milligan.)

"And having been made perfect." By this statement we are to understand that Christ became fully qualified to become the Redeemer of man. He now offers salvation to all them that obey him. "He became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." In order to accept the salvation Christ provided for all, man must obey him.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The great Bible doctrines of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ cannot be separated from the church. The Bible truths about the church grow directly out of Christ who is its founder.

2. The singular characteristic of Christ is the fact that he sought to do the will of God without compromise or alteration.

3. The supreme test of man's love for God is that he must do the will of God through obedience of complete trusting faith.

4. The character of a man is known by his good conduct with the right motivation determining

that obedience which establishes the reasons for the goodness of a person's character.

5. There are millions of people who do great good in the name of Christ, some are sincere and others are not. What are we to say about those who practice their religion in the name of Christ, but who have little respect for his teachings?

6. A person's life must be built for all seasons of life, for both the good and bad times.

7. It is a righteous thing for God to bring to judgment the wicked who dishonored his name and worked evil.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the biblical doctrine of the person of Christ and the nature of the church inseparable?

What was the supreme test of Christ's obedience to the will of God?

How do you account for the great agony Christ suffered in Gethsemane?

Golden Text

What is the greatest test of a man's love for God?

Describe the nature of God's love for man.

May we love even those who are closest to us through blood and friendship with the wrong reason?

Doing God's Will

Describe the characteristics of the false teachers that Jesus described as wearing "sheep's clothing."

Why will some people be denied entrance into the kingdom of heaven even though they have done great works in the name of Jesus?

The Wise and Foolish Builders

What important and tragic mistake did the foolish builder make in building his house?

Who will be justified in the presence of God according to James?

Why were the people astonished at the teachings of Jesus?

The Final Retribution

Describe the treatment of Paul and Silas by the Thessalonian citizens after Paul had preached in the city?

Describe the faith and steadfastness of the Thessalonian Christians.

Why is it a righteous thing that God should bring the wicked to justice for their deeds done on earth?

Does suffering play a part in the building of the strength of character?

What is the meaning of the word vengeance as Paul uses it?

How long will the wicked be punished
alter judgment?

The Learned Obedience

How do we learn obedience to God's will?

Why was it necessary for a high priest to
be a man?

Explain how Christ learned obedience
through suffering.

What does it mean that Christ was made
perfect through his sufferings?

Lesson IX—June 2, 1974

HOW TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Lesson Text

James 2:20-24; Matt. 21:28-31; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:37, 38

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 Isaac 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.

24 Ye see that by works a man is
justified, and not only by faith.

28 But what think ye? A man had
two sons; and he came to the first,
and said, Son, go work today in the
vineyard.

29 And he answered and said, I
will not: but afterward he repented
himself, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and
said likewise. And he answered and
said, I go, sir: and went not.

31 Which of the two did the will
of his father? They say. The first.
Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say
unto you, that the publicans and the
harlots go into the kingdom of God
before you.

10 For with the heart man believ-
eth unto righteousness; and with the
mouth confession is made unto sal-
vation.

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

38 And Peter *said* unto them, Re-
pent 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.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*And believers were the more added to the Lord.*” (Acts
5:14.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 11:1-10.

Daily Bible Headings

May27. M.....	Lord Adds (Acts 2:37-47)
May 28. T.....	Saved Are Obedient People (Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 7:21-23)
May 29. W.....	Must Be Born Again (John 3:1-8)
May 30. T.....	New Testament Case of Conversion (Acts 8:26-40)
May31. F.....	Faith, Repentance, Confession (Heb. 11:6; Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10)
June 1. S.....	Baptism, a Burial (Rom. 6:1-6)
June 2. S.....	A New Creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:11-19)

TIME.—James, A.D. 60; Matthew, A.D. 33; Romans, A.D. 60; Acts, A.D. 33.

PLACES.—In the Roman world; Jerusalem; Rome.

PERSONS.—James and Jewish Christians; Jesus and the Pharisees; Paul
and the Roman Christians; the apostles and the Jews in Jerusalem.

Introduction

Obedience is the essential mark
of the faith of a Christian. Christ's
own obedience is best exemplified
in Gethsemane. Christ submitted his

will to God so that God could work
through him.

Our present lesson sets forth the
principles of the new birth. (John

3:3.) We should not be discouraged that there are those among us who would speak lightly of the *four steps* into the church: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. The religious mood of some people is to accommodate whatever liberal theology is currently blowing in the wind, and who invariably end up with a shallow modernism. Heresy originally meant "taking for oneself" which means an individual preference to believe whatever suits at the time. This is both a distorted and perverted theology.

In a backward look into church history and the theologies of men, one gets the impression that the religious pendulums swing from one extreme to the other. We need to remind ourselves that the swing of Lutheranism with its dogmatic insistence on *faith* is to the furthest extreme from the doctrine of *works* of the Roman Catholic Church. John Calvin, as is well known,

taught the total depravity of man. Calvin stated, "Everything proceeding from the corrupt nature of man is damnable." Martin Luther insisted on the individual priesthood of every Christian. Calvin denied salvation to all except the elect, and Luther to all through "faith only."

Too many ride the swinging religious pendulum from one extreme to the other usually in the name of freedom. They go to one extreme to fellowship whatever is religiously suitable for the moment. We would wish that the Christian who is "limping between two sides" would make up his mind to get off the swinging pendulum and take his stand on the Bible.

The conditions for membership in the church of Christ are crystal clear. The fact that the denominations have abandoned the Scripture should make us want to know, "What must I do to be saved?"

The Golden Text

And believers were the more added to the Lord. (Acts 5:14.)

Following the beginning of the church on the first Pentecost after the crucifixion, the number of the disciples grew daily despite troubles from without and within the membership. Despite the open opposition of the Sadducees accompanied by threats, Peter and John were not intimidated, and replied to the high priest, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye." (Acts 4:19.) Peter and the others were aware of the growing opposition to their preaching, but they were also conscious of the fact that they were preaching the word of God. They chose to respect the authority of God over men.

Just a few weeks before Annas had sat, as a ranking member of the Sanhedrin Court and played a major role in sending Jesus to the cross. Their plot to rid themselves of the presence of Jesus was short lived. It seemed they would have even greater trouble with his disciples. The temple leaders could do little other than warn the disciples not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:18.)

The spirit of the new church was remarkable: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one

heart and soul." (Acts 4:32.) They shared their possession, and no one complained of hunger and want. Free will offerings were generously made by the members and distribution was carried out by the members while the apostle labored in preaching. (Acts 6:1ff.)

Luke records a sordid story of hypocrisy and deception. The first sin that scandalized the Jerusalem church was the deliberate ruse of Ananias and Sapphira, to deceive the church and to build a fake reputation for piety and sacrifice. Their sin must have been a staggering blow to the Jerusalem church. The attempted deception by Ananias and Sapphira was punished with divine judgment. (Acts 5:5, 10.)

The golden text explains the effect that the rising persecutions of the Jews and the sin of a husband and wife had on the growing faith of these first Christians. The apostles continued to preach despite the threats. The people who did not believe were afraid to attach themselves to the Christians lest they too would suffer divine wrath. "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Acts 5:14.) Out of these experiences of the early church living in the near shadow of the cross, the grand battle plan of

the militant church was laid for Christians of all the ages to carry

the banner of Christ forward regardless of the cost or suffering.

The Text Explained

Faith

(James 2:20-24)

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

The heart of the Christian faith is summed up in the life and teachings of Jesus, and in particular, his becoming flesh, the crucifixion, and his resurrection. Actually, it makes little difference what one may believe about Christ, if his faith fails him at the manger in Bethlehem, before Calvary, and the empty garden tomb.

When John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, his message was, "Repent ye." (Matt. 3:2.) His audience were Jews who already believed in God, and John commanded them to repent toward God. John the Baptist told the people that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and he had come to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Faith is a condition of salvation, but it is not the only condition. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11:6.) The Jews believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6); but the same Jews did not believe that God had glorified Christ (Acts 3:13). The faith that saves from sin is radically different from the intellectual assent which acknowledges Jesus to be the Christ. Simon Peter charged the people on Pentecost to, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (Acts 2:40.)

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?" James is setting forth the proposition that faith without works is dead. The apostle Paul says as much or more: "If I have

all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2.) The word *barren* in the text is rendered from the Greek word *argos* which means "ineffective," and hence, cannot produce salvation. James describes the man who believes in "faith alone" as a vain, or an "empty-headed man." The *vain man* is devoid of understanding.

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" It is a wholly false assumption that a contradiction exists between Paul's teaching in Romans 3:28, and what James is saying. Paul concludes, "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law." (Rom. 3:28.) James is declaring that the profession of faith is an empty thing without deeds to validate it.

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, is concerned to show how one comes into a right relationship with God. The Pharisees supposed that the works of the law earned the favor of God. But the apostle Paul says, "For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:3.) Paul is saying that centuries before the law of Moses was ratified between God and the people at Mount Sinai, Abraham was justified by faith.

James is not addressing the works of the law, but a quality of faith that is transformed into a fruit-bearing life. The character of Abraham's faith was such that when God promised him a son, "he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6.) Abraham's faith was of such a nature that years later Abraham was ready, in submission to God's will, to offer up Isaac his son. James' purpose is to expose the pretense of those who claimed to have faith with nothing to show for it. On the other hand, Paul is saying that Abraham's faith preceded the law. James emphasized "justification" as it relates to works of faith.

Abraham's faith was "wrought

with his works." The idea expressed in the text is that Abraham's faith enabled him to perform acts of obedience to God. A living faith will perform living deeds in God's service. "And by works was faith made perfect." By works his faith was made complete.

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." Abraham believed God when he left Ur of the Chaldees, and he believed God when he promised him a son in his old age. Abraham's faith staggered at nothing, "and he was called the friend of God." Abraham was God's great friend among mankind. Abraham is called God's friend forever (2 Chron. 20:7); and in Isaiah 41:8, God calls Israel "the seed of Abraham my friend." Abraham earned the title of the "friend of God" because of his faith as demonstrated in his willingness to sacrifice his son. The first was followed by the second, and both were conditions of God's approval. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you." (John 15:14.)

"Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith." James draws the inevitable conclusion from the account of Abraham's great test of faith to offer Isaac. Faith justifies, but a faith which is barren never saves. Faith is a practical response to a command of God. It is not "only by faith," it must be accompanied by works which perfect it.

Repentance (Matt. 21:28-31)

But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

The word "repent" carries the idea "to turn again," "to reverse one's direction," or to use a military expression, "to do an about face."

Jesus told of an occasion when Herod slaughtered some Galileans before the altar whose blood was mingled with sacrifices. Jesus raised the question if the Galileans were the chiefest of sinners because they suffered in such a fashion. Jesus said, "Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall in all like manner perish." (Luke 13:3.) The Lord does not wish that any should perish, "but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9.) We are to accept the facts that we must repent and that God would have all men to come to repentance.

But not every form of repentance is acceptable unto God. Paul described the repentance that saves: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret." (2 Cor. 7:10.) A man may repent and confess his wrong because he has been arrested and imprisoned. He is sorry that he sinned because he has been convicted and imprisoned. This is not godly sorrow.

Sorrow that truly leads to repentance can be said to be "sorrow after a godly sort." An acceptable repentance is a turn toward God which freely admits and willingly acknowledges guilt. Such a repentance submits to God's judgment and prays to God for forgiveness. A guilty conscience which leaves God out of the picture is simply remorse and disgust that amount to little more than a feeling of self-degrading shame. A godly sorrow that leads a man to turn to God will be met with the forgiveness of God's love.

Jesus told the story about two sons whose father told each to go work in his vineyard. The first son acted in an ugly, churlish manner and refused to respect his father's command. "But afterwards he repented himself, and went." The second son said, "I go, sir: and went not."

Jesus is not painting a complimentary portrait of either son. Which person among us is there who has not been churlish and rebellious at some time or another? The first son was a better person than he pretended to be. They each represent two classes of people with their own imperfections. The one obeyed in the end, the other never did. The joy the father would have

experienced in the obedience of both sons was spoiled by the ugly attitude of the first and the complete failure of the second.

The parable has a primary meaning easily understood. Jesus meant to say that the pious formalism of the Pharisees was insincere: "for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:3.) The Sadducees were the custodians of the temple. They were ever teaching, but never obeying. The forms of their priestly services were correct, but not their hearts. Jesus told them that the publicans and the harlots would go into the kingdom before them.

The first son, after his ugly display, "repented himself and went." He changed his mind and obeyed his father. This is repentance. The fruit of repentance is seen when he did go work in the garden. Paul wrote (2 Cor. 7:10), "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation." Repentance is the change of a man's mind, produced by godly sorrow resulting in a reformation of life. Repentance is not the ground of salvation; but it is a condition of salvation.

Confession (Rom. 10:10)

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Paul emphasizes the importance of belief accompanied by confession. Without belief nothing else is of any importance. The need for confession of faith is an imperative. We should not lose sight of the fact that Paul places equal emphasis upon mouth and heart. Believe with thy heart and confess with thy mouth. The affirmation of the early church was "Jesus is Lord." Not every one openly showed his faith in Jesus: "Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus." (John 19:38.) A man in the early church who confessed his faith in Christ was baptized. The mouth utters what the heart believes.

Jesus himself set forth the principles: "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32.)

In the days just before the cross, such a confession was dangerous. After the cross, countless thousands paid the supreme cost of an open confession of Christ.

To call Jesus Lord was to place him higher than the heavens and the earth and to reverence him as the Son of God. Confession without faith is a vain expression. (Matt. 7:22.) Confession of the mouth is evidence of the genuineness of the faith which saves and sustains. The eunuch responded to Philip's question: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37.)

Baptism (Acts 2:37, 38)

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is a condition of salvation. The New Testament Scriptures are clear on this fact. Jesus entered his ministry through baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. The Spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice from heaven came saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:16, 17.) And Jesus taught and commanded all who believed in him to be baptized: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized." (John 3:22.) At the very end of his sojourn on earth, among his parting words are these, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16.) Years later the apostle Peter wrote, "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." (1 Pet. 3:21.)

Jesus commanded his disciples in the Great Commission, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19.) On the first Pentecost after the cru-

cifixion of Christ, Peter preached to a multitude of Jews who had gathered in from all that part of the world to observe Pentecost.

The word Pentecost means fiftieth because it is counted a full seven weeks from the Passover until Pentecost. The next day after the seven weeks, of course, is the fiftieth day. Peter preached salvation in the name of a crucified Lord on that memorable Pentecost.

Following Peter's sermon on Pentecost, the people "were pricked in their heart." They were stricken in their consciences. They had incurred the greatest possible guilt. Indeed they had slain the Messiah

for whom they had prayed over the centuries. They said to Peter and the other disciples, "What shall we do?" What could a person do who was guilty of crucifying the Lord? Peter answered, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38.)

The people who lately had rejected the Messiah were promised forgiveness of their sins in his name, when they believed on Christ, repented of their sins and were baptized unto the remission of their sins.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Obedience to the commandments of God is the essential proof of faith in God.

2. The theologies of men change with the shifting opinions of the times, but the word of God abideth forever.

3. The apostles laid down the principles for admission into the church of Christ, and the theologies of men have not changed the divine pattern that was laid down on the day of Pentecost.

4. A faith which is not embodied in works is a dead and worthless

faith which cannot save.

5. Not every form of repentance is acceptable toward God. A turn in the right direction must be completely in harmony with the Scriptures.

6. The good confession is an open and public admission of the unqualified faith that a person has that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

7. There is not a single account in the Book of Acts of any person rejoicing because of his forgiven sins until after he had obeyed the gospel.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What are the inherent dangers in changing the Scriptures to fit personal opinions?

Discuss the differing religious opinions of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Are the Scriptures crystal clear in setting forth the conditions of salvation?

Golden Text

What opposition did the early church face from forces from the outside?

Were the Jewish leaders successful in intimidating the apostles?

What effect did the sin of Ananias and Sapphira have on the new church?

Faith

Describe the character of faith which saves a person from his sins.

What is the difference between intellectual assent and the faith which saves from sin?

At what point in Abraham's life was he justified by his faith?

Why is Abraham called the friend of God?

What is the relationship between faith and works?

Repentance

What is the meaning of the word repent?

What kind of sorrow will lead a person to true repentance?

How did Jesus explain repentance in the parable of the two sons?

What did Paul say works repentance?

Confession

Why is the need to confess Christ an imperative necessity?

What dangers were associated with confessing Christ in the early church?

What importance did Christ attach to the good confession?

What honor is bestowed upon Christ when he is addressed as Lord?

Baptism

Do the Scriptures teach that baptism is one of the conditions of salvation?

What was the first act of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry?

What did Peter command the people to do on the day of Pentecost?

Lesson X—June 9, 1974

WORSHIPPING GOD ACCEPTABLY

Lesson Text

Matt. 15:7-14; John 4:19-26

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people honoreth me with their lips;

But their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain do they worship me, Teaching *as their* doctrines the precepts of men.

10 And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand;

11 Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.

12 Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?

13 But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up.

14 Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir,

I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

22 Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am *he*.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Worship God.*” (Rev. 22:9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 20:1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

June 3.	M.	Vain Worship (Matt. 15:1-9)
June 4.	T.	Worship in Ignorance (Acts 17:22-28)
June 5.	W.	Will Worship (Col. 2:20-22)
June 6.	T.	Worship God (Matt 4:7-11)
June 7.	F.	False Worship (Rom. 1:18-25)
June 8.	S.	Praise in Worship (Psalm 100:1-5)
June 9.	S.	Worship God, Not Angels (Rev. 22:1-9)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 32; John, A.D. 30.

PLACES.—Galilee and Samaria.

PERSONS.—Jesus, scribes and Pharisees; the Samaritan woman.

Introduction

Our lesson is concerned with worshipping God acceptably. The primary emphasis will be centered in the attitude and spirit of the forms of worship which are acceptable to God. The only true worship is the worship of God, and the worship of anything else than the living God is idolatry. This can result in not only bowing before idols, but also from giving too high a place in one's heart and life to such things as home, business, family, material

objects, and such like. God demands first place in every Christian's heart.

The importance of worship is obvious. The average religious person is a part of a religious assembly thousands of times during his life. What consumes so much of a person's time must have an important significance. Our worship directly affects our relationship with God and with our fellow Christians.

The meaning of worship is de-

rived from two words—"worth" and "ship" indicating that we worship that which we esteem is higher than ourselves. In a general sense, worship is homage or adoration we give to a higher being. Christian worship is the homage we pay to God in keeping with New Testament doctrine.

Worship to God does matter. It mattered in the Old Testament times. Nadab and Abihu were condemned for using a fire in the worship which God had not commanded. We need to study carefully the New Testament teaching on worship. Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well that the worship of the Samaritans was done in ignorance, for they knew not what they worshipped. There is a vain worship according to the doctrines and precepts of men. (Matt. 15:8, 9.) There is will worship, "which things . . . are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." (Col.

2:23.) A common failing of some is to select what they wish to know about the Bible and to reject what is not acceptable to them.

And there is a worship acceptable to God which is a sincere worship from the heart, in spirit and as authorized by the truth. (John 21:23, 24.) The early Christians came together on the Lord's day to break bread (Acts 20:7); and Paul commanded the Corinthians to give on the first day of the week as they prospered (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Paul wrote to the Colossian church: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." (Col. 3:16.) Christians are to pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17.) Paul advised Timothy to preach the gospel in all seasons. (2 Tim. 4:2.) Christian worship as set forth in the New Testament is clear, beautiful simplicity.

The Golden Text

Worship God. (Rev. 22:9.)

In the closing words of Revelation, an angel commanded that John should "worship God" when John would have fallen at the feet of the angel to worship the angel.

To worship an angel, any creature, or any object other than God is wrong. A Christian is to worship God and serve him only. (Matt. 4:10.)

The Text Explained

Sincerity of Worship

(Matt. 15:7-9)

Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.

The background of the lesson text has its setting in a conference Jesus had with the Pharisees and scribes who came from Jerusalem to Galilee. The Pharisees were the self-appointed custodians of the law, and the scribes composed the learned class among them. They made an immediate frontal attack on Jesus: "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." (Matt. 15:2.) Washing of hands was simply a ritual act. The practice originated among the priests and was later adopted by the Pharisees. It was not commanded by the law of

Moses. It was a "tradition of the elders," among the Jews.

Worship to the Pharisees ran on a double track. The well-marked distinction was drawn between the *Oral Law*, "the Torah by mouth," which for centuries had been handed down by oral tradition, and the *Written Law*, which was the law of Moses embodied in the first five books of the Old Testament. The origin of the oral traditions of the elders, like most origins, is wrapped in obscurity. Perhaps the oral law dates from the time when the written law was discussed and exounded in the synagogues.

Jesus countered the scribe with his own question, "Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3.) Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for the treatment their aged parents received at their hands. Their traditions allowed a man to escape the material care of his aged parents by saying the gift, such as money, was *Corban*. (Mark

7:8-13.) This meant that the Pharisees vowed this as a gift to God. Jesus accused the Pharisees of making "void the word of God" because of their traditions.

Jesus used a statement of Isaiah to describe the hypocritical Pharisee of his day: "This people honor-eth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." With their lips they spoke pious words, but with their hearts they meant to make void the command of God, to honor their father and mother.

We must remember that Jesus kept the law in the strictest sense. (Matt. 5:17.) He said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:3.) Jesus placed the worship of God in the heart. He did not spare words in accusing the Pharisees in the words of Isaiah, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:9.) When they substituted the traditions of men for the commandments of God, their worship was vain. It was not acceptable to God.

That Which Defiles (Matt. 15:10, 11)

And he called to him the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.

He called to the multitude present and they gathered around him. Jesus said unto them, "Hear and understand: Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man."

Jesus was not telling the people that now all the food laws in Leviticus 11 could be disregarded. He is saying, that the evil which comes out of man's mouth is greater than any evil that could possibly enter the person through eating unclean food. It is the impure and evil thoughts which proceed out of a man's heart which defile him. Mark details the nature of the evil which issues from the corrupt heart: "For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adul-

teries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:20-23.)

We must not understand that Jesus was setting aside a part of the law. He condemned the traditions of the Jews. Peter said on the occasion of his going to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "But food will not commend us to God: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better." (1 Cor. 8:8.) A man's thoughts, words and deeds defile the soul, not that which he eats.

Denunciation of the Pharisees (Matt. 15:12-14)

Then came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit.

The response of Jesus to the Pharisees and his additional comments deeply offended them. We know this because his disciples came to him saying, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?" No wonder they were disturbed. Jesus had cut the ground from under them, and he had other words for the Pharisees no less disturbing.

Jesus did not soften the statement to pacify the offended Pharisees. He not only discredited them as teachers of the law, he also declared the Pharisees to be unworthy of the kingdom of God altogether. Jesus declared, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted, shall be rooted up." The "traditions of men" were not planted by the Father, nor were the men who taught them ordained of God. God would eventually uproot both.

Jesus gave further instruction to his disciples about the Pharisees to "let them alone." They were to be left to go their own separate ways whose judgment lay in the hand of God—not theirs. "They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the

blind, both shall fall into the pit." (Matt. 15:14.) Jesus declared the Pharisees could not direct anyone to the kingdom of heaven because they had no idea of the direction, and so both would go astray and fall into a ditch.

As Christians, we should be properly warned that the externals of religions do not meet the full demands of Christ. We may faithfully attend all the services of the church and never neglect the meeting around the Lord's table and our contributions may be generous and our good deeds numerous. But if our worship does not issue from a pure heart, and if not authorized by the truth, it will be worthless in the sight of God.

The Place of Worship (John 4:19, 20)

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

The occasion for Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman resulted from a journey that he and his disciples made from Judaea into Galilee. The shortest route to Galilee led through Samaria. They came to a place called Sychar near a parcel of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. A well was there which was dug by Jacob. The people from a village nearby came to draw water.

It was high noon and the disciples had gone away to the village to buy food. Jesus was resting at the well. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus spoke to her requesting a drink of water. Since the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the woman was startled that Jesus would speak to her, a Samaritan and a woman at that.

The feud between the Jews and the Samaritans was centuries old. In 721 B.C., the Northern Kingdom was invaded by the Assyrians and defeated. The Assyrians forced the people to leave their homes and transported them to the region east of the Euphrates River in the land of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:6.) The Assyrians brought other people and settled them in Palestine to the north of Judea. (2 Kings 17:24.) Some of the Israelites were never

moved out of the land of Israel, and they began to inter-marry with the incoming foreigners. The practice was condemned by the Israelites who honored the law in this respect. The people who continued to live in the land lost completely their identity as Israelites. The inter-marriages resulted in a mongrel race disparagingly referred to as Samaritans by the Jews.

The Kingdom of Judah suffered a similar disaster. They were defeated in 587 B.C. by the Chaldeans and lived some years in Babylonian exile. They returned in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. They had not lost their identity. Ezra restored the Mosaic law to the newly returned people; the wall of Jerusalem was re-built and a second temple was built.

The Samaritans offered to help in the restoring of the law and rebuilding of the city and temple. But the Jews rejected them. The schism developed between the Jews and Samaritans around 450 B.C., and the hostile feelings of the Jews and Samaritans were just as great in the time of Jesus. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah detail the background of the feud between the two peoples.

The Samaritan woman was amazed when Jesus described her manner of life past and present. He told her she had been married five times and was not married to the man with whom she presently lived. The woman was provoked to say, "Sir, I perceive thou art a prophet." Surely the woman was not turning the question away from an embarrassing revelation Jesus had just made about her life. She challenged Jesus with a burning problem which was a deep and grievous issue between the Jews and Samaritans: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

The controversy dated from the time when one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib, was excelled by the Jews in Jerusalem. Joiada married a daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. (Neh. 13:28.) He built a rival temple in Shechem. A factor was added which drove the wedge of imbibement even deeper. Shechem was a place venerable to all the Israelites

because of the associations of the place with the patriarch Jacob. Following the building of the rival temple at Gerizim, the claim was made by the Samaritans that God had chosen "to put his name there." (Deut. 12:5.) This reference is based upon the reading of the blessing and curse of the Mosaic law after the twelve tribes were settled in Canaan. In making the rival claim, the Samaritans insisted that sacrifices, vows, and festivals were legitimate only in the Samaritan temple in Mount Gerizim.

Jews and Samaritans worshipped the same God. They had the same law—the complete five books of Moses. However, they interpreted the law differently.

The idea of supplanting Jerusalem as the place of worship deepened the hostility, especially when the Samaritans supported their claim by showing that Moses enjoined the people to put the blessing on Mount Ebal and the curse on Mount Gerizim. (Deut. 11:29; 27:11-26, Josh. 8:33ff.) John Hyrcanus, priest-ruler of Judaea, took Shechem in 128 B.C., and destroyed the Samaritan temple. But a religion with no idols had no need for a place of worship. And the Samaritans continued to plague the Jews. The Samaritans rejected all Hebrew Scriptures with the exception of the Mosaic law. And to the present day, the religious practices of the Samaritans have changed little.

Worship in Spirit

(John 4:21-26)

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

The problem that the woman

challenged Jesus with demanded an answer from Jesus whom she recognized to be a prophet of some kind. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father." Jesus is explaining the events in the order of their happening. The death and resurrection of Jesus must precede the new form of worship to God. The worship would be different from the worship of the Jews and the worship of the Samaritans. It would be a worship from above in the realm of God and reality.

Jesus bluntly said to the woman: "Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews." Jesus addressed himself to the heart of worship. Although the Samaritans worshipped God, they did so imperfectly. They rejected all the historical books of the Old Testaments, Psalms, Proverbs, and others. They did not know what they worshipped, for they lacked a full knowledge of God. The reason why the Jews possessed a superior religion was because salvation comes from the Jews, and God had chosen them as his people to this end. The rabbis had charged the worship of the Samaritans as derived through ignorance and fear. What the Samaritans were doing is characteristic of our age. They accepted that part which suited them of the Scriptures and rejected the rest.

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." Jesus is prophesying that the great hour of the kingdom of heaven is about to strike. The old dispute of the Jews and Samaritans would disappear. The Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim had been long destroyed, and Jesus foretold of the doom of the Jews' temple in Jerusalem. (Matt. 24:1, 2.) Jesus would establish a new worship not tied to any place on earth.

The true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and truth. The Christian worships God "in spirit," that is sincerely from the heart, and "in truth," that is as the truth, the word of God, authorizes. Wherever Christians gather on the first day of the week around the

Lord's table is the right place: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20.) A sincere prayer in the name of Christ may be prayed in an American home or on the desert sands of Arabia. The church (the kingdom of heaven) recognizes no territorial boundaries on earth.

"God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." God is not fastened in a temple and his presence is not found in things or in external forms. God is a spirit and man's worship must be a spiritual offering to God. The concept is, that God is not circumscribed by time and space. John emphasized that the true worshipper *must* worship in spirit and truth. The people of Is-

rael brought their sacrifices, their wine and oil offering. They brought things. The Christian offers love, loyalty, and obedience to God.

The Samaritan woman did not dispute the wisdom of the words of Jesus. So she said, "I know that the Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things." The Samaritans knew the messianic prophecies in the Mosaic law, and they, too, looked for his appearing. The woman was puzzled from the start of her conversation with Jesus. Then he made the startling disclosure: "I that speak unto thee am he." Jesus is not the messiah only of the Jews or Samaritans. He is saviour of all mankind, the Christ, the Son of God.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Worshipping idols is practiced in every age of man. An idol is whatever a man substitutes for God in his value of things that have the greatest importance for him.

2. The correct form of worship to God does indeed matter. Cain despised the command of God and became a branded man. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fires on the altar and died for their disobedience.

3. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day. The Lord's day is the first day of the week, the day Jesus arose from the grave.

4. Man-made rituals and doctrines cannot supplant the word of God. Jesus charged the Pharisees

who did so, with hypocrisy, because they pretended to believe what they did not practice and used the traditions of men to subvert the Mosaic law.

5. Christians may adopt and devise procedures in worshipping God, but the mechanics of procedure cannot supplant the word of God.

6. Man is too often corrupted by the daily evils which he faces, but the evils which he creates in his own heart issue forth in lying, theft, and such like.

7. The place where a person worships God is not important. The sincerity and purity of his heart is important.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

Why is worship so important?

How important was the emphasis given to the worship of God under the Mosaic law?

Describe vain worship.

How did the early Christians worship God upon the first day of the week?

Golden Text

What day is the Lord's day?

Where is the Island of Patmos located?

What did the angel say when John would have worshipped him?

Sincerity of Worship

What were the traditions of the elders?

How did some Pharisees avoid their responsibilities to their elderly parents?

How did Jesus and the Pharisees clash over the traditions of the elders?

What did Jesus say they did by their traditions?

What made their worship vain?

That Which Defiles

Why is it that it is not what goes into a man which defiles him but that which issues from his heart?

What things did Jesus say defiled a man?

Denunciation of the Pharisees

Describe the denunciation of the Pharisees by Jesus.

Why did Jesus describe the Pharisees as being blind guides?

What did Jesus say about the Pharisees
and the kingdom of heaven?
Place of Worship
Why did the Jews have no dealings with
the Samaritans?
Why were the Samaritans considered to
be a mongrel people by the Jews?

Worship in Spirit and Truth
Discuss the similarities between the Jew-
ish and Samaritan worship.
Why is the place of worship unimport-
tant?
What does it mean to worship God in
spirit and truth?

Lesson XI—June 10, 1974

THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

Lesson Text

Matt. 7:7-11; James 1:5-7; 1 John 5:13-15

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:
8 For every one that asketh receiveth: and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
9 Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone;
10 Or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent?
11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
5 But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not;

and it shall be given him.
6 But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed.
7 For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.
13 These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.
14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:
15 And if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Pray without ceasing.*” (1 Thess. 5:17.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 16:23, 24.

Daily Bible Readings

June 10.	M.....	Persistence in Prayer (Luke 11:9-13)
June 11.	T.....	The Disciples' Prayer (Matt. 6:5-15)
June 12.	W.....	Pray for Enemies (Matt. 5:43-48)
June 13.	T.....	Humility in Prayer (Luke 18:9-14)
June 14.	F.....	Praying for Wisdom (James 1:5-8)
June 15.	S.....	Unanswered Prayers (James 4:1-10)
June 16.	S.....	Confidence in Prayer (Heb. 4:11-16)

TIME.—Matthew, A.D. 31; James, A.D. 60; First John, A.D. 90.
PLACES.—Galilee; scattered places in the Roman world; unknown for First John.
PERSONS.—Jesus, his disciples, and a multitude of people; James and widely placed Christians; John and Christians.

Introduction

The best introduction to the form and purpose of prayer is best expressed in the model prayer recorded in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught the multitude: “After this manner therefore pray ye.” (Matt. 6:9.) Jesus set forth in a brief prayer how we should address

God and to ask for the gifts from God for which we ought to pray.
The expression “Our Father who art in heaven” is found in numerous places in the Bible. This expression is found some twenty times in Matthew alone. “Hallowed be thy name” implies that God is holy and

ought to be revered. His name is above all names. The Christian knows the name of God and hal-lows it with respect.

To pray "thy kingdom come" was in expectation for the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." In heaven, God's will is perfectly executed. The prayer petitions for such a reign of God's righteousness on earth.

Jesus then addressed himself to the human side of life in the model prayer. We are to pray for bread to nourish our physical bodies. This is a statement of trusting dependence that God will supply such needs. "And forgive us our debts" means our sins, and was so understood by the people who heard Jesus. Jesus attaches a condition to God's forgiveness. The forgiveness of our sins will be in proportion to

the extent of our forgiving the sins of those who have trespassed against us.

"And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Temptation means severe trials such as the temptations of the flesh. This is a direct appeal to God to guide us away from the circumstance where temptations might befall us. A prayer of deliverance from temptations is a prayer to be delivered also from the influence of evil. The prayer closes with the ascription that the kingdom of heaven, the power, and the glory belong to God.

The spiritual and physical needs of man are legion and life will reveal them one by one. Prayers acknowledge our dependence on God, and our petitions express our concerns and our needs. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray.

The Golden Text

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. 5:17.)

To pray without ceasing is not to be construed as a continual pestering God with our endless petitions. We are encouraged to bring our smallest concerns to God. Is it not true that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without God's knowledge? Prayer is an attitude of worship.

The encouragement to pray without ceasing reminds us of Paul's admonition "to rejoice in the Lord always." (Phil. 3:4.) Paul enjoined Timothy to preach the gospel in all seasons.

The Christian is encouraged to pray without ceasing because of his dependency upon God. Prayer is a means of keeping in touch with God.

The Text Explained

Ask, Seek, and Knock
(Matt. 7:7-11)

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Jesus deals at length with the subject of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. He talks about the attitude of prayer and the character of the one who prays. Jesus spoke critically of the Pharisees, "for they

love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets, that they may be seen of men." (Matt. 6:5.) The Pharisees and scribes were stigmatized as hypocrites because they prayed for the wrong reason in the wrong way.

We should not think that Jesus is speaking against public prayer when he advised his disciples to pray in the privacy of their home. This could not be so since it was the custom of Jesus from childhood on to attend the synagogue services. Jesus is saying that a private prayer should be private, and that a prayer prayed in the synagogue should not be prayed on a street corner for show and publicity. Jesus never condemned public religious worship.

Jesus further advised not to use vain repetitions in prayers which was characteristic of the Gentiles. The prophets of Baal challenged by

Elijah indulged in wild incantations and vain repetitions. (1 Kings 18:26.) Solomon advised: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." (Eccles. 5:2.)

Jesus continued in prayer all night. (Luke 6:12.) Jesus also prayed the same prayers: "And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words." (Matt. 26:44.) And Jesus likewise urged a need for persistence in prayer. (Luke 18:1-8.)

The disciples said to Jesus when he was praying in a certain place: "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1.) The disciples felt the need to be taught to pray. An ancient Hebrew prayer begins with the words: "Magnified and hallowed be his great name in the world which he created according to his will; and may he make his kingship sovereign in your life time and in your days." Jesus taught his disciples to say: "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

"Ask, and it shall be given you." The sense of man's dependence upon God for all of his needs are reflected in the things for which he prays. Jesus would have his disciples to believe that God will hear and answer their prayers.

To ask of God means that we believe he hears us and will respond. An ancient Hebrew saying was: "Human beings can hardly hear two people talking at once, but God, if all the world calls to him at one time, hears their cry." A pious Christian lady whose husband lay desperately ill prayed that he might live, but he died. A cynical friend reminded her, "God did not answer your prayer." Her reply, full of faith, was, "Yes, God answered my prayer, but this time he said No."

Jesus illustrates the importance of importuning God in the story of the widow who went often to a judge who feared not God. The judge redressed her grievance lest she wear him out with her continual coming to his court. The contrast is between a corrupt judge who does the right thing with the

wrong motive and God who judges and answers in righteousness.

"Seek, and ye shall find." The best gifts in life may be had by seeking, but not without an expenditure of effort. Jesus explains that the key to success is persistence. Prayer, like study, good deeds, and worldly pursuits, needs effort.

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Imagine the frustration of standing before a door with no response to the knocking to gain admittance. The Lord said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20.) The prodigal son returned home to plead for a servant's place and found the warmth of a father's love.

The gifts of God exceed the fondest dreams of man's asking. If a son ask his father for a loaf of bread, will he give him a stone? What kind of cruel hoax this would be to play upon a hungry child. What a shabby trick it would be for a father to give his son a snake when he asked for a fish. Jesus declares, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" It would be incredible conduct for any earthly father to mock his child by giving him a stone or serpent. How much more incredible does it seem that God would stoop to such base levels to answer prayers.

A Christian should never grow weary in prayer. He must be persistent in bringing his prayers before the throne of God. God is generous both to hear and answer the prayers of the sincere and penitent person. However, persistency in prayer is not to be construed as necessary to overcome the unwillingness of God to respond to his children's request.

A Prayer for Wisdom (James 1:5-7)

But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind

and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

James addresses his letter to the "twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion." We are to understand that James is writing to Christians scattered throughout the Roman empire. James' purpose is to comfort and to encourage the Christians scattered abroad in their trials which they have to endure. He assures them the same trials may become the means of attaining greater spiritual maturity in Christ. The trials they endured came from the persecution of the Jews and hatred and contempt from the pagans. The abuse of the Christians was of a petty nature at times and severely harsh at other times. James encouraged the Christians not to fail or falter in the supreme tests of their faith and character.

"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally." He is obviously implying that some of the Christians were lacking in wisdom, the kind of wisdom that would enable them to deal with their trials in the right manner. For the Greeks, wisdom is associated with cleverness and subtlety of thought and the mental agility to make fine verbal distinctions and to follow highly subtle and abstract arguments. The Christian needs a wisdom that makes for a safe passage through life with its numerous pitfalls. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy." (James 3:17.)

James' commendation of wisdom is akin to Solomon's recommendation: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; yea, with all thy getting get understanding." (Prov. 4:7.) Wisdom is an important word in the Epistle of James in the way that faith is to Paul, love to John, and hope to Peter.

The Greeks discounted the preaching of the gospel as foolishness, and the Jews stumbled over the crucified Christ. But Paul stated that the gospel is the "power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:24.) James advised the Christians to pray to God for wisdom. We are reminded of Solo-

mon's prayer, "Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil." (1 Kings 3:9.) James states that God will give wisdom to all who ask in faith.

The promise that God will bestow liberally his gift of wisdom emphasizes both the goodness and generosity of the giver. God is not only overly generous in his giving, but he is gracious in his giving. He asks us to return often to receive of his bounty. Some gifts are spoiled by the churlish attitude of the giver. Other gifts are enhanced by the generosity and kindness of the giver. There is happiness in the heart of the donor and joy in the receiver.

God in his giving "upbraideth not." A gift can be spoiled by the stinginess of the giver and by a continual reminding of the gift bestowed. God is not like the father or mother who is forever reminding his or her children of what has been sacrificed for them and how appreciative they ought to be. However, we do need to count our blessings. And we should feel a debt of gratitude to God who is so gracious a giver.

Prayer for wisdom must be like all other prayers: "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting." Jesus taught, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24.) But he who prays must pray without doubting, for doubt will set up a disquiet in the soul. James is using the word faith in its plain and simple sense—a trust that Jesus is who he claims to be—the Son of God. We come to God with complete confidence that he will answer our prayers. The prayer must be with such a character of faith that it is as if the prayer has already been answered.

The prayer must be "without doubting." Misgiving has no place at all in a prayer of faith. The prayer never doubts that God has turned a deaf ear to his prayer. There must be no hesitation and no "ifs" on one's lips. Jesus commended the centurion whose servant was ill. Considerate of Jesus, he told Jesus if you will just say the word, my servant will be

healed. Jesus declared that he had not found such another great faith. The doubting man is like Elijah's description of the people—"limping between two sides." James describes such a one as being like the surge of the sea driven by the wind. The waves are blown first in this direction and that one by the shifting winds which change from one moment to another. An unstable faith is like a cork moving with the playing winds. The man of faith stands like a rock against the surging seas.

James declares a person who doubts is tossed to and fro "like the surge of the sea" and will not receive anything of the Lord. The fact that he doubts disqualifies his being the recipient of any divine consideration. James describes such a man as being "unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8.) But God's response to the prayer of faith is never failing.

Prayers of Confidence (1 John 5:13-15)

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

John wanted the Christians to know that they were a saved peo-

ple: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." In the gospel, the apostle explains his purpose for his account of the life and teachings of Jesus: "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." (John 20:31.)

It is the quality and character of life that John addresses. The essence of the Christian life is eternal life in Christ. The quality of eternal life makes it desirable. John promises us we may share this eternal life with God.

John speaks of the boldness the Christian enjoys in approaching God through prayer. "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." We are to understand that God does more than listen to his children; he answers their prayers: "for everyone that asketh receiveth." (Matt. 6:8.) God is always listening to the Christian. He is always more ready to listen than the Christian is disposed to pray.

A prayer that God hears, we must remember, must be according to God's will. Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." (Matt. 6:10.) God's will sometimes requires us to walk through dark valleys and carry heavy crosses. A walk with God is not always a walk in the sun. Life is like a dark day with black clouds and the arching rainbow and a lovely sunset.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Prayer is both a privilege and responsibility of every Christian to perform.

2. It is correct to pray for the "kingdom to come" when we keep in mind that the kingdom, which is the church, is in existence, but there are many people into whose hearts Christ has not come to reign.

3. To pray without ceasing is evidence of our continual dependence

upon God and our need for his help and sustaining presence.

4. There are wrong as well as right ways to pray and Jesus sets forth the correct principles.

5. The content of prayer evidences a person's understanding of God.

6. The true confidence of the Christian is that God both hears and answers our prayers.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

How did Jesus address the subject of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount?

Who has the right to address God in prayer?

Discuss the content of the model prayer of Jesus.

Golden Text

What is meant by the expression to pray without ceasing?

How is prayer an expression of dependency upon God?

Ask, Seek, and Knock

Why did Jesus speak critically of the prayer of the Pharisees?

Was Jesus opposed to praying in public?

What are vain repetitions in prayer?

What does the content of prayer say about a person's spiritual life?

Should a Christian expect God to answer his prayers?

Why is it that God is not wearied with our constant praying to him?

How does God respond to the prayers of his children?

A Prayer for Wisdom

Where the twelve tribes of the dispersion living?

Discuss the nature of the persecutions of the Christians in James' letter.

How does James relate wisdom to prayer?

What is the nature of wisdom which is from above?

What confidence must a Christian express in prayer?

Prayers of Confidence

Why did John write his letter to the Christians?

What does John mean by eternal life?

What are the conditions of an acceptable prayer to God?

Lesson XII—June 23, 1974

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

1 Thess. 1:9, 10; 4:9-18; 2 Pet. 3:1-7

9 For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God,

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

9 But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;

10 For indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you;

12 That ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead

in Christ shall rise first;

17 Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

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.

Golden Text.—*"So Christ . . . shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation."* (Heb. 9: 28.)

Devotional Reading.—2 Thess. 3:11-13.

Daily Bible Readings

June 17.	M.....	Promise of the Angels (Acts 1:6-11)
June 18.	T.....	Promise of Christ (John 14:1-4)
June 19.	W.....	Be Watchful (Mark 13:34-37)
June 20.	T.....	Be Ready (2 Pet. 3:8-18)
June 21.	F.....	Wait Patiently (James 5:7-11)
June 22.	S.....	Long for His Coming (2 Tim. 4:5-8)
June 23.	S.....	Events Associated with It (Matt. 25:31-46)

Time.—First Thessalonians, A.D. 54; Second Peter, A.D. 66.

Places.—Thessalonica; not known for First Peter.

Persons.—Thessalonian Christians and Paul; Peter and Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus from the tomb could have no personal meaning for the Christian unless he comes again to claim his own. The New Testament is clear that God loved mankind so much that he sent his Son to earth to live among men in order to defeat evil and death and to establish a church of penitent baptized believers in his name. The purpose being that the Christians should live their lives of love and service to prepare them to be with God.

A new and last age of man was inaugurated by Christ which will end in God's appointed time. Christians are citizens of the kingdom of heaven on earth; and in the age to come, they will become citizens of the eternal kingdom.

The second advent becomes necessary in the light of his first coming. He was distrusted and hated by the Sadducees and Pharisees

who were instrumental in nailing him to a cross. God proved them wrong by raising him from the tomb. All the forces of evil were powerless to destroy him. Christ who lived among us, humbly and beautifully, will return as the Son of God, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings who will call the whole of mankind together in judgment. And step by step, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John carry us to the cross and the tomb, and the resurrection. Luke describes his ascension and tells of Jesus' promise to return to earth. (Acts 1:11.) Though some of the first century Christians expected Christ to return soon, the New Testament is emphatic that he is coming again. And modern Christians should be confident in their faith that the time of the second coming is appointed of God, and we need await that inevitable day.

The Golden Text

So Christ . . . shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation. (Heb. 9:28.)

The author of the Hebrew letter sums up the life of man. "And inasmuch as it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this cometh judgment." In his time, a man lives out his days. Then he stands in the final judgment by divine appointment where he must give an account of his life and God will pronounce final judgment. Unlike the slave of sin, the Christian will not be scourged to his dungeon of everlasting punishment. His faith and obedience will stand in that

hour. Christ will come to vindicate the Christian's claim to be with God, for the believer has been saved from the guilt and power of sin. But the Psalmist declared. "Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." (Psalm 1:5.)

The golden text declares that Christ died by divine appointment on the cross as an offering to bear the sins of man (Isa. 53:12), and he shall appear a second time. The second coming will be apart from sin. The Christian disciples will appear on that day free from their sins. The text reflects the ceremo-

nies on the day of the atonement when the high priest sacrificed the sin offerings upon the altar before the tent of meeting. The people who watched the high priest enter the tabernacle awaited his return from the holy of holies with full confidence. (Lev. 16:24.)

The Text Explained

A Dead Idol and a Living God

(1 Thess. 1:9, 10)

For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and, how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come.

The church at Thessalonica was one of the joys of the apostle's ministry. Paul had come to Thessalonica from Philippi where he had baptized the first converts in Europe. Paul and Silas persuaded a great number of the devout Greeks and several of the chief women. The Jews created a disturbance in the city verging on mob violence. They accused Paul and Silas saying, "These that turned the world upside down are come hither also." (Acts 17:6.) Paul and Silas were accused of treason—who acted contrary to the decrees of Caesar. The charge was subtly conceived and dangerous. The rulers took a bond of security from Jason, a Christian, probably to guarantee that Paul would leave Thessalonica and not return.

The church prospered in Thessalonica. Paul complimented them, for the word of God had gone out from them to every place in Macedonia and Achaia and in other regions. Thessalonica was a great seaport city and located on one of the great highways of the region. These factors provided for easy movement of the Christians. Paul uses the strongest terminology: "For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, . . . but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth." (1 Thess. 1:8.) It is clear why the church at Thessalonica was held in such affection by Paul. The fervor of the evangelical faith of the Thessalonians was a clarion call to the rest of the world to follow their example.

Christ is depicted as going even to the presence of God to make his blood offering for the sins of the people. Now the Christians need only await his second appearing when they will be caught up with him to live eternally in God's presence.

We may imagine the joy of Paul when word came to him of the burning zeal of the Thessalonians as they preached the gospel abroad. The ships that sailed carried Christian converts to Syria, Palestine, and many other ports of call. Networks of all-weather roads laced the Roman empire together. Paul undoubtedly received from places other than from Thessalonica the good news that the gospel was spreading.

Paul's heart warmed to his praise of the Thessalonians. When the disciples came to Paul telling him about the great work going on in Thessalonica, they informed Paul how the members told about the going in and out of Paul and Silas in the few turbulent days they preached the gospel establishing the church in the city. The whole city was set into an uproar by certain "vile fellows of the rabble" that the Jews had set upon Paul and Silas. Jason's house was assaulted and he was seized by the people, but they did not find Paul and Silas. After they safely escaped the city, Paul was experiencing continuing joy as word kept coming in of the success of his efforts in Thessalonica.

The good news that thrilled Paul is summed up in the words: "how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." Paul's common practice when first entering a city was to locate a Jewish synagogue. Though called to be the apostle to the Gentiles, the "Hebrew of the Hebrews" was first constrained to preach the gospel to the Jews. They bore a special relationship to God which even their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah could not alter.

The most responsive hearers of Paul were Gentiles who had attached themselves to the Jewish synagogues which grew out of their admiration for the high moral standards of the Jews in a world empty alike of moral standards and reli-

gious convictions. But this was not the case in Thessalonica. Paul had drawn his converts from crass paganism with no spiritual and moral persuasion of any character whatsoever.

We may derive some idea of the paganism in the first century from Paul's first impressions of Athens. When he entered the city, he saw a city wholly given to idolatry. The Athenians were worshipping around fifty thousand gods and deities. Pagan temples adorned with sculptured figures of gods were all about the city including the Parthenon, the temple of the goddess of Athena. Paul saw an altar with the words inscribed—"to an unknown God." This provided Paul with the theme for his sermon on Mars Hill. (Acts 17.)

The city of Corinth was even more corrupted with pagan religious practices. A mountain overlooked the Corinth of Paul's day. One thousand young girls were forced into temple prostitution each year. The revenue from this nefarious traffic went to support the pagan temples and priesthood. The darkest and most shameful practices did go on in the name of religion. The pagans were not unspoiled children of nature. They were incredibly corrupt by any moral standard. Paul catalogs the vicious practices of the pagans in Romans 1:24-32.

The philosophies of pagans offered little more in moral instructions. Paul met and disputed with the Stoics and Epicureans in Athens. The Stoics taught an indifferent acceptance of life's offering. The Epicureans taught that the presence of "pleasure" and the absence of "pain" was the ideal life. These philosophies appealed to the upper classes. The ordinary people thought of life as an uncertain gamble which ended in absolute extinction. Life was lived without moral persuasions of any kind. Sensuous enjoyment of life was the practice of the people. They practiced fatalism because they had nothing to believe.

Such was the background of Paul's converts. Paul described them in three statements. First, they had turned to God from idols. Second, they were serving a living and true God. Paul's third state-

ment sums up their faith: "and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come." This is the most frequently mentioned doctrine. Someone has made the count that there is a reference to Christ's second coming on the average of every thirteen verses from Matthew straight through Revelation.

Paul advises the Thessalonians to await the coming of Christ from heaven. They were to be persistent and unwavering in their faith. The apostle provides the reason because Jesus "delivereth us from the wrath to come." The doctrine of divine wrath and retribution is not a popular doctrine in the modern age. A great many people in one fashion or another have simply rejected the Scriptures on this doctrine despite the fact they see the hand of God everywhere punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. We live in a world distraught by evil. To say that sin is not important is simply to imply that when man sins that God does not really care, or that sin is the inevitable consequence of nature. As a matter of fact, divine wrath is something we experience in life, and the Bible warns the wicked of their expectation of it in the world to come.

Paul pictures the world as standing under divine judgment with the godless man certain to reap the evil fruits of injustice, cruelty, and all forms of evil. Paul rejoices that the Thessalonian Christians have turned their backs on the pagan world and can now confidently await the return of Christ to this evil world to take them from it.

Brotherly Love
(1 Thess. 4:9-12)

But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more: and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing.

The pagans of the second century

had a saying: "See how these Christians love one another." The concept of Christian love was something new in the world. The Jews were commanded in the law to practice justice in their dealings with the Gentiles. Even mortal enemies will defend the need for justice so that men may be, at least, equal in this respect. Christian love, not only admits, but it seeks the other person's good. Paul advised that we should return good for evil. It was said of a certain Plato of Syracuse that no man ever did his enemies more harm or his friends more good.

The New Testament uses two primary words for love, *agape*, which is a self-denying love equally toward all men regardless of their merit. Paul advises that the Christians should practice a special kind of love among themselves. The word for this kind of love is *phileo*—the love of the brethren. This they did and they included also the brethren in Macedonia and other places.

Paul gave the Thessalonians some particular advice. He urges that they abound more and more. Christians are advised never to become weary in well doing. To rest content in one's faith is of little value being alone. Paul instructed the Thessalonians in three practices. They were to "study to be quiet." To live a thoughtful, well-balanced life is a virtue to be sought. In conjunction with this principle, Paul told them to tend to their own business. This expression is found only here in the Bible; however, it was a warning not to be meddling in the affairs of others and trying to run the affairs of the church, or other such like activities. Then Paul advised them to work with their hands. We may surmise that some of the Christians would have lived on the charity of the church. It might be that some were engaged in occupations not befitting that of a Christian. In either case, Paul was teaching one of the oldest principles on earth—a person shall earn his honest living by the sweat of his brow.

Paul states why such exemplary behavior is necessary: "That ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing." What could be

more transparent than the fact that our daily conversation and walk will win others to Christ? (1 Cor. 7:13-16.) The Christian who behaves in a becoming manner will have the respect of them who are without. And by their diligent minding of their own affairs and working with their own hands, they will have need of nothing.

The Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

After Paul had touched upon certain Christian virtues, he turns to another matter of great concern to the Christians. They were uncertain about the time of the second coming of Christ. Undoubtedly, some believed it would be in their own lifetime. Paul tells them that they should not be in deep sorrow over their dead loved ones. This was the practice of the pagans who had no hope beyond this life. Paul assures the converts that if "Jesus died and arose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." We need to take note of the fact that the doctrine of "soul-sleeping" is neither stated nor implied here. Paul is simply speaking the facts of death. Jew and pagans alike referred to death as a sleep. It is a common statement in the Old Testament that such a person "slept with his fathers." Paul is not here painting a grim specter of death. Death is no longer an implacable

reaper of human life. Death has been overcome by the risen Lord. Paul expressed the character of the Christian faith in this relation: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55.)

The pagans did indeed believe in life after death. But they did not rejoice in any form of hope. The pale soul was disembodied, as the pagan thought, to go to some dark abode in the underworld. They believed that any kind of life on earth, no matter how miserable, was preferable to the estate in Hades. Sadness and gloom pervaded the pagan's anticipation of death in the dismal realm of "shades."

Actually, the pagan world was without any real hope. They taught the immaterial nature of the soul and believed the body would be utterly destroyed. The Pharisees believed in some form of the bodily resurrection. The Sadducees did not. Paul is encouraging the disciples not to sorrow as do the pagans who have no hope, nor is the Christian to accept death as a matter of indifference. Rather, Paul is insisting that all who are "fallen asleep in Jesus" will awaken to live eternally with them. Paul is resting on the sure foundation of Christ's resurrection on which the Christian hope is based.

Paul proceeds to explain the Christian hope. He states that those who "are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." You will note that Paul speaks of Jesus dying. There are two accounts of death in the New Testament. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. 9:27.) This is a natural expression of the end of life's existence. The unnatural use of life in the service of sin will result in the second death of being lost eternally. (Matt. 10:28, Rev. 20:13, 15.) The fact of the resurrection of Christ is the confidence of the Christian's hope: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22.)

Those who have "fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Paul describes Jesus as being the "firstfruits" from the dead. (1 Cor. 15:23.) We should understand that as God raised Jesus from the dead

and brought him from the grave, that he will in like manner call the faithful to life to meet and to be with Christ.

A deep concern of the Thessalonian Christians was for their loved ones who were dead. Some believed their dying before the second coming would in some fashion compromise their living with him. They were not certain in what respect. Paul assures the disciples that the Christians who are alive at his second coming will have no advantage over them who have died in the Lord.

The apostle details the circumstances of the second coming of Christ. He assures the disciples that all who are alive at the second coming will not precede those who have died. Because in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51.) They would meet the Lord in the air never more to be separated.

Verse sixteen tells us something in particular about the second coming. Jesus himself will appear in the second coming, not an archangel or some heavenly emissary. Furthermore, the second coming of Jesus will be with majesty and honor. The advent of the Lord will be with a triumphant shout—the voice of authoritative command, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. Jesus said, "All that are in the tombs shall hear his voice." (John 5:28.) One fact is apparent. When Christ appears, he will be visible and we shall hear him. His voice will penetrate even the tombs. He will come to call mankind to the judgment (Matt. 25:31-46), and he will lead the redeemed to heaven. Paul tells us that the dead in Christ shall be raised first. They will be changed before the believers on earth who are left alive, and will ascend to meet the Lord. Then following their resurrection: "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

"So shall we ever be with the Lord." Paul meant to encourage the Thessalonians in the expectation of the great day and to exhort them to remain steadfast.

The Certainty of the Second Coming (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 which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God: by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Peter addresses the readers of his letter by putting them in remembrance of what he had written to them in an earlier letter: "I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance." He is urging the Christians to be alert and wakeful and to keep in mind the words spoken before by the apostles: "And the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." They must be constantly on guard

so as not to be led astray by last day mockers.

The mockers were probably sensuous people who followed their own inclinations to do as they pleased. They may have been false teachers described in chapter two.

They were skeptics who discounted the second coming of Christ, as the decades were passing with no visible signs of the second coming. Ironically they asked: "Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the days the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Peter recognizes the latent danger present in this form of sacrilege. Satan would not only wreck the faith of the believer outright if possible, failing in this, he would also raise the serious question of Christ ever returning again. These scoffers were ridiculing the hope of the Christians. The Son of man had not returned to reward the faithful.

Peter challenges the charge of the skeptics. He directs attention to the fact that God spoke and the earth was ordered from chaos. The earth in the days of Noah was destroyed by a universal flood. Peter says three things which are subject to change: the heavens and the earth by command of the word of God are to be consumed in fire; judgment of mankind will be attendant to that day; and the ungodly shall be destroyed in the sense they will go away into everlasting punishment. Peter completes his argument against the scoffers with a warning for his day and ours.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The fact of the second coming of Christ gives meaning and substance to the great Christian doctrines that Christ was the Word who became flesh and who died upon a cross and was resurrected from the dead.

2. The Scriptures depict Jesus as making a blood offering for the sins of mankind and seeking their salvation through their faith and obedience to his teachings.

3. The lust for pleasure and power or whatever man may wor-

ship is an idol which disrupts and destructs body and soul of whoever comes to bow down before it. This was a truth in Paul's day and no less in ours.

4. A person who has not been taught to work with his hands has been denied admission to one of the great character building schools in life.

5. Every Christian who has died "in the Lord" and all who are alive "in the Lord" at his second coming will live with him eternally.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why is the second coming of Christ of importance?
Why is Christ's second coming necessary in the light of his first coming?
Did some of the Christians expect Christ to come in their own lifetime?

Golden Text

How does the Hebrew letter sum up the life of man?
Compare Christ and his sacrifice on the cross, with the high priest and his services, on the day of atonement.

A Dead Idol and a Living G.)d

Where did Paul first baptize converts in Europe?
Describe the city of Thessalonica.
Where did Paul usually go when he came to a strange city?
What kind of people were Pau's converts in Thessalonica?
Describe the pagan religious practices of Paul's day.

Where did Paul dispute with the Stoics and Epicureans?
Why is the doctrine of divine retribution so unpopular in our day?

Brotherly Love

What are the two Greek words for love used in the New Testament and what does each mean?
Why should a Christian study to be quiet?

The Second Coining

Why were the Thessalonian Christians troubled by the second coming of Christ?
What did the pagans believe about life after death?
What will be the end of a person who has lived a life of sin?
What is meant by the expression the Jesus is the "firstfruits" from the dead?
In what order will the Christians meet the Lord at his second coining?

The Certainty of His Second Coining

Why did Peter stir up the remembrance, of the Christians?
What were the mockers saying about the second coming?
How did Peter respond to the mockers?

Lesson XIII—June 30, 1974

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

Lesson Text

Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23; John 1:1-9

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

21 And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,

And they shall call his name Immanuel;

which is, being interpreted, God with us.

1 In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him.

8 He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light.

9 There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."* (Col. 2:9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Isa. 53:1-12.

Daily Bible Readings

June 24.M.....	Christ, the Light of the World (John 8:1-12)
June 25.T.....	Christ, the Good Shepherd (John 10:7-18)
June 26.W.....	Christ, the Master Teacher (Luke 12:22-34)
June 27.T.....	Christ, Our Redeemer (Heb. 9:18-22)
June 28.F.....	Christ, Our Saviour (Luke 24:1-7)
June 29.S.....	Christ, Our King (Isa. 9:6, 7; Heb. 12:1, 2)
June 30.S.....	Christ, Our High Priest (Heb. 5:1-10)

TIME.—Isaiah, 742 B.C.; Matthew, 4 B.C.; John, A.D. 26.
PLACES.—Jerusalem; Bethlehem.
PERSONS.—Isaiah. Ahaz; Joseph and an angel of the Lord: and Jesus and John.

Introduction

The uniqueness of Christ is best portrayed within both the Testaments. The first scripture that brings Jesus into focus are the messianic passages of the Old Testament. The first messianic passage is Genesis 3:15, wherein, God promised that the "seed of woman" would bruise the head of the serpent. God promised in turn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that through their seed God would richly bless all of mankind.

The messianic person gradually emerges in grand dimensions throughout the Scriptures. God promised his birth to a young virgin (Isa. 7:14); Micah names his birth place in Bethlehem of Judea (Mic. 5:2); Isaiah identifies him as a descendant of David (Isa. 11:1); and he names the child with wonderful names (Isa. 9:6). And in the fifty-third chapter, we have the full length depiction of the "suffering servant." The servant would be little esteemed by men who would despise and reject him. He would be denied justice in the courts of men, and be led as a lamb to slaughter. His enemies would

pierce his hands and feet and gamble for one of his garments. (Psalm 22:16-18.) He would pour out his soul unto death for the transgressions of his people, and make his grave with the wicked and the rich. (Isa. 53:9ff.) Daniel calls him "a son of man." (Dan. 7:13.) Daniel tells of his kingdom which would be set up in the age of the Roman empire which would never be destroyed. (Dan. 2:44.)

Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled all the messianic prophecies concerning both his person and his kingdom. The Bible is true; it is self-validating and self-authenticating. What Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John say that Jesus said, is set forth in the Scriptures and grounded in the hard facts of history. For just a man to have fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah through chance and coincidence would be miraculous. We accept the miracles of Christ, the Saviour of mankind. We believe that he is uniquely the Son of God who lived among us and will at some future time come to

The Golden Text

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Col. 2:9.)

When Christ came into the world, he was more than a man though he was that. He was verily God. The Greek word for fullness is *pleroma*. This means a measure completely full with not even the slightest lack. The fullness of the measure of God was fully contained in Christ—*not*

divided partially somewhere else. A fifth century description of the nature of Christ was that he was fully human and fully divine in one nature. John is, of course, expressing the divine incarnation of the Word which became flesh and dwelt on earth among men. This is not only so, but all who believe in Christ may share his nature.

The Text Explained

Immanuel
(Isa. 7:14)

Therefore the Lord himself will

give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The historical setting of the lesson text was during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The times were troubled. Ahaz feared an invasion from two of his northern neighbors—the Syrian king, Rezin, and Pekah, the king of Israel. Their purpose was to wage war against Ahaz and displace him as king of Judah. Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser, king of the powerful Assyrian empire. Isaiah attempted to dissuade Ahaz away from this course of action. The kingdom of Judah and the Northern Kingdom Israel, were sometimes friends, but they were more often unfriendly and warlike.

Isaiah met with Ahaz and assured him of the gracious help of God in the time of his desperate need. The king was trembling with fear and dismay. Isaiah commanded the king to take heart and to be unafraid. The king was encouraged to place his faith in God's power to deliver Judah and not upon Assyria. Ahaz's fears were ill informed. Isaiah referred to the kings of Israel and Syria as "two tails of smoking firebrands." (Isa. 7:4.) They were not even firebrands.

But Ahaz refused to heed Isaiah's advice and to behave as a descendant of King David should in a brave and courageous manner. Ahaz sat on a great throne, but his fear and timidity diminished the worth of it.

Isaiah called upon Ahaz to ask a sign from God from either "in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." Isaiah chided the king for his weak vacillations. "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also?" (Isa. 7:11-13.) The sign that God offered would have been solely for the benefit of Ahaz to convince him of God's present help. You will remember that Gideon asked for a sign from heaven to assure him that he was God's chosen instrument to expel the Midianites from the land. (Judges 6:36ff.)

Despite the king's refusal to ask for a sign, God took the matter of choice from Ahaz and gave him a sign. The actions of the king were nothing less than sinful. His stubbornness was evidence of his lack of faith in God to deliver him from

his enemies. Ahaz clearly did not believe the statement of King Solomon in an address to Israel: "There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel." (1 Kings 8:25.) The sign would be that a "virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14.) The announcement is prefaced with the word "behold" from the Hebrew word *hinneh*. This is a term used to make an announcement of great importance. Isaiah is going to announce the birth of a child. The announcement is a messianic utterance: "behold, a virgin shall conceive." The Hebrew word used to translate virgin is *almah*. She would not be an old woman, or a married woman, not just a girl, but an *almah* (virgin). Rebekah before her marriage to Isaac is called *almah*. She was a virgin. *Almah* is never translated anywhere in the Old Testament to mean a young married woman. *Almah* may be translated maiden or damsel. The context of Old Testament Scriptures makes it a wise choice to translate the word virgin.

The argument is sometimes made that if Isaiah meant to imply a "virgin" he could have used *bethulah*. But an even greater uncertainty would have been injected had he done so. The word *bethulah* does mean a virgin; in another place, it means a betrothed virgin, and is used also to indicate a married woman. Isaiah used just the appropriate word to indicate a young unmarried maiden. The birth, without question, is of a messianic character. The mother was a good woman, and the birth was out of the natural order of human even! s. The only satisfactory identification of this young unmarried woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus. The only other reference to the birth of the Messiah is in Micah 5:2 which states that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

Isaiah clearly states that the birth of the child is yet in the future—"shall conceive and bear a son." And the birth of that son is the assurance that Ahaz would have nothing to fear from the two kings, Pekah and Rezin. Isaiah said she would call his name "Immanuel." The word means "God with us." The child could not be any child.

but a special child and such a child as would serve for a sign. The prophecy of Isaiah is something infinitely more significant than just the deliverance of Judah from Syria which God meant to do in any case. Isaiah is not announcing just the birth of a child who will be the next king of Judah, or just some ordinary child. Instead, the prophet is looking to the future of one who is the very "presence of God" among his people.

We cannot know why God should have chosen a great crisis in the history of the kingdom of Judah to make this announcement; but, nevertheless, he did. Isaiah was foretelling the birth of the Messiah. Jesus the Son of God.

The Virgin Birth (Matt. 1:21-23)

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us.

Matthew's opening words sound the keynote of his gospel. He was immediately concerned to provide overwhelming evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah directly descended from the royal lineage of King David and who came of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised man in his fallen estate that the "seed of woman" would bruise the head of the serpent. (Gen. 3:15.) The promise received personal embodiment in the statement which God made to Abraham that in his seed would all the peoples of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:1-3.) The people of Israel came from the loins of Abraham, and finally Christ who was the end of the promises and prophecies of the Scriptures.

The genealogy of Jesus contains a curious feature. Three women are named in the genealogy. The blood lineage is traced from father to son, although the Hebrew mother is the determining factor in identifying of the Jewish character of the child. Tamar is the first woman men-

tioned who bore a son to Judah. (Gen. 38.) Boaz was a son of a woman by the name of Rahab (Josh. 2); and Ruth was a Moabite woman who married Boaz whose son, Obed, begot Jesse, whose son was David. Matthew would have us know that though he was born of a virgin, Joseph was married to his mother providing Jesus with a legal Jewish genealogy. (Matt. 1.)

Matthew provides a detailed account of the birth of Jesus. His purpose is not to provide the facts as would be expected of a historian. Matthew purposes to call attention to the messianic revelations of the Old Testament and to show their fulfillment in Jesus. Matthew sets forth the facts that Jesus is the Christ. The claims set forth by Isaiah were misrepresented by the Jews. The Jews were not expecting a virgin born Messiah. Jesus did not fulfill their messianic expectations which were politically oriented.

The custom of the Jewish people followed a specific ritual. A girl of about twelve or thirteen was betrothed to a man usually around eighteen. It was thought to be shameful for a man to wait until later in life to be married. The betrothal period lasted a whole year and could only be dissolved by a legal divorce. During the course of the year, the couple were known as man and wife although they did not have the rights of a man and wife. In case a virgin's betrothed husband died in the course of the year, she was referred to as a "virgin widow."

In the case of Joseph and Mary, she became pregnant in the betrothal period. There is no adequate reason to assume the virgin birth did not occur because there is no discoverable reason, in the first place, why the story should have been invented. Joseph upon discovering Mary was with child decided not to make a shameful public exposure of what he assumed to be a clear case of infidelity. And Joseph began to make the preparations to put quietly away his betrothed.

While Joseph was pondering his problems, an angel of the Lord appeared, telling him the unborn child of Mary was conceived of the Holy Spirit and the child would be

named Jesus upon his birth. *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Joshua* which means "Jehovah is salvation." This was his name because, "it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

Verse 23 is the crux of Matthew's purpose in identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah in the prophecy spoke of a good young maiden who would give birth to a child. The very context of the Scriptures supports the virtuous character of the young damsel (*almah*). This, of course, is fully detailed in the virtuous character of the young virgin (*almah*) who was betrothed to Joseph. Matthew with far greater incisiveness deals with numerous messianic prophecies of the Old Testament as they were fulfilled in the person of Christ.

It is apparent that special emphasis is given to the humanity of Jesus both here and in the gospel of Luke. (Luke 2.) The apostle Paul alludes to the human nature of the birth of Christ: "but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law," (Gal. 4:4.) Paul deals at great length with the divine nature of Jesus that we will not document at this time. Matthew leaves no question that the child of the virgin in Isaiah 7:14 was not fulfilled in the birth of Hezekiah, who became a good king. Matthew sees nothing less than "Immanuel, God with us" in the birth of Jesus.

The Word Became Flesh (John 1:1-9)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but come that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.

John clears up what must have remained a great mystery of God. Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth, and Matthew gave a detailed account of the miraculous birth, but neither identified the origin of the one called Immanuel. John does this, and begins with the "pre-fleshly" existence of Jesus, the saviour of mankind. We may notice at this place that only Matthew and Luke detail the birth of Jesus. Mark passed the first thirty years of the life of Jesus in complete silence. John begins before the beginnings of heaven and earth and before time. The apostle leads us back on the infinite track of eternity to the Word (*logos*) who has existed in timeless eternity with God.

"In the beginning was the Word." This was before creation and time began. The Word was already in existence. The Word dwelt in and was a separate person in the Godhead. The Word is translated from the Greek word *logos*. *Logos* was a word in common usage in the Greek speaking world. The word could go forth from a man as an expression of his thought in speech. It was a creative intelligent energy from which all things came.

When God is thought of as the *Logos*, he is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient wisdom by which all things are created and guided. John is saying in this first verse that Jesus is that veritable *logos* who became flesh and entered this world as a man.

"And the Word was with God." We are to understand that the Word by itself does not make up the Godhead, nevertheless, the complete divine nature of the Godhead belongs to him. John is clearly saying that the Word and God are the one and same.

"And the Word was God." Nothing can be higher than God, and all that may be said about God may be said about the Word. John is not simply indicating the divinity of Jesus, he is asserting that Jesus is very God.

The law declared: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." (Deut. 6:4.) When John wrote the "Word was God," we must understand that John intended the meaning of the oneness of God. John does not say that God was in the Word. John equates the Word and God as an

absolute unity. We are to understand that God is meant in the fullest respect. "The Word was the same in the beginning with God." This verse repeats in a poetic manner the thought content of the preceding verse.

"All things were made through him." Notice the opposing line of thought. It follows as day follows night that there is nothing made that he did not make. John is expressing the idea that Jesus is the instrument through whom all created things were brought into being. The Word is God who is responsible for the creation of the world. The world belongs to God and the fulness thereof; he created it and sustains it through the word.

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Life and light are the two great key words of the gospel of John. This life is more than the life of the flesh and the span of man's appointed years. It is a quality of life whose value is discovered only in God. "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." (John 3:36.)

The second word, *light*, is used more than thirty times in the gospel of John. The world that is living in opposition to God is spoken of as *darkness*. The light of the Word continues to shine in the world in spite of the darkness. The light continues to illumine the spiritual darkness for rebellious men who refuse to accept God.

"And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not." The light of God is more powerful than the darkness of Satan which can neither understand it, nor overcome it. The darkness John speaks of is as real as the light. Evil men who work their sinful acts under the cover of darkness cannot stand before the rising sun, so darkness of evil is driven away when the searchlight of truth is focused upon it. Judas ate the last supper with Jesus and went out in the night to betray Jesus. The terrible truth of his great sin became an intolerable nightmare for Judas, and he could no longer live with himself.

"There was a man sent from God." There is good reason why John the Baptist is mentioned. John broke the prophetic stillness after a four hundred year period

when no prophet spoke. John the Baptist was greatly honored and revered by many people. John the Baptist is depicted in the gospels as the forerunner of Christ in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. (Isa. 40:3-5.) But not everyone understood it so. And some even thought he was the Christ. (Luke 3:15.) John the Baptist even said, "I am not the Christ." (John 1:20.) John's sole mission was that of the forerunner of Christ. He came that he might bear witness to the light, the Word, so that everybody would know Christ, obey him, and be saved.

John the Baptist was indeed the last and greatest of the prophets. Jesus said none born among men were greater than John the Baptist, but the least in the kingdom of heaven would be greater, because of the privilege to be a disciple of Christ. (Matt. 11:11.) We are introduced to another of the key words in the *Gospel of John* in the seventh verse: John came for a witness "that he might bear witness of the light." There are several witnesses to Christ in the *Gospel of John*: the Father (John 5:31ff); Christ himself (John 8:14); the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; 16:14); the works of Jesus (John 5:36); the Scriptures (John 5:39), and John the Baptist.

The greatness of John the Baptist is evidenced in his continued insistence that Jesus is the Christ. John came so that he might bear witness to the messianic character of Christ. The statement of verse eight clearly sets forth the fact that John is not the Christ.

"There was the true light." Jesus was the true light. He was no pretended light. The age of Jesus had many false prophets and saviours who claimed to have special knowledge and power to bring about salvation. The pagan religions made false claims to true knowledge and to the true light. John is speaking of the Word being the genuine light in an age of false saviours who walked in darkness despite their claims. Even the light of the prophets, including John the Baptist, were by far, lesser illumination of God and truth. Jesus is that light "which lighteth every man coming into the world."

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The uniqueness of Jesus lies in the fact that he was fully God and fully a man in one person.

2. Jesus of Nazareth in a brief lifetime of thirty-three years fulfilled all of the many messianic prophecies in the Old Testament proving beyond question he is the Son of God.

3. The announcement of the birth of Jesus to Joseph by an angel

was a messianic utterance since Jesus is the Son of God.

4. John's account of the nature of Jesus Christ is to emphasize the pre-fleshly nature of Christ as the Word who is the same with God.

5. Christ is both the life and light of man since he appoints the way which leads to God and determines the quality of eternal life which the faithful will enjoy in God throughout eternity.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

What are the names which Isaiah ascribes to the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6?

Discuss some of the descriptions of the "suffering servant" in Isaiah 53.

What evidence in the Bible supports the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ beyond question?

Golden Text

What should we understand by the statement that Jesus was fully God and fully man in one person?

Why is it necessary that Christ should be both human and divine in his nature?

Immanuel

What problem was Isaiah having with Ahaz, king of Judah?

Who were the "two tails of smoking firebrands" mentioned by Isaiah?

What is the importance of the Hebrew word *almah* in relation to the birth of Jesus?

What is the meaning of the name Immanuel?

What particular child did Isaiah have in mind that would be born of a young virgin?

The Virgin Birth

Why was it necessary for Matthew to prove that Jesus was a descendant of King David?

Describe the women who are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus.

Discuss the Jewish custom of the betrothal in the relationship between Joseph and Mary.

What application did Matthew make of Isaiah 7:14 in relation to Jesus?

The Word Became Flesh

How does John go about describing the nature of Jesus Christ?

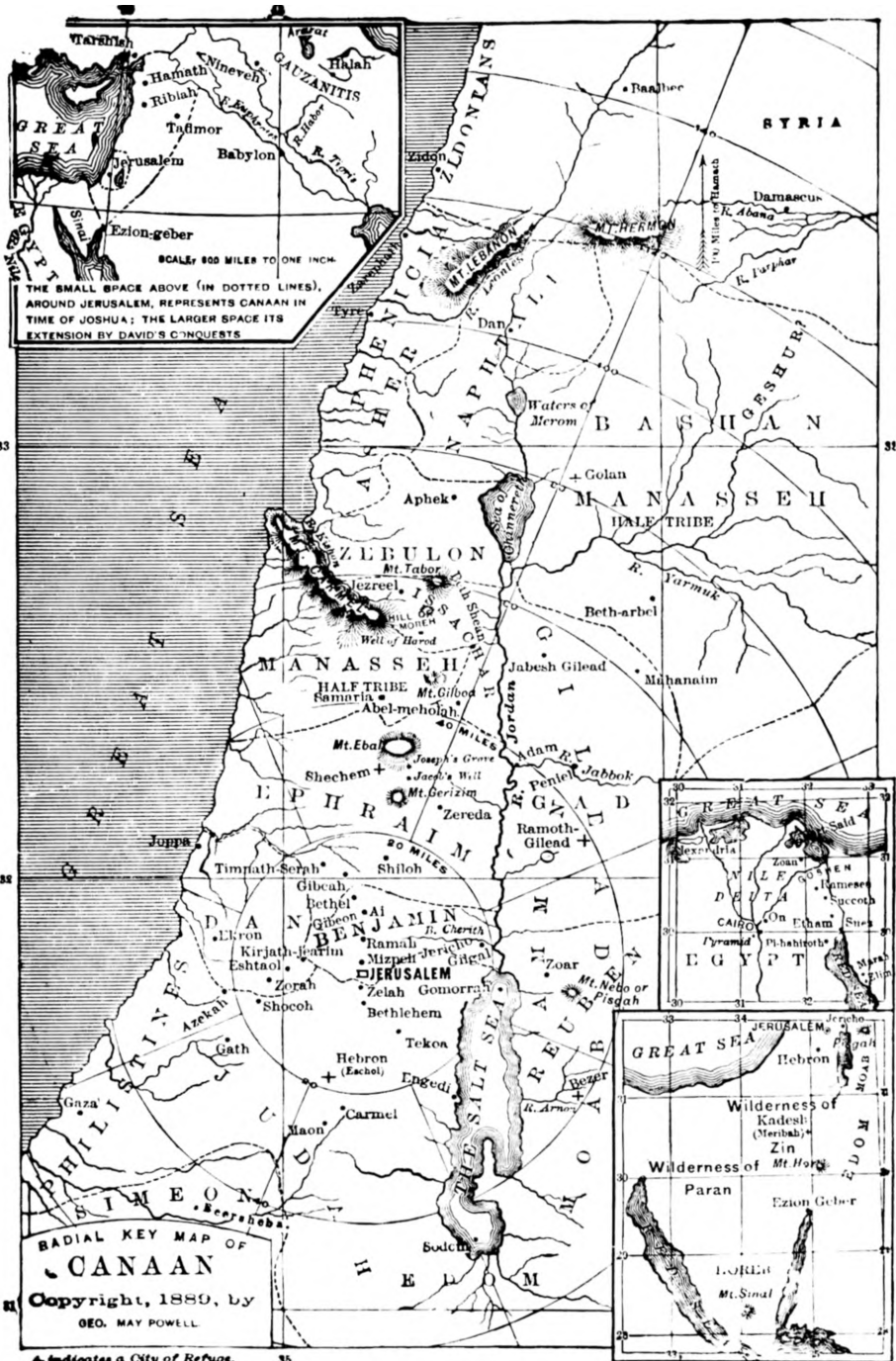
How was the word *logos* understood in the Greek speaking world in the time of Jesus?

What is the nature of eternal life in Christ?

What use does John make of the word "light" as opposed to "darkness"?

What was the relation of John the Baptist to Christ?

Discuss the mission of John the Baptist.



THIRD QUARTER

LESSONS FROM THE PATRIARCHS

Aim.—To consider interesting and significant events in the lives of the patriarchs; to observe their faithfulness and zeal (and the weaknesses and imperfections they sometimes exhibited), and to profit from their experiences.

Lesson I—July 7, 1974

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

Lesson Text

Gen. 12:1-9; 13:14-18

1 Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shehem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said. Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded

he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah.

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

14 And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward:

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

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it.

18 And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah.

Golden Text.—“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance.” (Heb. 11: 8.)

Devotional Reading.—Heb. 11:8-19.

Daily Bible Readings

July 1. M.....	Abraham's Ancestry (Gen. 11:27-32)
July 2. T.....	The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-5)
July 3. W.....	God's Promise to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-18)
July 4. T.....	Isaac, Child of Promise (Gen. 17:15-21)
July 5. F.....	Abraham's Great Test of Faith (Gen. 22:1-8)
July 6. S.....	Death of Sarah, Abraham's Wife (Gen. 23:1-20)
July 7. S.....	Death of Abraham (Gen. 25:1-11)

TIME.—1920 B.C.

PLACES.—Haran and Canaan.

PERSONS.—God, Abraham and Sarah.

Introduction

The family is the oldest institution on earth coming into existence at the time the first man and woman were created. The name patriarch is expressive of the family where the father served as both the temporal and spiritual head. As the head of his family, the father accepted responsibility for the preservation and welfare of his family. Genesis details that period of time which is called the Patriarchal Age because it is dominated by the patriarchs beginning with Adam down to the sons of Jacob. Chapter twelve begins the second part of Genesis. This portion of Genesis deals primarily with the question of God's relation with the people of Israel and Israel's relation with the rest of mankind.

Abraham is one of the patriarchs who becomes the father of the people of Israel. God singled out Abraham and blessed him in a special measure. He stands high among the towering Hebrews of great faith and character. John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, "Bring therefore fruit worthy of repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." (Matt. 3:9.) Abraham stands against the backdrop of time and history. He emerges as a great character who faced the dreams and despairs of life. He lived through dark tragedies that life ever presents and the golden hours of the fulfillment of life's fondest dreams. The towering person of Abraham stands across the ages. He believed in the one God while most of mankind worshipped their idols.

That such a person as Abraham lived is no longer questioned, nor is

the Genesis record of the facts of his life questioned in the time he lived. Abraham is first called Abram in Genesis, which means "the father is exalted." The lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are portrayed in realistic terms. They were patriarchs of faith. Their faith in God never wavered.

And it is with good reason that Abraham is honored as the father of the faithful throughout the passages of history. (Gal. 3:7.) Abraham when he was called to leave Ur of Chaldea tore up his roots to go into a strange land that God promised to him with no knowledge of the place where he was going. (Heb. 11:8.) The city of Ur in Abraham's day was one of the great cultural centers of the ancient world; the other was Egypt. Abraham knew what he was leaving behind with no knowledge of what lay before.

Abraham was a man like us. He delayed his journey to Canaan, staying awhile at Haran. (Gen. 11:31-12:5.) Abraham went to Egypt in a time of famine. (Gen. 12:10.) He decided to deceive Pharaoh about Sarah, his wife, to possibly save his life. (Gen. 12:15.) He would have, at least, been honored as Sarah's brother which indeed he was. However, his half-truth was a full blown falsehood. We can understand Abraham's impatience in waiting for an heir when he took Hagar, Sarah's personal servant, to raise up seed to continue his family. (Gen. 16:2; 17:19.) The greatness of the soul of Abraham is evidenced in his generous treatment of Lot when he gave his nephew choice of the grazing lands. (Gen. 13:14-17.)

The Golden Text

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance. (Heb. 11:8.)

The keynote of Abraham's great faith in God is stated after he had been settled in Canaan for some time. God promised Abraham again that a son of his loins would be surely born: "And Abraham be-

lieved God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:3.) Abraham in the truest sense walked by faith and not by sight. Many of the promises God made to Abraham would be centuries in their unfolding.

Centuries later, Nehemiah verified the fulfillment of the promise: "Thou art Jehovah the God, who

didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name Abraham, . . . and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite." (Neh. 9:7.) Other centuries

passed and Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians: "For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:3.)

The Text Explained

The Call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3)

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy fathers house, unto the land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

According to the genealogy recorded in Genesis 11, Abraham belongs in the tenth generation of the line of Shem, the son of Noah. In the tenth generation after creation there arose a righteous man, Noah, privileged to become the father of a new humanity; so ten generations after Noah, Abraham was born, chosen of God, to become the father of a "holy nation." (Ex. 19:6.) The blessing which God made to Noah, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1), was repeated in substance to Abraham: "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" (Gen. 17:6).

These verses record the turning point in the life of Abraham. He was obedient to the command: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred." He left his land, his father's house, and his kindred, and went to the land of Canaan, and God assured him that this land would be given to him and his descendants. At the outset of his long weary pilgrimage from Ur of Chaldea with his beloved Sarah, his elderly father Terah, and his personal belongings, Abraham did not know his journey's goal. But he knew full well the reason for the journey and the purpose for which God had called him. It was that he might be a blessing.

We may remind ourselves that Abraham was not the first or last man God called to be a blessing. He called Noah, Moses, and later

the prophets. We are also called of God through Christ. To be a blessing means leaving aside our selfishness and caring for others in their many needs. Abraham was God's nobleman of the ages. We may conclude that God singled out Abraham to bless mankind because of his incomparable character and personal worth.

We may be assured that it was no easy journey Abraham embarked upon when he left Ur, nor was the journey ahead any clearer following his father's death in Haran when he turned south to go to Canaan. He then broke all ties with his loved ones, his own native land, his birth place, every tie with the past, and those values which are life's most precious possessions.

We read in the first verse "Now Jehovah said unto Abram." It should be noticed that the name here is Abram, not Abraham. Since the name Abraham will be used throughout this lesson, we should understand the difference. The changing of the names of Abram and Sarai is detailed in chapter 16. Ancient Israel regarded the name as an essential and inseparable part of a person or a thing. The change of Abram's name marks a radical change in his nature. He was no longer the plain Abram, but now the great Abraham, which means "the father of multitudes." (Gen. 17:5.) Sarai's name was changed to Sarah, "princess." (Gen. 17:15.)

And *get thee out* is an important instruction. God directed Abraham to go. However, we are to understand that it was to Abraham's advantage for him to do so. The full weight of the command became immediately clear to him. The first step was to leave "thy country": Abraham must go from the land of his birth where he grew up. This was followed by an even harder test—"from thy kindred," the family to which he was bound by ties of blood. The hardest wrench of all came with severing all ties with

"thy father's house." This included not only the wider family group, the clan, but the narrower, and far more cherished circle, his own father's house.

As stated before, Abraham was commanded to go "unto the land that I will show thee." This was the most drastic part of the command to go into a strange land to live among strangers. This would be a challenge to both the personal courage and faith of the strongest character. Abraham following God's command, entered Canaan from the north and traveled to the southern boundaries of Canaan on the outskirts of the desert where he settled.

"And I will make of thee a great nation." The blessing of an abundant offspring is naturally treasured. What greater blessing could come to a man than to look upon his good children and his beautiful grandchildren. This was especially a wonderful promise for a man like Abraham since he was already advanced in years, and so far had no son.

"And I will bless thee." The concept of a blessing from God signified the bestowal of every good and coveted gift of value to man. This included also the bestowal of protection from every evil. A benediction in the Mosaic law reads: "Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." (Num. 6:24-26.) Abraham and his descendants were promised no ordinary life, but a life which was especially blessed of God.

"And make your name great." The importance of a name is detailed in another place. In the orient, the name was the symbol of a person's identity. Abraham's name would be great, and he would also be the father of a great nation and peoples whose number would be as the sands on the seashore.

"And be thou a blessing." Abraham is promised that he will become a blessing to all of mankind. God promised to make of Abraham a great nation and to bless him personally. Just as a good man in the church and community is a blessing to all who know him and who enjoy the blessings of the goodness of his life, so

Abraham would become the exemplary model of the faithful man of God. Abraham would not only receive blessings, he would also become the source of blessings which would endure throughout time. It would require the passing of history to prove the fulfillment of the promises of God to Abraham.

Abraham and Lot prospered in Canaan after their settlement in the land. The Genesis record states: "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together." (Gen. 13:6.) To measure the rich cultural heritage of the Hebrew people in religion and every aspect of humanity in all the ages to this day would be impossible. The greatest measure of Abraham's blessing to the human race is through Jesus who was of the seed of Abraham: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Gal. 3:16.) Abraham was to be filled with the blessings of God. A saying came into being among the Hebrews: "God make you like Abraham."

"And I will bless them that bless thee." God promised Abraham in this connection that whosoever would show Abraham sympathy and friendship would receive a special blessing from God. Abraham became a source of a mighty stream of blessings which flowed through Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Christ, and to the whole of mankind.

"And him that curseth thee will I curse." The idea present in these words is that God will oppose those who seek to do Abraham hurt and bring his curse against them. The original meaning of the Hebrew word for curse was to despise, or to degrade a person. To direct a curse against a person was to seek his harm, or to wish that evil might befall him. Whosoever opposed Abraham would be opposing the mission which God had appointed to Abraham, and hence it was right that such a person should be punished.

"And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham in addition to being the father of the Israelite people would be privileged to become a blessing to all the

people of the earth in the course of time. Before the destruction of Sodom, God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Gen. 18:18.) The apostle Paul said, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed." (Gal. 3:8.) This had reference to Christ, who would bring salvation to men of all nations.

The Journey to Canaan (Gen. 12:4-9)

So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

"So Abram went as Jehovah had spoken unto him." Just as God in another generation commanded Noah, so commanded he Abraham. He said to Abraham, "Go," and Abraham went. The idea is that Abraham swiftly and immediately obeyed the divine injunction. Abraham was then seventy-five years old—hardly the time in a person's life to begin a grand new adventure. There are times where human history stands at the crossroads. Abraham stood at one when God called him.

We learn another fact of Abraham's nature in that "Lot went

with him." Our knowledge of Lot goes back to the end of chapter 11 stating that Lot moved to Haran with his uncle. This is said so as to inform us that Lot formed a part of the larger family of Terah and became the ward of Abraham.

The courage of Abraham was equal to his faith. Abraham faced a severe test that would have been a great challenge to a young man. The challenge was not only to go into an unknown land to live among strangers, but also to believe that he would become a great nation in his advanced years. Abraham's journey to Canaan was in two migrations. Abraham first went to Haran with Terah his father, Sarah, Lot, and all their possessions. Haran was an important trading post up the Euphrates River on the Fertile Crescent where the habitable land skirted the Arabian Desert and turned back south into Canaan. Both Isaac and Jacob married wives who were natives of Haran.

Abraham with Sarah and Lot with all their possessions took leave of Haran to travel to Canaan. Herds were especially important in that age, and Abraham possessed gold and silver and numerous household servants.

"Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran." Stephen tells us in his speech before the council in Jerusalem, "Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell." (Acts 7:4.)

Any person who sets out on a journey even though he does not know his final goal must decide on a definite direction to go. Abraham heard the call of God, and he chose to go with God though he did not know his journey's end.

"And Abram passed through the land." By this we are to understand that Abraham entered Canaan from the north and traveled to Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. Abraham pitched his tents here. Shechem was a place first hallowed by Abraham's presence. The place was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Joshua centuries later caused the "blessing" and "curse" of the law to be read to the people of Israel.

"And the Canaanite was then in

the land." This probably means that the land was inhabited by the Canaanites who were the masters of the land at that time. Nevertheless, Abraham and his descendants in the future would possess it. Abraham would not come into the ownership of the land by just settling there. Abraham subsequently traveled further south.

There in the environs of Shechem the Lord appeared to Abraham at the oak of Moreh and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah."

Abraham moved next to Bethel located about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Here he built another altar. Here Abraham called upon the name of the Lord. "And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South." In his travel through the heart land of Canaan, Abraham saw the land that would belong to his descendants.

The Land Promised

(Gen. 13:14-18)

And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it. And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah.

This section of Genesis beginning with chapter 13 narrates how Abraham proposed to Lot to avoid a quarrel and for the sake of peace, that Lot should separate himself from Abraham. This too was a great test for Abraham. He was hoping to become a great nation: yet even now, though he was still childless, he sent Lot away for the sake of peace. Lot was his brother's son. In doing this, Abraham cut the last tie with his blood kin. Abraham continued to live in Canaan, the land God promised to him.

Jehovah said to Abraham at the time of the separation of Abraham and Lot: "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from this place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Even the region where Lot pitched his tents in the region of Sodom, was included in the promise.

There is another point of important significance in the statement: "And Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah." Hebron became the permanent home of Abraham as much so as a nomad could have a permanent home. Hebron eventually became the center of action in the tribe of Judah. David founded his kingdom first at Hebron before he moved his capitol to Jerusalem.

At Hebron, Jehovah repeated to Abraham the promise of a great posterity whose seed would be numbered as the dust of the earth: "seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice." (Gen. 18:18, 19.)

The greatness of the character of Abraham and the vision of his faith is seen in the fulfillment of time's passage. Abraham held title only to the cave of Machpelah in Canaan, but his descendants live in the land to this day. Abraham lived to see his own blood children—Isaac, the free-born son of Sarah, Ishmael, and his sons by Keturah. The number of the lineal descendants have been v stars of heaven uncounted for number. And all the earth has been blessed in almost two thousand years through the greatest of his descendents—Jesus Christ.

The supreme test of Abraham

came after the son of Sarah, Isaac, reached maturity. The command from God to sacrifice his only son, the only son he could ever hope for, seemed to cancel out all that God had promised him. Abraham

showed not the slightest flinching in the face of this command. (Gen. 22:1, 2.) Abraham went with the full assurance that even God can raise from the dead. (Heb. 11:19.) The apostle Paul placed Abraham in the towering position of faith

over all the faithful who had lived before him. (Rom. 4:20-22.) And James depicts Abraham as one whose faith and greatness of character grew out of his willingness to perform the works God laid upon him no matter the cost.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The family is the first institution that God ordained among men. The home is the heartbeat of the moral and spiritual life of man.

2. The towering character of Abraham was mirrored in the personal lives of his family and descendants and throughout the passing generations.

3. Abraham believed in himself because God believed in Abraham. Paul wrote in this vein: "I can do all things in him that strengthened me." (Phil. 4:12.)

4. Abraham became a blessing to

all of mankind. God intends that a Christian shall be a blessing. Christian parents bless their children through godly lives. A good man's influence will persist as long as time.

5. Abraham believed God and he also worked. Jesus began his personal ministry in both doing and preaching.

6. God has promised Christians blessings, and we should be no less confident than Abraham that God will perform his promises to us.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

In what respect is the family an institution?

Is it correct to say that God established the family as an institution?

Are nations such as the United States political institutions set up by God?

What is the meaning of the word "Abraham"?

Golden Text

What is the keynote of Abraham's great faith?

What did Paul say about the righteousness of Abraham?

The Call of Abraham

What is the first turning point in the life of Abraham?

How are we to understand the expression "be a blessing" as it relates to Abraham?

Explain the importance of the change of names from Abram to Abraham.

Why is an abundant offspring treasured by man?

What is the greatest measure of Abraham's blessing to the human race?

What is the meaning of the expression "to curse" as it relates to God's displeasure?

The Journey to Canaan

How old was Abraham at the time he entered Canaan?

How would you describe the quality of Abraham's courage?

Who accompanied Abraham to the land of Canaan?

How did God purpose to bless Abraham through his seed?

The Land Promised

Did Abraham come into possession of the promised land in his lifetime?

Where was Abraham's home in Canaan?

What are the names of the three women who were the mothers of Abraham's children?

Describe the supreme test of Abraham's faith.

Lesson II—July 14, 1974

THE TOLERANCE OF ISAAC

Lesson Text

Gen. 26:12-25

12 And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and Jehovah blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great:

14 And he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him.

15 Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in

the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.

21 And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

24 And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God."* (Matt. 5:9.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 26:1-11.

Daily Bible Readings

July 8. M.....	Birth of Isaac (Gen. 21:1-7)
July 9. T.....	Marriage of Isaac (Gen. 24:61-67)
July 10. W.....	Isaac, a Man of Peace (Gen. 26:17-25)
July 11. T.....	Isaac, the Father of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:19-26)
July 12. F.....	Isaac Blesses His Sons (Gen. 27:18-40)
July 13. S.....	Isaac, a Prosperous Farmer (Gen. 26:12-14)
July 14. S.....	Isaac's Death (Gen. 35:28, 29)

TIME.—1804 B.C.

PLACES.—Gerar and Beer-sheba in southwestern Canaan.

PERSONS.—Isaac, Abimelech, the herdsmen of Gerar, and the servants of Isaac.

Introduction

Our lesson concerns one of the virtues of Isaac, his tolerance. Isaac was, indeed, a great soul among the patriarchs. Isaac was motivated by his love of peace. The name of Isaac is as well known as the names of his father Abraham and his son, Jacob. Less informa-

tion is given about Isaac in Genesis than either Abraham, Jacob or Joseph. The name of Isaac, nevertheless, looms largely on the pages of sacred history. We may look at the high points of Isaac's life to better prepare for the lesson at hand.

Isaac first enters sacred history in

the promise God made to Abraham to give him a son in his old age. Abraham and Sarah learned about the birth of Isaac under unusual circumstances. Abraham was a great person who met every test God put him to. However, the greatness of Abraham was exemplified in the small amenities of life. An ancient rabbi once said, "Be as diligent in the performance of a small duty as in the performance of a great one."

One day sitting in front of his tent amid the shade of the oaks of Mamre, Abraham saw three men approaching in the distance. Abraham ran to meet them and bowed himself to the earth in respectful courtesy and welcomed them to rest in his tent and offered them food. That was the day that Abraham entertained angels unaware. (Gen. 18:1-5.) The summers in Palestine become witheringly hot as the sun beats mercilessly down, and people seek the shade.

We may surmise that Abraham was concerned for the comfort and safety of the men. But hospitality was a crowning virtue of Abraham. Abraham never waited for responsibilities to face him; he ran to them. Abraham had no idea who the strangers were or their station in life, humble or exalted. Abraham thus stands as a model of hospitality. This was characteristic of Abraham who said to Lot at the time of their difference, "We are brethren." (Gen. 13:8.)

On this occasion, the men told Abraham and Sarah that in the course of the turning of a season, a son, namely Isaac, would be born to them. And as was characteristic of Abraham, he believed this glad news.

Isaac was born as God promised and grew up in the tent of Sarah. Abraham would face another great test. He was told to sacrifice his son, the dearest thing on earth to Abraham. This trial seemed to cancel out every promise God had made to him. But Abraham did not falter. We are no less impressed with the unflinching confidence that

Isaac must have had in his father in those awful minutes as preparations for the sacrifice were being made. Isaac's faith and courage likewise withstood the iron test as he lay bound upon the altar and saw the knife in his father's hand. (Gen. 22:10.)

The making of the character of Isaac is told in another place. One of the most beautiful love stories in the annals of man is about Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham commanded his faithful steward to go to his brother's people to take a wife from his blood kin for Isaac. (Gen. 24:2-5.) The meeting of the old servant of Abraham and the virtuous, tenderhearted, and high-minded young maiden at the watering troughs in Mesopotamia is a heart warming story. Rebekah was willing to leave her home and kindred for the call of love to journey as Abraham had done to go to a strange land. The charm and nobility of the beautiful young Rebekah excites our admiration and commands our respect. Rebekah strikes us as being more compassionate and sympathetic than Sarah.

On the day Eliezer's drew near the tents of Abraham, Rebekah saw a young man walking in the field. It was Isaac. Rebekah learned from the servant his identity. We are told that Isaac brought Rebekah to his mother's tent, "and she became his wife; and he loved her." (Gen. 24:67.)

The life of Isaac was not without problems both inside his home and out. Isaac was not beyond falsifying as to his relation with Rebekah, to Abimelech, king of the Philistine state of Gerar. (Gen. 26:9.) The rivalry and deep bitterness that grew up between their twin sons, Esau and Jacob, form an unhappy chapter in the history of the patriarchs. The two following lessons present this part of Isaac's life. Our present lesson concerns Isaac and his relations with the people in the land. He was born in Canaan and lived out his days in the land in peace with good will and tolerance toward all.

The Golden Text

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God. (Matt. 5:9.)

Peace is an often used word in

the New Testament. Paul uses "peace" in the salutation of his letters. The Hebrew *shalom* which means peace has a much deeper

meaning than the English peace. When used as a greeting, it is a wish for the welfare of the recipient in every way, sound health, prosperity, security, contentment, and life. "Shalom" as a greeting appears in Joseph's speech to his brothers in Egypt: "Peace be to you, fear not." (Gen. 43:23.) This wish for peace spreads everywhere by him who is so blessed. He himself is at peace, and his home is at peace. Everything that belongs to him is at peace.

The great rabbinical scholar Hillel living at the time of the birth of Jesus made Aaron the exemplar of peace: "Be of the disciples of Aaron who loved peace." A story circulated in Jewish circles that a rabbi allowed a woman to spit in his face in the presence of his disciples. Her husband drove her from home for listening to a sermon over long in the synagogue and the lamp went out. The husband refused to allow her to return to the home until she had spit in the face of the teacher. She went to the teacher

with the intention to do so, but could not. The teacher knowing why she came had her under the pretext of healing his diseased eye to spit seven times in his eye. He told her to go back and relate this to her husband. This the teacher did for the sake of peace.

Jesus is expressing an ancient principle which remains forever new as this morning's sunrise. Peace creates a harmony so deep in the home and among people that the goodwill which it establishes forms a bulwark that stands. Peace expresses every form of happiness and is the foundation of life. Peace, strength, and love belong together because peace must be where the blessing is. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." (Isa. 52:7.) And the words of Paul reinforce the Christian rewards of peace: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:7.)

The Text Explained

The Blessing of Isaac (Gen. 26:12-14)

And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundred-fold: and Jehovah blessed him. And the man waxed great, and grew more and more until he became very great: and he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and a great household: and the Philistines envied him.

Isaac is depicted as living in the land and prospering under the blessings of God. The patriarchs are described as tent dwellers in the Scriptures though Abraham came from the great city of Ur. The patriarchs lived in tents or "houses of hair" as they are called unto this day by the desert Bedouin. Goat's hair was hand-woven by the women and made into long strips of black wool cloth and sewn together. At the time of the shearing of the goats, the old tents might be patched, or a new one made. The Bedouin tent is a familiar one in the desert of the Near East today as in the time of Abraham. The tents were divided into compartments. The one used by the men served also as a reception room for the guest. An inner compartment

was used by the women. A rich man would have several tents. You will remember it is said that Isaac took Rebekah to the tent of his mother. (Gen. 24:67.) Jacob seemed to have had a large number of tents for his wives and servants. (Gen. 31:33.) Abraham is pictured as sitting in the door of his tent in the heat of the day when he was visited by the three men. (Gen. 18:1.)

Although the patriarchs moved about in Palestine, they are described as farmers. Isaac sowed and reaped. (Gen. 26:12, 14.) Canaan was a land so diverse in character that it would accommodate a man who was both a nomad and a farmer. It seems that the patriarchs lived in fixed home encampments. Abraham lived in the vicinity of Hebron. And Jacob sent out Joseph to go afar into the countryside to learn how his brothers were faring. The patriarchs also bartered and traded with their Canaanite neighbors. (Gen. 24:10.)

Isaac's life is largely associated with that of his father Abraham and his son Jacob. All possessed the genius for prospering in material goods, waxing rich in gold and

cattle. Isaac "waxed great, and grew more and more, until he became very great." The same year that God told Isaac to stay in the land and not go into Egypt, Isaac reaped grain a hundredfold when a yield was normally twenty-five or fifty-fold return. To this day, the Bedouins practice agriculture as well as grazing.

The prospering of Isaac is the fulfillment of the promise that God would bless him, multiply his seed, and establish him in the land. (Gen. 26:3-5.) As Isaac grew greater and stronger, his wealth and power grew with it: "and the Philistines envied him." They became increasingly unhappy with Isaac's presence in their midst, and they sought to do him injury and to discourage his living in the land among them. We may pause here for a look at the Philistine who played such an important role in the history of Canaan even to the kingdom period of David. The Philistines were people of Greek origin who had migrated from the Aegean islands, the island of Crete, and the Coasts of Asia Minor. They invaded Syria and established themselves along the southern coasts of Palestine. The Philistines eventually established five powerful city fortresses on the southern coasts of Canaan.

The Departure of Isaac (Gen. 26:15-17)

Now all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and encamped in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

So intense had grown the jealousy of the Philistines against Isaac, they purposely set in to create all the mischief they could devise against him. They deliberately filled the wells digged by Abraham. Water in the arid regions of Palestine is very precious. Isaac had no choice in the matter. Abimelech, king of the Philistines, ordered Isaac, "Go from us; for thou art mightier than we." And Isaac moved into the valley of Gerar and pitched his tents there.

This valley is the modern Wadi

Ghazzeh, possibly also identified with the "brook Besor" of 1 Samuel 30:9, 10, 21. The water level along this valley is not far below the surface of the ground and a well can be dug with comparative ease.

Wells of Springing Water (Gen. 26:18, 19)

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

In the valley, the servants of Isaac re-opened the old wells which had been dug during the days of Abraham. Following the death of Abraham, the Philistines had filled the wells with rubbish to discourage the nomads, whoever they were, who would possibly settle in the region. Isaac had undoubtedly lived with his father on their nomadic journeys as they followed the annual grazing range. Isaac named the wells with the same names Abraham had given them.

Isaac was following in the footsteps of his father Abraham. The wells of Abraham were proven wells which would sustain life. Isaac was drinking from tested wells. The wells had not been in use since Abraham's death, and Isaac could not own the wells without contest and this he chose not to do.

The Wells of Contention (Gen. 26:20, 21)

And the herdsmen of Gerar strove with Isaac's herdsmen, saying The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. And they digged another well, and they strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

The servants of Isaac were favored with good fortune, for they digged in the valley and found a well of "springing water." This simply means that a strong stream of water is struck which literally bubbles up out of the ground. The herdsmen of Gerar came and contended with Isaac and disputed the ownership of the well claiming water rights to the well. Isaac called the name of the well Esek,

which means "strife" because the herdsmen contended with him. We may remember that Abimelech described Isaac as being mightier than they. There can be little doubt that Isaac could have won by strength with the herdsmen of Gerar, but he chose not to do so.

The servants of Isaac dugged another well. The herdsmen of Gerar opened a quarrel over the ownership of this well. Isaac refused to contest ownership of the well and called it Sitnah, which means enmity as a result of the opposition of the rival herdsmen. We should not receive the impression that Isaac was running from trouble; he was striving for peace.

Isaac was the son of a father with the same noble qualities. God had called Abraham to be his servant and to be a blessing to all the earth. Abraham had been tested by trials wherein he proved the fitness of his character for the noble and exalted calling of God. After Abraham's death, his mission and calling became the natural birthright of Isaac. Isaac's faith was equal to the challenges of his precious birthright in assuming the duties and responsibilities inherited from his illustrious father. Isaac faced trials in the land not unlike that of Abraham. As Abraham protected Sarah from Pharaoh, so Isaac protected Rebekah from Abimelech. Isaac's virtues were the same as those of Abraham. On the day Abraham entertained the three visitors under the oaks of M a m r e , they were greeted also by Lot at the day's close, who graciously offered his hospitality in the same words used by Abraham. (Gen. 19:2.)

The Fruits of Peace

(Gen. 26:22)

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now Jehovah hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

It is recorded that Isaac moved again and digged another well. This time the herdsmen of Gerar did not come again to contest with Isaac over the new well site, and he called the name of it Rehoboth, which means "room" or "expansion." Isaac could see the land was

broad and fruitful, and there was ample living room for all.

Abraham yielded to Lot to pitch his tents in the land wherever he chose after the quarrel of their herdsmen. And Lot selected the most desirable land which led to his own undoing. There is little doubt that Isaac had a better claim to the wells than the herdsmen of Gerar, but he yielded his rights for the sake of peace. Peace is one of the greatest blessings of life. Surely, the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God; and the unalterable demand of the Lord is that his servants shall make peace.

Abraham pursued the five kings who made off with Lot; and Isaac could have done as much and more with his enemies, yet Isaac remembered the example of Abraham who chose to live at peace with the people of the land. Isaac could have brought bloodshed and hate into his dealings with the Canaanites, and other generations would have suffered the consequences. His forbearance won the respect of the people. The weak and churlish are too prone to fight; the strong and generous yield and forgive. An ancient Jewish saying is, "If one refrains from sin, once, twice, and thrice, God will guard him thereafter, and he will triumph over sin." Jesus said, "And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two." (Matt. 5:41.) This is the principle of the "other cheek" and returning good for evil.

An Altar, a Tent, a Well

(Gen. 26:23-25)

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of Jehovah, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Isaac finally found peace among his neighbors. They learned that Isaac meant them no harm, and the land would be blessed with the likes of Isaac living among them. Isaac moved again and came to Beer-sheba. Jehovah appeared to him the same night he came with the promise: "For I am with thee, and

will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake."

Isaac finally was settled peacefully among the Canaanites. Abimelech journeyed to visit Isaac and make a covenant of peace with him. (Gen. 26:28-31.) On the day of his departure, the servants of Isaac came with the glad news they had digged a new well. He named the well Shibah, which means *covenant*, and the place was called Beer-sheba, the "well of the covenant."

Isaac did three things at Beer-sheba which are characteristic of him. He built an altar and called upon Jehovah: he worshipped God as a first responsibility. He pitched his tent in Beer-sheba: he assumed his patriarchal responsibilities to protect and to provide for his family. Then Isaac's servants, as was that custom, digged a well near his tent. Isaac would not again suffer at the hands of the people. The "well of the covenant" spoke eloquently of the peace Isaac and the Canaanites afterwards enjoyed.

We find a lesson in this story of Isaac that is timeless. Isaac's love

of peace and his willingness to sacrifice his rights for the greater good of others is a characteristic of a Christian virtue which Jesus expanded in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Time after time down the centuries Christians have been put to the test. Just as the Philistines forced Isaac into the desert with no concern if he lived or died, the world treated Christ brutally and has treated his disciples in a similar fashion. The disciples of Christ have with unselfish love and sacrificial devotion healed the sick and comforted the brokenhearted. They have out-lived, out-believed, and out-loved the world. They have yielded their human rights and demands for justice to the greater claims of God's love and mercy. The purpose of the coming of Christ was to bring peace on earth and good will toward all men. Isaac's spirit of tolerance is so unlike that of most people who put up with other people and get along with them the best they can. Isaac sought a positive good which grew out of his character to promote peace wherever he found himself.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The great controlling principle in the life of Isaac was his love of peace, but not at the price of principle.

2. Hospitality is a virtue associated with the love of peace.

3. In many respects, Isaac was a true model of goodness best exemplified in the love of his wife Rebekah who was his wife for a lifetime, the love of his children, and his patient respect for his neighbors who were less than hospitable.

4. The story of Isaac's life is the story of a good man who was blessed by the life of a good father which has lasted in influence

throughout thousands of generations.

5. The life of a good man is like a well of water that does not fail in the seasons, but continues to bless endlessly those who come under his influence.

6. Isaac was not without faults because he deceived Abimelech about the relation of Rebekah to him and he loved Esau better than Jacob. However, the greatness of true character overshadows moments of weakness.

7. The disciples of Christ yielded their human rights and demands for justice to the greater claims of God's love and mercy.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

When did Abraham learn that Sarah would bear him a son?

Describe the nature of Abraham's hospitality.

Why did Abraham require that Isaac should have a wife from among his own people?

Who was Abimelech?

Golden Text

What is the full meaning of the Hebrew word Shalom?

What importance did the Hebrews attach to peace?

What are the fruits of peace?

The Blessing of Isaac

What were the "houses of hair"? Describe the living tents of the Bedouins even to this day.

What occupations did Isaac follow for a livelihood?

Did Isaac prosper in the land of Canaan?
Who were the Philistines as to back-ground?

The Departure of Isaac
Why did the Philistines fill up the wells of Isaac?
Why did Abimelech order Isaac to leave the region near the Philistines?
Where did Isaac go?

Wells of Springing Water
Why did the Philistines fill up the wells of Abraham after his death?
What names did Isaac give to the wells he opened?

Wells of Contention
What is meant by a well of "living water"?
What is the meaning of the word Esek?
What is Sitnah?

In what respects was Isaac most like Abraham?
Did Isaac honor his birthright?

The Fruits of Peace
Why did the herdsmen of Gerar not contend with Isaac over a new well site?
What is the meaning of the word Rehoboth?
Why is peace one of the greatest blessings of life?
Could Isaac have defended his rights by physical force if he had so desired?

An Altar, a Tent, a Well
How did Isaac find peace at last among his neighbors?
Why did King Abimelech make a journey to the tents of Isaac?
What is the meaning of the word Shibah?
How do Christians win in the battle of life against those who hate them?

Lesson III—July 21, 1974

THE WEAKNESS OF ESAU

Lesson Text

Gen. 25:27-34; 27:41-45

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.

28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint:

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold. I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his

birthright.

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

42 And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

45 Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things"*(1 Cor. 9: 25.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 25:19-34.

Daily Bible Readings

July 15. M..... Birth of Esau (Gen. 25:20-24)
July 16. T..... Esau, the Hairy One (Gen. 25:25-27)
July 17. W..... Esau, and His Uncontrolled Appetite (Gen. 25:27-34)
July 18. T..... Esau, a Man of Great Temper (Gen. 27:41-45)
July 19. F..... Esau and Jacob Are Reconciled (Gen. 33:1-30)
July 20. S..... Esau, a Rich Man (Gen. 36:1-8)
July 21. S..... Esau's Descendants (Gen. 36:9-43)

TIME.—1800 B.C. at time of the selling of the birthright, and some four or five years later for Jacob's stealing the blessing of Esau.

PLACE.—Beer-sheba.

PERSONS.—Isaac, Esau, Jacob, and Rebekah.

Introduction

Much of the history of Isaac's life is related against the background of the life and time of Abraham and with his son, Jacob, and in a lesser sense, with his son, Esau. The story of Jacob cannot be told without the part that Esau played in his life. Esau and Jacob, twin brothers, were as unlike in temperament as two people could possibly be. Esau was a hunter of wild game, and Jacob loved the domestic life of the tents and the grazing range. Esau was loved of his father and Jacob was beloved of his mother.

The rivalry between Jacob and Esau was abetted by their parents, and the hatred of Jacob by Esau resulted from the conniving of a mother and her son. Neither of the two parents nor the two sons were free of blame for the sorrows of their home.

Jacob took an unfair advantage

of his brother in exchange for a bowl of lentils for his birthright. Esau showed a lack of faith in God and contempt for his heritage in accepting the bargain. Many are guilty of selling the future years and their blessings for cheap trifles of the present. The fact of Esau's marriages among the Hittite girls showed his complete disregard and disrespect for the feelings of his parents. Esau was an irreligious man whose main concerns were for the sensuous pleasures of the moment. Esau became a cause of great sorrow to his parents. Jacob and Esau were amicably reunited in the later years of their lives. But each then went his separate way.

Our present lesson is about the weakness of Esau—a man that God offered so much and who took only a pittance of the rich stores of God's blessing to which his birth had entitled him.

The Golden Text

Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. (1 Cor. 9:25.)

The Roman world of Paul's day was no less interested in athletic games of skill than in our day. Some of the events excite our admiration as then. The Coliseum which Vespasian Caesar had built in Rome was a sports arena. But contests of incredible cruelty were performed there when men fought each other to death. Men were pitted against wild ferocious animals. Christians were paraded into the arena, and lions were loosed from cages under the arena upon bands of pitiful Christians huddled together for the little protection it afforded.

In the best sense of the word, an analogy of the highly trained athlete is described in the Hebrew epistle. "Therefore let us also, feeling we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witness, lay aside every weight, and the sin that 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." (Heb. 12:1, 2.)

Our lesson is centered in a Bible character who had a choice to become a great patriarch and chose not to be. Esau is the man. Esau goes down in history, not for his great evils, but because he despised his birthright.

The Text Explained

Jacob and Esau
(Gen. 25:27, 28)

And the boys grew: and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field: and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob.

The history of Isaac begins with

the birth of his two sons. And to give the story the character of continuity and completeness, the birth of Isaac and his marriage to Rebekah are mentioned again in Genesis 25:19, 20. The life of Isaac may be divided in two parts. The first begins with the birth of his two sons until Jacob was compelled to

go to Mesopotamia to escape the wrath of Esau. (Gen. 25:20-28:9.) The second part of Isaac's life began with the suffering over his two sons and continued to the eventual return of Jacob and his large family back to Canaan. (Gen. 25:20-28:9.)

Isaac and Rebekah waited many years for the birth of a child. Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife because she was barren. The concern of Jacob lay in the promise that as the son of Abraham, he would become the father of a great people. After twenty years had passed, Isaac was fully proved in his trial of faith. The seed of promise that Isaac prayed for was not just a birth in the ordinary course of nature, but came as the result of his prayer to God.

Rebekah entreated Jehovah and the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." (Gen. 25:23.)

When the day came for her to be delivered, the first one born was "red all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau." Then Jacob was born, "and his hand had hold on Esau's heel." Isaac was sixty years old at the time of their births. Jacob's name provides us with an insight into his nature. The name Jacob means "he supplants."

We need to keep in mind from the offset of this lesson that Jacob was destined to greatness because it was God's purpose to work out his will through this descendant of Abraham. The characters of Jacob and Esau are depicted with sensitive insight. In the first place, the statement is "the boys grew." Here are two brothers with identical physical endowments who grew up under the same home influences. As should be expected, the two brothers should have grown up with their lives closely intertwined. Strange though it is, two brothers sometimes take completely different paths in life. And this was the case with Jacob and Esau.

The story of the growing up of the two brothers hardly begins before we are made aware that they did not grow up alike in spirit and temperament. They developed

characters so completely different that it can be hardly conceived they had the same mother.

"Esau was a skilful hunter." We can easily perceive that Esau was a cunning hunter as he stalked his game in the wild countryside. Jacob is pictured in a completely different setting. "Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents." We can easily think of Jacob as a good man. Jacob found pleasure in the quiet life among the family living in their tents. The statement that Jacob dwelt in tents does not imply that he sat daily in the tents. Rather Jacob chose this mode of life in preference to the wild hunter's pleasure in hunting game in the open fields as did Esau.

The contrast, of course, is between the hunter and the quiet shepherd. Esau was a man of the chase, quick, improvident, moving in for the exciting kill. He lived for the day seeking immediate gain from his efforts. Esau had the kind of character that would stake his fortune on the uncertain outcome in the game of life. Whatever the demands of his appetites, he would satisfy them immediately without regard to the cost. Esau planned for no certain future.

Esau was the hunter in more ways than one. There is no doubt he was implacable and cruel in the chase. He proved himself to be a pitiless man when Jacob incurred his hatred, and he would have even tracked him down to take his life.

What is even more disappointing in the person of Esau was his seemingly complete lack of moral and spiritual values. He was an unashamed materialist with no conception or appreciation of his birthright. He despised his birthright and bartered it away for a bowl of vegetables.

A commentary of meaning is found in two statements. The first one is that "Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison." However, we may understand in this statement, that Esau was thoughtful of his father's desires. He thought little of his birthright. But when his father became old and blind, it was Esau who responded to his needs and fixed him food to eat in a special way that Isaac enjoyed. So we may say that Esau was not all bad. Sometimes a person with a bad character can be more charming

and gracious than some unloving prude such as the older brother in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. And we should be reminded that many years later after Esau's hatred had died, he was generous and magnanimous toward his brother who had defrauded him of his birthright.

The comment that "Rachel loved Jacob" completes the picture. What seemed to have been no more than a preferential parental affection turned into hate between Jacob and Esau.

As Jacob dwelt in the tents by night and sat in the heat of the day under the shade, he pursued the life of a farmer and a shepherd in other times. Jacob beloved of his mother was self-disciplined, able to control his passions in order to gain his desired objectives. Jacob was a quiet man, a thoughtful person. He could carefully evaluate all the factors in his calculated plans. Jacob was ambitious with great personal talents. Such a person possesses great potentials for both good and bad depending upon what course of action he might choose. Jacob defrauded his brother with cold calculating deceit and with a complete pitiless regard for his brother. Jacob evidenced an ignoble willingness to take advantage of his brother's need in a time of weakness and to defraud him and to gain his coveted prize at his brother's expense.

Esau from the beginning is described as a person who despised his birthright. The Hebrew letter declared Esau to be a profane person. (Heb. 12:16.) The weak character of Esau is discovered in the fact that he despised his heritage—both the temporal and special privileges of being the firstborn. It meant nothing to him that by birth he was destined to bear the family coat of arms, so to speak.

Jacob possessed one quality despite his underhanded and deceitful practice. He possessed a great talent that would in time be developed in him, and Jacob would become both a great and good man. Just as Esau despised his birthright, Jacob desired it.

The partial loves that Isaac and Rebekah bore for their two sons seems to be a disposition of human nature that lessons of the past do little to correct. Such a divided fa-

voritism results in bad feelings between the children. Rebekah's favoritism was aggressive; and more than this, it was calculating. She became a scheming deceitful woman in helping Jacob take advantage of his weak brother. Her jealous love for Jacob was unscrupulous in pushing away Esau so Jacob could occupy his place. After Jacob fled his brother's face, Rebekah never saw him again. We may surmise that Rebekah saw and cherished the qualities of character in Jacob that would shape him to become one of the great patriarchs from whom the people of Israel would derive their name. This, however, did not diminish the suffering which grew out of the duplicity of Jacob and Rebekah.

The Selling of a Birthright

(Gen. 25:29-32)

And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?

The differences in the character of the two brothers is shown in a singular circumstance which was a turning point in their lives. Esau was in the field hunting and came in from the chase famished with hunger. Jacob was boiling red lentils, probably beans of a reddish color. Esau requested of Jacob: "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint." This is the setting whereby Jacob secured his brother's birthright by selfish cunning, and of his obtaining, likewise by deceit, the blessings of his father. On the other hand, here was Esau, unspiritual, rash, lacking in foresight, revengeful in nature, with uncontrolled desires and passions, but holding a love for his aged blind father that was pure.

From the request to eat of the red pottage, Esau received his second name, Edom (meaning red) which became the name of the people descended from him. Jacob propositioned Esau: "Sell me first thy birthright." As previously noted, the term birthright denotes the rights and advantages normally engaged by the firstborn son. In the

case of Isaac, however, the privilege embraced the chieftainship and the rule over his brethren in the larger family division such as the clan. This also included the title to the blessings and promises which God had made to Abraham and Isaac. (27:4, 27-29.)

The eldest son always acted with authority and felt a greater responsibility than the others. The right of the firstborn which Esau sold to Jacob implies the abilities and claims which were to be maintained by him. He became the spiritual leader of his people and God's messenger to them. The Bible tells us that Abraham purposely sent Hagar and Ishmael away and the sons of Keturah, in order that they might not inherit along with Isaac. (Gen. 21:10ff.; 25:5ff.) In the case of Ishmael, this meant that the rights of the firstborn belonged to Isaac.

Despising His Birthright

(Gen. 25:33, 34)

And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.

Jacob knew precisely what he was asking of Esau, and Esau also knew the worth of the family birthright, but he attached no significance to it. The weakness of Esau is evidenced in his telling Jacob he was at the point of death because of hunger, and this could not have been so. The critical weakness of Esau lay in the fact he was unable to exercise even a reasonable measure of self-discipline. This was not true of Jacob because he recognized the worth of spiritual and cultural privileges. The only thing that mattered to Esau was the sensual enjoyment of the present. His carnal mind was unable to appreciate the spiritual blessings of the future. The description of the profane nature of Esau and his contempt for the birthright privileges is stated in verse 34: "And he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went on his way."

The irresponsible and indifferent manner in which Esau sold his birthright to Jacob rendered him unfit to be the heir and possessor of

the blessings promised to Abraham and his progeny.

And in a fashion, Esau brought judgment upon himself, and the consequences of what he did are felt by his descendants to this day. Esau not only lacked an appreciation for spiritual things, he obviously had no desire to bring about the promised blessing of God to all mankind through his seed. And so Esau despised his birthright, but Jacob greatly aspired to it.

We may also surmise that Jacob had little understanding of the responsibilities of the birthright. He knew the value and privileges of honor, dignity, leadership, and even the sacrifice involved. Jacob may indeed have been selfishly motivated at first. Jacob in time achieved great character and stature, but not until he had suffered heartaches and tragedies.

Esau Hated Jacob

(Gen. 27:41-45)

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth, comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?

Esau was in full knowledge of his actions when he sold his birthright to Jacob and thought nothing about it. He came to hate his brother for another reason. The birthright involved a double portion of the inheritance. Esau cared little for this and nothing at all for the responsibilities. The account of Isaac's blessing Jacob instead of Esau carries us one step further in the unfolding drama of Jacob.

When Isaac became old and almost blind, he called Esau to him in preparation for the bestowal of his special blessings upon his son.

Isaac sent Esau out in the field to fetch in venison and to prepare his favorite dish before he bestowed his blessings upon his son. Rebekah heard the conversation. Just as Jacob desired the birthright, he coveted his father's blessings. Rebekah suggested the plan and helped Jacob deceive his father into believing he was blessing his son Esau. (Gen. 27:5ff.) Jacob, fearing his father's curse, was hesitant at first, but Rebekah agreed to receive the curse upon herself if it were made. (Gen. 27:13.)

We need to keep in mind that the birthright and the father's blessing were two different things. The blessing which God gave to Abraham was handed down from father through son. When Isaac was blessed of Abraham, this blessing became the heritage of Isaac.

When Jacob came into the presence of his father who ate his food and smelled his clothing, Isaac blessed him, and that blessing could not be retracted when once made. Isaac blessed Jacob saying: "Let peoples serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's son bow down to thee."

When Esau returned from the field, he learned that Jacob had already received the blessing. In spite of all his bitter tears and entreaties, Esau "was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind in his father." (Heb. 12:17.) Esau's loss was beyond repair.

The Bible nowhere implies Esau was a very wicked man. He was simply not a pious man. His love for his father was deep and abiding. We are moved by the pathos of Esau's cry when he returned to his father from the chase with the food

his father loved, only to learn in shocked unbelief what had happened. And he cried out: "Bless me, even me also, O my father." (Gen. 27:34.)

And so it was that "Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing where-with his father blessed him." Esau said that following his father's death and after the appointed days of mourning that he would slay his brother. Isaac was then in his one hundred and thirty-seventh year. His half brother, Ishmael, had died fourteen years before at the same age. Isaac perhaps thought death was near although he lived forty-three years afterward.

The words which Esau had uttered were told to Rebekah. Rebekah called her younger son and advised him of his danger. The mother told her son to go to Haran and live there a few days with her brother, Laban, until the anger of Esau had subsided. Rebekah told her son that when the days of Esau's anger had passed, she would send word and fetch him back.

In order to obtain Isaac's consent to the plan without informing him of Esau's evil intent, she spoke of her trouble on account of the Hittite wives of Esau, and the weariness she would feel if Jacob also married one of the daughters of the land. And so Rebekah introduced the idea of sending Jacob away.

Esau, because of his shortcomings and sinful indifference, lost both his birthright and blessing. Jacob was compelled to leave home. Jacob received the blessing, but he paid a bitter price. Rebekah thought her beloved son would be gone only a few days, but she never saw his face again.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Esau was guilty of selling his priceless heritage for a mere trifle. The sale of such birthrights as a good name and personal honor and self respect still goes on without regard to consequence.

2. No person is born unto himself and lives unto himself. Life is filled with opportunities and fraught with perils. Man's character is to be measured in relation to his concepts of highest moral and spiritual values about people and things.

3. Parental favoritism is ever a source of family unhappiness and often times deep dissension in the family life.

4. Too often a person desires honor and preferential treatment without the willingness to assume the responsibilities.

5. Jacob twice wronged Esau in taking advantage of his personal weakness for gain and deliberately defrauded him of his father's special blessing.

6. Although we suffer injustices because of the unfairness of others, we still may not hope to escape the

consequences of our own basic weakness of character and bad judgment.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What were the preferred occupations of Esau and Jacob?

What was the price of Esau's birthright?
How may people today sell their birthright?

Golden Text

Describe the Roman games of contest in Paul's day.

How were Christians treated by the Romans?

Did Esau commit any serious crimes as far as we know?

Jacob and Esau

Describe Esau at the time of his birth.
How old was Isaac when his sons were born?

What are some of the differences of the temperaments in Jacob and Esau?

Should we assume that Jacob followed no general occupation?

Why did Jacob desire the birthright of Esau?

Describe the suffering of Rebekah in relation to her two sons.

The Selling of a Birthright

Could it be possible that Esau was at the point of dying with hunger when he sold his birthright?

What is the meaning of Edom?

What factors were involved in the rights of a firstborn son?

Despising His Birthright

What values mattered most to Esau?

How did Esau bring judgment upon himself and his descendants?

Was Jacob fully aware of the responsibilities of a birthright?

Esau Hated Jacob

Did Esau hate Jacob because of Jacob's purchase of the birthright?

Why was Jacob afraid to deceive his father at Rebekah's request?

What was involved in a father's blessing of his son?

What bitter price did Rebekah pay for her part in the deception?

Lesson IV—July 28, 1974

THE STRENGTH OF JACOB

Lesson Text

Gen. 28:16-22; 32:24-30

16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God,

22 Then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.*” (Eph. 6:10.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 32:1-5.

Daily Bible Readings

July 22.	M.....	Jacob's Dream (Gen. 28:16-22)
July 23.	T.....	Jacob's Vision (Gen. 28:10-17)
July 24.	W.....	Jacob's Vow (Gen. 28:18-22)
July 25.	T.....	Jacob's Marriages (Gen. 29:21-30)
July 26.	F.....	Jacob's Children (Gen. 35:22-27)
July 27.	S.....	Jacob's Faith (Heb. 11:20, 21)
July 28.	S.....	Jacob's Death (Gen. 49:28-33)

TIME.—1760 B.C.

PLACES.—Bethel and the River Jabbok in Palestine.

PERSONS.—The Lord, Jacob, and an angel.

Introduction

This lesson tells the story of the strength of Jacob whose name invariably appears with those of Abraham and Isaac in the naming of the great patriarchs of Israel. Were we to judge Jacob by the two incidents of his taking the birthright of Esau and defrauding him of his blessings, we would be acting in presumptuous haste. A summer's day is not measured by the song of a bird nor the falling of a raindrop. A person's life may not be measured by the folly of youth, nor a moment of indiscretion. A man's life may not be measured until he has run the course of life and fought his great battles. A man may be said to have lived a full life when he looks upon his children and grandchildren and when his life has been filled with great measured goodness. Then he may be called a happy man who has brought good and worth to the lives of the people in his time.

That we may better understand our lesson, we should observe Jacob's movements when he was sent in haste from the tents of Isaac to escape the wrath of Esau. Jacob had no way of knowing what lay in store in the days and years ahead. Not unlike Cain, he was forced to flee from the presence of men; but in the case of Jacob, God would not

desert him. But Jacob had, as yet, no knowledge of this.

Isaac, at the request of Rebekah, sent Jacob to Paddan-aram with instructions to seek a wife from among his mother's people, and not among the daughters of Canaan, giving him at the same time the blessing of the promise which Abraham had received from God. (Gen. 28:1-4.)

As Jacob was fleeing from Beersheba where his father was then staying (Gen. 26:35), he came to a place where he prepared to stay for the night. After making a pillow of stones for resting his head, Jacob fell asleep and dreamed. He saw, in his dream, a ladder resting upon the earth whose top reached to heaven: "And behold, Jehovah stood above it." There were angels ascending and descending upon the ladder. Proclaiming himself as Jehovah, the God of his fathers, God confirmed the promises made to his fathers, and promised him a safe return to his home. (Gen. 28:13-15.) This dream came to Jacob when the way ahead was dark indeed. God came to Jacob, not only to confirm his birthright, but to enable him to see the value of his inheritance and the great responsibilities that were now his.

The Golden Text

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (Eph. 6:10.)

Paul wrote these words while waiting in prison in Rome. The apostle was hopeful he might be spared to live still into the uncertain future; however, death was nearer to him than he knew. His years as an

apostle doing the work of the Lord had been long and arduous. He had fought many a battle as a good soldier of the Lord should. He wrote to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7.)

The golden text suggests that Paul had in mind that the Christians should stand and fight the good fight of faith. We know this because he describes in the verses following the well armoured Christian. There may be no doubt that Paul had in mind the Roman soldier, the invincible warrior of the Roman world. Paul had undoubtedly seen thousands of disciplined soldiers in his lifetime in full fighting gear. Paul was under constant guard by Roman soldiers, and he was describing what he saw daily. The apostles charged the Ephesians to "put on the whole armor of God that ye may stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. 6:11.)

Paul warned that the Christian

struggle was not against flesh and blood—a physical struggle for survival. Rather the fight was against evil, not some abstract idea of evil, but a world of lying, stealing, murder, adultery, and the long list goes on. This was no struggle of a day for summertime Christians, but a lifetime filled with stern demands. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If after the manner of men, I fought with beasts at Ephesus. . . ." (1 Cor. 15:32.) Paul was faced by an enraged mob in Ephesus who would have destroyed him as surely as wild animals would have. (Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-28 for Paul's own enumeration of the mental and physical trials he had suffered as a Christian.)

The Text Explained

The Dreadful Presence (Gen. 28:16, 17)

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

The flight of Jacob from the wrath of Esau marks a crucial turning point in his life. Jacob had probably been faced with few problems in his life. But at the very beginning of his journey to his mother's people in Paddan-aram, God reveals himself to Jacob and promises to be with him on his journey, and in due time to bring him back to his home and to his father's house. (Gen. 28:15.) The purpose of God was more than assuring Jacob of his comforting presence. God repeated the promise to Jacob that had been made to Abraham and Isaac, that Jacob would become a father of multitudes numbered as the dust of the earth and that he would be a blessing to mankind. (Gen. 28:14.)

A noticeable change took place in Jacob, over night as we sometimes say. Little could he know that he would be away from his home for twenty years. His mother had bidden him to leave home for a few days; they would not see each other again. That first night that Jacob slept at Bethel became a most memorable night of his life.

"Surely Jehovah is in this place." When Jacob awoke from his sleep

the next morning, he was moved with reverent awe. God had visited him in the night at Bethel, and Jacob "knew it not." As Jacob fled his father's tent in Beer-sheba, we may imagine Jacob looked over his shoulder at strangers traveling in his direction, and he could not distinguish friend from foe. God visited Jacob in a dream to make known to him that God had not forsaken him.

We should keep in mind that Jacob was not an ignoble person. He desired both the birthright despised by Esau and the blessing of his father. The lonely night that Jacob spent in Bethel could have been the beginning of the loss of his hopes and dreams. He had coveted both the birthright and blessing. As far as Jacob could know he had lost his home and possibly his birthright. Indeed, the special blessing of his father must have seemed a thing remote of attainment when he lay down to sleep.

Desolate as this lonely barren place was, nonetheless, God was there. Bethel is not located in a green valley or a beautiful mountain view. Bethel is located on a high barren and rocky hill and as foreboding a place to spend a night as a man could have found. Jacob surely uttered a great truth when he said, "Surely Jehovah is in this place." God is in every place; and in the whole universe, there is not a place where God has not filled with his presence. David eloquently wrote, "If I take the wings of the

morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Psalm 139:9.) Awakening from his sleep, he knew that God was there to protect him and to teach him. The years ahead would be stern and demanding. Just as David learned to trust in God's protection when he kept his lonely vigils shepherding his father's flock, Jacob would learn a similar lesson. Although Jacob had lain down with fear and trembling, God was watching over him.

Jacob became the father of the people of Israel who bore his name. Israel learned through bitter experience that God is never far removed from his people. Jacob learned another lesson that night at Bethel. God remains with his children. Jacob would leave the next morning as not one without hope because God would finally bring him back to that land to fulfill the the promise God had made to Abraham that all nations should be blessed through him. God confirmed his right to the birthright.

Jacob raised his head from a pillar of rock the next morning. He had lain down a trembling sinner, but had arisen from his hard bed a strong and courageous man with a faith in God he had not known before. Jacob then had the stamp of God's approval. The presence of God was so deeply felt by Jacob and he was so moved in spirit that he declared, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Jacob's Promise to God

(Gen. 28:18-22)

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of

all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

The next morning Jacob took the stone upon which his head had lain during the night, "and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it." Jacob was not told to do what he did, but he was moved with reverence toward God.

Jacob gave a new name to the place. He called it Bethel which means the "House of God." Jacob then made a vow to God that if God would safely return him to the safety of his father's house, then Jehovah would be his God. Jacob promised to give back a tenth of all that God had given him. He was expressing his longing to return to those whom he loved. The words of Jacob are deeply meaningful. He prays that God will provide him with bread to eat and clothing to wear. Jacob expressly declares that the wishes to be brought back to his father's house in peace.

Jacob journeyed until he came to the land of his mother's birth. He saw Rachel first who had come to water her father's sheep. (Gen. 29:10ff.) Jacob was welcomed into the home of his mother's brother where he would live for the next twenty years. Jacob worked twenty hard years in the service of Laban. And during fourteen of those years, he labored for Leah and Rachel. Jacob suffered the practiced deceit of Laban when he worked seven years for his beloved Rachel and was given Leah. God never in his goodness allows injustice to go unpunished. Jacob faced the test well.

At the end of the fourteen years, Jacob was faced with the necessity to provide for his growing family. He negotiated a new agreement with Laban for his services. Despite Laban's repeated taking advantage of Jacob, he prospered and grew wealthy in large flocks, with maid-servants and men-servants. The sons of Laban looked askance at Jacob, and they confided their suspicions to Laban that they were being defrauded by Jacob. And Jacob saw that the countenance of Laban was not as it had been. Jacob complained to Rachel and Leah that their father had deceived him and changed his wages ten times. His wives agreed with Jacob, they no longer had any por-

tion in their father's house, and they were willing to leave Padan-aram to go to Canaan.

Jacob left his father-in-law, but not without hard feelings. Jacob "stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian." Laban pursued Jacob and was warned of God not to harm Jacob. With something less than a gracious parting, Laban and Jacob made a covenant between them and parted in peace. Gen. 30:28-31:1-55.)

Now that Jacob had escaped Laban's wrath, his meeting with Esau drew nearer. Jacob feared that Esau had cherished his anger and still sought revenge. Jacob was frightened and he took what precautions he could. He sent his servants to Esau to announce his coming and to seek favor in Esau's sight. The messengers of Jacob returned to inform Jacob that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. And Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed over the prospect of meeting his brother. Jacob prepared for the worst and divided his possessions and the people into two companies, so if Esau attacked one group the other might escape. A rich present was sent in advance to Esau with the hope that Esau's anger might possibly be appeased. The wives of Jacob and his children were sent over the River Jabbok.

But Jacob remained behind the River Jabbok. We cannot know what was bearing upon Jacob's mind. He could at the last moment flee the wrath of Esau as he had done before, and leave his possessions and family at the mercy of Esau. Jacob spent another memorable night.

Wrestling: with God

(Gen. 32:24-26)

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go. except thou bless me.

The River Jabbok flows through a deep rocky valley from the east to the Jordan River. Jacob was left

alone, and there came a man out of the dark who wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day. The man is identified by one of the prophets. Jacob "had power over the angel, and prevailed." (Hos. 12:4.)

Jacob wrestled physically all the night through with the angel. The wrestling match had not been a part of Jacob's battle plan. His days of clever dealing were suddenly brought to an end.

The Hebrew letter tells us, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31.) To stand before God is to be stripped of all deception. Jacob prevailed with the angel.

All through the long hours of the night Jacob struggled with his adversary. Over and over, Jacob must have felt defeat, but he would not let go. The angel touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh which left him with a limp in his walk. The angel said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Jacob Won a Blessing

(Gen. 32:27-30)

And he said unto him. What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou has striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

With the coming of the dawn, Jacob received the blessing that he demanded. When the angel asked Jacob's name, he replied, "Jacob." He was then told: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The name Israel probably means "per-severer with God." Henceforth, Jacob would fight the battles of the Lord, and he would become a blessing to all mankind.

The power and strength of Jacob grew with time. His love for Rachel was a crowning joy in his life. His favoritism toward his beloved Joseph brought him unmeasured grief. Jacob was loyal to his

sons in their troubles and misdeeds. His trust in God grew deeper with the years.

As the dawn was breaking, Jacob asked the name of his antagonist, who declined to give an answer. We do not know why. Jacob knew that the wrestler was from God because the angel told him so. He called the name of the place "Peniel" because he had seen God "face to face." Jacob met Esau on the

following day in peace and they departed in good will. He returned home to find his old father still alive. Jacob lived on many years worthy of his birthright and obedient to God. He lived his last days in the land of Egypt. His new name was transmitted to his descendants who were the covenant nation, a people chosen of God.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Human nature is mixed with both strength and weakness. We are prone to emphasize our strong points and gloss over weak ones. The sad fact is that often our children will tend to model after our weakness.

2. A person should never be condemned for a moment of weakness although it is tragically true that the eagle never flies as high again after suffering a broken pinion.

3. Jacob was not an ignoble person. He was ambitious for the right things, but his methods to obtain them were sometimes wrong.

4. We have no reason even to hope God will forgive our trespasses against him if we fail to forgive and hold bitter resentment against those who have spitefully misused us.

5. It is actually immoral and unethical to prosper at another's expense if an unfair advantage is deliberately taken of another person resulting from some form of personal weakness, or a lack of knowledge on his part.

6. The measure of a man's life may be evaluated after he has run his life's course and fought his great moral and spiritual battles.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What are the consequences for sins committed even when they are forgiven?
When is a person able to say that "mine is a happy life"?

Golden Text

What was Paul doing at the time he wrote the words of the golden text?
What use did Paul make of the gear of a Roman soldier in comparison to a Christian soldier?

The Dreadful Presence

What change came over Jacob the first night he slept at Bethel?
Why did Jacob covet Esau's birthright?
What were the possible losses Jacob faced when he fled from Esau's presence?

Describe the physical setting of Bethel.

Jacob's Promise to God

What is the meaning of the word "Bethel"?

What did Jacob promise God that night at Bethel?

How long was Jacob gone from his home at Hebron?

What was the blood relation of Rachel to Jacob?

How long did Jacob work for his wives?

What kind of a trade did Jacob make with Laban?

To what extent did Jacob prosper the last six years in Haran?

Was Laban pleased with Jacob's leaving Haran?

Wrestling with God

How did Jacob plan to save part of his family and possessions from the wrath of Esau?

What did Jacob do the night he spent alone at the River Jabbok?

What physical hurt did Jacob suffer the night at the River Jabbok?

With whom did Jacob wrestle?

Jacob Won a Blessing

What is the meaning of the word "Israel"?

What is the meaning of the word "Peniel"?

Lesson V—August 4, 1974

THE EXALTATION OF JOSEPH

Lesson Text

Gen. 41:33-44

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

34 Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint overseers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that come, and lay up grain under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it.

36 And the food shall be for a store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he set him over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings.*” (Prov. 22: 29.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Luke 19:11-23.

Daily Bible Readings

July 29. M.....	Joseph's Birth (Gen. 30:22-25)
July 30. T.....	Joseph's Position (Gen. 37:1-4)
July 31. W.....	Joseph's Dreams (Gen. 37:5-11)
August 1. T.....	Joseph's Bondage (Gen. 37:25-28)
August 2. F.....	Joseph's Imprisonment (Gen. 39:19-23)
August 3. S.....	Joseph's Triumph (Gen. 41:37-45)
August 4. S.....	Joseph's Death (Gen. 50:22-26)

TIME.—1715 B.C.

PLACE.—Egypt.

PERSONS.—Joseph and Pharaoh.

Introduction

The story of Joseph is one of the most beautiful accounts in the history and literature of mankind. Joseph was one of the great patriarchs of Israel although his name is lost in the names of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who received a portion of land once their descendants were settled in Canaan in Joshua's day. Joseph faced bitter trials in his young years unlike any suffered by his illustrious forebears. The fear of Esau by Jacob

was his own doing. Joseph was innocent of the causes of his suffering, but he was not without fault.

It is not recorded that God appeared to Joseph in his darkest hours to apprise him of his mission to preserve his family from extinction. Joseph had no way of knowing that he would play a part in bringing to reality the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to bless all people through their seed. We cannot

know what stirs the souls of men such as Joseph. But it never occurred to Joseph that he was meant for anything in life less than some form of greatness.

The dramatic incidents of Joseph's life began to unfold through a series of unfortunate circumstances. On one occasion, Joseph was feeding the flock with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah: "and Joseph brought the evil report of them unto their father." (Gen. 37:2.) Joseph's dream of the sheaves and the sun, and moon, and eleven stars further enraged his brothers. They could not speak a kind word to him. That Joseph was the beloved son of Rachel, born to Jacob in his old age only aggravated the brothers more because of Jacob's preference for Joseph. (Gen. 37:1-4.) There may be little doubt that Jacob saw and suffered as a result of jealousy among the brothers. But this was just the beginning of his great trials.

The rise of Joseph to the pinnacle of power started on the darkest day of his life when his cruel and deceitful brothers sold him into slavery. Added to the pathos of this tragedy was Jacob who was old and

divided in love for his sons. We should not assume that Jacob was not dearly loved by all of his sons. The pity they felt for their aged father was real as he re-lived for many years the imagined cruel death of his son slain by a wild beast as a result of their false story.

The elevation of Joseph to a position of preeminence followed a chain of circumstances that seemed, at the time, to lead Joseph into even greater misfortune. Slavery led to imprisonment, and Joseph seemed to have no future. Although God did not appear to Joseph as he had to Abraham in Haran and to Jacob the night he slept at Bethel, God had not deserted Joseph: "And Jehovah was with Joseph." (Gen. 39:2.) Joseph was appointed to a great mission; but first, he had to be tested in the fiery crucibles of life. Joseph lived with one consolation. He was not haunted by memories of wrong done to others. His dreams were not troubled like that of Jacob at Bethel, or with fears such as Jacob suffered at the River Jabbok before meeting Esau the next day.

The Golden Text

Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings. (Prov. 22:29.)

Whatever a man's business, profession, or work may be, he will receive special recognition in relation to his proficiency, and his promotions will come as a matter of natural development.

The idea that such a man will "stand before kings" is literally so. Whatever may be his profession, if

he is the best and discharges his work with superlative responsibility, he will be summoned into the presence of the great and powerful people in the professions, or in skilled labor. Such a talented person will not stand before mean men. Joseph was a noble person of such character and ability that his abilities were recognized, appreciated, and used by the most powerful ruler of the ancient world.

The Text Explained

Joseph's Advice to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:33-36)

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of these good years that come, and lay up grain under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. And the food shall be for a store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in

the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

The events which brought Joseph into the presence of Pharaoh started as a simple errand. Jacob had sent his older sons to pasture the flocks near Shechem. They perhaps had been gone for several weeks. Jacob's concern for the safety of his sons led him to send Joseph to learn about their welfare. Joseph traveled to Shechem, but his brothers were not there. Some shepherds in the field advised Joseph that his brothers were in Dothan some fifteen miles further north.

As Joseph drew near Dothan, his brothers recognized him. Joseph perhaps did not comprehend the bitter hatred that his brothers held against him. The brothers said, "Behold, this" dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, An evil beast hath devoured him." (Gen. 37:20.)

There were reasons for their resentment. Joseph was the favorite of his father. The resentment of the brothers was aggravated by the dreams of Joseph. These reasons for hating Joseph were more imagined than real, but only time and its sorrow could teach them this lesson.

We need not guess at the great hatred they felt toward Joseph because of their subsequent actions. Their annoyance with the young boy suddenly turned into something horrible and evil. Reuben besought his brothers not to bring the blood guilt upon themselves with such a monstrous crime. Joseph was spared such a shameful death when his brothers spotted a trading caravan of Ishmaelites going to Egypt. He was sold to the traders who carried Joseph with them into the land of the Nile. (Gen. 37:25ff.)

The Ishmaelites sold Joseph into the household of Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guards. Joseph's fortunes prospered in the household of Potiphar. The Egyptian perceived that Joseph was favored by Jehovah, and he made Joseph the overseer of all that he had. A dark shadow crossed Joseph's path. He faced a second major crisis in his life. Joseph fell victim to the amorous intentions of Potiphar's wife who brought about Joseph's undoing. Joseph withstood her temptations by calling the proposal by appropriate words: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) The angry false accusations against Joseph by Potiphar's wife resulted in Joseph's imprisonment seemingly with no hope of reprieve from either prison or slavery for the rest of his life.

Joseph seems to have been a kind dispositioned person with a trusting heart and with a fine personal decency.

Some people have more than a common store of integrity and character. Joseph undoubtedly believed that God purposed to use him

for a purpose in life, and he withstood the blandishments of Potiphar's wife. Temptation comes to young and old alike and over a lifetime. The truly noble are those who have fought and conquered in life's sternest battles.

Although Joseph passed his first great test, he was falsely accused, and consequently thrown into prison. This ordeal also became a part of the testing ground of Joseph. And he stood the test nobly. We are impressed with the fact that Joseph never became bitter and disillusioned over his lot. He could live with the fact of his innocence without cause for remorse. We may even wonder if Potiphar had greater reason to believe in Joseph than in his wife. The Egyptian could have as easily ordered death for Joseph as he did imprisonment; but for some reason, he did not.

Joseph could not alter the circumstance, so he resolved to become a useful prisoner. As a result, Joseph found favor with the keeper of the prison and with all of his fellow prisoners as well. We may surmise that Joseph's kindly, cheerful disposition was a ray of hope in the harsh atmosphere of the prison. The trust of the prison keeper in Joseph grew daily. He committed the full care of the prison into the hands of Joseph; and whatever was done, Joseph was the doer of it. Sometimes even the most menial of tasks may become the stepping stones to services of higher usefulness. Joseph could not accept a life that was either common or unclean.

What is so outstanding about Joseph is that whoever came into the presence of Joseph trusted and liked him as even his brothers eventually did. Jesus said that we are known by our fruits, and the beautiful story of Joseph is full testimony of this. The darkest and most tragic days and years of Joseph's life were so diffused with the goodness and worth of Joseph that we are inclined to forget how Joseph spent those dreadful years.

Such a person as Joseph wins the help of those around him, and receives God's help mainly because he deserves it. As a person wins in the great battles of life, he should not lose memory of the fact that he has had powerful allies. There were the parents who guided him as he faced his early challenges, and

his teachers, and friends who helped him to grow strong and form a strong character. Then the days come when a person can look everyone squarely in the face without shame or remorse. He has won, but not alone. Joseph never denied his birthright, nor the demands which grew out of it. He accepted the challenge to live nobly as a man who accepts God should live.

The key to Joseph's rise to greatness, therefore, arose out of the faith and confidence his associates had in him. The butler and the baker, fellow prisoners, confided in Joseph about their dreams. "And Joseph said unto them. Do not interpretations belong to God? tell it me, I pray you." (Gen. 40:8.) And finally when Joseph was privileged to stand before Pharaoh who was troubled by his dream, he said to Pharaoh, "God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Gen. 41:16.)

The baker had not conveyed to Pharaoh what Joseph had told him prior to his reinstatement as Pharaoh's baker as he must have been rejoicing over his own good fortune. Joseph had asked him to make mention of his plight with these words: "I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should nu'me into the dungeon." (Gen. 40:15.) Joseph uttered no bitter words of condemnation of his brothers, nor did he indict Potiphar's wife for lying. It is so easy when we are wronged to accuse our adversaries, and often to no profit. Joseph had 'earned by bitter experience how to think and act. Joseph did not have as far to go as many other Bible characters. Joseph had indeed been disciplined in one of life's most pitiless crucibles—a prison. Afterwards, he would stand in the presence of princes as their master. God's hand was moving in Joseph's life. He would later see that clearly.

It was two full years after the baker had been restored to his place in Pharaoh's service that Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw seven fat cattle ascend from the River Nile followed by seven lean ones who devoured the seven fat cattle and were no less lean afterwards. Pharaoh awoke and fell asleep again and dreamed a second time. A stalk grew with seven heads of grain, full and good. Afterwards a

stalk grew with seven thin weathered heads of grain blasted by the east winds which devoured the seven good ears. Pharaoh was troubled by the dream that had seemed so real. The next morning, Pharaoh sent for all the men in Egypt who were wise in such matters such as astrology and the interpretations of dreams. But not one of them could interpret the dreams. A curious fact is that the cow was one of the symbols of the fertility pagan goddess, Isis, of Egypt who represented the life giving earth sustained by the waters of the Nile; and grain for bread was the support of life. It was in this setting that the baker recalled his offense against the king and his ingratitude to Joseph. (Gen. 41:9, 10.)

Upon hearing the story, the king commanded Joseph to be brought into his presence from the prison. Joseph proceeded to inform the most powerful monarch on earth in those days what the next fourteen years held in store for all the land of Egypt. The fertile lands of the Nile would produce crops in great abundance followed by seven barren years of famine.

Joseph followed up the interpretation of Pharaoh's dream by giving him advice: "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt." Joseph proceeded to advise Pharaoh to appoint overseers to collect a fifth of the grain to put it in storage against the famine years. This was to be done by royal authority and direction, and its control would be exercised in the same fashion.

Pharaoh's Approval

(Gen. 41:37-40)

And the thing was good in the cues of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph. Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than you.

The counsel of Joseph pleased the king and all of his servants. We are to understand that servants here were the trusted advisors in

Pharaoh's kingdom. Pharaoh immediately perceived that Joseph had said the appropriate thing. There were good years and bad years in the Nile Valley. The source of the Nile was lost in the dark regions of Africa. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile River no less than a god. If the waters failed and disease struck the growing grain, a pitiless famine would seize the land and there was no reprove. Whatever the future held in store, Pharaoh realized the common sense advice of Joseph and gave his full endorsement.

Pharaoh complimented Joseph as highly as he could: "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?" The king supplied his own response to his question. He declared that none was so wise and discreet as Joseph. Pharaoh perceived that Joseph was an uncommon young man. Already Joseph had informed Pharaoh that his knowledge came from God. The Egyptian ruler was impressed with the supernatural insight and wisdom possessed by this Hebrew in whom the "spirit of God" rested in such full abundance.

Pharaoh responded with the confidence to place Joseph over his house and over all the land of Egypt. The king made only one reservation: "only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

The Promotion of Joseph (Gen. 41:41-44)

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he set him over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt.

"See. I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." This was the way in which Joseph became ruler over the lands of the Nile from the Mediterranean Sea to the upper reaches of Egypt along the Nile to the South. Joseph was particularly

charged with the safeguarding of the grain and other food supply during the seven years of hard times. As was characteristic of Joseph, he discharged his new responsibility with complete integrity and with the complete satisfaction of Pharaoh. Joseph had indeed been trained in one of the harshest schools of adversity. He behaved himself during those dark years with courtesy and humility. Whosoever came into the presence of Joseph for any reason or period of time came to trust him implicitly.

Joseph was entitled to Pharaoh's confidence with good reason. Joseph had borne his years of servitude without bitterness. He perhaps thought that since he was a prisoner, he would be the best prisoner in Pharaoh's dungeon. He could have spent his idle and secluded hours in bitter lamentations. Joseph could have resolved to do little in prison, and such as he did, to do with bitter resentment. But Joseph chose a different route.

Joseph had won the trust of the keeper of the prison by deserving it. This had been accomplished by his forthright honesty and decency. And so it turned in Joseph's favor that he would eventually rule in the land of Egypt.

Joseph could never erase from the memory when his remorseless brothers drew from the pit the frightened boy with tear stained face and with begging entreaties not to be sold into slavery. The memory of his helpless degradation by Potiphar's wife remained indelibly implanted in his mind. An Egyptian prison along the torrid reaches of the River Nile was a nightmare memory. Joseph survived all of this a wiser and kinder man. When he met his brothers a few years later, it was without bitter memories.

"And Pharaoh took off his signet ring." The signet ring bore the seal of the imperial authority of Pharaoh. Joseph received the power of a regent, one who acts for the king. Joseph was clothed with fine linen which was highly prized by the Egyptians and worn by the wealthy. A gold chain was put around Joseph's neck, which was usually worn in Egypt as a mark of distinction as evidenced by statues of ancient Egypt.

Pharaoh then had Joseph driven in a second chariot in a stately procession through the city. The king's chariot preceded the one with Joseph. Heralds marched before them announcing to the people the important personage of Joseph. The people were commanded to bow down. And on such an occasion, Joseph became the head of state answerable only to Pharaoh. Joseph was chosen by Pharaoh because he deemed the young Hebrew discreet and wise. Joseph was discreet in the sense that he possessed understanding in foreseeing the future, and he was wise in the sense of utilizing for good his knowledge. Pharaoh was indeed bestowing a great responsibility upon Joseph. All matters concerning the welfare of Pharaoh's people were placed in the hands of Joseph. "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." He was actually being ordered to do his best. We must be impressed with the fact that never before had Joseph been presented with such a challenge. He had managed Potiphar's house with honor and rendered valuable service to the keeper of the Egyptian prison.

Thus Joseph was elevated over all the land of the Egypt. The king said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." Pharaoh made it clear that he was the undisputed king over Egypt. This only tends to show the awe in which the people regarded Pharaoh, and the high respect that now would be shown Joseph.

More than twenty years had gone by since Joseph's brothers drew him from a pit to sell him into bondage. He was ruling as a powerful

potentate. In order that Joseph be completely Egyptianized, he received the name of Zaphenath-paaneah. The meaning of the name is uncertain. One interpretation is that it means "he who reveals that which is hidden." Joseph received as his wife, Asenath, daughter of the priest of On, Potiphara. Joseph assumed his new duties and traveled throughout the land of Egypt administering its affairs through the seven years of plenty and doling out the grain when the years of famine set in.

The record of Joseph's life up to this point is more than another success story. There was a pattern to the events in Joseph's life up to that time, but he could not see it then, nor did he when first his brothers came into his presence bowing with faces to the earth as he once dreamed that they would. Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers on their return to Egypt with his full brother, Benjamin. The brothers were terrified when he said, "I am Joseph, doth my father yet live?"

Joseph realized then that God was using him as an instrument to save his people. The birthright of Joseph was that he should become the saviour of his people and the guardian of the promise that God would bring forth a mighty people from the loins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who would become a blessing to all mankind. On that occasion, Joseph said, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." (Gen. 45:8.) In all of Joseph's sore troubles, the hand of God was at work. Joseph was being prepared for a great task that awaited him in life which he performed with impeccable honor.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God has appointed each person to greatness of character which he is capable of achieving.

2. Whenever a person is doing the best he knows to do, he stands on higher ground each day because he is never satisfied to be no better than what he is.

3. God works his will in the affairs of men. The dark deeds of Joseph's brothers intended no good for him; nevertheless, God's plan to

bless mankind through Abraham was worked out for good.

4. A good person wins in the major battles of life because he deserves to win.

5. The faith and confidence of our associates is necessary if we are to use our talents to the fullest extent for good.

6. A person's role in life may be indeed humble, but he can resolve to serve God the best he can.

Joseph decided to be the best prisoner he knew to be.

7. The incomprehensible patterns

of life do have meaning as Joseph realized when he faced his brothers in Egypt.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the purpose of God in allowing man to suffer for the evil doing of other people?
Did the cruelty of Joseph's brothers grow out of a lack of love and respect for their father?
Was Joseph aware of the fact that God had appointed him to a great mission?

Golden Text

What does it mean to say that the diligent man shall stand before kings?
When are talented people honored who are willing to use their special skills?

Joseph's Advice to Pharaoh

What were the reasons for the great hatred which the brothers of Joseph bore him?
Was the hatred of the brothers based upon wrongs Joseph had done?
How did Joseph respond to the enticement of Potiphar's wife?
Why was Joseph able to withstand sufferings and temptations?
Did Joseph become embittered because of his unjust treatment?

How did Joseph find favor with the keeper of the prison?
Does a person win in the great battles of life alone?
To whom did Joseph attribute his power to interpret dreams?
Why did Joseph not engage in bitter words of recrimination against Potiphar's wife and his cruel brothers?

Pharaoh's Approval

Discuss the common sense advice which Joseph gave to Pharaoh concerning the plentiful years and famine years.
Why did Pharaoh select Joseph to administer the affairs of Egypt?
What was the importance of Joseph's position in Egypt?

The Promotion of Joseph

How did Joseph discharge his new responsibilities as a ruler?
How did Joseph prepare himself for those responsibilities in prison?
How did Joseph win the respect of the prison keeper?
What was the importance of a signet ring?
How many years passed since his brothers sold him into slavery and his elevation?
What did Joseph say to his terrified brothers when he revealed his identity to them?

Lesson VI—August 11, 1974

THE BROTHERLY LOVE OF JUDAH

Lesson Text

Gen. 44:18-34

18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother

come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food.

26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons:

28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since:

29 And if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying,

If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Let love of the brethren continue."* (Heb. 13:1.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Psalm 26:1-7.

Daily Bible Readings

August 5. M.....	Mission to Egypt (Gen. 43:1-38)
August 6. T.....	Judah and Jacob (Gen. 44:1-17)
August 7. W.....	Judah Pleads with Joseph (Gen. 44:18-24)
August 8. T.....	Judah's Promise to Joseph (Gen. 44:25-34)
August 9. F.....	Joseph's Reconciliation with His Brothers (Gen. 45:18)
August 10. S.....	Joseph Sends for His Father (Gen. 45:9-28)
August 11. S.....	Judah, "A Lion's Whelp" (Gen. 49:8, 9)

TIME.—1707 B.C.

PLACE.—Egypt.

PERSONS.—Judah, Joseph and Benjamin.

Introduction

This lesson centers in Judah, the most honored son of Jacob. Judah was the man that God chose to become the father of the kings of Judah and the Messiah. Judah did not distinguish himself as one of the great patriarchs because of any unusual fine qualities of character. The Judah we read about was more like the young Jacob, cunning and ambitious. Jacob described this son of his as a "lion's whelp."

Judah had his profane moments. This is witnessed in the action of Judah who delayed giving his third son, Shelah, to Tamar who had been married to the eldest sons of Judah and had died without a male heir. Tamar disguised herself as a harlot to entice Judah. Upon learning that his daughter-in-law was with child, he angrily condemned her to be burned. Tamar had taken the signet ring, cords, and staff of Judah for surety. Judah was compelled to acknowledge that Tamar is "more righteous than I, forasmuch as I gave her not to Shelah my son." (Gen. 38:26.) Perez was the son born to Judah and Tamar

from whom Jesus was directly descended.

Judah was capable of cruelties wholly unlike his father Jacob. Judah was the favorite son of Leah. He became a party to the slaughter of the household of Hamor, the Hivite, whose son, Shechem, had defiled their sister, Dinah. (Gen. 34:25-31.) Judah is hardly to be praised for this act, and he should have resisted the sale of Joseph.

Joseph's last memories of Judah, this young lion, was the day Judah along with his brothers sold him into slavery. We are brought once again to the stern truth that man's nobility of soul is not irretrievably destroyed in times of indiscretion, personal weakness, and even the most shameful of sins. Years later, Joseph would see this man, "a lion's whelp," a strong man of imposing character. Judah consented to become a slave, as Joseph had been, in order that Benjamin might return home. This noble offer of Judah proved that God had again chosen the right man for destiny. God was also using Judah to fulfill his promises to the patriarchs.

The Golden Text

Let the love of the brethren continue (Heb. 13:1.)

The Scriptures make much of brotherly love; or the lack of it. The peace of the family of Adam was destroyed by the death of Abel at the hands of Cain. This is an account of the problem of brotherhood. The trouble with Cain lay in his choice of the wrong, and envying of his brother because he chose the right. He ended up by killing his brother. Cain's reply to God's question of the whereabouts of his brother — "Am I my brother's keeper?" — was "Yes." We are responsible for our brother's life, for the welfare of his family, and his good name. We are keepers of his priceless heritage whose rights should be as precious to us as our own.

Abraham made the appraisal of circumstances between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. Abraham said; "Let there be no

strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, . . . for we are brethren." (Gen. 13:8.) The psalmist beautifully phrases the principle: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalm 133:1.) The brotherhood of humanity is set forth in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Love is the cement which binds Christians together. The fellowship of Christians started on Pentecost; and where the "love of the brethren continues," there is the church and the love of Christ works in the midst of them. The center of gravity for Christian fellowship is the love and respect for God's word. John wrote, "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 3:16.)

The Text Explained

Judah Addresses Joseph (Gen. 44:18)

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh.

Joseph assumed his regal office in Egypt with all the trappings befitting a prince. He was married to an aristocratic wife, the daughter of the priest of On, one of the most important persons in the religious life of ancient Egypt. The priesthood at On was distinguished for its learning and was of royal rank.

Joseph was blessed with two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh means "making to forget." Ephraim means "to be fruitful."

As Joseph told Pharaoh, the seven years of famine were followed by the seven lean years. The famine gradually settled over the whole region including the lands at the approaches to Canaan. The brothers in the decade Joseph had been gone experienced a complete change of character. Whatever anger they nurtured in their hearts against Joseph was lost in their own personal shame and guilt. During those years they were compelled to see

their old father's daily sorrow over the loss of Joseph, and they could not comfort him. It would be difficult to imagine the remorse they suffered.

The occasion of Joseph seeing his brothers for the first time in Egypt must have brought back a flood of memories. The Scriptures states, "Joseph saw his brothers, and he knew them." (Gen. 42:7.) Joseph assumed the role of the tyrant and spoke roughly to his brothers through an interpreter as they bowed to the earth before him. Joseph dealt harshly with his brothers and accused them of being spies.

Joseph learned something about one of his brothers he had not known. They condemned themselves for selling their brother; and Reuben reminded them, "Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear?" (Gen. 42:22.) Joseph understood his brothers, and went apart from them and wept in compassion for them.

Joseph put his brothers through many anxious hours. He took Simeon and bound him before their eyes until they should return with Benjamin. We need not recount the rest of the details. Joseph an-

nounced on his brothers second return to Egypt his intention to keep Benjamin because the silver cup of Joseph was found in his sack.

This is the background of Judah's plea to Joseph. The brothers were in deep despair when it seemed they must leave Benjamin behind. Their father would be bereaved of the only remaining son of Rachel. Joseph had brought the whole matter to a head. The ten brothers had passed their tests well up to that point. From the rank of the brothers, Judah stepped forth to address Joseph. Judah had earlier petitioned Jacob to allow Benjamin to accompany them. "Send the lad with me ... I will be a surety for him." (Gen. 43:8-9.)

The personal integrity and courage of Judah was equal to the tragic situation. They were faced with the seeming guilt of Benjamin, and they were deeply troubled by their own secret guilt which they had kept hidden for so many years. Judah must have addressed Joseph with great fear and consternation: "Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ear, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh." Finally the guilt of the brothers had come home, and Judah would confess their common shame to Joseph. He was confessing their sins before God, and Joseph knew better than any man could what Judah was saying.

Judah's life, so to speak, was on the block, and he speaks as a man would who is condemned to death. Judah knew that the seemingly hostile ruler held such a power over him, as Judah acknowledged, "thou art as Pharaoh." Judah faced the great moment of truth. He stood alone to make the decision. Judah's words are among the most beautiful in all recorded human utterances. The speech moves eloquently without anger or cringing fear. Judah humbly petitions Joseph that he be heard. We understand why Joseph was so deeply moved on that occasion. His memory of his brothers was that they were unfeeling and ruthless with no apparent redeeming graces. But the years had changed them. Their values were different, for they had wives and children of their own. Had Joseph in this, his great hour

of triumph, been as hardhearted as they had been, he would have been no better than they.

Judah's Story

(Gen. 44:19-26)

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, Go again, buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us.

Judah did not know Joseph, but he knew the emotions and feelings of all decent, civilized people. Joseph had passed from boyhood in the intervening years; and how far removed from Judah Joseph must have seemed at that moment. Judah was an older man, but not an old man. He briefly recapitulated the story of his father's family. We may not assume that Judah was speaking with calculated words to sway the emotions of Joseph. There was no need for that.

Judah's plea was of an old father who had lost a beloved son in his tender youth and whose grief had not passed with time. Judah did not go into the sordid details of their past because that would have only worked added harm in the ears of a stranger. Judah reminded Joseph that only because he had demanded it, that they had brought Benjamin along. Judah's words would have melted the heart of a man with a heart of stone. With pathos and sympathy, Judah told him that Benjamin was the son of his father's old age. And to add to the bereavement that Jacob would suffer, Judah spoke of the son that

was dead. Judah plead with Joseph, "And we said unto you, my lord, the lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die." Judah did not mention the money left in their sacks, nor the silver cup that Benjamin supposedly had stolen.

Judah reminded Joseph that he had turned a deaf ear when he said to them, "Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more." We may even pause to ask this question from Joseph's point of view. Had the brothers of Joseph told him the truth? Could it be that Benjamin was dead, and they had been instrumental in his death? Joseph remembered their studied cruelty against him. What better way could he have to evaluate his brothers than to observe their treatment of Benjamin. How Joseph's heart must have been filled with love and emotion as he beheld the confidence of Benjamin in his older brothers and their tragic dismay as they feared they would be compelled to return home without him. There is no trace of jealousy, but a deep and moving concern for their young brother and aged father.

Judah related to Joseph the conversation they had with Jacob on the eve of their second return to Egypt. They told their father that they could not see Joseph unless Benjamin accompanied them.

Jacob's Lament (Gen. 44:27-29)

And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is tom in pieces; and I have not seen him since: and if ye take this one also from me, and harm befall him, ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

Joseph was experiencing a dramatic revelation. Most of the story Joseph already knew. There had even been something uncanny about Joseph's dealing with them from the first. Following their return with Benjamin, they ate with Joseph. He set them in order from the youngest to the oldest in the order of their birthright, and Benjamin's food was five times that of

theirs: "and the men marvelled one with another." (Gen. 43:33.)

Judah related Jacob's part of the story as he despaired over the prospect of sending Benjamin into Egypt. Jacob lamented that Rachel had borne him two sons, and a wild beast had slain one of them. How Joseph's interest must have quickened with that statement as he sat in flesh and blood in their presence. Joseph controlled himself with great dignity. When he first saw Benjamin, he soon dismissed his brothers and wept, no longer able to control his emotions. Judah's account was ringing true. Benjamin stood in his presence as Judah expressed the sorrow of his father that his gray hairs would be brought down in grief to the grave should he never see his son again.

Judah's account was stirring deeply the soul of Joseph. As Joseph looked at Reuben, he then knew that Reuben had intended to rescue him from the pit and restore him to their father. (Gen. 37:22.) Joseph could not have felt other than gratitude toward Judah who probably saved his life, but had been, otherwise, no less cruel. The story was almost complete, but there was one other episode that Joseph did not know.

Judah's Pledge (Gen. 44:30-34)

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; it will come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Judah turned back to his own part of the story, and what he said must have deeply moved Joseph. Judah stood with courage in the presence of Joseph. He did not flinch or cringe. He had an honest

story to tell, and he had eloquently presented it. For all Joseph knew, Judah may have been willing to return home without Benjamin. Had the Egyptian prince, as they thought of Joseph, desired, the brothers would have been helpless with no other choice than to return home.

Judah knew his father, but his father did not know his sons. Judah was no longer willing to add to the grief of his father, nor would he forsake Benjamin in his desperate hour of need as he had forsaken Joseph. The time had come to test the iron in the soul of Judah. And this man stood his test with great courage and magnanimity of soul. God had chosen the right man to become the great patriarch from whose loins the kings of Judah would come.

Judah makes the full discovery of all the facts to Joseph. He declared that the father's life was so bound up in the lad that he would surely die if he were not with them upon their return to Hebron. No longer given to recriminations against his brothers, but fully confessing their shared guilt, Judah told Joseph, "Thy servants will bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to Sheol." It is not Joseph whom Judah accuses, but themselves.

The climax of Judah's address to Joseph was reached in the moment of his greatest despair. This brother had said all he knew to say. He was gripped with fear that Benjamin must remain behind and their father would be doubly bereaved. Then Judah made the revelation to Joseph which he had not known: "For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father forever."

Judah had gone surety for Jacob, and he would not deny the promise to his father: "Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my Lord: and let the lad go up with his brethren."

Judah fully realized the implications of all that he was saying. Not again would he ever see his wife and children. Slavery by any comparison was a harsh and pitiless experience in Egypt. Judah did not

dwell on these prospects. He acted bravely and sacrificially. This is one of the noblest recorded acts of history. The move was solely motivated out of Judah's love for his father and his brother. His love for Joseph would have been no less great that day if he could have faced Joseph. And that unwittingly he was doing. This Judah was not the man at all who sold Joseph into slavery.

Judah recited simply the story of his family. He started with Jacob and Benjamin and ends the account with them. Judah mentions his father's name some eighteen times and the name of Benjamin twenty times. The story moves from person to person and event to event. Judah recites the words of Jacob as he lamented the loss of Joseph saying, "and I have not seen him since," nor could he hope he would ever again. The tenderness and love that Jacob had for his children exemplified the character of Jacob and his home. Judah had indeed gone to the very heart of Jacob and his love for his family. Judah was a part of that family, and so were his brothers.

Joseph needed no additional proof beyond this impassioned plea of Judah. Joseph had only to speak the words to reenter the life of his family. Like Moses did, Joseph sought to identify with his own people, and he said, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?" Joseph reassured his brothers that they should have no cause to fear him. There had been enough hatred and strife which compounded pain unto sorrow. Judah's love was shown beyond degree. It is true love that covers a multitude of sins. The brothers wanted to be forgiven. This is one of life's hardest lessons. A person can more often be reconciled to the death of a loved one than to forgive a person for a grave injustice. Forgiveness is always the better part of wisdom. No matter how great and real wrongs done us may be to nurture ill will will sour our days and turn our sunrises into sunsets.

Judah was the champion of his brothers on that momentous day in their lives. He had stood his test well as Joseph had done in his darkest days. God had tried Abraham to make him fit for his great mis-

sion. Jacob had beheld God in a dream on a lonely hilltop one night and wrestled with an angel to prepare him for the stern trials of life. Jesus set forth the principles that the greatest gift a man can give to another is the offer of his own life for his brothers, and Judah did this.

The meeting of Joseph with all his father's family is another account. A fitting sequel to Judah and Joseph is summed up in the blessings that Jacob bestowed upon his two great sons. The blessings of Judah are as follows: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from

Judah . . . until Shiloh come." (Gen. 49:9, 10.)

The blessings received by Joseph are somewhat the same: "Joseph is a fruitful bough. . . . The archers have solely grieved him." (Gen. 49:22.) And in this manner, the blessings uttered by Jacob mount gloriously one on top of another. Joseph was promised a fruitful family and an abundance of water and great yields of crops from the fertile earth.

Joseph sent his brothers home to return with their father's family. He was thoughtful of his brothers. Joseph instructed his brothers to tell his father of his glory in Egypt and all they had seen and how well he was prospering.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The moral failures of Judah in his younger years did not cancel out the greatness of his character, but they remained stains upon a great man's record.

2. Without love Christian fellowship could not possibly exist. The world judges Christians on two counts: their unity and love for each other.

3. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; faith is the mainspring of the Christian life; love is the lubricant.

4. There are some prospects in life worse even than death. One is a shameful and crushing personal

self-disgrace; and another is to live at the expense of another person's humiliation, degradation, and even destruction.

5. The emotions and feelings of all decent and civilized people may be aroused through love and pity for the unhappy plight of the young and the old.

6. The time comes in a man's life when he has no choice, but to face the great moment of truth, no matter the consequences.

7. Sacrificial love is the greatest offering a Christian can give to another and erases the guilt of the past.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

How did Judah compare his sin with that of Tamar, his daughter-in-law?
In what cruel act did Judah engage in defense of his sister Dinah's personal honor?

Golden Text

What was Cain's problem of brotherhood?
How did Abraham demonstrate his love of his brother in the case of Lot?
How is the brotherhood of humanity set forth in the parable of the Good Samaritan?
What did Paul say about working good for others?

Judah Addresses Joseph

How was Joseph honored by Pharaoh after his elevation?
What are the names of the sons of Joseph?
Is it possible for a man to experience a complete change of character from good to bad?
What did Joseph learn about Reuben's concern for him?

Discuss the great moral courage of Judah as he stood in the presence of Joseph.

Judah's Story

How did Judah appeal to the emotions and sympathy of Joseph?
How did Judah attempt to make Joseph a party to Benjamin's plight?
Discuss the nature of the test to which Joseph put his brothers.
Did Joseph discover jealousy in his brothers feelings for Benjamin?

Jacob's Lament

How did Joseph react when he first saw Benjamin?
What change could Joseph see in his brothers as Judah addressed him?

Judah's Pledge

Describe Judah's feeling for their old father.
Did the great love of Jacob for Benjamin cause resentment among his brothers?
What fact did Judah reveal to Joseph?
Why did Judah offer himself as a pledge for Benjamin?
What change had come over Judah in the intervening years?

Lesson VII—August 18, 1974

THE KINDNESS OF JOSEPH

Lesson Text

Gen. 46:1-7, 28-30; 50:24-26

1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto God of his father Isaac.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons'

daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."* (Eph. 4:32.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 46:1-27.

Daily Bible Readings

August 12. M..... Joseph's Tenderness (Gen. 46:1-7)
 August 13. T..... Joseph's Kindness (Gen. 46:28-30)
 August 14. W..... Honoring Parents (Prov. 1:7-9)
 August 15. T..... Overcoming Evil with Good (Rom. 12:9-21)
 August 16. F..... Forgiving One Another (Col. 3:12-17)
 August 17. S..... Example of Christ (1 Pet. 3:19-25)
 August 18. S..... Love Fulfills the Law (Rom. 13:10-14)

TIME.—1706 B.C.

PLACES.—Beer-sheba and Egypt.

PERSONS.—Jacob, his sons and their families, and Joseph.

Introduction

The life of Joseph from the beginning to the end is one of the most thrilling and heart warming stories in the historical annals of mankind. Joseph, in many respects, is the most lovable of all Bible characters other than Jesus. The

ugly and sordid find no place in Joseph's life.

The account of Joseph's life begins simply. Jacob had resettled in the region of Hebron. Esau returned to the desert which, by his own choice, became his home.

Jacob's birthright was secured, and the blessings of his father Isaac, possessed all the bright hope of fulfillment. Jacob prospered in the land as Abraham and Isaac before him had done.

The most significant part of Jacob's life from this time forth is related in his son Joseph. At the outset, Joseph angered his brothers. He was in the care of the sons of Bilhah, Dan and Naphtali, and the sons of Zilpah, Gad and Asher. "And Joseph brought the evil report of them." (Gen. 37:2.) We may surmise that Joseph informed his father about all of his brothers. There is no way of knowing the nature of their misdeeds.

Joseph was also the favorite son of his father, and Jacob made an outward show of the favoritism by giving him a beautiful coat. Joseph became the envy of his brothers who thoroughly despised him: "They hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." (Gen. 37:4.) Partiality is always a form of injustice and causes untold evil. Jacob should have learned this lesson through his bitter experiences with Esau.

Joseph aggravated his brothers further by relating dreams of his to them and to his father. The dreams of Joseph implied first his brothers, and then they and his father and mother, would bow down to him as a king. Jacob chided Joseph for the suggestion, and his brothers hated him even more. (Gen. 37:10, 11.) Jacob kept the memory of what Joseph has said in mind as having some meaning unknown to him. Joseph was just a boy and

had done no one any real wrong. There may be no doubt that Jacob must have suffered when he perceived the feelings against Joseph among his sons, but apparently did nothing about it.

We need not recount the incidents from a previous lesson which relate the circumstances of the brothers selling Joseph into Egyptian slavery and his subsequent imprisonment and elevation to great prominence in Egypt. The dreams of Joseph actually foreshadowed his rise to power with his brothers literally bowing to the earth in obeisance to him. (Gen. 42:6.)

There is no way of knowing precisely the age of Joseph when he saw his brothers in Egypt. Some twelve or thirteen years passed from the time Joseph was sold into slavery and the interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker. Two years later Joseph was commanded into the presence of Pharaoh. After the passing of the seven plentiful years, the sons of Jacob came to Egypt. Joseph would have been thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of age.

The account of Joseph's life up to this point was simply a great success story. God had not appeared unto Joseph, as he had to Jacob, promising him a role in becoming a blessing to all mankind. From the moment Joseph saw his brothers in Egypt, he saw God's providence working in his life to preserve his father's family. Whatever faults Joseph had, he had no place for envy and hatred in his heart which always brings sorrow and pain in their wake.

The Golden Text

Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:32.)

Joseph came to the forefront of the history of the people of Israel in an evil hour. It is clearly perceived that God guides the destinies and fortunes of man and nations without deviation or frustration. Even the evil that men do is used through the divine providence of God; and in ways beyond human understanding, even out of evil that men do, greater good is brought. Joseph phrases it thusly: "Ye meant evil

against me; but God meant it for good." (Gen. 50:20.) Joseph was able to furnish a home for his father's family in Egypt and to furnish kindly and abundantly all their needs. And the Egyptians were blessed with their presence in the land.

The golden text mirrors the generous and loving nature of the likes of Joseph. However, Joseph was not a man without a flaw. His humanity is brought out in the instructions he gave to his brothers when he sent them back to Canaan to return with his father's family.

Joseph chided his brothers: "See that ye fall not out by the way." (Gen. 45:24.)

The apostle Paul admonished the Christians at Ephesus to be kind to one another. The day dawns the brightest out of the darkest night. Paul warned them to put away the dark passions of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and railing from among them. Paul is simply pointing up the unworthy practice of brawling, fighting, and "bad mouthing" among people who belong to God. A harsh and malicious spirit is foreign to the nature of a true Christian. The world has no other way to judge a Christian than through the fruits of his words and

deeds. And we may rest assured that we shall be so judged.

The spirit of forgiveness is the natural expression of the spirit of Christian love. This includes the head strong, erring brother in the flesh or in the body of Christ. The most unlovely person who seems to merit so little consideration is also to be forgiven. Angry and pitiless Christians are as alien to the Christian as love and mercy would be to Satan.

Jesus prayed for his tormentors who hanged him on a cross as Stephen did when he faced his accusers. This is one of the simplest of the great Christian lessons to learn, and the most difficult to put into practice.

The Text Explained

God Assures Jacob (Gen. 46:1-5)

And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

The last years of Jacob were crowned with peace and with an abundance of prosperity in his adopted home. The hatred and strife in the family which engendered so much unhappiness was gone. Esau had long since chosen the desert for his home. The brothers of Joseph were secure; however, a fear of Joseph continued to stir them deeply. That fact was brought out following the death of Jacob. The brothers expressed their anxiety about the matter: "It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him." (Gen. 50:15.) The brothers sent a message to Joseph and petitioned him again for his forgiveness. Joseph

spoke with his brothers and reassured them: "Fear not: for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." (Gen. 50:19, 20.)

We can imagine the inexpressible joy of Jacob as he looked forward to seeing his beloved Joseph again. It would be difficult to imagine the reaction of Jacob to the good news brought by his son: "Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. And his heart fainted, for he believed them not." (Gen. 45:26.) Jacob was convinced when he saw the wagons laden with rich gifts from his son. We may assume that the sons of Jacob confessed their sordid dealings with Joseph. It is not difficult to envision a mounting hatred that grows as formidable and as cruel and as deep as the terrible wrong a person has suffered. Wisdom and love can always find a way out of this tangled trap of Satan. Joseph never learned to hate, and he sought no revenge for the suffering brought upon him without cause.

As Jacob faced the prospect of leaving the country around Hebron, he had deep misgivings about it. His family had lived in this part of Canaan going into the fifth generation. Droughts and periods of famine in that region of the world were not uncommon, but the people always persevered. Jacob was assured of a continuing food supply from Egypt because of Joseph. The prospect of making one more journey could not have confronted

Jacob with an insurmountable problem. Jacob was a nomad by occupation, and he had made other long and arduous journeys in his young manhood.

Jacob was deeply concerned about another problem. He had secured his birthright and the special blessing of his father at great cost and sacrifice. Jacob, no doubt, had heard of the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob recounted in his presence while he sat in the tents at Hebron.

Jacob now faced the prospect of leaving the Promised Land with no assurance he would ever return at his advanced age. The promise included Jacob also that through his seed all mankind would be blessed. Jacob's concerns were far deeper than a simple matter of personal convenience. He rightly hesitated over the prospect of leaving Canaan.

God appeared to Abraham before he left Ur of Chaldea to go to Canaan. Now he appeared to Jacob as he was preparing to leave Beer-sheba. The Scripture states: "And Israel took his journey with all he had and come to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac." God appeared to Jacob in visions of the night on the eve of his departure assuring him not to be fearful of making the journey into Egypt. God spoke to Jacob, "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

God appeared to Jacob to remove his anxiety and to reassure him that Jacob was still a part of God's providential plan. Jacob was assured of God's presence with him even in Egypt, and with the promise his descendants would come out later a great nation of people.

Jacob's Descent into Egypt

(Gen. 46:6, 7.)

And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

After Jacob's name was changed to Israel, he became, in the fullest sense a "fighter for God." His great personal qualities were not achieved at small cost. Jacob paid his price for his misdeeds in the twenty years he had lived in Haran. God promised to go with him into another strange land.

The family that Joseph would welcome into Egypt was not the same family that he remembered at Hebron. The days of the struggles of his brothers were passed. Jacob had passed into his aged years a wise old man tempered and melted with time. There may have also been the comfort of Jacob that his special love for Joseph had not been something wasted. As clearly as Joseph perceived the hand of God working out his purpose in his life, Jacob could see as much and even more with his long life stretching behind him.

Verses five through seven briefly describe the descent of Jacob and his large household into Egypt. We can imagine the wagons sent by Pharaoh to Canaan to bring back Jacob and all his possessions. The wagons like the war chariots were sturdy vehicles built to withstand long desert journeys. The nomads owned no such conveyances. Jacob was accompanied by his sons and grandchildren. The fact is mentioned that Jacob was accompanied by his daughters and their children. We know only the name of one of his daughters, Dinah. (Gen. 46:15.) We can easily imagine the movement of this large family by comparing it to the endless wagon trains which moved into the West during frontier days.

Reunion of Father and Son

(Gen. 46:28-30)

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to show the way before him unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive.

The narrative of Jacob draws rapidly to a close following the meeting with his family and their

settling in the land of Egypt. Other seed of Abraham would take up the burden of God to preserve the seed until the messiah came. The age of Moses was centuries ahead. The descendants of Israel would suffer as Jacob had, and his descendants would be forced into slavery as bitter as any Joseph had experienced.

The movement of the large caravan of seventy souls as it moved out of southern Canaan across the desert land before Egypt, surely excited a great measure of curiosity along the way. The Egyptian wagons would have conveyed the importance of the entourage.

Jacob sent Judah ahead to Joseph to announce their coming and to make preparation for their arrival. Judah, though he was not Jacob's favorite son, was a son that could be trusted to keep his word and discharge his responsibility. Joseph's memory of the brave Judah pleading for Benjamin would not be lost. Joseph had already made preparations to receive his family into Egypt. They were to settle in Goshen in the rich delta region of the Nile River as it poured its enormous volume of water into the Mediterranean Sea.

The momentous day for the meeting of father and son drew near. Joseph made ready his chariot to go to Goshen to meet his kinsmen. The meeting of Joseph and his father is briefly told. "And he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while." Jacob's cup of happiness was full to overflowing. The sorrows of his years were now more than compensated for, as he saw his son in all his splendor. The son he thought was lost to him forever was safe, and his other sons would share a relationship with their father no longer clouded with deceit and lying. Jacob was so overwhelmed with thanksgiving he said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive." Fortunately, however, Jacob lived another seventeen years in Egypt with his sons and daughters and their children.

We are picturing the kindness of Joseph in this lesson, and there is an important facet of this that is brought out with Joseph settling his family in the land of Goshen. Joseph had to take into consideration what was best for his family

and the Egyptians among whom they would live. And he was compelled to secure the consent of Pharaoh to settle his people in Goshen.

Joseph faced a problem. In the first place, the occupation of a shepherd was despised by the Egyptians. The reasons were both religious and prejudicial. The dislike of the Egyptians grew partially out of the fact that the foundation of Egyptian life was based upon agriculture. Shepherds were the rude and barbarous people who lived in the desert and on the fringes of the farming regions and who posed a continual threat to the settled civilized communities. No doubt, there were religious practices by Jacob and his family that would have been odious to the Egyptians.

Goshen was a region especially adapted to pastoral occupation. We are not to assume that there were no shepherds among the Egyptians. There were, but they were despised as unkempt and inferior cow-herds and goat-herds. There may have been another concern that gave Joseph cause for additional thought. Egypt was then ruled by the Hyksos Pharaohs. The Hyksos were foreigners who had invaded Egypt. They were also of Semitic background and were called the "shepherd kings" in ancient history. Nevertheless, the Hyksos ruler chose not to disregard the feelings of his Egyptian subjects.

Joseph must have had another reason in mind for settling his family in Goshen. They would be removed a safe distance from the main concourse of Egyptian life, and they could secure their own religious beliefs and practices from a too close involvement with the Egyptians and the consequent paganism which attended the idolatrous practices of the Egyptians.

The portrait of Joseph as drawn in Genesis is, as we say sometimes, almost too good to be true. However, we clearly see a need for a person with the unimpeachable character of Joseph that would prove equal to great responsibilities. Indeed, Joseph was kindly considerate of the Egyptians and their feelings, and for the best interest of his family. Joseph cautioned his father and brothers to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds from old to insure them of

the prospect of settling in the Land of Goshen. Joseph knew that Pharaoh would inquire about their occupation in order to settle them advantageously in Egypt. (Gen. 46:31.)

So Joseph Died

(Gen. 50:24-26)

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was in a coffin in Egypt.

As is true of all life, there is that part which comes in between. Joseph lived for many years after he had settled his family in Egypt. The Genesis book records that Jacob and his family were received into Egypt and prospered. Joseph continued to serve in the role as second in command only to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh received the family of Joseph in a very gracious manner. We can better appreciate Joseph when he came before Pharaoh to announce the arrival of his family in Egypt. He took with him five of his brothers. We may easily imagine these rude brothers of Joseph accustomed to the pastoral life, in the presence of the great people in the sophisticated Egyptian Court. Joseph took pride in his family. They were his people. And from his humble station, Joseph had risen to a great and honorable station in life. His spiritual heritage was incomparably greater than the elevated culture of the Egyptians.

Joseph never doubted that God intended for him to play an important role in the affairs of mankind. It seemed no less providential for Joseph to meet Pharaoh with members of his families than when he first recognized his brothers in Egypt. Joseph owed his wisdom and insight to God, not to some intangible personal quality or gift.

The most dramatic moment of Jacob and his family meeting with Pharaoh came when the mighty king turned to the aged patriarch with a question: "How many are the days of the years of thy life?"

(Gen. 47:8.) Jacob gave answer, and as an old man would, mentioned the sorrows of his life. Jacob had not solved the unanswered riddles of life, but he had faced life with its fortune and misfortune proving the greatest need for man is to fear God and keep his commandments. (Eccles. 12:13.)

Genesis closes on a happy note. Jacob lived several years in the midst of his family. Following his death, the Egyptians embalmed his body. The sons of Jacob carried their father's body with Pharaoh's permission to lay it in the cave tomb of Abraham and Isaac in Hebron. Following their return from Canaan, Joseph lived with his brothers and their families: "And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them." (Gen. 50:21.)

Joseph lived to the age of one hundred and ten years. His years were full and richly blessed. Joseph lived to see his great-great-grandsons. The statement that they were born upon "Joseph's knee" simply means that he could take, the children upon his knees and show them his paternal love and acknowledge their kin to him.

When Joseph saw death close upon him, he took an oath of the children of Israel that they would carry his bones from Egypt. Joseph was prophesying the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Jacob had similarly told of the exodus of his descendants, (Gen. 48:21.) Joseph's last wish was to be laid finally to rest in the promised land. Following his death, he was embalmed and placed in a wooden coffin and deposited in a room according to Egyptian custom where it remained for three hundred and sixty years. The people of Israel carried his body to Shechem where he was buried in a plot of ground which had been originally bought by Jacob. (Gen. 33:19.) Joseph's request expressed the faith and hopes of his ancestors that the people of Israel would be settled permanently in Canaan that God had promised long before to Abraham. The years ahead of them would prove to be as bleak and arduous as any Joseph first suffered when he came to Egypt. The Book of Genesis tells of creation of the universe and of man, and the purpose of God to create a race of people with a special bless-

ing and a mission to bless all nations. Joseph was honored of God because he came at a critical time

in the history of the people of Israel to preserve them so they could fulfill their messianic mission.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. A great mistake that parents are sometimes apt to make is to show favoritism for one child in preference over another resulting always in hurt and sometimes in even greater grief.

2. God guides the destinies and fortunes of nations without deviations or frustrations.

3. A Christian cannot be too good—no man can be; but even the best person, like Joseph, is not without personal flaws.

4. The spirit of forgiveness is the natural expression of the spirit of Christian love.

5. Our children learn their prejudices from us and our practiced hatreds.

6. A person with talents, great or small, is appreciated in relation to his personal qualities of character.

7. It is an honor to any person to take pride in his family no matter how humble their circumstances may be.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why did Joseph's brothers hate him?
Why did Jacob favor Joseph above his other sons?

How did Joseph aggravate his brothers?
How did Jacob react to the dreams of Joseph?

How old perhaps was Joseph when he saw his brothers in Egypt?

Golden Text

What is your understanding of divine providence?

How is the humanity of Joseph brought out when he chided his brothers?»

What is the natural expression of the spirit of Christian love?

God Assures Jacob

Describe the last years of Jacob's life in Egypt.

What fear did the brothers of Joseph continue to experience?

How would you have reacted had you been in Jacob's place and learned of the sordid acts of his ten sons?

Did Jacob show any concern about going to Egypt?

Jacob's Descent into Egypt

What is the meaning of the word "Israel"?

Describe the family of Jacob that entered Egypt?

Reunion of Father and Son

Why perhaps did Jacob send Judah to Egypt to announce their arrival?

Describe the meeting of Jacob and Joseph.

What did the Egyptians think about shepherds?

What problem did Joseph face in settling his family in Egypt?

Why was Pharaoh kindly disposed toward Jacob and his family?

So Joseph Died

How did Pharaoh receive the family of Joseph?

Did Joseph believe that God meant for him to play a special role in life?

What question did Pharaoh ask of Jacob?
What dying request did Joseph make of his family?

Lesson VIII—August 25, 1974

TRIUMPHANT DEATH

Lesson Text

Gen. 25:7-10; 35:28, 29; 49:29-33

7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years.

8 And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

9 And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre;

10 The field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

28 And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years.

29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah—

32 The field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."* (Rev. 14:13.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Thess. 4:13-18.

Daily Bible Readings

August 19. M.....	Hope of the Resurrection (Acts 23:6-11)
August 20. T.....	Blessed Assurance (2 Cor. 5:1-10)
August 21. W.....	Hope Set on God (1 Tim. 5:1-5)
August 22. T.....	Hope in Christ (1 Cor. 15:12-19)
August 23. F.....	Hope, An Anchor to the Soul (Heb. 6:13-20)
August 25. S.....	Death Swallowed up in Victory (1 Cor. 15:50-54)
August 25.	S. Death Swallowed up in Victory (1 Cor. 15:50-54)

TIME.—Abraham, 1857 B.C.; Isaac, 1732 B.C.; Jacob, 1689 B.C.

PLACES.—Hebron and Egypt.

PERSONS.—Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob and his twelve sons.

Introduction

This lesson addresses death, not as man's dread conqueror, but as the time when the attributes of a noble life lived in service to God may be summed up gloriously. Such were the lives of the three great patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The belief in the immortality of the soul of man is perhaps the most universal belief of mankind. Man lives out his earthly life with purpose, and he is unwilling to believe

that the purpose for his existence can be completed in the span of a lifetime.

The hope of eternal life motivates man to the highest principles of character and the noblest of deeds. He will not accept that death ends all hopes and confronts him with a terrible finality. It has been said, "He sins against this life who slights the next." Abraham, the great patriarch, did neither because he was a pilgrim looking for the

city whose builder and maker is God.

Were it not for our faith and knowledge of the Scriptures, the power of death over us would be absolute, and its fatal hurt inescapable. But the Scriptures assure us that Christ won the victory over death, and that in the fulfillment of Christ's promise, the Christian will pass from this world into eternal life with God. (1 Cor. 15:55-57.) God promises his children that through death they are to be received into a new realm in which they will enjoy eternal life in a world without end.

One has only to read the Old Testament to learn from the deaths of the patriarchs and other heroes of faith that they lived out their days with trusting faith and hope that in being "gathered to their people" they were closer home to God. (Heb. 11:10.) The Old Testament Scriptures abound with scriptures

explicit and implicit that the soul of man never dies. Daniel declared in the clearest of language that the wicked who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken some day unto eternal punishment and the righteous unto eternal life. (Dan. 12:2, 3.)

The only ground on which a person may stand on his approaching death is his faith in God and his power to raise him from the dust of the earth at the final judgment then to receive his eternal reward for his righteous life on earth. To believe otherwise means that climbing the stairway of a righteous life on earth would at the end lead to nowhere. Abraham, Moses, and the other pilgrims were not engaged in the endless wanderings like the desert nomads. They had goals in life and beyond. The prophets of Israel and Judah did not thunder their prophecies of impending doom for the passing emergencies of time.

The Golden Text

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them. (Rev. 14:13.)

When John wrote Revelation, the Christians were coming under the most vicious and pitiless persecution after the beginning of the church on Pentecost. The content of Revelation indicates the bitter persecutions of the Christians under the reign of Domitian Caesar who revived "Caesar worship" and threatened death to every subject in the Roman empire who would not comply. Thousands of Christians suffered the worst forms of death because they could not obey the

dictum of the terrible Caesar. Domitian Caesar, unlike Nero Caesar who was a madman, was cruel beyond degree. He bore a special hatred for Christians. They were hunted down like animals by the officers of Caesar. The Christians had nowhere to go to find protection, or any place to hide. They had no choice other than "Caesar or Christ." Most of them chose Christ.

The scripture of the golden text is related to this dark period in Christian history. John is encouraging the triumphant Christian martyrs who died in the faith that their works would follow them through the portals of death.

The Text Explained

The Days of Abraham's Life
(Gen. 25:7)

And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred three score and fifteen years.

The measure of a man's life on earth is not how long he lives, but how well he has lived. Life is not a measure to be emptied, but a measure to be filled. Abraham lived out a round century in Canaan with the exception of a brief sojourn in Egypt.

The life of Abraham may be summed up in several major episodes commencing with his call as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. When a person reaches the zenith of his years on earth he may look back and describe himself as a person whose life has been lived happily and well. Abraham lived to look upon his children and his children's children. He earned the respect of the people in the land where he lived and the approval of God.

We may turn at this point to sum

up the main events in Abraham's life which led to his being called the "friend of God."

The significant events in the one hundred years after Abraham's death are easily traceable. We should note his name is first called "Abram" which only appears in three places: Genesis 11:26-17:5; Nehemiah 9:7; 1 Chronicles 1:26. Interestingly, the name is worn by no one else in biblical history. The word "Abram" means "exalted father." His name was changed to "Abraham" which means "the father of a multitude." (Gen. 17:5.) "The main events of Abraham's life are recorded in Genesis 11:26-25:10. The accounts trace Abraham's elevation in the estimation of God to be acknowledged as "the friend of God." Abraham was the son of Terah. Abraham was removed ten generations from Noah through the linear descent of Shem. Abraham had two brothers, Nahor and Haran. The wife of Abraham was Sarai, later named Sarah, which means a "princess." Sarah was Abraham's half-sister. Terah was the father of both, but each had a different mother.

Abraham was born in Ur of Chaldaea. At the age of seventy-five, he obeyed the call of God to migrate to Canaan with the promise that he would become the father of a multitude of people. Abraham did not worship the false gods of the people. Abraham worshipped the only true and living God who fashioned the universe and created man in his own image. Abraham traveled to Shechem in Canaan where God repeated his promise and the attendant blessing. On his journey south, he came to Bethel, where he called upon the name of Jehovah and built an altar. (Gen. 12:6-9.)

Abraham was a good man, but not a perfect man. In a time of famine, Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt to survive. Pharaoh, who would have taken Sarah, was deceived with Abraham's declaration that Sarah was his sister—not his wife. (Gen. 12:10-20.)

Abraham returned to Canaan to live out his days around Hebron. Lot and Abraham separated from each other due to their quarreling herdsmen. (Gen. 13:5-9.) God renewed his covenant promises with Abraham with a promise of the

land and the attendant blessing. Abraham appears as a leader among his contemporaries to punish a coalition of five kings who had kidnapped Lot and despoiled the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, upon the defeat of the kings, returned home through Salem where he was blessed by Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem, to whom Abraham paid tithes. (Gen. 14:19.)

Although God promised Abraham abundant lineal descendants, Sarah remained barren. Sarah gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham, to assure Abraham's posterity. However, Abraham and Sarah were assured that their son would become Abraham's lineal descendant. They learned from the three visiting strangers (angels) that Isaac would be born. (Gen. 18:1-10.)

Abraham was not without problems which cropped up along the way. Abimelech, king of the Philistine, would have taken Sarah from Abraham, but was warned of God not to do so. (Gen. 20.)

Ten years after Abraham was promised a numerous offspring, Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham and Ishmael was born. Fifteen years later, Isaac was born to Sarah who was ninety, and Abraham who was one hundred. Abraham for the sake of domestic peace was compelled to send Hagar and her son, Ishmael, away.

The supreme test of Abraham's life came when he undertook to sacrifice his son, Isaac, under divine command". Abraham obeyed God without hesitation and never faltered in his resolve, even taking the knife and raising it for the fatal blow. Abraham had passed every test God had put him to. Abraham received for the last time the promise from God that his seed would be numbered as the stars of the heaven and the sands on the seashore, and would continue victoriously through time. Abraham was promised that he would become a blessing to all mankind through his seed. That promise has been fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah of Abraham's blood line. The apostle Paul set forth the fact that the promise was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 3:16.)

Abraham's life drew to an anti-climax. Sarah died and was buried in Hebron. He ordered his servant

to go to Haran to secure a wife for Isaac from among his people. (Gen. 24.) Abraham married again. (Gen. 25:1.) Several children were born to this union, but Isaac received all of the rights and the inheritance of the firstborn. Abraham gave gifts to his other sons and sent them away.

Abraham is the Old Testament personality referred to most often in the New Testament. His name is mentioned seventy-two times. The lineal descent of Jesus is traced from Abraham by both Matthew and Luke. (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-28.) Abraham is honored both as the "friend of God" and the "father of the faithful." Paul develops the doctrine that all Christians are the spiritual "seed of Abraham" because of a like quality of faith." (Rom. 4; Gal. 3:7-9, 26:

29.) The place of the righteous dead is set forth as "Abraham's bosom." (Luke 16:22.) Abraham was a man of reason, but his faith in God towered over the limitations of human logic. The Christian is called upon to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified, raised from the dead the third day, and is now seated at the right hand of God. Abraham's faith was undaunted. He staggered at nothing in unbelief which God commanded him to perform. The Christian may do no less.

The Passing of Abraham

(Gen. 25:8-10)

And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people. And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; the field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

Abraham is described as living to a good old age. This is a statement calculated to sum up the whole of Abraham's life, full of goodness and blessings which his presence had brought to the people among whom he lived. His life would have not been described in this fashion if his life had been darkened with sorrow and tragedy, or if he had brought untold harm to others.

Abraham was indeed a blessing to his contemporaries as he has since been to all mankind. The statement is made that Abraham was gathered to his fathers. By this we understand something other than the fact that Abraham died and was buried in a tomb. The idea in this Scripture denotes the reunion of Abraham and loved ones who had gone before. Paul wrote, "These all died in faith, not having received the promise, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth." (Heb. 11:13.)

Isaac and Ishmael buried their father in the cave of Machpelah which he had bought for a fair price from Ephron the Hittite. Though Ishmael was excluded from the blessing of the covenant, he was acknowledged by Abraham as his son in a distinct blessing which he gave to him. (Gen. 17:20.) Ishmael was thus elevated above the sons of Keturah. The journey of man leads finally to the grave. No one may escape. But this is not the end of life, but another beginning that will never end. A person may be reluctant to leave this world, but a good man is not afraid and ashamed to leave for he is looking toward that city of eternal day where sorrows are unknown and tears never dim the eyes.

The Days of Isaac

(Gen. 35:28)

And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years.

Isaac lived more than twenty years after Jacob's return from Mesopotamia. Twelve sons were born to Jacob and Rachel and Leah with their handmaidens. Rachel died in childbirth when Benjamin was born on their return to Canaan from Haran. Jacob lived first in Shechem and later in Bethel north of Hebron in southern Canaan.

Jacob came eventually to dwell with his father in Hebron for about twelve years until Isaac's death. (Gen. 35:27.)

Isaac lived one hundred and eighty years. The years of his life were not as eventful as the years of Abraham, but they were good years. We may turn for a look at the high points of the long and largely uneventful life of the good patriarch.

Isaac was born when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety, twenty-five years after his parents came into Canaan. God repeatedly promised Abraham a lineal posterity, and Isaac became the only true heir of Abraham. Even before his birth, God had provided him with his name. (Gen. 17:19.)

The Scriptures tell us nothing about the birth of Isaac and his childhood other than his circumcision and the festivities held on the day of his weaning. The details of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was told in another place and will not be recounted here.

When Isaac was forty, he married the beautiful Rebekah who had been brought to him from his father's people. Her father was Bethuel, nephew of Abraham. We find little fault in Isaac. When he first saw Rebekah, she was coming to Abraham's tent. The scripture states that Rebekah "became his wife; and he loved her." (Gen. 24:67.) Isaac is the only one of the patriarchs who had only one wife in his lifetime.

Whatever sorrows Isaac suffered, the most disturbing was the enmity between his twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Isaac's life was not without some trouble from his neighbors. He grew rich in farming and shepherding. His neighbors envied him and harassed Isaac over water rights.

"Isaac was a good man who placed peace above personal rights. Isaac received in kind the same promises of Abraham that he would be a blessing to all men through his lineal descendant. (Gen. 26:2-4.)

The unhappy circumstances of Jacob's purchasing Esau's birthright and defrauding him of his father's blessing which belonged to Esau as the firstborn was a source of grief to Isaac. However, Isaac lived to see the return of Jacob from Haran and the peaceable reunion of his "two sons.

In the New Testament, the Scripture which relates Christ to Abraham necessarily includes Isaac. The apostle Paul, in an allegory, depicted Isaac as the free son of his mother, Sarah. Paul's purpose is to show that God's initial promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Isaac in the sense that the son of a servant

was turned away. In like manner, Christians are saved from bondage to the law, and are become free in Christ. (Gal. 4:22-31.)

The Death of Isaac (Gen. 35:29)

And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.

The passing of Isaac is similar to the description of Abraham's passing. The statement that he gave up the ghost and died is one fact and that he was "gathered unto his people, old and full of days" is another fact. This Scriptures apparently mean that Isaac rejoined his friends and family who had preceded him, not in death, but in eternal life. The burial of Isaac ends on a happy note. Esau came from Seir to Hebron to assist his brother in the burial of their father. Whatever animosity Esau had felt toward Jacob had long since died away. They buried their father with mutual respect and love.

A Last Request (Gen. 49:29, 32)

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite . . . the field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth.

The passing of Jacob was attended by his twelve sons. The aged father addressed each son in turn by bestowing a blessing upon each. In a sense, the whole life of Jacob passed in procession before him as he pronounced his blessing upon each of his twelve sons beginning with Reuben, the oldest, and ending with the youngest, Benjamin.

Before his death, Jacob expressed the wish to his sons to be buried in the sepulchre of his fathers (Gen. 25), where Isaac and Rebekah, and his own wife Leah, lay by the side of Abraham and Sarah. Joseph had already performed an oath to his father to bury him in the family sepulchre, the cave of Machpelah. (Gen. 47:29-31.)

The life of Jacob, in many respects, was fitted with more crises and uncertainties than either Abraham or Isaac. We may turn at this

place to review the long and eventful life of Jacob.

Esau and Jacob struggled in the womb of Rebekah portending unhappy circumstances in the lives of both. Each would become the founder of a great nation, and the elder would serve the younger. (Gen. 25:22-23.) Nothing at all is known of Jacob's boyhood. (Gen. 25:26.) Jacob was a quiet man who stayed around the tents near his mother who loved him more than she did Esau.

Jacob took advantage of Esau's weakness and purchased his birthright for a bowl of lentils. He was wily and cunning, and Rebekah was no less deceitful in the stratagem for Jacob to defraud Esau of his birthright. (Gen. 27.)

Esau threatened the life of his brother. Rebekah, under the pretext of securing a wife for Jacob from among her people, obtained Isaac's consent to send Jacob to Haran. Jacob's sudden flight from Beer-sheba found him the first night at a place which he named Bethel ("house of God"). God repeated the promise of blessing to Jacob that he had made to Abraham and Isaac. (Gen. 28:10-15.)

Jacob journeyed on to Haran where he would live the next twenty years. Jacob suffered from the hands of Laban whom he served seven years for the hand of Rachel only to be given Leah. And he was compelled to serve another seven years for Rachel.

Eleven sons were born to Jacob in Haran, of his two wives and their handmaidens, Zilpah and Bilhah. Jacob struck a bargain with Laban to build up his own flocks as the sons of Laban later thought was at their expense. (Gen. 31:1-2.)

Jacob fled Haran, and after three days, was pursued and overtaken by Laban. Laban was warned of God not to harm Jacob. They made a covenant and separated in peace.

Jacob's return to Canaan was momentous and fraught with personal danger, as Jacob believed, from the hands of Esau. On a lonely night Jacob wrestled with an angel at the River Jabbok. His name was changed to Israel.

Following the peaceful reunion of Jacob and Esau, Jacob moved on to Hebron. The rest of the story of Jacob's life is intertwined with that of his son Joseph. Judah was the patriarch whom God chose to trace the lineal descent of Messiah to fulfill the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Death of Jacob

(Gen. 49:33)

And when Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

The statement is simply made that after Jacob had finished charging his sons, he gathered his feet into the bed and yielded up the spirit. The assumption must be that Jacob was sitting upright while he blessed each of his sons. Afterwards he lay down to breathe his last breath, "and was gathered to his fathers." The point should be made again that Jacob did not go only to the grave. He was gathered to his fathers in the sense that he went to live with them after death. Down the ages, the names of three great patriarchs are known because the God of the universe who made man is designated as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The belief in the immortality of the soul is one of the most universal beliefs of mankind.

2. The hope of eternal life motivates man to the highest principles of character and the noblest of deeds.

3. The only ground on which a person may stand at his approaching death is his faith in God and his power to raise him from the dead at the final judgment.

4. The measure of a man's life on

earth is not how long he has lived, but how well he has lived.

5. Abraham was a good man, but not a perfect man. He too sometimes suffered failures of judgment.

6. Abraham was a man of reason, but his faith in God towered over the limitations of human logic.

7. A person may be reluctant to leave this world, but a good Christian man is not afraid or ashamed to leave this life.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for the lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How is it that death is the time when the qualities of a man's life may be summed up?

What should be the Christian's attitude toward death?

What does Daniel say about the resurrection of the dead?

Golden Text

Why did Domitian Caesar persecute the Christians?

How did John encourage the Christian martyrs?

The Days of Abraham's Life

What is the meaning of the word "Abraham"?

What is the meaning of the word "Sarah"?

Who was Melchizedek?

How many times is Abraham's name mentioned in the New Testament?

How are Christians counted as the "seed of Abraham"?

The Passing of Abraham

What is meant that Abraham was "gathered to his people"?

Who buried Abraham?

Were Abraham's sons by Keturah present when Abraham was buried?

The Days of Isaac

What facts do we know about the childhood of Isaac?

Did Isaac live a carefree life?

How does Paul relate Isaac to Christ?

The Death of Isaac

Where was Isaac buried?

Who buried Isaac?

A Last Request

Where did Jacob wish to be buried?

Which of his sons was involved to the greatest extent in Jacob's life?

Death of Jacob

What did Jacob do prior to his death?

How are the names of the patriarchs associated with God?

Lesson IX—September 1, 1974

FAITH S HALL OF FAME

Lesson Text

Heb. 11:3-10; 17-22

3 By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts; and through it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God:

6 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.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a *land* not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

17 By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*;

18 *Even he* to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God *is* able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning upon* the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when his end

was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and

gave commandment concerning his bones.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."* (Heb. 11:6.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Gen. 16:1-18.

Daily Bible Readings

August 26. M.....	Victory Through Faith (Heb. 11:32-40)
August 27. T.....	Faith of Abel and Enoch (Heb. 11:4-6)
August 28. W.....	Faith of Noah and Abraham (Heb. 11:7-19)
August 29. T.....	Faith of Moses (Heb. 11:24-29)
August 30. F.....	Faith Which Looks Unto Jesus (Heb. 12:1-4)
August 31. S.....	Prayer of Faith (James 5:14-20)
September 1. S.....	Faith Overcomes the World (1 John 5:1-5)

TIME.—A.D. 64.

PLACE.—Place is not known.

PERSONS.—Unidentified Jewish Christians.

Introduction

This and the following two lessons are based upon scriptures in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Certain facts are of primary importance to enable the student to understand, not only these lessons, but the entire Epistle to the Hebrews. The identity of the author of the Hebrew letter is unknown. It begins without a greeting containing the author's name. The assumption that the apostle Paul wrote the letter dates back to the second century A. D. when the church in Alexandria, Egypt, accepted the Pauline authorship. Eusebius, fourth century church historian, said that the letter was accepted by Clement in the third century as the work of Paul. Clement believed Paul wrote the letter in Hebrew for the Jews and that Luke translated the letter into Greek.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written in the apostolic age and addressed to Jewish Christians. Quotations from Hebrews appear in the earliest Christian writings. The letter is like a sermon of exhortations. The Hebrew Christians were persuaded not to desert the Christian faith and were warned of the awesome consequences if they did. The content of the Hebrew letter argues that the gospel has superseded the Mosaic law.

The purpose of the epistle is to dissuade the Hebrew Christian

against an apostasy back into Judaism. The author moves back and forth in the Hebrew letter from the Mosaic law to the gospel and from Moses to Christ, that God in the last days has revealed himself through Christ whereas once he spoke to the fathers by the prophets. (Heb. 1:1, 2.) The comparisons between the shadow and the reality are built one on top of the other to show that Christ is superior to Moses, and the blood of Christ only is able to save from sins. The infinite superiority of the gospel as the new covenant is presented with overwhelming evidence from the Scriptures. The present lesson based upon Hebrews 11 is an earnest exhortation supported with powerful arguments that the faith of the Christian shall be of such a character that he is assured that God will keep his promises and fulfill them as surely as he did to Abraham and the others. The persuasion of the Hebrew letter is that salvation from sins now may only be attained through Christ. (Heb. 10:10.)

The roll call of the great men of faith shared two controlling convictions. In the first place, they believed God without qualification, and they implicitly trusted in God to keep his promises. The Old Testament Scriptures show that God kept his promises to his people in past ages and would do no less now.

The Golden Text

And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him. (Heb. 11:6.)

A great deal more must be believed about God than just his mere existence: "the demons also believe, and shudder." (James 2:19.) Man must believe that God will respond to man's devotions to God and reward him accordingly. However, man may not approach God minus the saving quality of faith. The golden text sets forth the proposition that to believe God is to be absolutely certain of what one has not seen, and that God will, nevertheless, reward the person who seeks diligently after him.

The Text Explained

The Character of Faith (Heb. 11:3)

By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has been rightfully called the roll call of the great men and women in the Bible who possessed unparalleled faith in God. At the time God appeared unto Abraham in Ur of Chaldea, he had nothing to go upon but the promise of God. When God told Noah that he should expect a worldwide flood, he believed without any signs whatsoever. Each of the great Bible characters acted as if he were fully realizing the fulfillment of the promise. The writer of the Hebrew letter does not so much define faith as he describes it in the statement: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." They were so confident that God would keep his word that their faith took on the full embodiment of something already realized in time. The great men and women of faith simply believed that everything was cradled in the everlasting arms of God. They were convinced that they were constantly living in the presence of God.

Noah was so convinced of the warning of the flood that it was as if the ark were already afloat. Abraham was as convinced of possessing the Promised Land as if he possessed the title to all the land of Canaan in his lifetime.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews lauds their ancestors who never faltered in unbelief and who never questioned that God was

The faith which the Hebrew writer has in mind is the fact of God's existence as well as the supernatural existence of the realm of eternal spiritual existence. The Bible describes the individual who lacks this kind of faith: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 53:1.)

The promise of God's fulfillment is, however, contingent upon faith. God is pleased with the faithful, and will just as surely reward them as he did Enoch and all the other Old Testament worthies.

moving through their lives to accomplish his great purposes. The heroes of faith looked to the future as if it were realized in the present.

This thought is amplified in verse three: "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God." It is not out of certain knowledge that we know that God framed the universe; but out of our certain faith, we do not question the certainty of the realities we see, and the fact that God made them. The most stringent demands placed upon faith is satisfied in the acceptance of the fact: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1.) The truly religious person has no cause for anxiety over advancing scientific knowledge. For him, in one way or another, every scientific advance of the knowledge of nature provides him with an increasing awareness of the infinite wisdom and power of God. The person who believes in God can say with the deepest assurance and conviction, "Jehovah of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:7.) Faith is the embodiment of the realities we do not see, and the certainty of their existence.

Abel and Enoch (Heb. 11:4-6)

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous. God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he

hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God; 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.

The writer of the Hebrew letter singles out Abel to begin his cataloging of the Bible heroes of faith. The life of Abel is inseparable from that of his brother Cain. The Genesis account deals mainly with the problem of brotherhood. Cain began by choosing the wrong and envying and hating his brother because he chose the right. And his anger took the form of the most awful crime known to man—the taking of a brother's life. Cain's great sin was also against God. The blood is the life of the flesh, and a man who robs a man of his life takes only what God can give. Cain's punishment was commensurate with his terrible act. Cain broke the law that provided him with God's sustaining presence and comfort and disrupted the common ties of brotherhood.

As a consequence of his sin, Cain became a fugitive and an outcast bearing the stigma of one who lost all human compassion and love for his brother, and Abel became the first martyr.

We are not given the slightest inkling in Genesis how the brothers discerned that God had respect for Abel's offering and not the sacrifice of Cain. However, we are not left in the dark about the awareness of Cain of his sin against God. The Hebrew letter supplies the information: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect to his gifts."

God communicated to the patriarchs who, in turn, served as the patriarchal priests of their own households as in the case of Abraham. (Gen. 18:19.) Paul states how faith is formed in the heart: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17.) We may infer that both brothers heard. One acted in faith; the other did not. The act of Abel was an honest expression of his faith and confidence in God. He had the

kind of faith which comes to God and believes that he is, "and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6.) True faith may only survive in a world of real things and of real human values. Faith is putting things into their proper perspectives. We can have little patience with the modern day "miracle workers" and "tongue talkers" because they live in a world of make believe. They claim to have experiences with God which are uncommon and denied to all but a special select class. The faith of such people is a bogus faith without scriptural verification.

The kind of faith possessed by Abel is set forth in Hebrews: "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." The direct cause of Abel's death, as we are told in the text, was his righteousness. God made man in such a way that he can choose either the good or the bad. Abel listened to the voice of God and chose the right. Cain succumbed to the base passions, which he nurtured in his heart, leading to his dark deed. Only if we do that which is right, can we expect divine approval. If we do not, a fate as bad as Cain's may be ours. God said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire." (Gen. 4:7.)

We turn next to Enoch. We know two interesting facts about Enoch. He was the father of the world's oldest man, Methuselah, as far as we know. When Enoch was sixty-five, he begat Methuselah who lived nine hundred and sixty and nine years. We may pause here to take note of the fact that the measure of a man's life is not its length, but the quality of his life. All that is said about Methuselah is that he was born, lived, begat children and died. On the other hand, Jesus lived only thirty-three years, a short life by any human standard; and he stands an incomparable mountain looking back down the vistas of time to the land of endless day.

The second statement about Enoch singles him out as a great hero of faith: "And Enoch walked

with God; and he was not; for God took him." (Gen. 5:24.) We understand why God took him, for "before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God." The character of this man of faith qualified him for an honor that only one other person, Elijah, experienced. (2 Kings 2:11, 12.)

The declaration that Enoch walked with God is a figure of speech. Enoch is described as being not just a man who was perfect in his own generation as were Noah and Job, but as perfect in righteousness. Not every act of Noah may be recounted without some shame, but there is not one blot recorded against Enoch's name. That Enoch walked with God implies that he walked in obedience to God's commands. The harmony of two persons who walk together is the ideal: "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3.) The thought is conveyed in another scripture: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Mic. 6:8.)

The walk that Enoch made with God led him through a long life. Enoch begat sons and daughters and lived a normal life of unimpeachable integrity. Enoch's walk with God grew out of his faith that never doubted and never questioned.

The statement that God "took him" meant he never suffered death. God carried him where all the righteous who have died now are. Paul declared the "wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23.) Enoch never suffered this humiliation that Satan must enjoy as he witnesses the dying agonies of the young and the old, and especially those who are eternally trapped in their sins. Like Abraham, the long walk of more than three hundred years was that of a "pilgrim and stranger" in this world just passing through. Enoch speaks to us of the hope of which his translation is but a shadow of the reality of the bodily resurrection of all mankind who have died. A walk with God is no less than a walk in the light and the truth.

Noah: A Righteous Man

(Heb. 11:7)

By faith Noah being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Noah stands out as a great witness for God in a time when he stood almost alone in the midst of a wicked generation. The Scriptures describe him: "Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations: Noah walked with God." (Gen. 6:9.) Noah feared the Lord. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." (Psalm 111:10.) God placed man on earth for a definite purpose. Man is richly endowed with marvelous faculties of mind and body. If man lives a good life and walks daily with God, he is blessed with the joy of living and personal worth.

Noah was a righteous man in his generations who walked with God and lived a righteous life. Noah mightily strove by word and example to lead his generation to repent of their sins. They did not, but God saved Noah and his family to become the parents of a better and more righteous race of people. God made a covenant with Noah and sealed it with the promise of the rainbow that not again would God destroy the race of man by a flood. (Gen. 9:8ff.)

Peter describes Noah as a preacher of righteousness. (2 Pet. 2:5.) He warned the people of his age of the disaster facing them, but they did not heed. Noah's faith was vindicated, and they were destroyed when it was too late to heed his warning. The writer of Hebrews would have the Christians know that God would keep his promise of salvation as surely as he honored his word to Noah.

The contemporaries of Noah must have pointed no end of sarcasm and ridicule as he went patiently and confidently on with his work building a huge floating vessel. The reward of Noah's faith was the saving of himself and his family. The warnings are unequivocal in the Hebrew letter to the Christian should they fall away from the

faith which is in Christ. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10:26.)

The example of Noah's faith and his work is set forth in the New Testament in several places. As a preacher of righteousness, he saved his family. Peter says, "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." (1 Pet. 3:20.) This is a figure of Christian baptism. Noah and his family were saved when they passed through the flood. A Christian is one who has passed through the baptismal waters to salvation. (Mark 16:15-16.)

Furthermore, the great faith of Noah is used as a warning of the impending judgment when all mankind will be summoned into God's presence. "For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." (Matt. 24:38.) The faith of Noah is summed up in these words: "Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he." (Gen. 6:22.)

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Heb. 11:8-10)

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We have gone into the details of the lives of the three great patriarchs and that information will not be recounted. The call to Abraham to leave Ur is recorded in the twelfth chapter of Genesis. Abraham with great courage and undaunted faith launched out into the unknown regions lying west of Mesopotamia. Abraham was never a passive man. He believed and he acted decisively. Abraham was no less positive in such

decisions as giving Lot the choice of the best land.

After Abraham settled in Canaan, he was compelled to live as a stranger and sojourner among the Canaanites. The only land he owned in Canaan was the burial cave of Machpelah, and he paid for that. Abraham never wavered in his belief that he would become the father of a multitude of people who would own the land. "He believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6.)

Abraham lived in the land, but his only secure possession was the promise God had made to him. For this reason Canaan was called the promised land. "By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own." Abraham enjoyed the respect of his neighbors who referred to him as, "a prince of God among us." (Gen. 23:6.)

Paul sets Abraham forth as the classic example of an unimpeachable faith to encourage Christians in such an unwavering endurance of fidelity to God: "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, which believe on him that raised Jesus from the dead." (Rom. 4:23.)

Isaac and Jacob grew up in the tents of Abraham around Hebron. They were heirs with Abraham of the same promise. They too were looking for a city "whose builder and maker is God." Surely this means that the patriarchs trusted in God in this world and hoped with an unflagging faith to live with God throughout eternity beyond the bourne of space and time. Like Abraham, his son and grandson lived in tents and moved their temporary encampments from season to season. Time moved on like an ever rolling river. They reached the promised land of Canaan where they never realized complete rest. (Heb. 3.) They were looking forward to a heavenly city built by God, whose foundations were not tent ropes and insecure stakes.

Abraham's Greatest Test (Heb. 11:17-22)

By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

The supreme test of Abraham came with the command to sacrifice Isaac, the heir of promise. God seemed to be contradicting himself in this demand because God had promised that through his seed the families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham proved himself willing to go against his love for Isaac and to commit this act in obedience to God.

Abraham believed God would fulfill his word even if it was necessary to raise Isaac from the dead. Had not Isaac's birth been a miracle born to Sarah in her very old age? Whenever we trust God's promise through his word, only good can come from it. The Hebrew letter means for us to believe no less that God who allowed Christ to

die on the cross brought him back to life.

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph shared a common conviction with Abraham. When each was living out his last days and about to die, he expressed his complete confidence by blessing his sons and transmitting the promise God had made in turn to each of them. Each in turn was an instrument of salvation. Joseph was a saviour of his family, and he preserved the seed of Judah from whom the Messiah would someday come. Joseph knowing his end was near requested his bones to be buried in Canaan. He too was looking for something far better than the glory and honor of Egypt heaped upon him.

It is a sobering thought to look back over the centuries to Abraham, and attempt to comprehend the fulfillments of God's promises to the patriarchs which the hard facts of history prove that God did keep. The Jewish people have the longest and deepest historical past of any people in the world. They have not questioned that God has moved through the descendants of Abraham even to this day. Christians believe that God in a unique way kept that promise through Christ, and can now see even more clearly the city whose builder and maker is God.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews carries a critical message to every Christian. Apostasy is possible; a Christian can fall from grace. A falling away from the faith is always a dangerous possibility.

2. The roll call of the great men of faith was marked by faith and the unalterable conviction that God would keep his promise.

3. The Hebrews believed in God, and they took it to be a great vir-

tue. James reminds us that faith alone is insufficient.

4. The faith of the patriarchs was so great that they believed in the promises of God as if they were already fulfilled.

5. Enoch was a man who walked in obedience to God with not a blot against his name.

6. Noah was a righteous man in his generations, when every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Who is the author of Hebrews?
How is it that the authorship is attributed to Paul?
What is the purpose of the Hebrew letter?
How does the Mosaic law serve as a shadow of the reality of the gospel?

Golden Text

Why did the Hebrews take such pride in believing in God?
How does the author describe a fool?

The Character of Faith

State the definition of faith set forth in the Hebrew letter.
Is it through faith or knowledge that we understand the works of God?
Does increasing scientific knowledge threaten the truth of the Scriptures?

Abel and Enoch

Why did God accept Abel's sacrifice?
How did Abel come by his faith?
What is the importance of the length of life?

What does it mean to walk with God?
How do you understand the expression about Enoch that God took him?

Noah: A Righteous Man

Describe Noah as a righteous man.
Did Noah lose patience or faith in trying to save the people of his generation?
How is the salvation of Noah through the flood related to Christian baptism?

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Describe the character of Abraham's faith.
Did the faith of Abraham waver in spite of the fact that some of God's promises were not kept in his life?
What was Abraham's ultimate goal?

Abraham's Greatest Test

Did Abraham believe God was contradicting himself with the command to sacrifice Isaac?
How did Abraham accept the possibility of Isaac's death?
Compare the faith of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph with the faith of Abraham.

Lesson X—September 8, 1974

THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH

Lesson Text

Heb. 11:32-40

32 And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 Quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens.

35 Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of mock-

ings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth.

39 And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise,

40 God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 1:1-14.

Daily Bible Readings

September 2. M..... Assurance of Faith (1 John 3:20-24)
September 3. T..... Faith of the Gospel (Gal. 3:23-29)
September 4. W..... Faithful Abraham (Gal. 3:7-12)
September 5. T..... Just Live By Faith (Gal. 3:11-22)
September 6. F..... Faith, Apart From Works, Is Dead (James 2:17-26)
September 7. S..... Faith, a Work of God (John 6:29-35)
September 8. S..... Kept By Faith (1 Pet. 1:59)

TIME.—A.D. 64.

PLACE.—The author and place of writing unknown.

PERSONS.—Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the prophets, and other men and women of great faith.

Introduction

The present lesson is based upon the great heroes of the people of Israel. The writer of the Hebrew letter brings together some of God's courageous champions of faith for them

to bear witness of their lives of unquestioned faithfulness to God.

The men and women who are commemorated for lives of faith, in Hebrews 11, lived out their lives

in circumstances different to each other. Abel suffered death because he obeyed God; but in spite of his death, Abel has continued to speak to every generation since. The good that a man performs does not perish, but continues to grow in time. Enoch is pictured as a man who walked with God for a whole life time. Enoch never experienced death.

Noah's life story is that of a man who believed in God in spite of the seemingly apparent absurdity of the meaning of the task God had appointed to him. Noah built a great floating ark. Noah was like Paul who became a fool for God's sake. (1 Cor. 12:11.) Noah trusted in God while his wicked contemporaries ridiculed him.

Abraham was challenged by God to launch out into the unknown. Abraham's faith was the great force in his life as he moved into a strange land with the assurance of God supporting him. Abraham's immediate descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were worthy successors of their illustrious forebearer.

The Golden Text

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (Gen. 5:24.)

Enoch's walk with God has proved to be fascinating to every generation. Enoch was a man who walked with God in the midst of a wicked people. Little is said about him; but like a beautiful day, the sunset of which is matched by the morning sun, the life of Enoch was a long walk with God which ended in heaven.

The Text Explained

The Roll Call of the Faithful (Heb. 11:32-34)

And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens.

The writer of Hebrews enumerates others in the long list of Old Testament heroes who shared an undaunted faith in God and his

The writer of the Hebrew letter moves from the great patriarchs to praise other great men and women who were equally laudable in their own lives of obedience. Their trials of faith were monumental tests of their character. Gideon faced a large army and won a great victory for the Lord.

People are prone in every age to regard their time as a time of great evil, and their suffering for righteousness' sake as unequalled by any other age. It is an error to make such a supposition. The horrors, injustices, and the inhumanities of man to man in this century are hardly equalled in the annals of mankind in human suffering and mass slaughter.

This present lesson surveys the heroes of faith who paid for their allegiance to God in indescribable sufferings, humiliations, torture, and death. A Christian cannot know when he may be faced with one of life's crucial tests from which there seems to be no way out.

The Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament written about 250 B.C. says that Enoch "pleased God" rather than the simple statement that he "walked with God." In either translation, the implications are precisely the same. Enoch was a righteous man full of faith. A person may not walk with God who lacks faith. But a walk with God in faith terminates triumphantly on the day when God calls him home.

promises. Rahab harbored the two spies sent to Jericho and was saved with her household because she believed the God of Israel would give the land to them. Rahab became the mother of Boaz who was in the direct descent from Judah to Jesus. (Josh. 21:1-21; 6:25.)

The roll call of the men of faith singles out Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel whom we shall address in this order.

Gideon. This man stood out in a crucial period when the Midianites swarmed like locusts for multitude over the land of Israel. These descendants of Midian and Ishmael were fierce desert fighters. They

had terrorized the people of Israel for seven years. They robbed the land of its fruit and the hills and valleys of their camels, cattle, goats, Sheep, and asses without number. The people of Israel were brought very low, and they cried out for deliverance. God promised them deliverance. (Judges 6:1-10.) Gideon was chosen for this formidable task to save Israel from her enemies in circumstances requiring great faith in God's promises. Gideon was required to perform extraordinary acts of courage and personal danger. Gideon with three hundred brave Israelites with torches concealed in earthen vessels and trumpets, to blow on signal, threw the whole Midianite army into such a state of panic that they fled in disarray into the desert. (Judges 7:19ff.)

Barak. The names of Barak, Samson, and Jephthah are included with Gideon. They were men who led the Israelites in troubled times before Israel chose to have a king to rule over them. Barak is remembered as the man who refused to go into battle against Jabin, king of Canaan, unless he was accompanied by a woman judge, Deborah, who judged Israel in those days. She ordered Barak into battle against Sisera, the general of the Canaanite army. It should not be assumed that Barak lacked courage in his refusal to go into battle without Deborah. After all, she was God's spokesman, and she had taken the initiative to command Barak to attack the Canaanites.

Barak won a great victory that day, but Sisera died in the tent of a woman, Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite, who offered Sisera protection. She smote this enemy of Israel while he lay in a deep sleep in her tent. (Judges 4:1-10.) Jael gained the honor of saving Israel from her enemy, but the place of Barak was nonetheless great because he too acted with great faith against what seemed to be impossible odds.

Samson. Samson was indeed one of the strongest heroes of the Hebrews. At first, Samson stands out as a man with an almost superhuman physical strength. Samson became a thorn in the sides of the Philistines in the land. He discomfited them by cunning and with

physical force. Delilah led Samson to his shame and imprisonment by the hands of his enemies.

The character of Samson's faith became as great a power as his great human strength when he was called from the prison to amuse the Philistines who had gathered in great numbers in a building to offer sacrifices to their god, Dagon, and to rejoice over the fallen Samson. He called upon God on that occasion to restore his strength so that he might avenge himself upon the Philistines for the loss of his eyes. Samson died among the enemies of Israel. For twenty years, Samson had been Israel's champion. (Judges 16:28-31.)

Jephthah. This judge of Israel was an unusual kind of man who became one of Israel's leaders. He was driven from his father's home by his half brothers because Jephthah was the son of a harlot. Jephthah fled his father's home and dwelt in the land of Tob. "And there were gathered vain fellows to Jephthah, and they went out with him." (Judges 11:3.) Nevertheless, he is described as a "mighty man of valor." (Judges 11:1.)

Israel was being terrorized by the Ammonites. Jephthah was petitioned to lead the Israelites against the Ammonites because of his skill and great valor. He was promised that he would become their chief if he would do so. It is an unusual fact that we should remember the foolish vow of Jephthah which brought a curse upon his virgin daughter more than his great bravery in facing the Ammonites. (Judges 11:34-40.)

Jephthah is remembered for his faith, in the Hebrew letter. The message he sent to the king of Ammon denying his allegations and recounting the history of the time when Israel came out of the wilderness to settle in Canaan, brought out the great confidence of Jephthah in God and the cause of justice for the people of Israel. (Judges 11:12ff.)

David. David is the only king of Israel whose name is mentioned. David realized the claim to all of Canaan as the promised land. David extended his kingdom before the River of Egypt which led to the approaches of Egypt, and beyond Syria to the Euphrates River. The prom-

ise of the land God made to Abraham for an inheritance for the people of Israel became a reality. David was a leader of great genius. David was a man whose life was darkly stained with sin. The enormity of his sin was matched by his repentance and the pardon he sought from God. A man of lesser stature would have been crushed by the sins of his children and the rebellion led by Absalom. David refused to acknowledge there is a point of no return in man's coming back to God. He was indeed a man after God's own heart.

Samuel. From time to time, mankind is blessed with the goodness of one of their own. We raise no question as to the fitness of Samuel to be ranked among the great men of Israel. He was Israel's last judge who ruled the people with honor and justice for forty years. And he was one of the great prophets of Israel. "And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah." (1 Sam. 3:20.)

Samuel suffered tragic sorrows in his old age. His sons were corrupt in their practices as judges of the people. The people of Israel demanded a king to be like the other nations about them. The people were in effect rejecting, not Samuel, but God when they asked for a king. We see Samuel in his last days as a pathetic old man, but standing magnificently in honor and dignity before the people. He called upon the people to witness against him before whom he had walked all of his life. They replied that Samuel had not defrauded them, nor oppressed them, nor had taken ought from any man. (1 Sam. 12:4.) Samuel had served the people for forty years as their priest and judge. He ruled in a time of peace. Israel had never known finer years, nor would they in the future. The strong faith of Samuel showed to the people of Israel that God was in their presence. Samuel warned the people of the consequences of their fateful choice; and they refused and said: "Nay; but we shall have a king over us." (1 Sam. 8:19.)

The prophets. The grave dangers which threatened the prophets are enumerated. Daniel faced the lions in their den unharmed. (Dan. 6.) The three Hebrew children escaped

the fiery furnace unscathed. (Dan.

3.) Jezebel threatened the life of Elijah who had destroyed the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 19: 1ff.) And from weakness, some were made strong. Gideon describes himself as the least of his father's house, but God chose him to drive the Midianites from the land with only three hundred men.

Other Ordeals of Faith (Heb. 11:35, 36)

Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.

"Women received their dead." Elijah restored to life the son of the widow of Zarephath. (1 Kings 17:23.) Elisha brought back to life the son of the great woman of Shunem. (2 Kings 4:32ff.)

The persecutions of the faithful among the people was prolonged and pitiless at the hands of their many enemies. They chose death rather than dishonoring God.

The reason given that horrors of this kind were suffered was "that they might obtain a better resurrection." The Old Testament does not go into detail about the resurrection of the dead and life after death, although the Old Testament Scriptures are not silent on this point. Daniel makes a clear statement of the bodily resurrection of the dead and life beyond the grave: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they shall turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12:2, 3.)

"Others had trials of mocking and scourging." The records of such abound both in the Scriptures and Jewish writings. Jeremiah was smitten because he declared the judgments of God. He was placed in stocks in the gates of the city to be an object of ridicule. (Jer. 20:1, 2.) On a later occasion he was beaten and thrown into prison. — He was thrown into a dungeon where he sank into the filth and mire of the

hole. Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, rescued Jeremiah from his fate. (Jer. 38:6ff.)

Other suffered scourgings of one kind or another. Jesus suffered a merciless flogging at the hands of a Roman soldier before his crucifixion. Chains and ropes have been among the common manacles of human degradation.

Other Acts of Torture

(Heb. 11:37, 38)

They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, i?i goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth.

Stoning is another of man's ageless methods of torture and execution. The fate of Jeremiah, according to tradition is that he was stoned to death by the Jews because he condemned them for their idolatrous practices. Jesus condemned Jerusalem because it too had the reputation of stoning the prophets. (Matt. 23:37.) Zechariah was stoned to death through the instigation of King Joash in the temple precinct. (2 Chron. 24:21.)

"They were sawn asunder." Another tradition recorded in a second century A. D. Jewish work, the "Ascension of Isaiah," relates that Isaiah was sawn asunder with a wooden saw during the wicked King Manasseh's reign. The story goes that Isaiah in order to avoid the wicked actions of Manasseh in Jerusalem fled the city and went into the hills beyond Bethlehem. He was captured and killed in the fashion described.

We are to understand by the statement "they were tempted" that every form of lure, enticement, or

threat of torture was used to break the faithful Israelites under pressure.

"They were slain with the sword." This was an often repeated story. Uriah, the prophet, was brought into the presence of Jehoiakim who slew him with a sword and cast him into a grave with the common people. (Jer. 26:23.) In life or in death, the great prophets of God had the courage to speak the judgments of God.

Others were so destitute they went about dressed in sheepskins and goatskins. They lived in poverty and were despised by the people who abused them. They made their homes in caves and holes away from the centers of population. The details of such persecution and abuse may be added and compounded almost without end. We may remind ourselves that the early Christians were no less abused. Stephen was stoned, and James, the brother of John, was put to death by the sword of Herod Agrippa I. The persecutions of the Christians and countless martyrdoms were mostly in the future at the time of the writings of the Hebrew letter.

Heirs of Promise

(Heb. 11:39, 40)

A?id these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

These faithful men and women described in the Hebrew letter were too good for this world. The point is brought out in these Scriptures that the righteous people are commemorated for their faith. The Jewish Christians to whom the Hebrew letter was addressed were encouraged to do no less and were warned of the severe consequences if they did so.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The good that a man does in time does not perish, but continues to grow and only eternity can sum the fruits of a good life.

2. The trials of faith are always tests of the greatness of character.

3. A person cannot walk with God who lacks faith, because faith involves unquestioned trust and confidence in another.

4. The quality of faith may become the character building virtue, as it was in the case of Rahab.

5. Our faith in God and courage to do his commands may sometimes be bolstered by leaning upon a person in whom we have great confidence, as in the case of Barak and Deborah.

6. Our finest virtues may some-

times be overshadowed by an even greater weakness, as in the case of Samson.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What quality of character do the heroes of faith seem to have in common?

Discuss the fact that every age has its own forms of evil and human suffering and the need for men of great faith is no less real.

Golden Text

How much information does the Bible give us about Enoch?

What does the life of Enoch mean to a Christian?

The Roll Call of the Faithful

Were all the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews of great fame and reputation?

Describe the growth of Gideon's faith and courage.

What respect did Barak show the woman judge, Deborah?

Why was Jephthah not accepted in his own family?

Why was Jephthah petitioned to drive out the Ammonites?

7. The sins of David dramatize the fact that a great sinner in true repentance may come back to God.

Describe the goodness and greatness of Samuel.

What was the deep sorrow of Samuel's old age?

Enumerate some of the dangers which threatened the prophets.

Other Ordeals of Faith

Who received back their loved ones from the dead?

What did Daniel teach about the bodily resurrection?

How did Jeremiah meet his death according to tradition?

What do all scourgings have in common?

Other Acts of Torture

Which of the prophets was stoned to death in Jerusalem?

What prophet may have been sawn asunder with a wooden saw?

How did Uriah, the prophet, die?

In what respects did some live like animals?

Heirs of Promise

How do the Scriptures commemorate the righteous people for their faith?

What warning was given to the Hebrew Christians not to depart from the faith?

Lesson XI—September 15, 1974

THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Lesson Text

Heb. 12:1-11

1 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,

2 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.

3 For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin:

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,

Nor faint when thou art reproved of him;

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of his holiness.

11 All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, *even the fruit of righteousness.*

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"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.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Heb. 12:12-29.

Daily Bible Readings

September 9. M..... God, Paul's Witness (Rom. 1:1-9)
 September 10. T..... Song of Moses, a Witness (Deut. 31:1-19)
 September 11. W..... Witnesses Under the Law of Moses (Deut. 17:1-6)
 September 12. T..... False Witnesses (Deut. 19:15-21)
 September 13. F..... Witnessing Requires Inspiration (Acts 5:32)
 September 14. S..... Encouragement From Others (Heb. 13:7-17)
 September 15. S..... Prophets, Examples of Suffering (James 5:10-20)

TIME.—A.D. 64.

PLACE.—The author and place unknown.

PERSONS.—A great crowd of witnesses, Jesus, and Christians.

Introduction

A look inside the Epistle to the Hebrews will help with the understanding of the present lesson. A meaning of Jesus to mankind is opened up in the Hebrew letter. It is looking at Jesus through the Mosaic law with the eyes of a Hebrew Christian.

Although the Hebrew letter seems to be, at first reading, matters largely concerning the Jewish temple and the priesthood and temple services, the letter is something far different from this. It is addressed to a group of Jewish Christians who were passing through a crucial period in which their faith was being tested. They were being persuaded to desert Christ and to return to Judaism. The message comes through strongly and clearly that there was deep opposition to the Christian faith and the church on the part of the Jews.

The burden of the Hebrew letter was centered in the fact that eternal salvation is to be found—not in Abraham or Moses—but in Christ. The basic idea implicit in Hebrews is that Jesus Christ alone brings the fullness of God to man. Jesus is contrasted with the prophets who have gone before. God spoke in previous ages through the prophets, but now speaks through his Son. (Heb. 1:1ff.)

The writer declares the superior-

ity of Christ over the angels. He presents Jesus who is our perfect high priest, who is fully God and man, and who can save, only as God can, man who is weak and inclined to sin by his nature. The fact is stressed that the Christian has now entered into a new covenant relationship through Christ which is unlike the old covenant. (Jer. 31:31.)

The Hebrew letter declares that Christ only is the way which leads to God. The law and its services were dim shadows of the reality which is in Christ. The writer is unyielding in stating that a desertion of Christ leaves man without hope and without God and a fearful expectation of the visitation of God's divine wrath. (Heb. 10:26-31.)

After the great eleventh chapter with the roll call of the great saints who had run their race against great odds to the finish line, the Christians to whom the Hebrew letter was addressed were encouraged to do likewise. As we run the race, Christ is our companion, and he is the supreme goal of achievement. A Christian must run the entire course or else he misses the mark. He does not run alone, and a great crowd of witnesses testify that one can run successfully against Satan, for the crown of eternal life.

The Golden Text

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. (Rom. 15:4.)

The apostle in these words de-

clared his confidence in the Scriptures as the instrument through which God will bring about the salvation of man. Patience is the virtue which is produced by the comfort which the Scriptures give to

the faithful. The basis of the patience and comfort of the Christian is the hope, or confidence, that he will be ultimately rewarded of God.

Paul appeals in a similar fashion to the Old Testament Scriptures in another place as he admonishes the Christians to live Christian lives of respectability and faith: "Now these things happened

unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. 10:11.) Paul would have the Christian to know that the disobedient people of Israel were punished and the faithful were rewarded. Paul is calling for an unwavering perseverance on the part of the Christian to remain faithful to God.

The Text Explained

The Christian Race (Heb. 12:1-3)

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. For consider him that hath endured such gain-saying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls.

The writer of the Hebrew letter sums up the meaning that the examples of the great Bible heroes of faith should have for a Christian as he runs his race to win the crown of eternal life. Abraham and the others ran their race against insuperable odds and won. Christ is the author of our faith and example in life.

The course of life a Christian must follow, to attain his goal at the end of the way, is compared to the Hellenic games where many runners competed with others to win the laurel crown. The Olympic champion wore proudly this crown. The Christian is running for his crown that will never fade throughout eternity. Christians do not run the Christian race against each other to outstrip each other. Each may win the prize. Satan will use every trick and stratagem to trip up the Christian.

The Christian life is a course that leads through an entire lifetime with a fixed goal in mind. The children of Israel traveled in the wilderness wanderings with the Promised Land as their goal.

"We are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The

Hebrew Christians were made to see that as they ran the Christian race, they were encompassed about with a great audience of people. During the ancient Olympic games, vast numbers of people assembled to watch the games and to roar their approval of the great athlete of the day. The runners of the ancient Hellenic games were acutely conscious of certain spectators who were watching them. They were more than mere spectators because they were the great champions who had won the games in their day. They testified to the possibility that the race can be won by those who run. They had run and won, so can others.

The Hebrew letter dramatizes the Christian race by picturing that great unseen audience which witnesses the Christian runners. Their lives had been lived nobly and victoriously. The examples set by them witnessed the fact that faith in God and obedience to his commands will bring the highest and noblest achievements to those who trust in God with unflagging faith. The Hebrew writer would encourage and inspire the Christians to have no less courage and faith than the Bible heroes of chapter 11.

When the Hebrew writer enumerates the roll call of the faithful, he has much more than life witness in mind. He was talking about people who knew the experiences being suffered by the Christians, because they had shared similar ones in their own day. He was saying to the Hebrew Christians that only through faith in Christ could they expect to reach heaven. He was afraid they were drifting away and losing heart to persist in the race. The Hebrew Christians are encouraged and warned not to drop out of the race, but to persevere to the end.

"Lay aside every weight and sin." The writer further describes the good life of the Christian in terms of the Hellenic games. The training of an athlete is a great matter. The discipline and rigorousness of training is painful and demanding. The disciplining of the great champion demands the last ounce of devotion and sacrifice to become the best. He does this to win, and he knows there are the other great champions who did not weaken and they did not fail.

The great champions of history know full well the folly of carrying excess weight of clothing or fat. Every encumbrance, no matter how small, may full well determine the outcome. The great athletes win their contest with a split second or the fraction of a step. Any foolish oversight of even a binding thread could spell the difference between success and defeat.

The besetting sin that hinders the Christian may be so small a thing as to divert attention. A tiny mote in the eye will impair vision. The pleasures and self indulgence to which a person grows accustomed may loom as large as a great sin to hinder the progress in the Christian race. There may be bad associations or similar drawbacks that a person must rid himself of. The fact should be kept in mind that the Christian contestant is in the mind of the author. The Christian is not a deliberate sinner; but that he is not may not insure the winning of the race.

The apostle Paul in writing to the Christians at Corinth also uses the metaphor of the Christian race: "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected." (1 Cor. 9:24-27.)

In two other places Paul uses the metaphor of the runners. He assumes that the victor may win the crown solely on the condition that he has run the race lawfully: "And

if also a man contend in the games, he is not crowned, except he have contended lawfully." (2 Tim. 2:5.) Not all who run, however, may finish. The apostle put the question to the Galatians: "Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7.)

"Let us run with patience." The Christian runner must indeed divest himself of all superfluous weight and every encumbrance of whatever sort. But this does not insure the race. He must then run with patient endurance the race that is set before him. There are many activities that a person may engage in one place, but not in another. The Christian must run the particular course set out before him. He cannot change the track or the rules in the middle of the race. God has qualified us and appointed us to the course in life a Christian must follow. A Christian chooses to run the race when he chooses to become a Christian. Once in the race he must persevere to the end. The patience the Christian exercises employs the fullest quota of his skills and the greatest spiritual exertion he can command. He presses without compromise to cross the goal line. Christ knew the race would be arduous and he said, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." (Matt. 10:22.)

"The author and perfecter of our faith." The Christian, as he runs his race of endurance, is admonished to keep his eyes trained on Jesus who "endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." And he is the perfecter of our faith. This is to say that Jesus initiated the faith of the Christian, and he will bring it to full fruition.

Jesus became the perfecter of the Christian faith because he committed himself into the hands of God. He submitted to the ordeals of Calvary. He met the harshest and the most pitiless demands placed upon suffering flesh. He "endured the cross, despising shame." The Mosaic law said: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13.) Jesus was nailed to the cross. It was a shameful death to die. But Jesus was willing to bear the shame to save man. His exam-

pie should encourage the Christian to run the race.

Christians are advised to look to Jesus who withstood the gainsaying of sinners. The Christians, to whom the Hebrew letter was written, were in need of encouragement from the example of Jesus. Harsh and abusive words deeply wound a person, and they may not be passed off lightly. A physical assault is deeply disturbing under any circumstance. The Hebrew Christians were probably under attack from the Jews who were seeking to drive them back into Judaism. Christians were urged not to grow weary or faint in their souls. The great champion will cross the finish line with his face drawn in lines of agony. He may collapse after he has crossed the goal line, because he has given his last measure of energy with an indomitable spirit that would not be conquered. So should the Christian run in the race.

The Discipline of God

(Heb. 12:4-9)

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

"Ye have not resisted unto blood." Christ paid with his blood as did other Bible heroes of the past. The Hebrew Christians were undoubtedly being subjected to intolerable pressure, but they had not as yet resisted to death. The possibility that they would be, was a real possibility. Acts of violence against the Christians had started in Jerusalem and occurred in Damascus and other places. The apostle Paul enumerated his sufferings:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned." (1 Cor. 11:24.) The apostle continued a long list of his trials. Whatever discomfort the Hebrew Christians had suffered was nothing in comparison to Christ and others. They were indeed abused because they are described as having struggled against sin.

"The chastening of the Lord." A good father devotes a great amount of his time and care in rearing his children in the right way. The sons bear the family blood line and reflect in one way or another on the honor of the family. Kindness and indulgence are a part of paternal love as is reproof and admonition. A father does not intelligently love his son who will not correct him. It is said of Christ: "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5:8.)

The Hebrew writer describes the Christians as sons of God whom he chastens. We read in Proverbs: "My son, despise not the chastening of Jehovah; neither be weary of his reproof." (Prov. 3:11.) It is the greatest honor to be counted as a son of God. The joy that grows out of responsible discipline is summed up in another proverb: "Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest; yea, he will give delight unto thy soul." (Prov. 29:17.) No discipline for the present moment seems to be good, but the eventual fruit will be.

One of the earliest lessons learned in life is that every accomplishment, no matter how small or great, grows out of discipline. The measure of and happiness we experience in life has its comparable measure of pain and sacrifice. Too much sun will create a desert; and too much water will create a swamp. God has not intended that life shall be altogether lived in the shadows or in the light. And God has not promised a life that is free from pain. The mountain climber never reaches the loftiest peak without discipline and there is danger every foot of the way. Out of the dark shadows grow the lovely colors and beauty of the day. It is because God loves us that he corrects us to make us fit for heaven after awhile.

God "scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." There is no primrose

path to any worthwhile accomplishment, much less to heaven. The idea in these words implies the laying on of the rod is distasteful both to the father and the child, and both comprehend the necessity for such: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son." (Prov. 13:24.) Another proverb sets forth the principle: "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die." (Prov. 23:13.) We should not be surprised in our permissive age that law and order and respect for human decency is a disgrace of our society. We should not be surprised at this because the learned educators of the century have brainwashed the people that corporal punishment should never be administered to children. This is a false and deadly doctrine which is detrimental to the development of character.

"God dealeth with you as with sons." The Hebrew writer has set forth the example of the heroes of faith and their suffering and steadfast resolve. He urges them to remember their suffering is little compared to the death of Christ upon the cross. Then the writer emphasizes that all sons are disciplined by their fathers. And were they not disciplined, they would not be sons at all. A father who does not discipline his son regards him as no better than an illegitimate child for whom the father has neither love nor responsibility.

"We gave them reverence." Children have fathers to properly discipline them. The discipline of the father is his right and duty; and the son is under obligation to respect his father and to submit to his discipline. The point is made that since we accept discipline from our earthly father, which was designed for a few years and whose knowledge and wisdom is limited, then we should even more readily accept the chastening of the Lord who has our eternal welfare in mind and is guided by infinite wisdom.

A good father develops self control in his son by punishing him when he is bad. He impresses upon his son the importance of respecting

and obeying the law to make him a good citizen. A respectful reverence for one's earthly father naturally leads to a proper reverence for God. A dutiful son accepts obediently his punishment. Our heavenly Father may be relied upon never to impose any suffering or punishment which is not intended for good.

"All chastening seemeth for the present not to be joyous, but grievous." Chastisement is always a painful experience dependent upon the magnitude of the punishment. The value of discipline lies in its spiritual and quality building character. The sincere Christian understands that whatever falls out to him in life, joy or pain, comes from God who never wills needless pain for his beloved children. Jesus admonished his disciples to rejoice when they were persecuted for righteousness' sake for such made them worthy for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:10-12.)

Discipline may not be pleasant, but it may be borne when it is realized that the good and honest life is intended. A Christian is confident that the disciplining of God takes its source in the love of God for his sons aiming always for their good, and consequently the obedient will never rebel against God or resent his chastening.

God has never promised his people a carefree life. The rigors of life are often great. The Christians who accept painful disciplines of God will ultimately enjoy the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The Christian's love of God and obedience to him creates an ineffable peace of soul. Paul sums up this principle: "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. 4:5-7.) The acceptance of God's chastening will result in a form of righteousness always submissive and responsive to the will of God which can only work good for all who love the Lord.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Eternal salvation is now to be obtained—not in Abraham or Moses

—but in Christ who brings the fullness of God's promise of salvation.

2. Christians are entered into a new covenant relationship with God, not in any way related to or dependent upon the patriarchs, Moses, or the prophets.

3. The Old Testament Scriptures are inspired of God relating what God has done to bring about the salvation of man through Christ and to provide living examples of the faithful and the faithless.

4. The Christian's only competitor is Satan who uses every stratagem

to trip up the runner.

5. Every Christian is called upon to be a martyr in the sense that he must bear witness of his faith in Christ no matter what the cost may be.

6. Jesus is the perfecter of the Christian's faith.

7. A father who does not discipline his son regards him as no better than an illegitimate child for whom he has neither love nor responsibility.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What is the importance of the Mosaic law to an understanding of the Hebrew letter?

To whom was Hebrews addressed?

What is the central theme of the Hebrew epistle?

What punishment could be expected for deserting Christ?

Golden Text

What is the patience and comfort of the Scriptures?

How does Paul use the examples of the Old Testament?

The Christian Race

Who would hinder the Christian in his race?

Who make up the great crowd of witnesses?

To what do they bear witness?

Who was the first Christian martyr?

Describe the discipline and preparation of an athlete training for the Hellenic games.

What are some of the hindrances which may hinder the Christian effort?

What kind of a crown is promised the faithful Christians?

Explain how Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith.

Enumerate the kinds of abuse Jesus suffered from sinners.

The Discipline of God

What does it mean to resist unto blood?

How was Paul mistreated by his enemies?

What is the meaning of the expression, "The chastening of the Lord"?

Does discipline mean punishment of some kind?

Why do good fathers discipline their children?

What is the purpose of the Christian's chastening?

Should a Christian expect to live a care-free life?

Lesson XII—September 22, 1974

ABRAHAM, JAMES' EXAMPLE OF GENUINE FAITH

Lesson Text

James 2:14-24

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 Isaac 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.

24 Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."* (James 2:26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — James 2:1-13.

Daily Bible Readings

September 16. M.....	Faith, Apart From Works (James 2:14-16)
September 17. T.....	Demons Have Faith Apart From Works (James 2:18-20)
September 18. W.....	Example of Abraham (James 2:21-24)
September 19. T.....	Example of Rahab (James 2:25, 26)
September 20. F.....	Steps of Faith (Rom. 4:12-16)
September 21. S.....	Abraham, Strong in Faith (Rom. 4:17-25)
September 22. S.....	Faith Acts to Bless (Heb. 11:8-10)

TIME. — A.D. 60.

PLACES. — In far flung places of the Roman Empire.

PERSONS. — Christians of the dispersion, Abraham, and demons.

Introduction

Every part of James' letter abounds with Christian love and compassion. James addresses his message to the very heart of the moral and spiritual implications in living the Christian life.

A reading of the epistle reveals the fact that some Christians, while professing faith in Christ, failed to realize the moral and ethical responsibilities of living the Christian life. James understood living a Christian life was to become involved in the struggle against sin with the highest moral conscience. James taught the principles of love and compassion for the poor.

The message of James will not allow a Christian to settle down to a self-complacent life largely motivated by faith. Instead, the faith of the Christian must issue forth in love with the deepest concern for the feelings and needs of others.

James' letter has a special message for the Christian. As he travels along the road of life, the Christian is called upon to practice his faith in endeavors that will promote the growth of the Christian virtues. James creates a spiritual barometer for measuring the quality of Christian character.

The Golden Text

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:26.)

The implications of James' words in this scripture are obvious. The Christian life does not actually exist when correct doctrine and statements of faith are made to stand for the whole of the Christian life. Words claiming faith are empty and can not be substituted for moral obligations. The faith that leads a Christian into spiritual and moral involvement is proof of its own character. Faith without works is profitless.

James sets forth the analogy between the body and the spirit. When the flesh is bereft of the spirit, the body dies and decays, and so it is that "faith apart from works is dead." Works may no more be separated from faith than the spirit can be separated from the body without destroying it.

A Dead Faith (James 2:14-17)

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? 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.

The Epistle of James presents no small problem to a person who is insistent that a Christian is "justified by faith alone." This means to exclude works of any kind even going to the extreme and saying baptism and the Lord's supper are unessential since each is an act. Nothing could have been further removed from James' purpose than to discredit faith at the expense of good works. A musician can play a

tune on a violin with one string, but the instrument must have a full set of strings to make beautiful music. The fact set forth in James is that a faith without works is worthless because such a faith is fruitless and barren.

James declares that a hollow declaration of faith in God is worthless. James calls for a "doer of the word." "A lack of compassion for the poor and unfortunate is condemned. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." (James 2:10.)

Words without works are worse than worthless. Jesus passed his judgment on such who practice worthless lives: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21.) — Faith and works may no more be separated than the body can be separated from the soul and yet live.

"James attacks the lack of pity and compassion toward the unfortunate. The principle is set forth that to see the pitiful needs of the hungry and ill-clothed without helping them is the evidence of a worthless and empty faith. Clearly it is a mockery of God to claim faith in God and then to despise the poor and the unfortunate.

James describes the destitute condition of a brother or sister. A man who does not provide for his own household is worse than an infidel. The principle may be reasonably applied to the neglect of a Christian brother or sister. (1 Tim. 5:8.) However, charity is as broad as the needs of mankind. The apostle Paul stated the principle: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:10.)

James is here describing both an empty and negative faith. He imagines a brother being sent away by a fellow Christian who has done nothing to relieve his misery. The person is ordered to go his way and to be warmed and filled, notwithstanding the fact he lacks the means to provide for his personal needs. To wish a person well and good fortune is the usual practice of man denoting goodwill. Such

words are pleasant and agreeable to be heard. The Good Samaritan did something else when he found man on a lonely road in a desperate condition. The words—"go in peace, be ye warmed and filled"—formed a common greeting in Palestine of James' day. Then for a person to send a poor man on his way when one has the means to supply his needs is displeasing to God. Such words are indeed cheap and cost nothing, but God holds in contempt such practices.

Martin Luther began the great debate of faith versus works. Paul is quoted to prove the side which holds to justification by faith **only**: "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law!" (Rom. 3:28.) Martin Luther assumed that Paul flatly disagreed with James' comment: "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith." (James 2:24.) Luther was so obsessed by the doctrine of justification by faith only, that he was led to describe James as "a right strawy epistle," and omitted James from his German translation of the New Testament.

There is no contradiction between Paul and James and the Roman letter and the Epistle of James. Paul was showing that faith in Christ and obedience to the gospel would save, and that the works set forth in the Mosaic law would not save a person from his sins. James does not even have the Mosaic law in mind. He is addressing himself to works of faith.

James is clearly opposing those in the church who strongly assert to have a saving faith, but who neglect to obey the Lord, even in the simplest acts of charity. Paul in the Roman letter had in mind the fulfilling of the requirements of the law of Moses to meet the demands of the law, which no one could ever do. To do so one would have to live a sinless life. James is simply showing the absurd folly of divorcing faith from good works, and works of faith necessary in obeying the gospel of Christ.

Such a faith is like a tree withered at its roots, or a body from which all life has gone. Where there is life in a human body, there is warmth and vitality. A tree planted by the rivers of

water will bring forth its fruit in its seasons. A faith which is no longer living can produce nothing.

The Test of Faith

(James 2:18-20)

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?

If James were not actually addressing some Christians who believed in a saving faith apart from good works, he would not have addressed the problem in such a way as he did. James assumed the opposing position to a belief held by some that faith was the only essential to salvation. The implication would be that faith is completely sufficient apart from all works. James takes up the argument at this point with a clear, simple, and logical statement: "Show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith." James is pointing up the obvious truth that the Christian's faith that is grounded in truth will produce good works. He says as much in these words: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27.)

James will not accept the separation between faith and works. James mentions Rahab, the harlot, who concealed the two spies in Jericho and was saved through her faith which led her to do the daring act of bravery. (James 2:25.) A mighty river pours vast volumes of water into the ocean. The earth is continually bathed in light. The great rivers have their sources, and the sun gives its never failing light. The numerous good works of the Christian are generated in the never failing source of his faith in God.

"Thou believest that God is one." James in these words was referring to Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear O Israel: Jehovah our God is one." James commended the Jewish Christians because they did believe in God. But "the demons

also believe and shudder." The evil spirits believe in God's existence in terror, but they do not love and serve God. So is the man who says he believes in God, but does not obey God. His faith is worthless.

"Faith apart from works is barren." James proceeded next to advance his contention that faith apart from works is an empty thing. A fruit tree grows from the earth with strong limbs covered with luxurious leaves; but it lacks fruit. Even so a man's faith without works is a fruitless thing.

James addressed such a person with this form of faith as a "vain man." The vain man is the person who is "empty headed." The wisdom of God which comes through his word has not entered into the mind of such a person. James was driving home the point to the Jewish Christian to get the truth in their heads that a faith without works was a fruitless faith.

Faith Made Perfect

(James 2:21-24)

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith.

James then proceeded to provide a case where faith is exemplified beyond human comprehension. Abraham was ready to offer his son Isaac, believing God could bring him back from the dead, if necessary in order to fulfill his promise. James is not contending that a person is saved by works alone. He shows in the case of Abraham the inseparability of faith and works. James concurred with Paul who declared: "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (Rom. 4:3.) James is saying that Abraham's faith was a working faith which staggered at nothing in unbelief.

It is quite obvious that if Paul and James were contradicting each other, then the very foundation of our Christian faith would be de-

stroyed. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ." (Gal. 2:16.)

"Ye see that by works a man is justified." James at no place devalues faith at the expense of works, or the other way around. As Paul had the works of the Mosaic law in mind, James had the fruits of the Christian's faith in mind. Paul and James were not addressing the same problem. Paul faced the Judaizing teachers in Galatia who were teaching the Christians they should be circumcised after the law of Moses. James sets forth the principle that a living faith in God is an active and fruit bearing faith.

James naturally began with Abraham who is a great Bible example of faith. (Gal. 3:6-9.) Abraham's faith was perfected in one heart-breaking assignment—to sacrifice Isaac upon an altar. James intended doubtlessly to offset any defense of the "faith only" teaching of what Abraham did. For them to claim faith in God with no visible evidence to show their faith was a barren affair.

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac?" As far as an act of personal will is concerned, Abraham went as far as to bind Isaac upon the altar and prepared to administer the death blow when God arrested his hand. James shows that Abraham's faith was not made perfect until after he had offered up Isaac on the altar. This is the kind of faith that justifies a man today.

The relation between faith and works should have never been con-

fused. The Bible does not do so. Theologians and their contradicting creeds are at fault for this. Paul speaks to a person who is not a Christian telling him how to become one. James addresses the Christian reminding and warning him that he must have a working faith such as Abraham had because he is a Christian.

"And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6.) James quoted from Genesis about Abraham and an incident which occurred thirty years before the offering of Isaac. James is far removed from the slightest suggestion that faith makes no contribution to justification. Instead, James is saying that it must be a faith that takes God at his word. Furthermore, there is not the slightest suggestion that James is emphasizing works at the expense of faith in any respect. A person is not justified by faith alone, nor is he justified by works alone.

The title Abraham received as the "friend of God" is not stated in Genesis, but in other places. (See 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8.) Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." (John 15:14.)

"Ye see that a man is justified, and not only by faith." Surely it is obvious that the only faith which can be well pleasing to God is a faith that results in a beautiful Christian life devoted to reverence to God and to good works toward our fellowman. As the sun pours its light in endless profusion from itself, so the Christian's faith flows out continually unto all good works.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Living the Christian life is to become involved in the struggle against sin with the highest moral sense.

2. The measure of faith a Christian professes may be measured by the good he does.

3. The faith that leads a Christian into good works is pleasing to God. Faith without involvement is profitless.

4. To wish a person well and good

fortune notwithstanding a person does nothing is an insult to God.

5. James describes the "vain man" as a foolish person who cannot be brought to realize that his fruitless faith is a pretentious faith.

6. It is obvious that Paul and James do not contradict each other on the importance of faith and works. Were this true, the very foundation of our Christian faith would be destroyed.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What is the special message that James has for Christians?

What is James' spiritual barometer for measuring character?

Golden Text

Is it possible for faith to stand for the whole of a Christian life?

How does a Christian prove his character?

How does James describe faith which is separated from works?

A Dead Faith

What does it mean to be saved by "faith only"?

What does James mean by a "doer of the word"?

How is a worthless and empty faith recognized?

Whom should the Christian help in his good works?

How does James describe an empty and negative faith?

What was Martin Luther's evaluation of the Epistle of James?

Explain that James and Paul do not contradict each other in their statements on faith and works.

The Test of Faith

Does James discount the saving power of faith?

What reaction do the demons suffer?

Whom does James describe as a "vain man"?

Faith Made Perfect

What does James seek to show about faith and works in the actions of Abraham?

What works did Paul have in mind?

What works did James have in mind?

Who is responsible for confusing faith and works?

How does James think of the right kind of faith?

Lesson XIII—September 29, 1974

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Lesson Text

2 Pet. 2:1-9

1 But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of.

3 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.

4 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;

5 And spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly;

7 And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds):

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure. . . (2 Pet. 1:10.)*

DEVOTIONAL READING.—2 Pet. 2:10-22.

Daily Bible Readings

September 23. M..... Corruption of the Wicked (2 Pet. 2:10-19)
 September 24. T..... Last State Worse Than First (2 Pet. 2:20-22)
 September 25. W..... Scoffers Willingly Ignorant (2 Pet. 3:1-10)
 September 26. T..... Importance of Faithfulness (2 Pet. 3:11-18)
 September 27. F..... God Is Not Mocked (Gal. 6:1-8)
 September 28. S..... Christian Consecration (Phil. 1:12-26)
 September 29. S..... Walking Worthily (1 Thess. 1:3-12)

TIME.—A.D. 66.

PLACE.—There is no certain way of knowing.

PERSONS.—Christians, false teachers, Noah, Lot, and the wicked.

Introduction

Our lesson has its setting in Second Peter. The Second Epistle of Peter is one of the shortest letters in the New Testament, but its significance is not to be measured by its brevity. The authorship of the letter is clearly stated in verse one: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Furthermore, the author reminds the reader of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with James and John: "We were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (2 Pet. 1:16, 17.)

The letter is different in that it is one of the letters in the New Testament whose chapter division is made in harmony with the thought content. The letter was written to combat heresy in the church, and the language is strong and pointed in condemning false teachers and their false doctrines, and the apostate Christians who were making havoc of the church.

In the first chapter, Peter emphasizes the nature of the true knowledge which comes from God.

Peter knew that his own death was imminent. He emphasized the sonship of Christ. Peter was probably refuting the gnostic heresy which accepted the divinity of Jesus, but denied his humanity. Peter condemned the false teachers and their heretical doctrines in chapter 2. The false teachers not only denied the humanity of Jesus, they rejected the authority of God with their cunningly devised fables. Peter compares the false teachers to animals bereft of reason. (2 Pet. 2:12.) They are further compared to immoral degenerates who cannot even wait for the darkness to reveal in their shameful practices.

And in the third chapter, the apostle encouraged the Christian concerning the second coming of Christ. Peter asserted the undeniable certainty of the second coming pointing out, among other things, that God does not count time as we do. Peter gave comfort to the Christians against the scoffers who ridiculed the Christians for believing in the Lord's second coming. Peter appropriately closed his letter with a reference to time and eternity: "To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen."

The Golden Text

Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure. ... (2 Pet. 1:10.)

The words of the golden text are prefaced by some of the most lovely words in the New Testament. Peter was admonishing the Christian to supply to their faith spiritual qualities such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and love. Peter described any Christian who lacked such virtues as being blind. (2 Pet. 1:5-9.) Furthermore, such Christians are accused with a loss of memory of having ever been cleansed from their old sins.

Peter contrasts the Christian life with the old manner of living and urges Christians who had been

called of God to make their election sure. The idea of diligence is akin to an imperative concern or great zeal to work in order to make the calling and election of God sure. Salvation for the Christian is indeed a calling and an election. (2 Thess. 2:13-14.) God's calling is his invitation to man, and the election is man's acceptance and God's approval. The making sure of the election is made through obedience to the will of God.

Peter follows with the assurance that "if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." The apostle adds another result which will follow: "entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 1:1.)

The Text Explained

False Teachers
(2 Pet. 2:1)

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teach-

ers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

The harshest words in both the Old

Testament and New Testament are directed against false teachers and false leaders. The reason for this is apparent in the words of James: "Be not many of you teachers, my brethren, knowing we shall receive heavier judgment." (James 2:1.) Much of the accomplishments of man are achieved through the medium of words. The words of teachers leave lasting impressions of good or evil upon both the simple and the wise. Jesus, likewise, delivered a sharp warning in this respect: "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12:37.) James does not discourage such as would be teachers, but warns them that they also are subject to judgment.

Peter approaches the false teachers, past and present. False prophets had risen among the people of Israel, and he warned the Christians they may not hope to escape false teachers who would also arise among them. The apostle proceeds to describe the false teachers who would invade the church by presenting examples of past wicked invasions of God's people and their consequent destruction. Peter clearly warned that both the false teachers, and those who were lured by their false teaching, would meet a similar fate.

The identity of the false teachers that Peter had in mind may not be known. Two classes of false teachers were prominent in the apostolic age. We usually refer to one group as Judaizing teachers. Paul identifies such for us. They were Jewish Christians who sought to corrupt the Christian doctrine with practices from the Mosaic law. They taught that before a person could be saved, he must be circumcised according to the law. (Gal. 5:2ff.) The second group of false teachers, the gnostics, were especially pernicious. They denied the saving power of the cross.

The false prophets of the Old Testament were men who claimed to be speaking for God. The outstanding example of the false prophet in the Mosaic age is Balaam who failed to curse Israel, because God would not allow it. (Num. 22-30.) Jeremiah condemned the false prophets on the eve of Jerusalem's fall to the Chaldeans. "Therefore,

behold, I am against the prophets, saith' Jehovah, that use their tongues, and say, He saith." (Jer. 23:31.)

The Scriptures are replete with statements against the pernicious influence of false prophets who would arise before the impending destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. (Matt. 24:24.) Paul grieved over the fact that "grievous wolves" would invade the Ephesian church. They would appear as a good shepherd, but they would spoil the church as wolves would a flock of sheep. Paul used the harshest expression of all to the perverters of the gospel among the Galatians—"Let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:9.) This is in effect calling down the curse of God upon such.

Peter follows this accusation of the false prophets that "among you also there shall be false teachers." The false teachers would twist Christian doctrine and pervert the word of God to their own selfish designs. The false teachers would bring in privily heretical teaching to mislead the Christians under the guise of teaching them the truth" Peter catalogued their false teaching.

"Destructive heresies." The idea in these words means the opinions of men which are destructive of the true faith. The false teachers would "privily" bring in their false teachings. The false teachers would slyly and deceitfully slip in their false doctrines and mislead those who had accepted the truth.

They would deny "even the Master that bought them." The seriousness of this sin relates to man's slavery to sin and the costliness of Christ's purchase price: "Who gave himself a ransom for all." (1 Tim. 2:6.) In the cross of Christ, God's divine intervention is clearly perceived. God redeems man through Christ that he should live his life honorably to the extent that it would glorify his Saviour. "That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Pet. 4:2.) Peter accuses the false teachers that in denying their Saviour they would bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Consequences of Evil

(2 Pet. 2:2, 3)

And many shall follow their las-

civious doings; by reason of whom the way of the 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.

Peter declared the evil influence of the false teachers infected and corrupted others and brought discredit upon the cause of Christ.

"Many shall follow their lascivious doings." Lasciviousness is a form of immorality of the worst forms of depraved lust. They were indulging in shameful indulgences of the passions of the flesh under the guise that salvation was a spiritual process and had nothing to do with the body. This was one of the teachings of first century gnosticism. Furthermore, the false teachers justified their licentiousness under the guise of freedom. Christ never intended that freedom in Christ meant that his disciples were no longer obligated to live upright lives.

The destructive consequences of the influence of such corrupt teachers was to cause "the way of the truth" to be evil spoken of.

Unbelievers who did not indulge in immorality were misled by such teachers. They were unable to distinguish between the false teachers and godly men, and they regarded such behavior as the ordinary practice of the Christians. The shame of the false teachers unjustly became the shame of the faithful Christians.

The false teachers further compounded their gross immorality into other sinful practices. In the first place, the false teachers were greedy libertines seeking their own gain through their teachings. The apostle Paul was compelled to deny on an occasion that he was such a teacher: "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness." (1 Thess. 1:5.) Covetousness is another word for greed.

The greedy nature of the false teachers led to a further sin. They used feigned words which means they were using false words and arguments. They were glibly spelling out their corrupt doctrine in exchange for money from their deceived victims. They too were making the temple a den of thieves.

Peter declares the judgment of God against teachers who made merchandise out of preaching the gospel as a source of financial gain to themselves. "Whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." The apostle Paul describes their fate: "whose end is perdition." (Phil. 3:18.)

Nominal Christians in the twentieth century have generally lost sight of the diabolical danger of false teachers and what they teach. A great many people have lost their sense for right and wrong and the distinction between good and evil. Peter simply states that the judgment of God against the false teachers had been pronounced long before, and they should not expect to escape. The following words of Peter describe their predicament: "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God." (1 Pet. 4:17.) Destruction is personified. It has not been asleep and is only waiting to bring swift destruction upon the heretics without hope of deliverance.

Judgment and Deliverance

(2 Pet. 2:4-8)

For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds).

The apostle Peter documents his statements with three examples from the Old Testament. He speaks first of the fallen angels, and then of the flood and the deliverance of Noah. Next he speaks of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the saving of Lot. Peter is simply saying the wicked enemies

of God had not escaped the judgment of God, nor would they.

"For if God spared not angels when they sinned." It cannot be ascertained just who these angels were. Angels are created beings. Angels can sin and have. However, God created angels for good and they are guardian spirits: "sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." (Heb. 1:14.)

"Cast them down to hell." The word "hell" is not the Gehenna of the gospels, but a Greek word "Tartarus" used in Greek mythology to describe the eternal abode of the wicked dead. The point Peter makes is clear. Eternal suffering is the lot of the angels in the great outer darkness. Here the angels await the judgment. The picture is like the rich man in torment as he sees Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham across a great gulf which separated them. (Luke 16:23-26.)

There is a close parallel here with the statement of John in Revelation: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:10.)

Peter turned next to the great flood and salvation of Noah. The proposition is that God "spared not the ancient world" because of the sins of a wicked race of people, and neither would he spare the false teachers and their disciples of that time. Peter speaks in another place of Noah preaching while the ark was under construction. Only eight souls were saved which included Noah and his immediate family. (1 Pet. 3:20.)

Peter describes Noah as a "preacher of righteousness" who lived in the midst of a wicked generation who only thought and practiced evil continually. God chose to destroy the people of that age in a great flood. Noah's faith was so great and his righteousness so pronounced that he was moved to save the people through preaching.

Noah is described as a preacher of righteousness in Psalm 119:172, he is described as "just" and as a perfect man in his generation. How Noah preached, we can not know. His towering faith grew

with the building of the ark. No good man can hold his peace when he sees others going to their ruin. A man of God is as truly concerned for the rescuing of others as he is in saving his own household. The point Peter is making is clear. His generation has the choice of either accepting the true teachings of the apostles, or the heresies of the false teachers.

Peter turned to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah when God rained down fire and brimstone upon a people whose wickedness must have been matched by those in the days of Noah. God made the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah an example of his wrath for all future ages.

Lot is described as a "righteous man" who was disturbed by the gross immorality going on about him day by day. Salvation came as surely to Lot in the midst of that wicked generation as it had for Noah in his time. Jude describes further the evil practices of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah: "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." (Jude 7.)

The scriptures state that Lot was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked." Peter draws out the fact that the righteous Lot was daily compelled to see and hear their evil and lawless behaviour.

We may sometimes ponder if the closing years of the twentieth century are not witnessing a growing decadence of moral decline comparable to Lot's period. The filth and indecencies of every kind on every hand seem to grow in compound multiplication. Filthy movies, vulgar language, obscene behavior, a glut of pornography, crime, violence of all kinds, and dishonesty in high places are only a start to describe the decadence of this time in man's history.

People who claim to be Christians sit through TV programs and watch and hear what must be repulsive and disgusting to a refined and sensitive spirit. A generation ago, this would not have been tolerated, when a man's moral sense is so dulled by the daily exposure to sin that his conscience is no longer disturbed, Satan is getting his "ham-

mer lock" fastened on him. Our increasing apathy toward the brazen exposure of evil in the national magazines, and news media is an unconditional surrender to the influence of evil men and their practices.

God Is Able to Deliver

(2 Pet. 2:9)

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment.

Peter emphasizes that God knows how to deliver the righteous person from temptation. The idea here is the time of testing. Noah and Lot were subjected to tests no ordinary man would have borne up under. They lived in the midst of a wicked generation of mockers and unbelievers. Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matt. 6:13.)

Trials come upon the righteous. The point should be noticed that

God does not build a fence around good people to save them from attacks of evil. But God is able to deliver his own who are caught up in the trials of life.

In the cases of Noah and Lot, their examples show how God delivers his own. Noah was compelled to build an ark for the saving of his house. Lot made a foolish decision when he pitched his tents toward Sodom. God delivered him as he sent messengers to lead him out of the city.

God also knows how "to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." Peter emphasizes that God who can deliver is just as certain to punish the evil doer. Peter turns back to the fallen angels who are in the pits of darkness to await the judgment. The text states that the wicked are now suffering as did the rich man who died and lifted up his eyes in torment to see Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom delivered from his sorrows.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The false teacher and his false doctrines, and consequently apostate Christians, have made havoc of the church in every age.

2. God's calling is his invitation to become a Christian, and God's election is conditioned by man's acceptance of the gospel.

3. The words of teachers make lasting impressions for good or evil on both the simple and the wise.

4. Freedom in Christ was never intended to imply that Christians

are not obligated to live morally upright lives.

5. Many Christians in the twentieth century have generally lost sight of the diabolical danger of false teachers and their influence.

6. Our increasing apathy toward the brazen exposure of evil in the news and entertainment media is an unconditional surrender to evil and destructive influences leading to moral disintegration.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

False Teachers

What kind of people are the most severely condemned in the Bible?

How did Jeremiah condemn the false prophets?

What did Paul say about false teachers?

Consequences of Evil

What is the meaning of the word "lasciviousness"?

Why were the false teachers teaching their erroneous doctrine?

Should present day teachers be on guard against false teachers?

Judgment and Deliverance

What is the meaning of the Greek word "Tartarus"?

How did Noah bear witness to God?

What is the message of a righteous preacher?

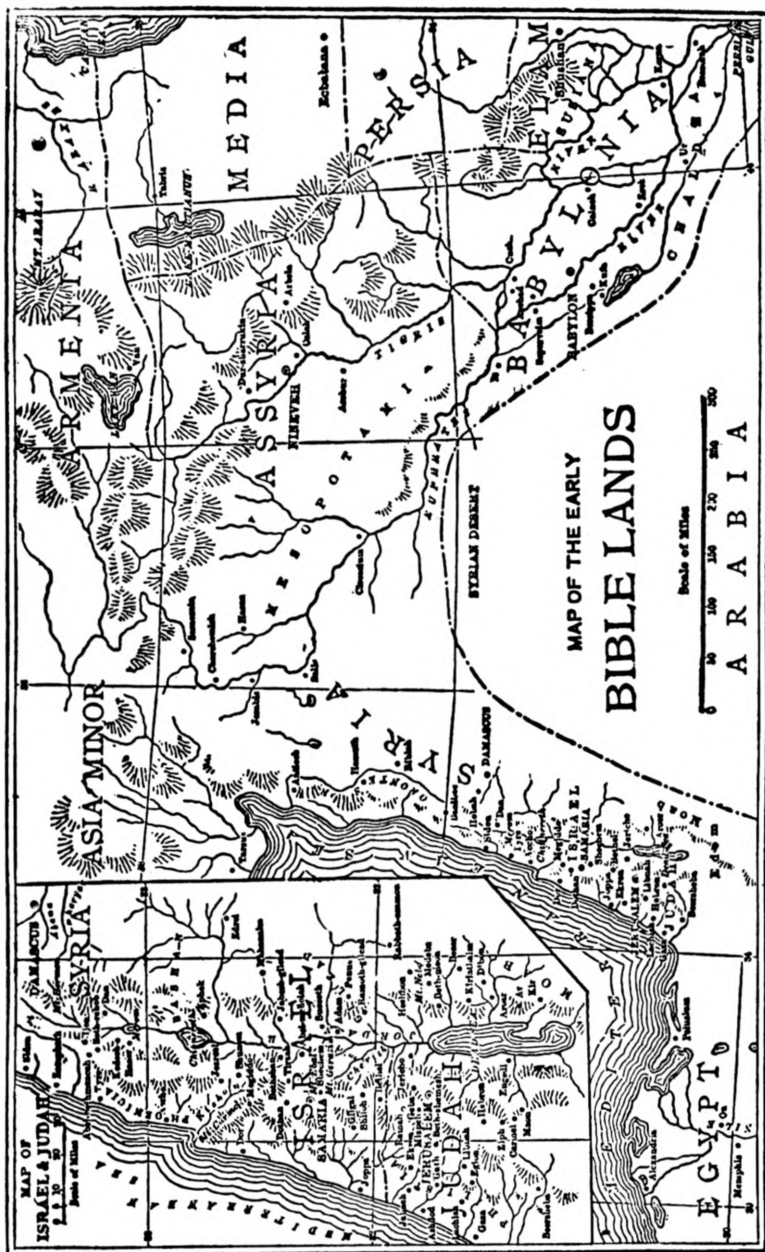
How easy is it to grow accustomed to the evil practices of other people even to the extent of ignoring the fact?

God Is Able to Deliver

What were the trials of Noah and Lot?

May righteous people hope to escape the severe trials of life?

What is the fate of fallen angels?



FOURTH QUARTER

STUDIES IN ACTS OF APOSTLES

(Part I)

AIM.—To examine the details of our Lord's church in Acts, and to catch a glimpse of the zeal, faithfulness and fervor of the early disciples.

Lesson I—October 6, 1974

THE ASCENDING LORD

Lesson Text

Acts 1:1-12

1 The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach,

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

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

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

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

6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not

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

8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

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

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

11 Who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye behold him going into heaven.

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off.

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

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Mark 16:9-20.

Daily Bible Readings

September	30.	M.....	Jesus Predicts His Resurrection (Matt. 16:21-28)
October	1.	T.....	Jesus Predicts His Ascension (John 16:1-14)
October	2.	W.....	David's Picture of the Ascending Christ (Psalm 24:1-10)
October	3.	T.....	Hope for Us (1 Cor. 15:20-28)
October	4.	F.....	The Lord to Return (1 Thess. 4:13-18)
October	5.	S.....	We Are to Watch for Him (2 Pet. 3:8-13)
October	6.	S.....	Blessed Assurance (John 14:1-18)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and Mount Olivet.

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

Introduction

Luke is the author of the third gospel as he is of the book of Acts. Luke begins his address to Theophilus in much the same respect as

he does the gospel account. However, there is one distinct difference. Luke was not an eyewitness to any part of the life of Jesus. Luke writes in the third person in Acts until he comes to Acts 16:1. Here Luke begins speaking in the first person. Luke was a Christian, a personal friend, and companion of the apostle Paul who addressed Luke as the "beloved physician." (Col. 4:14.) Luke's personal attendance with Paul may be marked by his change from the third person to "we."

As Luke detailed the life and teaching of Jesus, he told in a similar manner about the beginning of the church on Pentecost and its history for about thirty years under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who brought to the attention of the disciples what they should say and do. The book of Acts does not relate all the acts of the apostles. As

a matter of fact, Luke spells out in great detail only the work of two of the apostles—Peter and Paul. The gospel was first preached in Jerusalem and then to the distant parts of the Roman empire. Luke traces the emergence of Christianity from a purely Jewish setting and its spread to become a religion of world-wide importance even in Luke's lifetime.

Luke carefully details the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, Caesarea, to Damascus and Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syrian Antioch, to the Roman provinces of Asia Minor, to Greece, and finally to Rome itself. Luke does not so much write a history of the church. Instead, he depicts the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth and its spread from the church in Jerusalem under the direction and preaching of the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Golden Text

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

The scene suggested by these words is that of a king who has gone into battle and won a great victory over his foes. Upon his return from a victorious campaign, the king brings back the conquered king and his royal family in chains in a triumphal victory march through the capital of his kingdom. The king brings back the looted treasuries of his conquered enemies. From his rich store of the spoils of war, he bestows lavish gifts upon his subjects.

The picture of the golden text is clear. Christ engaged Satan in mortal combat. Christ, the incar-

nate Son of God, came from heaven to this earth. He descended even into Hades, and passed into Hades. But he came forth victorious over death and the grave and is now seated at God's right hand. (See Rev. 1:17, 18.) Christ established his kingdom and secured it. Now he reigns at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:31-35.) He gave gifts to his subjects in his kingdom. Some were appointed apostles, others prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (Eph. 4:11-13.) Theirs was the responsibility to perfect the saints and to build up the body of Christ to the full attaining of the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.

The Text Explained

Between the Resurrection and the Ascension
(Acts 1:1-5)

The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty

days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence.

"The former treatise I made, O Theophilus." The former treatise Luke has in mind is the gospel according to Luke. Luke declared his

intentions in the opening words of his gospel account: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word." (Luke 1:1-2.) Luke thought it good to recount the life and teachings of Jesus in great detail.

Luke continued the record of what the apostles said and did in the apostolic church in a like manner. He was equally well informed since he was both a friend and traveling companion of the apostle Paul. The book of Acts is addressed to the same Theophilus of the book of Luke. "Theophilus" means a "lover of God" which was a most appropriate name for a Christian. There is no way of knowing the personal identity of Theophilus. In the gospel of Luke, he is addressed as "most excellent Theophilus." This is a title meaning "your excellency" and used in only two other places in Acts wherein the Roman governors Felix and Festus are addressed with respect befitting their office. (Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25.) Theophilus was probably some Roman citizen of honorable estate. We do not know that he was a Christian.

"Concerning all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Luke states his exact familiarity with the full ministry of Christ as he had "traced the course of all things accurately from the first." (Luke 1:3.) Just as Luke detailed what Jesus said and did during his personal ministry, he purposes to detail the working of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic church from the ascension of Christ to the eve of Paul's execution in Rome. Luke tells about the establishment of the church and its early history. There is no other source of information about the church that provides the information such as Luke gives. The New Testament provides the only source in the body of the epistles about the apostolic church.

The statement of Luke of what "Jesus began both to do and to teach" is especially significant. The teachings and doings of Christ are put together, and what Jesus did is placed before what he said. We say

that actions speak louder than words, and this was so in the case of Jesus. Luke indeed traced out the entire life of Jesus from his birth to his ascension. What Jesus did in his personal ministry and what happened to him is supported by the import of all he said. The words of Jesus were true to his behavior.

What Jesus said to his disciples prior to his crucifixion is especially significant to this lesson. His departure from the apostles would be a deeply disturbing experience. Jesus assured them they would not be left alone, and he promised the apostles the baptism of the Holy Spirit: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26.) Jesus added to this assurance: "However when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) The full meaning of what Jesus meant by these words was fully revealed to them on the next Pentecost. They were assured that a divine presence would accompany them during their own personal ministry. They would not have to rely on their fading memories about what Jesus said to them.

"Until the day in which he was received up." The ascension of Jesus marked the end of his personal ministry, and shortly thereafter his heavenly ministry would begin. The ascension of Jesus occurred after he had given "commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles." Luke provides the details of the last meeting of Jesus with his disciples in the concluding verses in his gospel at which time he commanded his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations beginning in the city of Jerusalem. And he required them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-53.) Luke is implying that Acts will be a continuation of what Jesus continued to do and preach after his resurrection.

"To whom he also showed himself alive." Between his crucifixion and his ascension, Jesus remained on earth forty days. He showed himself alive to his disciples on several

occasions at intervals in such ways there could be no possibility of their doubting his resurrection and so proving beyond question that he was alive. The apostle Paul provided a description of the occasions when Jesus appeared in different settings to his disciples: "He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles, and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also." (1 Cor. 15:5-8.)

Luke states the content of Jesus' message to his apostles in the interim: "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." We can not know for certain what Jesus said about the kingdom. However, it is reasonable to assume that he gave his apostles information about the nature of his kingdom as he had done during the three years of his personal ministry. The apostles' minds were then opened to comprehend the spiritual nature of his kingdom, but not completely as we shall see. (Luke 24:45.) They were enabled to understand more clearly his death, burial, and resurrection. Luke never records in a single place that the apostles mistook the nature of the messianic kingdom from the day of Pentecost on.

"And, being assembled together with them." During the period of forty days between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus taught his disciples concerning the kingdom: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46, 47.) In the course of his appearances, Jesus carefully instructed his disciples they would be witnesses of all the things that he had said and done during his personal ministry. He commanded them, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) Read the following passages: John 14:16, 25; 15:26; 16:13. The memories of these occasions would serve the apostles well in the days ahead when they received the baptism of

the Holy Spirit and power from God and began to fulfill the Great Commission.

"Wait for the promise of the Father." This statement of Jesus is undoubtedly an allusion to the words of Jesus: "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) Jesus made another statement to his disciples prior to his crucifixion concerning his kingdom: "There are here some of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1.) Judas, the traitor, did not see the kingdom of God come with power. He lay in a shameful grave in the potter's field. It was not until Pentecost that the apostles were fully aware of what Jesus meant by these words.

"John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Jesus emphasized the fact that they were, to receive another baptism in addition to the baptism that John the Baptist practiced. We are not to assume that water baptism was no longer necessary. Jesus commanded baptism in the Great Commission. John's baptism had been a baptism of repentance which pointed to the coming of Christ. (Acts 19:4.) Christian baptism looks back in retrospect to the cross of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was something promised and something other than water baptism. The meaning of the baptism of the Holy Spirit will be discussed in another lesson.

Questions about the Kingdom

(Acts 1:6-8)

They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The kingdom of Judah fell in 587 B.C. at the hands of the Chaldeans.

The expectation of the re-establishment of David's kingdom with a descendent of David on the throne never dimmed in the minds of the Jews. Jesus taught at great length about his kingdom even in the shadow of the cross. Not even his disciples understood at this time the spiritual character of the kingdom. James and John, along with their mother, were anxious that they might have chief places in his kingdom as did others of the disciples. Despite the fact that Jesus discussed the building of his church at Caesarea Philippi and equated the church with the kingdom of heaven, his disciples could not yet clearly understand what he meant by his kingdom. (Matt. 16:13ff.) Pilate was persuaded that Jesus posed no threat to Caesar's dominion. Jesus declared to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18: 36.) And Pilate believed Jesus.

It is not surprising after the resurrection that his disciples should raise again the question concerning the establishment of his kingdom. The fact that Jesus was alive renewed their hopes that one who conquered death would have the power to establish his kingdom. Jesus made the disciples aware of their interest in the kingdom, and he gave no direct response to the question as to the time for the coming of the kingdom.

The answer of Jesus was more in the form of a rebuke: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within his own authority." They were concerned to know how and where God would act in history. The Bible does not serve to satisfy man's curiosity, but to place him in a right relationship with God. Instead, Jesus advised his disciples that with the coming of the Holy Spirit they would be endued with power from God.

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." Jesus repeatedly promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come to them after his departure and lead them into all truth. (John 16:13.) The power they were promised was the power which would accompany their receiving the Holy Spirit enabling them to preach the gospel, and to work mighty deeds through the

power of God in proof of their ministry. (Rom. 1:16.)

Jesus related three happenings that the apostles would experience after his departure. First, the kingdom of God was in the near future; second, the apostles were to receive a special baptism of the Holy Spirit; and third, they were to receive power from God after their baptism by the Holy Spirit. The three promises were inseparable. Then the disciples would have the knowledge and the power to proclaim the gospel and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, and to lead men into the kingdom.

The nature of the power Jesus spoke of can be properly evaluated in other words Jesus spoke to his disciples in the Great Commission, as Matthew records it: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." (Matt. 28:18, 19.) The power of God which created the universe and fashioned man, was the power that would enable the disciples to preach the gospel to every habitable part of the earth.

Verse eight contains the outline for the book of Acts, and we should say for the preaching of the gospel to all the world through all time. Jesus said to them, "Ye shall be my witnesses." The first seven chapters of Acts cover the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem; chapters 8:1 to 11:18 detail the preaching of the gospel to "all Judaea and Samaria"; and the remainder of Acts embraces the carrying of the gospel to other places outside Palestine and to Rome. Paul declared, "The gospel which ye heard which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister." (Col. 1:23.)

In summation, these verses climax the message Jesus proclaimed throughout his personal ministry. Following the baptism of Jesus in Jordan and the period of fasting and temptation in the wilderness, "Jesus began to preach and to say: Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17.) The whole ministry of Jesus centered in the message of the kingdom. When he sent forth his twelve apostles to preach to the people of Israel, Jesus assured them: "Be not anxious how or what

ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. 10:19, 20.)

As the time of his departure drew near, Jesus knew that his disciples would seem to be as sheep without a shepherd. This led to the comforting assurance of Jesus that they would not be left without a companion: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John 15:26, 27.) Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, as already stated, would be more than a witness: "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13.) In connection with these promises, Jesus made another. He would endue them "with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.)

The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-12)

And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey off.

Luke provides the information in his gospel account about the ascension of Jesus: "And he led them out until they were over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 24:50, 51.) This was the last time his disciples ever saw him. Although Luke is the only writer who described the ascension, there are references made to it in other places. Peter said of Jesus: "Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven." (1 Pet. 3:22.) (See also Eph. 4:10;

Col. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:14.) The chain of circumstances beginning with the crucifixion of Christ are inseparably linked with his burial, resurrection, and ascension. Either without the others cancels out the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death.

Luke's statement in the gospel record implies that the ascension of Jesus took place at Bethany. This was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and was located about one mile and a half due east of Jerusalem just over the brow of the Mount of Olives. Jesus agonized in the olive vineyard called Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion on the west slope of the Mount of Olives overlooking the city of Jerusalem just across the Kidron Valley.

"And a cloud received him out of their sight." At the very moment they were looking at Jesus and listening to his words, he began to ascend upward. Then he was seen no more as a cloud received him out of their sight. Luke very simply and in a few words describes the departing of Jesus from this earth. He had entered this world as a helpless infant. His sojourn was brief. We may surmise the first thirty years of his life on earth were spent in a normal fashion as that of any person. The three years and more of his personal ministry were momentous and crowded with events. What Jesus did and said in that period would change the course of the human race.

Perhaps we should not discover any unusual significance in the cloud that received Jesus from the sight of his disciples. However, Luke speaks of a cloud that overshadowed Jesus, Moses, and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Luke 9:34.) Daniel depicts the Son of Man who came with the clouds of heaven. (Dan. 7:13.) On the day Jesus was crucified, the high priest asked Jesus if he was the Messiah. Jesus answered, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:61-62.) In any case, the Messiah was not earthbound. The tomb could not hold him, and God received him into heaven as the victor over sin and death. (Eph. 4:10.)

"And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven." As Jesus was talking with his disciples, it must have been only a matter of moments before he was received out of their sight. They continued looking, hoping they might catch another glimpse of him. To their further amazement, the disciples became aware of two men standing by them in white apparel. Luke clearly intends that his readers shall understand that the two men were heavenly messengers. Luke had previously described the two messengers who had appeared before the open tomb in the presence of the women who had gone to the tomb. The men were described as clad in "dazzling apparel." (Luke 24:4.) This reminds us of Christ's transfiguration on the mountain top when his raiment became "white and dazzling." (Luke 9:29.)

"Who also said, Ye men of Galilee." The question was asked the disciples: "Ye men of Galilee, why

stand ye looking into heaven?" The implication is clear that they need not wait to see Jesus momentarily. However, they were assured that this same Jesus whom they had seen leave the earth and received into heaven would return back in like manner. The point should be noted that there is no Scripture which even implies that Christ will ever come back to earth again, clearly refuting any and all theories about his returning to earth to set up an earthly kingdom. On his second return, the redeemed will be caught up with him into the clouds of heaven. (1 Thess. 4:17.) In the meantime, the disciples followed the instructions of Jesus. They returned to Jerusalem. They continued steadfastly in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with the other women. (Acts 1:14.) In the interim, Matthias was chosen to fill the place of Judas, "and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The book of Acts may be read as a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Luke details what the apostles did and said, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit until a short time before the death of Paul.

2. The word "Theophilus" means a "lover of God" and is a most appropriate description of a Christian.

3. Jesus promised that the apostles would receive the Holy Spirit after he left them. The Holy Spirit is described as a Comforter who would lead them and guide them into all the truth.

4. The Holy Spirit continues to be the Christian's guide through the inspired Scriptures which perfectly

and thoroughly furnish us unto every good work.

5. Jesus appeared to his disciples "by the space of forty days" after his resurrection, teaching and instructing his apostles about the kingdom soon to appear in their midst.

6. Jesus promised his disciples "power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

7. The meaning of all that Jesus did and said, the cross and the resurrection, and his ascension is bound up in his promise that he will return again to receive his own.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How does Luke's account of the gospel differ from his recording of the history of the church from the day of Pentecost until near the time of Paul's death?

Does Luke relate all the acts of all the apostles?

Where was the gospel preached after it was first proclaimed in Jerusalem?

Golden Text

What scene does the golden text suggest about the practice of ancient kings?

What does it mean that Jesus "ascended on high"?

How did Jesus give gifts unto his subjects?

Between the Resurrection and Ascension

Did other people besides Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John attempt to recount the life and teachings of Jesus?

What is the meaning of the title of "Most excellent"?

Who was Theophilus?

What other source outside of the book of Acts provides information about the New Testament church?

In what order does Luke place the activities of the personal ministry of Jesus?

Who is the Comforter about whom Jesus speaks?

How many people at one time saw Jesus after his resurrection?

What did Jesus teach his disciples in the forty days between the resurrection and his ascension?

What did Jesus command his apostles to do at the time he left them?

Which of the apostles never saw the kingdom of God come with power?

What kind of a baptism did Jesus promise his disciples?

Questions about the Kingdom

What kind of kingdom were the Jews expecting?

Describe the nature of the kingdom of Christ.

What did the disciples of Jesus ask him

about the time of the establishment of his kingdom?

What did Jesus promise would attend the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

List the three promises that Jesus made to the apostles.

Who is the "Spirit of truth"?

The Ascension of Jesus

Where was Jesus at the time of his ascension?

What friends of Jesus lived at Bethany?

How did the apostles last see Jesus?

Who appeared unto the apostles at that time and what did they say?

Name other members of the company of the disciples after their return to the city.

Lesson II—October 13, 1974

THE DESCENDING SPIRIT

Lesson Text

Acts 2:1-13

1 And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with others tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans?

8 And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judaea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia,

10 In Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans, and Arabians we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God.

12 And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 But others mocking said. They are filled with new wine.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel."* (Acts 2:16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—John 16:1-14.

Daily Bible Readings

October 7. M.....	The Promise of Joel (Joel 2:28-32)
October 8. T.....	Joel's Promise Fulfilled (Acts 2:1-37)
October 9. W.....	Baptism of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-8)
October 10. T.....	Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1-11)
October 11. F.....	Temporary Gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-13)
October 12. S.....	Miraculous Powers (1 Cor. 14:1-38)
October 13. S.....	Purpose of the Gifts (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter and the other apostles and a great number of Jews.

Introduction

Jesus had promised his disciples on several occasions that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and his last words to the apostles repeated the promise: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1:8.) They were to expect the Holy Spirit to guide them and lead them into all truth. The keynote of the book of Acts is sounded in verses 6 through 8 in the first chapter. In response to their question concerning the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, Jesus declared that they would become his witnesses to proclaim the gospel first in Jerusalem and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The apostles were filled with great expectation as they returned to Jerusalem from Olivet. Upon returning to Jerusalem, "they went up into the upper chamber, where they were abiding." (Acts 1:13.) This room was probably the scene of the Last Supper. (Matt. 14:15.) The room must have been filled with stirring and awesome memories following their last meeting with Jesus.

All were there excepting Judas. They continued steadfastly in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women disciples; and they were of one accord. Luke is only one of the four gospel writ-

ers who mentioned the service and ministration of the women suggesting that Luke had a tender and sympathetic feeling for women.

During those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples numbering about one hundred and twenty. Jesus had many disciples in Galilee and other places. We do not know why such a large group should have come together in one place. The apostle Peter ran true to form on that occasion. As he stood up in the presence of the disciples, he recounted the story of the traitor and his terrible deed and expressed the necessity to appoint another disciple to his place.

Peter set forth the qualifications for an apostle: "Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us." (Acts 1:21, 22.) The apostles set forth the two men they thought were the best, and the lot fell on Matthias. We hear no more about this apostle as is the case with most of the others. The number of twelve was restored. Following the death of James by the sword, some years later, no steps were taken to fill the vacancy. He lived a faithful Christian life until death claimed him.

The Golden Text

This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel. (Acts 2:16.)

These words are a part of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32. Joel announced the coming of the day of the Lord. Joel spoke in such a time when he called the people together in hope of their repenting of their sins. Both the primary reason for Peter quoting Joel's prophecy was to prove that the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the apostles was in fulfillment of Joel's proph-

ecy: "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh." (Acts 2:17.)

Peter was declaring that the "last days" had come upon them. The "last days" was used to denote "the last dispensation." The apostle had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and power from God to preach the gospel. The kingdom of heaven was no longer "at hand." It was in their midst.

The Text Explained

Pentecost
(Acts 2:1-4)

And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind,

and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other

tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

"And when the day of Pentecost was now come." Pentecost is a word found only in the New Testament. It is a Hebrew word meaning fiftieth (Gk. *pentekostos*). The day was set forth in the Mosaic law when the "first fruits of the wheat harvest" were offered to the Lord. (Num. 28:26.) It was also known among the Israelites as the "feast of the weeks." (Ex. 34:22.) Much later in the history of the people of Israel, the day was reckoned as the time when the Mosaic law was given at Mount Sinai. Pentecost was the second of the three great feasts of the Israelites. The celebration always occurred on the first day of the week. The count of time began from the fiftieth day from the first day of the week after the Passover. (Lev. 23:15, 16.) It is of interest that Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week, and the church arose from the waters of baptism on the first Pentecost after the crucifixion of Christ.

Luke states that the apostles "were all together in one place" on Pentecost. This would be the day when the baptism of the Holy Spirit would be experienced; they would be seized with power from on high; and the kingdom of God would be established in their midst.

"And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as the rushing of a mighty wind." In a way that was wholly unexpected, the room where the apostles were sitting was filled with the sound of a great and powerful wind. It is clearly certain that the Holy Spirit descended in their midst as Jesus promised. The outward manifestation of the descent of the Holy Spirit was audible, and visual.

"And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire." It was not fire, but "like fire." The fire became parted like separate flames and lit upon each of them. We should not be overly curious about what did happen, but the importance of the occasion lay in the fact of the divine presence among the apostles.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." This was the third extraordinary event to occur on this momentous day. There is no way of knowing just where the apostles

were gathered. The statement in verse 1 is that "they were all together in one place." In some manner not described, a great crowd of people assembled around the disciples. Undoubtedly, they were not secluded in the upper room at the time. They may very well have been in the temple court. In the forty day interim, Luke stated that the apostles "were continually in the temple, blessing God." (Luke 24:53.) This seems to be the most probable place. Pentecost was a festive occasion. Every male Jew was required to present himself in Jerusalem for the passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of the Tabernacles. A great multitude would have been present in the temple courts including both men and women.

Whatever may have been the expectations of the apostles as they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit, which they had been promised, they were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in "other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The last few years the churches of Christ have been confronted with problems and practices among certain people that were unthought of less than a decade ago. The practice of tongue speaking, faith healing, and casting out evil spirits had been confined to related Pentecostal Holiness churches. Space will not permit an analysis of the "Jesus Movement" and related practices such as "tongue speaking."

Jesus had promised his apostles certain miraculous gifts after his departure from their presence: "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; and they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. . . . And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed." (Mark 16:17-20.)

Only the apostles received the promise of such special gifts which accompanied their baptism with the Holy Spirit. And only the apostles were empowered to pass on the spiritual gifts to other disciples by laying their hands on them. (Acts

19:6; Acts 8:17, 18.) Such miraculous powers ended with the passing of the apostles. The current contention is that the promise as recorded in Mark 16 was intended for every Christian in all subsequent time. But Paul says, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." (1 Cor. 13:8.)

"And began to speak with other tongues." These words described what happened after the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The words were in other tongues which the apostles spoke as the "Spirit gave them utterance." Jesus promised his disciples they would speak in tongues, and this is the first recorded fulfillment of the promise. The second occurrence was in the household of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. (Acts 10:46.) The third event was at Ephesus. Following Paul's laying his hands upon the Ephesian Christians, "they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men." (Acts 19:7.)

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the household of Cornelius at Caesarea, and the apostles "heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." (Acts 10:46.) The experience was the same as that which happened to the apostles on Pentecost. Peter understood this was a sign from God that the Gentiles were now accepted unto God. "Then answered Peter, can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" (Acts 10:47.)

And a similar appraisal may be made about the disciples in Ephesus who had received only the baptism of John. After receiving baptism by Paul and following the laying on of Paul's hands upon them, they spoke "with tongues."

It is apparent that speaking in tongues served useful purposes in the three cases reported by Luke. On Pentecost "every man heard them speaking in his own language." (Acts 2:6.) The apostles used such words as they spoke "with other tongues" as could be understood. There were probably twelve or more different languages

spoken by the multitude on this day. "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:7, 8.) Paul says, "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving." (1 Cor. 14:22.) On Pentecost the speaking in "other tongues," tongues other than their native tongue, was a sign to the unbelieving Jews that God approved the apostles and their message to the people.

The Response of the Multitude (Acts 2:5-8)

Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?

The Jews had come from the distant lands of the dispersion to celebrate Pentecost in their holy city of Jerusalem. The people in Jerusalem were for the most part Jews and proselytes. The statement that they were "dwelling at Jerusalem" only means that they were being housed in Jerusalem, and some only temporarily as they returned to their respective homes following the Feast of the Weeks. The Jews who had come to Jerusalem were described as devout Jews. They were the "people of the Book" who had come to Jerusalem out of respect to the Mosaic law which commanded every male Jew to present himself three times a year in the city of Jerusalem.

The word "devout" (Gk. *eulabes*) meant "discreet or cautious." Luke uses the word to describe good men who honored God. (Luke 2:25; Acts 8:2.) The word was often used in early Christian ascriptions in this exalted sense.

"And when this sound was heard." The result was that a great multitude of people came together. They were confounded and the reason is given: "every man heard

them speaking in his own language."

A significant fact is outstanding. This speech on Pentecost was intelligible. The pious Jews were confounded that each understood the apostles in his own tongue. Luke states the apostles spoke in "other tongues" (Gk. *dialektos*), or languages. The Jews were surprised that each heard the apostles and understood each person in his own native language (*dialektos*).

"And they were all amazed and marvelled." The Jews present had reason to be amazed. The apostles were Galileans. The people were astonished "because that every man heard them speaking in his own language."

And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?" The apparent fact is that each man understood the apostles with his own ears in a perfectly clear language, which was not a matter of incoherent gobbledegook that is common to the gibberish language of the modern "tongue talkers." God is able to perform his works with mighty wonders and signs as he pleases.

The Pilgrims (Acts 2:9-11)

Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God.

"Parthians and Medes and Elamites." Pious Jews were assembled from the lands in the far reaches of ancient Persia. The people were present in large numbers from Africa and Rome. This is not at all surprising. The people of Israel,

wherever they were scattered in the dispersion, traveled back to the land of their fathers. The great number of people contained "both Jews and proselytes." Those designated as Jews were born of Jewish parents, and the proselytes were converts to the Jewish religion. Luke repeats the amazement of all present: "we hear them speaking in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

The Responses of the Multitude (Acts 2:12, 13)

And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine.

"And they were all amazed, and were perplexed." At first, the Jews and proselytes were confounded, and this turned into perplexment and amazement. Some who heard responded favorably, and others did not. Some were disrespectful in their comments. The question was raised—"What meaneth this?" The rude answer was given by some that the apostles were "filled with new wine." Of course, the "new wine" was months away in the fall when some people drank the sweet wine fresh from the vats to the point of drunkenness. The law condemned drunkenness and drinking of wine when it sparkled in the cup. (Prov. 23:21; Prov. 20:1.)

It was the custom of the pious Jew to drink wine only in the evening. The time when the apostles spoke was at nine o'clock in the morning at the fixed time of prayer. The sarcastic remark was intended probably to be an abusive insult. The importance of the occasion lay in the fact that the apostles proclaimed the good news of the kingdom on that day, and the response of the people will be set forth in the following lesson.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised the apostles was accompanied by the power enabling them to declare the word of God as the Holy Spirit guided them and to perform miracles attesting that they were approved of God.

2. The qualification of a disciple to become an apostle was conditioned by the fact such a one had to

have been with Jesus from the baptism of John until his ascension.

3. The church was established on the first day of the week and Christ was resurrected on the first day which seems to be more than a coincidence.

4. The baptism of the apostles of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a great noise of winds and the ap-

pearance like fire and the ability to speak in tongues.

5. The tongues with which the apostles spoke on the day of Pentecost were intelligent. communications which the apostles had with the people present.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why were the apostles continuing to show an interest in the time would establish his kingdom?
Where were the apostles staying in Jerusalem after the ascension?
With whom did they continue steadfastly in prayer?
How many other disciples were present with the apostles in Jerusalem?

Golden Text

How did Peter use the prophecy of Joel to explain the occurrences on the day of Pentecost?
What are the "last days"?

Pentecost

What is meant by "other tongues" spoken cost?
How was Pentecost counted according to the Mosaic law?
Why did the Jews celebrate the day of Pentecost?
Where were the apostles at the time they received the Holy Spirit?
Describe the unusual happenings on this

6. The speaking in tongues in the apostolic church was for a sign to the unbelieving.

7. The response of the people to the preaching of Peter was an intelligent response followed by obedience.

day which aroused so much amazement among the people.
What is meant by "other tongues" spoken by the apostles?
Did the people understand the apostles?
What was the purpose of "tongues"?
Who else other than the apostles spoke with tongues?

The Response of the Multitude

In what respect were the Jews in Jerusalem described as "devout"?
What were the three occasions when every Jewish male had to present himself in the city of Jerusalem?
Why were the people so amazed on the day of Pentecost?
To whom were the tongues a sign on the day of Pentecost?
What did the tongues signify?

The Pilgrims

From what distant places had pious Jews come to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem?
What is the difference between a Jew and Jewish proselyte?

The Responses of the Multitude

What accusation did some make of the apostles?
How did Peter answer them?

Lesson III—October 20, 1974

THE OBEDIENT PEOPLE

Lesson Text

Acts 2:37-47

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

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

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

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

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

three thousand souls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."* (Mark 16:16.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 2:14-28.

Daily Bible Readings

October 14. M.....	Origin of the Day of Pentecost (Lev. 23:9-21)
October 15. T.....	Events of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)
October 16. W.....	Gospel to Be Preached from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-4)
October 17. T.....	Gospel to Begin at Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-49)
October 18. F.....	Peter and the Keys (Matt. 16:13-21)
October 19. S.....	Obedience Essential (2 Thess. 1:1-9)
October 20. S.....	Doing the Will of God (Matt. 7:21-27)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter and three thousand Pentecostians.

Introduction

The day of Pentecost was a great occasion of momentous happenings. The occurrences on Pentecost which began with the apostles receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit and power, to the preaching of the first gospel sermon by Peter, ended with the birth of the church from the waters of baptism.

Peter's pentecostal sermon began with the declaration that the men of Jerusalem had delivered up Jesus of Nazareth to be crucified whom the apostles had declared to

be the Messiah. Peter quoted David's prophecy in support of the fact. (Psalm 16:8.) Furthermore, Peter added that the apostles were witnesses.

Peter added one more unanswerable proof: The miraculous outpouring was being seen and heard by all who were present. He concluded his sermon by declaring that God raised up Jesus to sit on David's throne and made him both Lord and Christ whom they had crucified.

The Golden Text

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

Faith is a condition of salvation. Without faith, repentance would be a meaningless word with nothing to be believed: "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Heb. 11:6.) Faith will lead a man to God; disbelief will forever shut the door of salvation in his face,

Mark connects belief and baptism as conditions of salvation. Matthew provides additional details, that the

believing, repenting person is to be baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 18:19.) It would be an error to separate and disassociate the teachings of the different inspired writers into isolated contexts. To do this would absolutely destroy any pretext to know the teachings of Jesus.

It is not a matter of theological quibbling that faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are equally conditions of salvation. The order is logical with a sound scriptural support. The plain teachings of the Scriptures have been perverted and misconstrued by church creeds over almost eighteen hundred years.

The Text Explained

What Shall We Do?

(Acts 2:37)

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

"They were pricked in their

hearts." The sermon of the apostle Peter made a great impact upon a great number of people who heard him. They were so deeply moved that they made an impassioned plea to the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter mightily convinced the Jews that they had cru-

cified the Messiah who had been long awaited by the Jewish people: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made' him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:36.)

"They were pricked in their heart." "Pricked" is from the Greek word *katanusso*, which means to pierce, to sting sharply, to stun, to smite. Peter's sermon carried overwhelming proof and the people were stung by their convictions. We may easily conceive of the obsession of Peter with his great message.

Just fifty days ago, Peter, trembling with fear, had denied he ever knew Jesus. In the very city and among the very people who crucified Jesus and who could have done the same to Peter, he accuses them with the guilt of having slain the Son of God. We may account for Peter's new found courage in only one way. Peter preached a living Saviour whose, empty tomb he had examined and beheld him as he was received into the heavens. Peter's sermon carried such an impact that the people cried out, wanting to know how to escape their great guilt.

Peter had declared unto the people the "great day of the Lord" as spoken by the prophet Joel, who required repentance of the people and declared "that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21.) Indeed, the people wanted to escape the terrible judgment of the Lord. To their already numerous sins, they had even further compounded their guilt with slaying the Messiah.

Repent and Be Baptized (Acts 2:38, 39)

And Peter said unto them. Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

"Repent ye, and be baptized." Peter's response to the question was clear and unmistakable. The multitude who heard him already believed in God as their fathers be-

fore them had done. Peter had boldly accused the Jews that by the hand of lawless man they had crucified Jesus of Nazareth whom he declared: "God hath made him both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:33-36.) Peter did not demand faith on their part to accept Jesus as the Christ. This was evidenced by their question to Peter. He told all who heard his sermon to repent.

John the Baptist, had preached repentance to the Jews. (Matt. 3:2.) The earliest words of Jesus were like those of John the Baptist: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15.) This too was the message of the twelve apostles as they were sent out to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: "And they went out and preached that men should repent." (Mark 6:13.)

John the Baptist and Jesus also required the people to be baptized. Those who believed the message of John "were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. 3:6.) Among the last words of Jesus was the command to the apostles, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:15, 16.)

We must keep in mind that Jesus spoke during his personal ministry to the Jews. Their faith in God was as ancient as their history. Peter had no need to preach of the Messiah who would appear in their midst. Every Jew hoped for the establishment of the messianic kingdom and prayed for the coming of the Messiah.

The burden of Peter's sermon was to lead the people to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God. Indeed their faith in this cardinal truth was an absolute condition of their repenting. Unless a man turns to God, he must still be heading in the other direction away from God. They were to do a complete "about face." Not only had they rejected Jesus as the Son of God, they sought to take his life.

The call of the people to repentance was joined with baptism. Any attempt to disjoin repentance and baptism is a perversion of the Scriptures. Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan and set forever this example of obedience to God's

command. Any attempt to minimize the importance of baptism or to cancel out its significance is doomed to failure from its inception.

The movement of Pentecost was through faith in Jesus Christ, the response of repentance, and the willingness to be baptized. Baptism could have no meaning without genuine faith and honest repentance. Christian baptism is a symbol of the expression of faith in the fact that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3, 4.) Christian baptism is a symbolic picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Pentecostians were told by Peter to repent and be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." It is obvious the people wanted to be saved from their sins and they were told what to do. Any attempt to disassociate baptism from the "remission of sins" is doomed to failure. The identical logic would then have to be employed to disassociate repentance from the remission of sins. The theologians have never shown an inclination to do this.

Matthew's account of the Great Commission is to baptize people of all nations into the name of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19.) The full formula is not set forth in Peter's response in Acts 2:38. Once the assumption is granted that Matthew and Luke are not in full agreement, then the credibility of the Scriptures must be forever surrendered. May it be remembered that Jesus concluded the Great Commission with the words: "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." (Matt. 28:20.)

"And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The apostle Peter promised the people who heard him two things. First, the baptized believers were promised the remission of their sins; and second, they were promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. The people on Pentecost obviously were not promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the apostles had been promised. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" is that measure of the Holy Spirit promised to all Chris-

tians. The Holy Spirit operates through the word. (Eph. 6:17.) The fruits of the Christian's life bear evidence that the Holy Spirit is working through the word in his life and bearing fruit as a result. (Matt. 7:16, 20; Gal. 5:22, 23.)

"For to you is the promise, and to your children." The promise of salvation through Christ (Gen. 12:3, Acts 3:25, 26), was made to the Jews and to those who were "afar off."

"As many as the Lord our God shall call unto him." God calls people through the preaching of the gospel: "Whereunto he calls you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:14.) The call of God to lost mankind may come only through men: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." (2 Cor. 4:7.) We are called unto God through the preaching of the gospel by men. The gospel must be preached. It must be obeyed. In this way may one come to God.

Response to Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:40-42)

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

Luke did not record all that Peter said on Pentecost. He spoke "many other words" and exhortations. We may reasonably assume that Peter bore personal witness to Jesus of both what he did and said during the ministry of Jesus.

Peter exhorted the people to save themselves from "this crooked generation" by accepting the terms of salvation he had announced. Peter meant to say that this generation was a perverse and wicked generation. They were morally and mentally deficient and had crucified their own Messiah. Jesus himself had upbraided the same people calling them a "faithless and perverse generation." (Luke 9:41.)

Jesus said this because they had repudiated him as the Messiah. (Luke 17:26.) However, the way of salvation was still open to them as Joel had prophesied: "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21.) So Peter exhorted all the Jews to save themselves from the fate of that wicked generation by repenting and being baptized as the result of their faith that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

"They that received the word." Some three thousand did believe Peter's sermon. They were the faithful remnant of Israel and they became along with the apostles and other disciples of Jesus the nucleus of the Jerusalem church of Christ. Only those who received his word were baptized. The baptized believers formed the first church in the apostolic age. The New Testament would be written over the next sixty and some years. The church would grow from the confines of Jerusalem to the far flung outposts of the Roman Empire.

They "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching." The teaching of the apostles was authoritative. Jesus promised them a measure of authority when he commissioned his apostles. (Matt. 28:18, 19.) The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit, resulting in the New Testament. To this day, the New Testament remains the only authoritative standard for Christian belief and practices.

Second, the new church enjoyed the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ. They shared a common interest in the fellowship of the church and a mutual love for each other. The local church cannot exist without the binding ties of love and mutual respect.

The second practice of the church named was the breaking of bread. "Breaking of bread" comes from the Greek word *klasei* which is used only in Luke and only in the "breaking of bread." We conclude that Luke intended that the celebration of the Lord's supper should be understood, and not the ordinary eating of food.

And third, the church engaged in prayer. This probably means that the Christian had appointed seasons when they would meet for prayer. The most ancient and universal

practice of man has been to address God in prayer. The early Christians were given continually to prayer.

The Jerusalem Church

(Acts 2:43-47)

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

The enthusiasm of the Christians grew from the day of their conversion. At first, they were moved with fear when they first heard Peter declare that they had crucified the Christ. The idea of "fear" in this place is that of deep reverence and awe. The wonders and signs done by the apostles in their midst further intensified their awe of the divine presence. Just as Jesus had done wondrous works, the apostles were empowered to do the same.

"And had all things common." Such as had property and material possession were generous to share their possessions with the unfortunate. We should assume that in the daily commerce of life, the Christians were unselfish in sharing their good things with those in need. Luke does not suggest that all sold their property and divided the money among the members of the church. They simply helped each other in need. "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?" (1 John 3:17.) No one suffered for bread in the Jerusalem church. Each was supplied according to his need.

"And day by day, continuing . . . in the temple." In the days that followed, the Christians frequented the temple precincts to bear witness to Christ through teaching and

worship. There had not developed the wide cleavage between the Christians and the Jews that would become characteristic in time that lay ahead. The Christians seemed to have been tolerated in the temple in their worship and other teaching activities at first.

They would meanwhile meet in their respective homes to enjoy their meals with each other. This was the partaking of ordinary meals with the Christian fellowship added as they met from house to

house. Their mood was one of gladness and singleness of heart. Their hearts were filled with generosity which generated goodwill among the people. New members were added to the church daily.

This chapter closes with the introduction of the church of Christ into the city of Jerusalem and eventually the world. This Pentecost was the birthday of the church. It would be difficult to find now a reputable Bible scholar who would question this fact.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The church began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week, which means that the church came into being on the first day of the week.

2. Faith leads to salvation. Repentance, confession, and baptism are the initial steps a person must take to become a Christian.

3. Peter's newly strengthened faith resulted from his seeing the empty tomb (1 Pet. 1:3) and seeing with his own eyes the resurrected Lord.

4. Peter's one purpose in his sermon, was to lead all present to be-

lieve that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

5. The Holy Spirit has joined repentance and baptism together as conditions of salvation; and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

6. The response of the new born Christian to the gospel is to continue in the New Testament doctrine, in fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers, and all of the other responsibilities of living a Christian life.

7. The Jerusalem church grew from the day of its birth, and the growth resulted from the teaching of the gospel.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

How did Peter begin his sermon on Pentecost?

What did Peter declare about the death of Christ?

Golden Text

What is the importance of faith in the new birth?

Who declared baptism to be a condition of salvation?

Would it be correct to say that faith is the most important step in coming to Christ?

What Shall We Do?

What was the immediate response of the people to Peter's sermon?

What is meant by the statement that they were "pricked in their hearts"?

Repent and Be Baptized

What was Peter's answer to the people who wanted to know what to do to be saved?

Does any person have the right to mini-

mize the importance of baptism?

What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit"?

Does the Holy Spirit operate today separate and apart from the Word of God?

How does God call people to him today?

Response to Peter's Sermon

What is the meaning of the expression "this crooked generation"?

How did Peter advise the people to save themselves from this crooked generation?

To whom were the three thousand people added who were baptized on the day of Pentecost?

What were the actions of the Jerusalem church as described by Luke?

What practice did Luke have in mind when he spoke of the "breaking of bread"?

The Jerusalem Church

What replaced the fear in the hearts of the people who believed Peter's sermon?

How did the first Christians show their deep concern for each other?

What practices did the Christians follow daily in the temple?

What spirit marked the home life of the Jerusalem Christians?

When was the birthday of the church?

Lesson IV—October 27, 1974

THE PERSECUTED APOSTLES

Lesson Text

Acts 4:1-14

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them,

2 Being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow; for it was now eventide.

4 But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;

6 And Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?

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

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

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* in him doth this man stand here before you whole.

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

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

13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness."* (Acts 4:31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — Acts 4:15-22.

Daily Bible Readings

October 21. M.....	Faithful Saints (Acts 4:31-37)
October 22. T.....	Fearless Devotion (Dan. 3:13-18)
October 23. W.....	Persecution Inevitable (2 Tim. 3:1-17)
October 24. T.....	Blessedness of Trial (James 1:2-18)
October 25. F.....	Promise to the Persecuted (Matt. 5:1-12)
October 26. S.....	Reward of Faithfulness (Rev. 7:13-17)
October 27. S.....	Help in Persecution (Luke 12:1-12)

TIME. — A.D. 33.

PLACE. — Jerusalem.

PERSONS. — Peter and John, the priests, captain of the temple, Sadducees, Annas, John, and Alexander.

Introduction

The future for the early Christians seemed bright. They were enjoying the good will of the people, and the church was growing daily. We do not know how long the disciples continued with their worship and work before they ran into opposition. Dark clouds were

beginning to mount with ill forebodings for the church. The account of this begins in chapter three and steadily mounts until the church was scattered and the disciples were driven from Jerusalem.

The opposition came mainly from the Sadducees who took direct ac-

tion against the Christians. The Sadducees were opposed to the preaching of Peter, John, and the other disciples in the temple precincts. The healing of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate was clear proof that they had not gotten rid of Jesus. (Acts 3:1ff.)

The healing of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate afforded Peter with the opportunity to preach the resurrected Saviour. Peter recounted the trials and crucifixion of Jesus, and he charged the people with having "killed the Prince of Life," and declared that God had raised him from the dead. And Peter, with powerful words, preached a sermon similar to the sermon on Pentecost. And he charged the Jews who heard him to,

"Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3:20.)

Peter declared that Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing and undeserving of the shame of the cross. The apostle placed the blame squarely on the Jews and found them guilty of a heinous crime and declared that Jesus was approved of God and that the resurrection was the proof of this fact.

Peter concluded his sermon by stating that the purpose of God throughout the ages was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Peter declared that all the prophets had told of this day when this seed of Abraham would bless the people of the earth.

The Golden Text

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:31.)

The preceding words tell us what took place at the conclusion of the prayer of the apostles. Peter and John told the other disciples of their abuse at the hands of the Sadducees and the temple guards, who had arrested them and put them in prison overnight, because of Peter's sermon following the healing of the crippled man. On the following morning, Peter and John were brought into the presence of the rulers and elders and scribes and Annas, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, who were the ranking priests. The Jewish rulers charged the apostle to cease preaching in the

name of Jesus Christ.

As the apostles were praying to God, they petitioned God for strength and faith to continue to preach the gospel in the face of mounting opposition. Instead of praying for God to destroy their enemies, they prayed for strength and grace to meet the opposition and to preach the word of God with all boldness.

And while they were praying, the "place was shaken" where they were assembled and they "were all filled with the Holy Spirit." This receiving of the Holy Spirit was reminiscent of their Pentecost experience. This was a renewal of the Holy Spirit received on Pentecost.

The Text Explained

The Arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-4)

And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in ward unto the morrow: for it was now eventide. But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

A great crowd of people were assembled around Peter and John following the healing of the crippled

man at the Beautiful Gate. The impassioned sermon of Peter could have been no less than provocative to the Sadducees. They sought to take direct action against the apostles. The captain of the temple was responsible for maintaining law and order in the temple courts. The Sadducees also had strong religious objections to the charge of Peter that they were responsible for the death of Jesus and particularly the claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the dead. (Acts 23:8.)

Luke states that the Sadducees and the captain of the temple ar-

rested Peter and John and put them in prison until the following day. The Sadducees were supposedly Zadokites who were the temple priests named after Zadok, whom King David recognized as high priest and who had shown great loyalty to David in his last days. (1 Kings 1.) In either case, the Sadducees formed a caste of priestly nobles who wielded great power among the Jews and were held in high esteem by the Romans. Following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Sadducees disappeared from the pages of history.

The Sadducees were especially grieved because the apostles "taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." The Sadducees sharply disagreed with the party of the Pharisees on certain fundamental religious doctrines. Jesus said, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not." (Matt. 23:3.) The Sadducees did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead and were not disposed to believe in the existence of angels. Consequently, the apostles were deeply disturbing the Sadducees with their preaching and discrediting their religious beliefs.

The people who heard the apostles reacted differently: "Many of them that heard the word believed." The sermon of Peter deeply moved the people and the number of men who believed was about five thousand. We should not be surprised at the large number of converts. This was a time of great expectations. John the Baptist was the first prophet to appear in Judea in over four centuries. The air had been electric with excitement over the great prophet, John the Baptist, who was likened unto Elijah. Matthew records that great numbers of people came out of Jerusalem, all of Judea, and the region about Jordan to hear the fiery preacher calling them to repentance. The interest in Jesus before his crucifixion was enormous; Luke simply records what the effect of Peter's preaching was after the cross. Considering the fact that the estimated number of Jews attending the Passover in Jerusalem ran

as high as two and three million people,, the growth of the church among the Jews to around ten thousand should not be surprising.

The Arraignment of Peter and John (Acts 4:5-7)

And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?

"And it came to pass on the morrow." The apostles were brought out of the prison and placed before the ruling body of the Jews. It was indeed an august assembly similar to the official body of Jews who condemned Jesus to the cross. It seems that the men who were assembled to hear Peter and John were conducting an examining trial. The apostles had not yet been charged. An interesting fact is that no mention was made of Peter's preaching the resurrection of Jesus. As a matter of fact, no specific charge at all had been brought against the apostles.

The Sanhedrin court was a religious-judicial body of learned scribes and leading elders of the Jews. The high priest was one of the two highest ranking members of the court. The court was presided over by an eminent Jewish scholar learned in the Mosaic law. His role was somewhat similar to that of a presiding judge. Shammai and Hillel were two such eminent scholars living at the time Jesus was born, Saul of Tarsus had come to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of another, Gamaliel. The court numbered seventy-two counting the high priest and the scholarly president of the court.

The Sadducees were well represented; Annas, the senior ex-high priest, was present. Although Caiaphas was the official priest at the time, Annas was still a high ranking priest and could well have been the power behind Caiaphas, his son-in-law. Annas had five sons who had served as high priests between 6 A.D. and 18 A.D.

Caiaphas held the office longer than any other person in the first century A.D. prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. He ruled from 18 A.D. to 36 A.D.

There is no cause to wonder why such an august body of rulers saw fit to come together. It had been just a matter of weeks since Annas and Caiaphas had taken a leading hand in condemning Jesus to the cross. We should pause to remember that the cross was a terrible Roman invention to torture criminals most odious to the Romans. The Jews had deliberately put Jesus on that course. Their hopes of having ridded Jesus from their midst was indeed short lived. Now it appeared they would have even more trouble from the disciples of Jesus. Thousands had come out to hear Jesus during his personal ministry; now thousands were responding to the preaching of the gospel and becoming Christians. The identification of Alexander is not known. The John mentioned is perhaps Jonathan, the son of Annas, who succeeded Caiaphas as high priest. The presence of such dignitaries points up the gravity of the arraignment of Peter and John.

"And when they had set them in the midst." After the members of the great court had taken their seats, Peter and John were brought from the prison and set in the presence of the ruling Jews. The council chamber, according to Josephus, was located adjacent to the temple on the western side of the temple hill. The Sanhedrin usually sat in a semi-circle fashion. Peter and John were perhaps placed in the midst of the chamber inside the circle.

After the apostles were seated, the question was directed to them: "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" They were simply charged to declare by whose authority or by what name the apostles had presumed to heal the man. The Jewish rulers could not deny the healing of the lame man. The scribes had earlier challenged Jesus that he performed his wonderful works through the power of Beelzebub. (Mark 3:22.)

We could not even guess what the suppositions of the rulers may have been to explain the healing of the crippled man. Indeed, this question

was tailor-made for the apostles. It provided them with the opportunity to say what they wanted to say.

The Power and Name of Jesus

(Acts 4:8-10)

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

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit." Peter perhaps remembered what Jesus had said to them during his personal ministry. Jesus warned the disciples that they would be brought before governors and kings for a testimony to them and the Gentiles. In such critical and grave situations, the disciples were advised, "Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. 10:19, 20.)

Peter filled with courage would not be intimidated. However, Peter addressed respectfully the elders and rulers of the people. Peter and John were being examined relative to the good deed they had done in healing a crippled man who had not walked since birth. So Peter simply said if they were being called in question for the good deed which they had done, he was prepared to give answer. Men of honor and good will could not have any objections to works of charity.

In answer to the council's question, Peter and John had healed the lame man by the power of Jesus. Every member of the council knew the name Jesus, and felt the power of his name on that occasion.

"Be it known unto you." What Peter then said must have deeply moved and disturbed the rulers. If they had hoped that the imprisonment overnight had disquieted the disciples, they soon discovered themselves in error. Peter declared to all present that in the name of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye

crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole." Peter bluntly charged the council with the high crime, not of just taking the life of an innocent man, but of taking the life of the long awaited Messiah of Israel. Instead of the high court of the Jews putting the apostles on trial, Peter had reversed the process. Now they stood charged, and Peter gloried in the fact that a man lame all of his life was now well.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the man who had been healed was then even standing in the presence of the court. Peter could say that this man stands here now completely healed. The apostles had acted under the authority of Jesus, and they had healed this man by the power of Jesus. The question was now answered, but Peter had not finished with his remarks. Peter proceeded to inform the rulers that the consequences of their act in the crucifixion of Christ was even more serious than they had imagined.

The Rejected Stone

(Acts 4:11, 12)

He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

Peter and John presumably had been brought before the Sanhedrin to be examined and possibly charged with some unlawful act. There seems to have been no disposition on the part of the rulers to call in question the good which they had done. The Sadducees collaborated as far as possible with the Roman authorities who were the rulers in the land. The ranking priests were charged with keeping the peace. Their survival as a religious group was dependent upon their cooperation with the Romans.

Peter turned the table on the rulers. No longer are Peter and John accused, but the rulers of the Jews. Now they must defend themselves from the charges directed against them by Peter. The apostle began the charge by quoting from the Psalms: "The stone which the

builder rejected is become the head of the corner." (Psalm 118:22.) Peter tells the chief priests, the scribes, and rulers about a stone which had been rejected by some rulers. They finally discovered much to their chagrin that the stone was the keystone in the building. Jesus had used the same comparison when he accused the priests and rulers in the parable of the vineyard with seeking to do him violence, (Mark 12:10.)

The apostle proceeded to make an application and directly implicate the rulers in reference to the quotation from Psalm 118:22. Peter declared Jesus to be that rejected stone. And of the power and name of Jesus, Peter summed up the full meaning of the name of Jesus and left no question in the minds of the Jews about what he meant. "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.) The scripture from the Psalm was used by Peter to bring into focus the rejection of Jesus and his humiliation and death on the cross.

The Jews had refused to accept Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. But now that stone which had been thought to be utterly worthless, had become the head of the corner. Jesus is now enthroned at God's right hand. Peter was saying in substance that if the rulers continued their resistance to Jesus Christ that there was no other power or authority or name under heaven that could save them. The chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and rulers were not only in opposition to Jesus, they were guilty in misleading their own people about Jesus.

They Had Been with Jesus

(Acts 4:13, 14)

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

The members of the high court were impressed with the boldness and forthrightness of Peter and

John. They had not acted as the rulers supposed they would. After all, there is seldom an occasion in any age when men of humble origin find themselves suddenly brought into the presence of the highest ranking rulers for any reason. If they had thought to frighten the apostles, they were soon disappointed. Peter and John stood undaunted in the presence of the rulers.

The rulers took notice of the fact that "they were unlearned and ignorant men." By this we are to understand that it was obvious that the men had never attended a rabbinical school and sat at the feet of a great Jewish scholar of the age. Saul of Tarsus had that experience. Nevertheless, Peter had spoken with confidence and conviction. He had knowledge superior to training of the Sanhedrin. They took knowledge of the fact "that they had been with Jesus."

Jesus impressed the learned scribes during his personal ministry. Jesus had taught with authority which they could well remember. (Mark 1:21-22.) Jesus spoke with perfect confidence in knowledge of the Old Testament Scrip-

tures. The scribes could not find him at fault in his interpretation of the Scriptures, and they sought to entrap him into disobeying the Mosaic law. They were impressed with the manner in which Jesus conducted himself. "The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15.)

Indeed, the apostles had been with Jesus. They heard the gracious words which fell from his lips and beheld the mighty works which he did. Now Peter and John had followed in the footprints of Jesus. The lame man now walked, and their mighty words were confirmed by this miracle. (Mark 16:20.) The rulers stood at loss to know what to say or do to Peter and John. They could not deny the cure of the crippled man, and neither were they willing to accept Jesus as the source of the cure. The rulers of the high court sent the apostles away in order to deliberate a course of action. They did nothing further at the time other than to order and to threaten Peter and John not to preach and teach in the name of Jesus, for they had nothing with which to charge them.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The best of times in the passages of life are often followed by the worst of times which is always a testing of our faith.

2. We are not always rewarded or appreciated for the good that we do or would do, but the good that a Christian does is its own defense.

3. The faith and the courage of a Christian grows out of the faith and confidence that he is fulfilling the will of God according to his word.

4. The best of religious intentions may be wrong if they are not properly informed by the word of God,

as was true in the case of the Sadducees.

5. The good that a person does is never wholly unrewarded because a person should be good just for the sake of goodness.

6. Intimidations, threats, and other means to induce fear are the weapons used by men of weak character and marked by cowardice.

7. The confidence of the Christian under the pressures of life, no matter what they may be, is secure because he is standing with God.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

From what group of Jews did the first develop against the opposition of the Jerusalem Christians?

What disturbed the Sadducees about the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate?

How did this afford Peter the opportunity to preach the gospel?

Golden Text

Who were the highest ranking priests at

the time of the arrest of Peter and John?

What did Peter and John pray for, that they might meet the opposition of their enemies?

What happened when they prayed?

The Arrest of Peter and John

How did the people react to the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate?

Who was responsible for maintaining law and order in the temple courts?

Who arrested Peter and John and put them in prison?

Who were the Zadokites?

Why were the Sadducees especially

grieved at the preaching of James and John?
 Did the Sadducees believe in a resurrection?
 How did the people react to the preaching of Peter and John?

The Arraignment of Peter and John

Describe the organization of the Jewish court.
 Who were the two highest ranking members of the court?
 Who were Shammai and Hillel?
 What concern did the ranking priests show?
 What question did the priests ask of Peter and John after they had been placed in their midst?

The Power and Name of Jesus

Why was Peter unafraid as he stood in

the presence of the high court of the Jews?
 Who guided Peter in what he said?
 How did Peter explain their healing of the lame man?
 How did Peter put the Sanhedrin on trial that day?

The Rejected Stone

Did the rulers call into question the good that Peter and John had done?
 How did Peter use the "rejected stone"?

They Had Been with Jesus

In what respects were the rulers impressed with Peter and John as they stood in their midst?
 Were the rulers successful in frightening the apostles?
 Why were the rulers impressed with the fact that Peter and John had been with Jesus?

Lesson V—November 3, 1974

THE DETERMINED DISCIPLES

Lesson Text

Acts 4:18-31

18 And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye:

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.

21 And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

23 And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said, unto them.

24 And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,
 And the peoples imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array,
 And the rulers were gathered together,
 Against the Lord, and against his Anointed:

27 For of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together,

28 To do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.

29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness,

30 While thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together: and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"If God is for us, who is against us?"* (Rom. 8: 31.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Matt. 10:16-20.

Daily Bible Readings

October 28. M..... The Determination of Abel and Enoch (Heb. 11:1-6)
 October 29. T..... The Determination of Abraham and Sarah (Heb. 11:8-20)
 October 30. W. The Determination of Moses (Heb. 11:23-29)
 October 31. T..... The Determination of Joshua (Josh. 24:1-15)
 November 1. F..... The Determination of Ruth (Ruth 1:1-18)
 November 2. S..... The Determination of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1-28)
 November 3. S..... The Determination of Peter and John (Acts 5:17-32)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Peter and John, the Sadducees, and the members of the council.

Introduction

I his lesson follows closely the preceding one. Following the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, the overnight imprisonment of Peter and John, and their arraignment before the chief priests, rulers, and scribes, the rulers of the Jews were unable to dispose of what seemed to be either a serious problem or could possibly become one. The great Sanhedrin would not have assembled to discuss matters of little import. Peter had made his defense by declaring that the same Jews had killed the Prince of Life through whose name and power this man stood before them whole.

In order to work out some kind of action to take against Peter and John, the rulers sent them out of the council chamber while they conferred among themselves. They were puzzled and uncertain to know just what action should be taken. As they said, "A notable miracle hath been wrought through them." (Acts 4:16.) The fact was known throughout all of Jerusalem.

The apostles had broken no law, and they had not defied the authorities. Besides, their healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate was a laudable act which made them

popular with all the people. The rulers thought it would not be the best judgment to punish Peter and John for doing a good deed. However, the priests and elders were unwilling to set them free without charging them. They were afraid they would fill all of Jerusalem anew with the name of Jesus, perhaps with highly undesirable consequences.

The course of action the Sadducees chose was an admission of their weakness to handle the problem. The people were pleased with the healing miracle which made it impossible for the rulers to punish the apostles. Perhaps out of fear and indecision, they decided to forbid the apostles to spread their teaching among the people and to threaten them with unpleasant consequences if they did. We are at loss to understand why the Sadducees did not take great exception to the charge of Peter that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, but they said nothing about this. It may be that the Sadducees thought it to be in their best interest not to answer the charge of Peter on this score. At least, they did not let the issue surface at the time.

The Golden Text

If God is for us, who is against us? (Rom. 8:31.) We may rephrase these words more closely into our own vernacular. "If God is on our side, who is then against us?" We have here a picture of a court of law in which God is presiding as our judge, and the Lord is our advocate appearing for us before the judgment bar. No accuser against us could possibly successfully defeat us. And since God is on our side, we need not fear that

we could possibly lose with such support and defense. The fact is clear that no adversary is to be feared when God is for us. If God is for us, then all things must work together for good. This verse, however, should not provide any comfort or support to the belief that a child of God cannot fall from grace and be lost. The Scriptures are replete with warnings and examples against falling away.

The Text Explained

Peter and John Threatened

(Acts 4:18-22)

And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was more than forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was wrought.

Following the strong defense of Peter as he justified his actions and of John's in the presence of the council, the rulers of the Jews were aware of the kind of men with whom they had to deal. Peter and John had shown no weakness, nor disposition to be afraid although the apostles were acutely aware of the great power of the council.

The Sadducees quickly perceived that Peter and John were uneducated and common men. By this, we are to understand that the apostles were associated with the "people of the land" who had been trained in no rabbinical school. The rulers of the Jews would have preferred to treat the apostles with contempt and to summarily dismiss them. But that would have been no solution to their problem. They were amazed, and the presence of the lame men presented them with an irrefutable proof of something they could not understand. Since the apostles had broken no laws, either Jewish or Roman, the council had no recourse other than to let them go.

"And they called them, and charged them." The best that the Sadducees and the others could think was to forbid the apostles "to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." This was an order from the highest authority among the Jews. The Sanhedrin was recognized by Caesar and was allowed to administer the laws of the Jews under Roman mandate. This would have been the only warning necessary for a non-law-abiding Jew or

dissenter. But this did not prove to be true in the case of Peter and John.

Peter and John heard well the words of the Pharisees and knew full well the serious implications of what they said. The council was simply banning any further preaching in the name of Jesus. The apostles were ordered to remain absolutely silent. If the Sadducees thought their plan would work, they were quickly disillusioned. What the apostles said on that occasion was a true index to their character. They could not in good conscience remain silent. Jesus Christ had given them the mandate to preach to all nations beginning in the city of Jerusalem. The apostles were facing their first great test since Calvary. The decision was simple and lay between two choices. They chose to fear God and obey his commandments rather than to obey commandments of men out of fear.

Peter and John made their decision without flinching, and they said to the council: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye." Peter set up one of two alternatives, and his answer came with a final decisiveness. "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard." The apostles had gone in and come out with Jesus. They had been in Gethsemane the night of his arrest. All fled him in the darkness of that fateful night. They saw his empty tomb and watched as he left the earth with the promise of his return. Peter and John chose to obey the authority of God rather than the authority of men without surrender or reservation.

"And they . . . further threatened them." Whatever hopes the council may have had that their threats would intimidate Peter and John were doomed to failure. The laudable act of Peter and John in healing the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate had excited the admiration of the people. We could perhaps say that the crucifixion of Jesus just a matter of weeks in the past had not proved to the liking of the people judging by the response of the people to the gospel. The council was at a loss to know what to do.

"And they, when they had further threatened them." Peter and John had put the Sanhedrin to silence. They had no further arguments to make and no new charges. They had only one recourse which was to further threaten them as they had done before. Luke simply states the rulers found nothing for which to punish the apostles. Their choice to free Peter and John was reluctantly made. We receive the impression that they would have punished the apostles even without clear cause, but did not "because of the people." The council had decided Jesus should die and arrested him in the dead of night. They did this out of fear of an uprising of the people. (Mark 12:12.) And for a similar reason, they feared the people: "for all men glorified God for that which was done."

The age of the healed man was more than forty. The reason for stating his age is seemingly apparent. The Beautiful Gate faced the east toward the Mount of Olives and was the gate immediately accessible to the temple. The lame man was carried each day for his appointed place at the Beautiful Gate. He was not so much a beggar as he was an object of pity. He expected alms from the Jews who entered the temple. The Mosaic law commanded "deed of loving kindness" for the leper, cripple, or whatever. The man had long since become a familiar sight to the people of Jerusalem. The rulers were helpless to condemn Peter and John in the face of the facts, and the apostles won a great victory that day.

Peter and John Report to the Church (Acts 4:23)

And being let go, they came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them.

"And being let go, they came to their own company." Peter and John reported all that the Sadducees and elders had said to them. We may surmise that they had no knowledge of what had happened to Peter and John after the healing at the Beautiful Gate and their entrance into the temple court. The apostles recounted their unprovoked arrest, the night spent in prison, the accusations and threats

of the Sadducees and elders, and their reply to the accusers. The fact that Peter and John stood as free men in their presence was evidence of their triumphant stand for the truth.

The Prayer of the Christians (Acts 4:24-28)

And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves in array, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed: for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass.

"And they . . . lifted up their voices." Men of little courage and weaker faith will succumb to threats and intimidation. This is the primary approach of ruthless people to reduce to silence anyone who dares to raise his voice in opposition. The Sanhedrin reckoned without a full knowledge of the men with whom they were dealing. Their threats did not bring about the hoped for silence. Instead, the threats called for increased boldness of speech and the number of the Christians was growing daily.

The company of disciples listened to the report, and they "lifted Up their voice with one accord." Their prayer acknowledged the power and might of God to withstand and to conquer the forces of evil. The disciples addressed God as the Sovereign Lord who fashioned the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. The disciples acknowledged their complete faith in the power of God to deliver them from their adversaries.

The second Psalm, from which they quote, is clearly messianic with its explicit reference to the Messiah. "Jehovah said unto me. Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." (Psalm 2:7.) The

words of the disciples reflected their thought. Jesus had stood before Pilate and King Herod, and Peter and John stood in the presence of the rulers of the Jews. The failure of the past is recorded, and the confidence is expressed that all the rage and hate of the enemies of Jesus and his disciples will ultimately fail. The prayer of the disciples stated their conviction that prophecy was being fulfilled in their midst. The prophetic language of this Psalm clearly states that all the enemies of Jesus who were joined together to destroy Jesus were fulfilling the purpose of God. Luke describes their actions as predetermined by God: "... to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass."

The Prayer of the Apostles

(Acts 4:29, 30)

And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus.

The Sadducees and the rulers could only threaten the apostles. Instead of reacting in fear and submission to the demands of the Jewish rulers, their courage grew and their will to preach in the name of Jesus grew more determined than ever.

They called upon God to look upon the threatenings of the Jewish leader, "and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness." The apostles prayed for miracles and signs to accompany their preaching through "the name of thy holy Servant Jesus." The apostles were under the heavy threats of the Sanhedrin and their challenge was great. Their ability to perform miracles through the name of Jesus would confirm that God was working through them. The apostles were not praying for safety or deliverance from their enemies. They did not pray for the undoing of their tormentors. They described themselves as "servants" whose only desire was to continue the work which they had begun. The apostles prayed for the continuance of mighty works in miracles and signs through the name of Jesus.

Confirmation of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 4:31)

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

"And when they had prayed." Following the prayer of the disciples, the divine approval of the Holy Spirit was manifested in their presence. The place was shaken wherein they were gathered, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." We may easily perceive that the prayer of the apostles was heard. The apostles were strengthened by the Holy Spirit's manifestation of his presence. They would be able to rise above fear and to preach in the name of Jesus with even greater boldness.

We may take notice of one important fact at this juncture in the preaching of the apostles in the early days of the church. "They spoke the word of God with all boldness." However, the Sadducees, rulers, and elders did not retreat from their determination to stop the preaching of the apostles in the name of Jesus. The Sanhedrin was now on a collision course with the apostles. Their threats were not lightly made, nor were they lightly taken by the apostles. The Sanhedrin kept the Christians under daily surveillance and watched with jealousy and envy as the disciples grew in number.

The opposition of the Jews grew apace with the success of the apostles. The Sadducees spoke with determined words; later, they would take actions as decisive as their final plans had been to destroy Jesus. Their words led to violence resulting finally in the death of Stephen. The apostles continued undaunted to preach the word. They were setting the pattern that would mark the Christians throughout the centuries. The militant church emerged in those early days, and this was the spirit of the Christians that pressed throughout the Roman empire during the days of the apostles and into all the world since to win people to Christ. The Jerusalem Christians were not weak vacillating disciples. They believed and with unparalleled courage extended the boundaries of the king-

dom in their day, and we can afford to do no less in ours.

We need to take note of a second fact of crucial importance. Just moments before the ascension, the apostles were questioning Jesus about the establishment of his kingdom, and their curiosity was not satisfied. From the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit led the apostles into a growing awareness of the meaning of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of God is the rule of God in the hearts of Christian people whose limits of dominion are to be the uttermost bounds of the earth. The unpleasant experiences

of Peter and John growing out of healing the lame man at the Beautiful Gate suddenly caused them to recognize that the preaching of the gospel would be fraught with perils and hardships. The Holy Spirit led Peter and John to stand up to the Sanhedrin and gave them words to say in defense of what they had done in the name of Jesus. Truly the kingdom of heaven had come into their midst and they were aware of the fact, and they were girded with courage to faithfully discharge the commandments of the Great Commission.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. One of the great principles which a Christian must live by is to obey the laws of God when the laws of men contradict the laws of God.

2. The recourse to violence and intimidation, against the good that man does is an open admission of weakness of character and conviction about principle.

3. Men of small courage and lit-

tle faith will succumb to threats and intimidation.

4. The faith of the Christian is resolved in the fact that if God is for us then who can be against us.

5. The apostles did not pray for safety of deliverance, or the undoing of their enemies, but that they would have the courage to continue what they had begun.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What charge did Peter make against the Sanhedrin after a night spent in prison?

Had the apostles broken any laws of the Romans or Jews?

Why were the elders and priests afraid for Peter and the other apostles to continue preaching in Jerusalem?

Why was the Sanhedrin afraid of the people?

Golden Text

What is the legal setting for the golden text?

Is there any biblical support for the contention that a child of God cannot fall from grace and be lost?

Who is the Christian's advocate before the judgment bar?

Peter and John Threatened

Had Peter and John shown any weakness in the presence of the high court of the Jews?

What was meant by the statement that the apostles were unlearned and ignorant men?

What two choices confronted Peter in the presence of the court?

Why did the priests and rulers free Peter and John on this occasion?

Peter and John Report to the Church

Did the disciples know what happened to Peter and John after their arrest at the Beautiful Gate?

Did Peter and John win, at least, a temporary victory over the Sadducees and elders?

The Prayer of the Christians

How do ruthless people seek to reduce to silence their opposition?

Why were the Jews fearful of the growing number of Christians?

How did the apostles use quotations from the Old Testament to encourage the Christians in the face of their oppositions?

The Prayer of the Apostles

What was the reaction of the apostles to the threats of the Jews?

What was the support of the courage of the apostles?

What was the request of the prayers of the apostles at this time?

Confirmation of the Holy Spirit

How were the apostles filled with the Holy Spirit?

Was this a repeat of the Pentecost experience?

Were the threats against the apostles made lightly by the court?

How did the understanding of the apostles toward the nature of the kingdom of God change after Pentecost?

Lesson VI—November 10, 1974

TWO EARLY HYPOCRITES

Lesson Text

Acts 5:1-11

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it.

6 And the young men arose and

wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 But Peter *said* unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out.

10 And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

GOLDEN TEXT.— *Lying Lips are an abomination to Jehovah.*" (Prov. 12:22.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 4:32-37.

Daily Bible Readings

November 4. M.....	Christian Generosity (Acts 4:32-35)
November 5. T.....	Barnabas' Example (Acts 4:36, 37)
November 6. W.....	Sin of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
November 7. T.....	Lying, Hateful to God (Prov. 6:16-19)
November 8. F.....	Deceitful Tongue (Psalm 52)
November 9. S.....	Satan, Father of Liars (John 8:44-55)
November 10. S.....	Destiny of Liars (Rev. 21:5-8, 24-27)

TIME.—A.D. 33.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Ananias and Sapphira, the young men, and the church.

Introduction

The young church in Jerusalem was growing. The membership numbered several thousand. The same boldness which characterized Peter's sermon on Pentecost marked the kind of preaching that the apostles were doing in Jerusalem. They had not broken any Jewish laws, and had not been accused of doing so. That the Romans took no notice of the Christians indicates that they were peaceful law abiding citizens. Luke describes the unity which characterized the whole Christian community. "And the multitude of

them that believed were of one heart and soul." (Acts 4:32.) We are to understand by this that the emotional and intellectual lives of the Christians were centered in Christ and his teachings.

The church showed a remarkable unanimity of the oneness of their concern for each other. "And not one of them said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; and they had all things common." (Acts 4:32.) We are to understand by this expression that those who owned property regarded

it not as their own, because another person's need was a greater claim than a title of ownership. They shared their possessions with each other according to the needs of the people among them. We should take notice of the fact that the personal ownership of property was not deemed to be wrong, neither here nor in any place in the Scriptures. The Christians simply sold their property and converted it into money to make the care of the needy more convenient. They sold houses and land, but we should not assume that they sold every house and every piece of land. The Christians had to live in homes and life went on as usual. There is no reason to assume that they did not continue to work for their daily bread. Luke meant for this account of the distribution of goods to introduce the episode of Barnabas and Ananias.

"And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 4:33.) The power that Jesus promised the apostles which would come with their baptism of the Holy Spirit enabled them to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ which

was especially offensive to the rulers of the Jews. The great power lay in their ability to counter the gain-sayers and to mightily convict the people of their sins with the powerful reasoning of their arguments. "Great grace was upon them all." The entire church found favor with each other and others as well. Their good behavior was commending them to those who were without. This grew out of the fact that the money which was laid at the apostles' feet went for the needy. They preached the word and lived the word.

The first sin in Jerusalem grew out of the selfishness of two people for praise in the church which they did not deserve. The problem started when a man named Joseph, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles, sold some property. This good man sold a piece of his land and brought the whole price and laid it at the feet of the apostles. It is a strange thing that a good and generous act would have been so misinterpreted as it was in the case of a husband and wife who were seeking the praise of men. What they did was good; their motives were bad.

The Golden Text

Lying lips are an abomination unto Jehovah. (Prov. 12:22.)

The Scriptures set forth seven things which God hates, and lying is listed secondly in the list of abominations. (Prov. 6:16.) We may erroneously assume that all sins are of equal gravity, but the Scriptures do not teach it so. Jesus detailed the malignant progression of sin in the Sermon on the Mount as hate moves from anger toward a brother, to saying "Raca" (a disparaging comment), to "fool" which was a term of utter contempt. (Matt. 6:21ff.)

God ranks lying as one of the seven most heinous crimes committed by man for reasons which are easily apparent. The commandment against lying is set forth in

the Decalogue: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." This means among other things, not to give testimony against a neighbor which is contrary to truth. This sin is equally destructive to the moral nature of man as murder, adultery, and theft, because each is based upon a form of the lie. Lying is the means by which all kinds of deceptive practices are concealed.

False testimony given in a court of law can cost an innocent man his life. Talebearing is also included because a good person may be robbed of his reputation by careless gossip. It is the universal judgment of the human race that a person who will deliberately lie may not be trusted. One of the surest indexes to character is truthfulness.

The Text Explained

The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira
(Acts 5:1-4)

But a certain man named Ananias with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of

the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the

Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and, after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

The first recorded sin in the Jerusalem church was an act of deceit on the part of a husband and wife. Their specific sin was lying. Their sin was a blot on the church. The twelve apostles had their Judas, and the Jerusalem church had Ananias and Sapphira. Luke tells this story, and he could have omitted it from his account. However, the inspired writers simply told the truth, both the good and bad. The dark side is related alongside the good, allowing the facts to speak for themselves as they must. The early church was not made up of perfect people.

"But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession." The story of this husband and wife is placed alongside a similar account of the good Barnabas who sold a possession and laid the money at the apostles' feet. The name "Ananias" was familiar to all the Jews; it meant "the grace of the Lord." "Sapphira" was an equally well known name meaning "beautiful." Suffice it to say that the names did not ethically and morally fit those who wore them based upon their actions.

"And kept a part of the price." Ananias and Sapphira were apparently emulating the generosity of Barnabas and other members of the church by selling a parcel of land they possessed. But the comparison ends here. They held back a part of the money for their own private use. This was their privilege since no one was compelled to sell his property. They lied in representing the gift of the money which they brought to the disciples as the full purchase price of the land.

Although Ananias took the lead in the deception, Sapphira knew of it; and she agreed to become a part of the deception. Ananias was both selfish and greedy. The praise of the generosity of Barnabas by the church led Ananias to seek the same praise without being worthy, since he was unwilling to make the

same sacrifice that Barnabas had made.

"Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie. This is the first recorded sin of any of the members of the Jerusalem church. No doubt there were others. We have no way of knowing how long after Pentecost the sin occurred. It could not have been a long period of time.

The hopes of Ananias for praise was short-lived. Peter immediately knew the deception of the unhappy man who was seeking to gain a reputation for generosity with the Jerusalem church. We may wonder why Ananias behaved in such a manner. Some people with profit motives in mind for their business, show great generosity in the church with ulterior designs. Some people just enjoy attention.

The enormity of the sin of Ananias became immediately apparent. Peter was filled with the Spirit of God and he spoke with both the power and the authority of the Holy Spirit in their presence. Ananias and Sapphira were not just lying to a man: they were lying to God. We need to remember that Adam and Eve too were started on their path of sin through a lie. Satan told them. And Satan became the father of all liars. (John 8:44.)

"While it remained, did it not remain thine own?" The members of the Jerusalem church were under no commands from the apostles to dispose of their property for a communal division of the proceeds among the members. The early Christians owned what they had and could do as they pleased with their possessions. There are those who have interpreted this practice of the Jerusalem church to be an early precedent for the practices of contemporary communism. This is not so. The practiced generosity of the church was voluntary and pure in motive. The deception of Ananias and Sapphira in view of the circumstances made their behavior even more revolting. And moral judgment should not be passed on Peter for the fate of the husband and wife since what happened to the husband and wife was an act of God. Peter describes this sin in another setting: "forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of

Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing." (2 Pet. 2:15.)

The Curse of the Lie (Acts 5:5, 6)

And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

Death to all mankind resulted from the first lie ever told to him by Satan, man's chiefest adversary. When God said to Adam not to touch the forbidden fruit "lest ye die," Satan countered with the expression: "Ye shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:3, 4.) The old adage to be adequately warned is to be sufficiently armed applied in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, but they deliberately chose to lie. Peter simply put the question to Ananias that is as old as the ages—"Why did you do it?" Whatever entered your heart to lead you to believe that you would go unpunished? Peter did not take a self-righteous position to condemn Ananias; he was appalled by his perfidious action in the light of the goodness and decency of the church.

"And Ananias hearing these words." The awesome import of what Peter said to Ananias became apparent when he fell dead at the feet of the apostles. One sin begets another sin, and still other sins. "What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive." Great fear came upon all who heard of the death of Ananias. We are inclined to shudder at such accounts in the Bible as the death of the first born in the land of Egypt and Ananias. This is because we momentarily blind our eyes to evil and evil men. The sins of the fathers may become even more monstrous in the acts of their children. The German people took a persecuted stance after World War I, and they created a monstrous dictator who plunged practically the whole human race into war.

Peter did not deliver judgment against the man: God did. Peter said much later when the church was triumphantly advancing under constant persecution, "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." (1 Pet. 4:17.) This was the first example of disci-

pline in the church. The warning was swift and sure that such people may not be contained in the church.

Wicked people have no place in the Christian fellowship. A church will surely be disrupted and destroyed from within if unruly and wicked people are not constrained in their practices. The apostle Paul set forth the rule for the church in cases of such behavior on the part of the members in advising the church at Corinth what to do concerning the immoral behavior of one of the members. Paul wrote, "Deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. 5:5.)

And some of the young men took the body of Ananias and wrapped it for burial. The practice was to take a long continuous roll of cloth and wrap each limb and then the whole body with a head napkin wrapped around the head. The appearance would be somewhat like a dressed mummy. It was the practice of the members of a family to perform this chore. It could be that Ananias had no immediate kin, or they could not be summoned. The haste of the burial including the burial cloth and ointment is the common practice in this part of the world because of the extreme heat and rapid decomposition. Burial often took place on the same day for the stated reason. It may be assumed that Ananias received a proper burial as is the custom of civilized people.

The Death of Sapphira (Acts 5:7-10)

And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much. But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband.

The death and burial of Ananias was during the space of three hours.

Luke does not provide any information about the reason why Sapphira had not been told of her husband's death, and she was not even present for the burial. The death of Ananias was a quick and terrible punishment for a wicked man who would have disturbed the fellowship of the church with his deceptive practices had his actions been overlooked.

We are told that "great fear came upon all that heard it." As Peter and the others were contemplating the meaning of this sudden judgment of God, the wife of Ananias came in not knowing the terrible fate of her husband.

Peter immediately presented Sapphira with an opportunity to clear herself of any complicity in the sin of her husband. "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much." Sapphira could have removed herself from the falsehood of her husband had she chosen to do so, but she did not. She repeated the same price of the land as reported by her husband. Sapphira apparently possessed no more conscience than had her husband, and she confirmed the lie of Ananias.

"But Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to try the Spirit of the Lord?" Sapphira chose to brazen her way in support of her husband's lie. She apparently showed not the slightest hesitation to perpetrate the falsehood. Any extenuating circumstances would have been immediately perceivable to Peter. He made known to Sapphira that her sin too had discovered her.

Peter's announcement to her that Ananias was dead came as a shock to Sapphira.

"The feet of them that have buried thy husband are at the door." The sudden announcement of Ananias' death was a crushing blow to Sapphira. The staggering impact of her guilt was too great for her to bear. Peter announced to Sapphira that her death would immediately take place.

The episode of Ananias and Sapphira breaks forth with sudden harshness upon the reader as he follows Luke's account. We are prepared for the opposition of the Sadducees and Pharisees which was steadily mounting against the Jerusalem church. It is not surprising that the threats and intimidations

of the rulers of the Jews later resulted in imprisonment and death for many of the early Christians.

The writer of the Hebrew letter described such sins as they were committed under the Mosaic law, and the comparable sin under Christ. "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?" (Heb. 10:28-29.) Indeed judgment belongs to God and he will recompense. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10:31.) Peter was simply an instrument in the hands of God. He simply rebuked the husband and wife for their jointly shared sin of deception.

Luke does not pass judgment on Peter or the church for the fate of Ananias and Sapphira. The reasons for Luke's recounting the dreadful story is apparent. The Christians Were members of the church. They were the temple of God in whom the Spirit of God dwelled. (1 Cor. 3:16ff.) They were the vines and Christ was the branch. Sin is of a cancerous nature, and malignancy begets malignancy. Paul advised Timothy, "Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." (1 Tim. 5:22.)

The account of Sapphira's deception ends as suddenly and tragically as that of her husband. The young men who had buried her husband came and found her. She was carried out and laid by the side of her husband. Such an awesome happening was indeed a deeply disturbing experience for the church.

The Response of the Church (Acts 5:11)

And a great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

The word church (Gk. *ekklesia*) is a common word with both a Hebrew and Greek background. The word simply means an assembly of people who have come together for some particular purpose. The rea-

son for the assembly with a prefix or suffix describes its nature. The church (*ekklesia*) of Christ simply means that this is Christ's church. As it is used in Acts, the word includes exclusively the baptized believers in Christ. In the LXX Greek version of the Old Testament, translated 250 B.C., the word denotes the whole congregation of Israel. We should take note of the fact that to prefix the church with such names as Baptist, Catholics, and other such denominational names is to ascribe ownership to something

other than Christ, and this is wrong.

The church had no complicity in the sin and did not become a party to it. Not only did great fear come upon the whole church, but others who heard it as well. The integrity and purity of the church was upheld, and the church multiplied and prospered. And those who were not pure in heart dared not associate themselves as Christians in name only. The praise of the apostles was sounded forth among the people, and they continued to work the mighty acts of God.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The early Christians were law-abiding people which is evidenced by the fact that the Romans took no notice of them.

2. The church need never fear the opposition from without as long as the members are united from within as was the Jerusalem church.

3. The mark always of a Christian is to show a deep sympathy for the unfortunate and to help him in his need.

4. The first recorded sin of any member of the Jerusalem church

grew out of a selfishness to win the praise of men they did not deserve.

5. Lying is one of the seven deadly sins which could cost a man all of his most precious possessions, including his life.

6. The Bible is scrupulous to tell the truth—both the good and the bad—about the best and worst of men.⁵

7. The praise of men even when deserved is a short lived matter, but the praise of God will last for eternity.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Did the Roman authorities pay any attention to the Christians in their early days in Jerusalem?

How did the Jerusalem Christians show their concern for each other?

Did the early Christians practice a form of communism?

How did the non-Christians react toward the generosity of the Christians toward each other?

Golden Text

Why is lying considered to be such a heinous sin?

Why is lying so destructive to the moral nature of man?

Why is talebearing such a serious sin?

The Sin of Ananias and Sapphira

What was the first recorded sin in the Jerusalem church? What is the first recorded sin in the 9th?

Why did the husband and wife hold back a part of the price?

Was Sapphira a party to her husband's deception?

Was the apostle Peter responsible in any way for the death of the couple?

The Curse of the Lie

What was the result of the first lie ever told on earth to man?

Did Ananias and Sapphira deliberately choose to lie as they did?

Why does the account of Ananias and Sapphira seem so terrible at first reading?

Who delivered judgment against the husband and wife?

What is the influence of wicked people in the church?

The Death of Sapphira

Was Sapphira told about her husband's death?

What was the reaction of the people to the death of the two people?

Did Sapphira have the opportunity to clear herself of any guilt she may have had?

How does the case of Ananias and Sapphira point up the cancerous nature of sin?

The Response of the Church

What is the meaning of *ekklesia*?

How does the name of Christ alter this simple word?

Lesson VII—November 17, 1974

A PROBLEM SOLVED

Lesson Text

Acts 6:1-10

1 Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Phillip, and

Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch;

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” (Gal. 6:2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 5:12-29.

Daily Bible Readings

November 11.	M.....	Genuine Religion (James 1:1-12)
November 12.	T.....	Practical Religion (James 2:14-26)
November 13.	W.....	Cheerful Religion (2 Cor. 9:1-8)
November 14.	T.....	Macedonian Religion (2 Cor. 8:8-15)
November 15.	F.....	Business-Like Religion (2 Cor. 8:16-24)
November 16.	S.....	Mutual Religion (Rom. 15:1-9)
November 17.	S.....	Growth Religion (Psalm 112:1-10)

TIME.—A.D. 34.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Grecian Jews, Hebrews, the apostles, the widows, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus, and Stephen.

Introduction

The present lesson concerns one of the first problems which arose among the membership of the Jerusalem church. There seems to have been an unequal distribution of the necessities of life among the dependent Christian widows. The Grecians complained against the Hebrews to redress the inequity, and it was promptly done. The time passage between the establishment of the church on Pentecost and the episode of this lesson was perhaps four or five years. Before address-

ing the lesson text, we may turn with profit to review the good and bad fortunes of the Jerusalem church in the interim.

Following the healing of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate, the membership of the church grew rapidly. A short while after Peter and John had been dismissed after their examining trial before the Sanhedrin, the apostles were again in trouble with the rulers of the Jews. Despite the earlier threats to cease speaking in the name of

Jesus, the apostles continued to do so, and had told the Sanhedrin they would. The apostles were both preaching and performing healing miracles among the common people in and around Jerusalem.

The high priest and his Sadducean cohorts were grieved and angered. They were also "filled with jealousy" at the continuing success of the apostles. Their anger turned to frustration, and they descended upon the apostles and laid hands on them and put them in prison.

As was their practice, the Sanhedrin convened the next morning to re-address the case. We may imagine the chagrin of the Sanhedrin when the officers returned to say the cells were empty and the prison was securely locked with all the guards properly stationed at their post. In the meantime, "an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out." (Acts 5:19.) The angel told them to go and stand in the temple and preach the words of life.

Then the word was brought to the Sanhedrin. The apostles had not fled in cowardly fear in the darkness of the night. They were standing in the temple court preaching to the people. The Sadducean authorities had no way of knowing how the apostles had been released from prison. But they meant to get to the bottom of the matter. The captain of the temple officers was dispatched to the temple to bring the apostles before the high court of the Jews. The captain was careful to exercise no violence in his arrest for fear of the people, and the apostles accompanied them without protest.

The Sanhedrin was both grieved and angered. They accused the apostles: "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." (Acts 5:28.) This remark had been prefaced with the charge that the apostles were ordered not to teach any further in the name of Jesus lest they suffer painful consequences. The Jewish leaders were further dismayed by the bold words of

Peter who told the rulers: "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:30.) Peter charged that they had indeed killed Jesus; and furthermore, they had stigmatized him with the most shameful form of death in the Roman world. Moses wrote: "He that is hanged is accused of God." (Deut. 21:23.)

The tempered threats of the rulers moved to passionate anger, and they were moved to slay them possibly by stoning. We need to keep in mind that the Sadducees and Pharisaic members of the high court were the princes of Israel responsible to both the people and the Romans for their actions.

Present at the convening of the court was the great rabbi of the age, Gamaliel. He had been the disciple of the illustrious Hillel, who was the leading scholar in the Mosaic law. Gamaliel taught one of the most illustrious scholars of all ages, the peerless apostle Paul. Gamaliel warned the Sanhedrin not to do anything intemperate. He cited the instances of a certain Theudas who led a revolt among the Jews which came to nought. And also Judas of Galilee led a revolt in A.D. 6 when Judea was made a subservient Roman province. He perished along with those who were joined to him.

Gamaliel warned that no overt action should be taken against the men and least of all any form of violence. Gamaliel warned the Sanhedrin that if the work of the apostles was of God, they could not stop it; otherwise, the apostles would fail and would suffer the fate of other insurrectionists. The apostles did not escape so easily. They were beaten and further charged not to speak any more in the name of Jesus. Nevertheless, they continued daily in the temple court and in their homes teaching the people.

Luke gives us reason to believe that the church enjoyed relative peace. The Jews were perhaps hesitant to move against the church for fear of both the Romans and the Jews since the apostles were apparently breaking no laws.

The Golden Text

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2.)

The Christian journey is both a

bearing and sharing of the daily burdens we carry through life. Jesus taught this principle. Jesus set forth the principle in relation-

ship to himself. "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. 11:29, 30.) Jesus set forth the principle in another context in point of service: "and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." (Matt. 20:27.)

In the golden text, Paul simply states a principle of sharing. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Paul's statement is indeed broad. Jesus taught the rule of the "second mile" even when our enemies compel us

to bear their burdens. (Matt. 5:41.) The burdens of life are numerous: sorrow, sickness, poverty, tragedy, and the list goes on. The word "bear" (Gk. *bastazete*) means "to take up" "carry," "endure," and "remove." This commandment primarily means to lift up the person who is burdened with the crushing weight of sin.

"And so fulfill the law of Christ." This principle sums up the character of Jesus' teaching that Christians are to love one another (John 13:34), and Christ indeed has borne our griefs and our sorrows. (Isa. 53:4).

The Text Explained

The Problem (Acts 6:1, 2)

Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.

Luke pauses in his narration of the history of the growth and progress of the Jerusalem church. After the passage of some four or five years, the church numbered several thousand people. After the healing of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate, Luke numbered the new converts at that time to be some eight thousand persons. This included the three thousand on Pentecost and the five thousand in Acts 4:4.

Luke provides us with little information about the worship practices of such a large number. We do know that the early Christians met in their own homes. Paul saluted the church which met in the home of Prisca and Aquila. (Rom. 16:5.) We do know that the Christians continued in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. (Acts 2:42.) It is highly unlikely that the entire church in Jerusalem came together in one place at one time for worship, but that the whole church continued in the spirit of fellowship is stated. Furthermore, the church was under the direction of the apostles.

However, Luke narrates the unfolding divine pattern for the worship and work of the church. The large increase in the number of disciples brought about complications in the affairs of the church. "Now in those days" is a statement about some point of time in the early growing period of the church. The Grecian Jews complained against the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration. We are to understand that this meant bread and other human needs. The administration of the daily food was under the supervision of the Hebrews.

The care of the poor was a matter of great concern to the Hebrews. Moses had commanded: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them for the poor, and for the sojourners." (Lev. 23:22.) Legislation for the poor was broadly expressed in the law: "For the poor will never cease out of the land." (Deut. 15:11.) The people of Israel worked out methods and programs to care for the poor all in keeping with the divine directives of the law. The church in Jerusalem was no less concerned to provide for the daily needs of their number.

The church in Jerusalem contained both Hebrews and Grecians. The Hebrews were the Aramaic speaking Jews living in Palestine, and most of them were living in Jerusalem and Judea. They were the natives of the land. The Grecians

were probably immigrants from the Greek provinces of the Roman empire, or children of Jews who had long lived outside Palestine. We may assume they spoke the Greek language. And some of the Grecians may have been Gentile proselytes, or with strong strains of the genetic blood stream of the Gentiles marking them. Whatever may be the facts here, one fact is outstanding. There was a visible tension existing between the Hebrews and the Grecians, and it finally surfaced.

The murmuring arose over what would be considered, as such is the case many times, just a trifling matter. It does not seem that the widows were complaining so much as the Greek element in the membership. They thought the Hebrews were showing partiality to the native Jewish widows, which may or may not have been the case since the sole responsibility of the distribution of the alms had resided in the hands of the Hebrews.

A Christian principle is most apparent in this early conflict in the Jerusalem church. Jesus reflected the statement of Moses: "For ye have the poor always with you, and whosoever ye will ye can do them good." (Mark 14:7.) The church is charged to care for the poor, widows and orphans, and other human needs. Unfortunately, some of the members of the church in recent years have opposed the support of orphan homes and homes for the aged. Their failure has largely been due to their neglect to distinguish between the church and the method which the church deems best to be used under the direct supervision of the elders to help the poor and unfortunate.

"And the twelve called the multitude." Luke mentions all twelve of the apostles as serving in the position of leadership in the church. Matthias had been chosen to take the place of Judas, and he was numbered with the twelve. (Acts 1:26.) The apostles are represented as calling together a multitude of the disciples which implies that a sizeable number of Christians were involved. The apostles informed the people on that occasion that it was not best for them to forsake the word of God and serve tables. Jesus had commanded his apostles to go and teach, and this was their

first and greatest responsibility. Had they taken the time to handle the distribution of the daily food, their teaching responsibilities would have been hampered.

The word "ministration" comes from the Greek word *diakonia* and means the same as "to serve." The Greek word *diakonia* or *diakionos*, as used here, has precisely the same meaning in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The word is usually translated "deacon," but also as "servant" and "minister." The apostles did not have time for this kind of service.

The apostles, however, recognized both the justice and gravity of the problem and were determined to right the inequity at once. After calling the community of disciples together, the apostles made known their decision in the matter, and what they wanted done about it.

Solving the Problem (Acts 6:3, 4)

Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word.

The disciples simply screened the church for the best possible men in the church to appoint to this duty of serving tables. The New Testament does not in this place or at any other place even suggest the method for selecting and approving of the officers in the church. This is left to the good sense and judgment of the church members. The dictum is clear that whoever is appointed must be a good man, held in the highest esteem by the church; and the approval of the congregation must be made known in some unspecified way, in a responsible and dignified manner.

Why the apostles should have arrived at the number of seven is not stated. However seven is regarded as a perfect number of completeness in the Scriptures. The seven men then had to be of honorable reputation and held in esteem by all the church. Furthermore, they had to be men filled with the Spirit. We do not understand that the seven men had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit because they did not. In addition, they were to be

men filled with wisdom. They were to possess a good amount of common sense and good judgment. They were expected to know the principles of justice and to possess the intelligence to exercise it.

If brethren in the churches today would exercise the same good judgment in selecting the elders and deacons, then a good many problems in the church would be averted before they arose. Good men will handle the affairs of the church in such a commendable fashion that the need for unnecessary criticism will seldom arise.

In the case of the selecting of the seven men to appoint over the business of the daily ministration, the apostles reserved the right to make the appointment. We need to keep in mind that the leadership of the apostles was a special appointment from God, and they possessed miraculous power from God to exercise leadership in the church. It would be a mistake to equate the work of the elders, and their authority with that of the apostles.

One of the most important lessons in the New Testament emerges at this juncture in the history of the growing church. The apostles insisted upon their responsibility and pressing need to devote themselves and time to the worship and daily teaching the gospel. The endless details of church affairs are always with us, and good men should be appointed to see to them.

The Response of the Church

(Acts 6:5-7)

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The fairness of the proposal was equal to the Christian spirit which created it. The seven men who were chosen to be responsible for the daily ministration had Greek names which meant they had Hel-

lenic backgrounds of some description. The shoe was then on the other foot. The Hebrews had been responsible for the daily ministration; now the Greeks were to look after the Grecian widows.

The name of Stephen heads the list. He is described as a man "full of faith and the Holy Spirit." The expression to "be full of the Holy Spirit" is frequently used to refer to spiritual gifts and miraculous powers. There is another reason why Stephen should be honored with heading the list: he is the first Christian martyr. Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus were the others.

Luke sets the name of Philip second in the list. This is Philip the evangelist, who is to be distinguished from Philip, the apostle. The Philip of the seven named men is the Philip who preached in Samaria and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8:26-39.) This is Philip the evangelist who had four virgin daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:8, 9.)

We know nothing of the other five with the possible exception of Nicolaus, who was a Gentile proselyte and a native of Antioch in Syria. As early as 180 A.D., the time of Irenaeus, a Nicolaus was said to have been the founder of the heretical sect called the Nicolaitans whom John condemns in the harshest terms in the churches at Ephesus and Pergamum. (Rev. 2:6, 15.) But there is no shred of credible evidence that the Nicolaus of the seven is related to a later heretical sect in Asia Minor.

"Whom they set before the apostles." The church selected the seven men whom they believed best qualified for the responsibility. The authority for their appointment was left to the apostles. The ordaining of the seven has resulted in much discussion. The apostles first prayed and then they laid their hands upon them. The imposition of hands was a common custom among the Hebrews. Jacob laid his hands upon the son of Joseph (Gen. 48:13,14); Moses laid his hands upon Joshua (Deut. 34:9); and the Levites were set apart to the service of the tabernacle by the laying on of hands (Lev. 16:12). In this case, the laying on of hands was a symbol of the impartation of the gifts

and graces necessary to qualify the seven disciples for their new duties.

Many have supposed the appointment of the seven men to have been the beginning of the work of deacons in the church, but these men are not called deacons. After the persecutions of the Christians in Jerusalem, the Christians were scattered abroad. (Acts 8:1.) We cannot know that they continued to function in their specially appointed work, and we discover Stephen and Philip later working as preaching evangelists. We may reasonably assume that the seven disciples were especially fitted to do the work of an evangelist in the same respect that Paul charged Timothy. (2 Tim. 4:5.)

"And the word of God increased." The word "increased" is from the Greek word *euxanen* which means "to keep on growing all the more." The preached word grew apace with an ever increasing number of Christians teaching the word. The number of the converts multiplied. A mathematical term is used to indicate that the membership grew in ratio to the preached word.

"A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." All priests were necessarily Levites. We should keep in mind that many of the regular priests were humble and pious men such as Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

The priests believed the Scriptures of their fathers and were persuaded that the Scriptures verily set forth Jesus to be the Messiah. The priests were learned in the Scriptures and had to be in order to fulfill their priestly functions in the temple. The statement that the priests were "obedient to the faith" means that they obeyed the gospel.

Stephen, the Evangelist (Acts 6:8-10)

And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians,

and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

Stephen possessed a knowledge of the gospel and mightily preached the word. And what he said was confirmed by the wonders and signs which he did in the presence of all the people. The statement that he was full of grace meant that he found "great favor with God"; and the power was the power of the gospel to convert the gainsayer and sinner.

The force of Stephen's preaching was powerful and logical. Stephen's preaching was so effective that certain of the Jews could no longer constrain themselves. Opposition came from a particular synagogue in Jerusalem composed of Libertines. These men may have once been slaves of the Romans and freed by them for some meritorious service, or the Romans declared their freedom from their owners for some special reason.

It is said that there were two hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem. These Libertines and their descendants had come from Cyrene and Alexandria in Egypt, and from Cilicia and Asia. Saul of Tarsus may well have been a member of this particular synagogue since he hailed from Tarsus in Cilicia in Asia Minor. Their opposition to Stephen grew so intense that they could no longer contain themselves which resulted in an open public confrontation.

"And they were not able to withstand the wisdom." Stephen's command of the Old Testament scripture was formidable. Being "full of grace and power" he mightily proclaimed the gospel. He spoke with such clear and forcible arguments that his adversaries were unable to answer the wisdom and spirit with which Stephen spoke. The Libertines were completely unharnessed by Stephen; and they resorted, as is often the case, to subterfuge to discredit Stephen with the people.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Christians may not use the need of people less fortunate than most to become a point of contention among the fellowship of the

church since this is a work always with the deepest meaning of Christian love and charity.

2. The moral courage of a Chris-

tian may always be discovered at a crucial point which is to do the right thing regardless of outside threats and interferences.

3. Gamaliel taught a great lesson for all men of all ages that we cannot fight against God without being defeated.

4. A test of true Christian faith is determined by the willingness to help the orphan, the widow, or whoever we may find in need along the roadside of life.

5. The problems of life are to be solved, not compounded, and the

good Christian will see to it that he becomes a problem solver, not a problem maker.

6. The best way to prove one's Christian faith is to live it. The best way to prove the existence of God is to believe in his existence and live in such a way as to prove it.

7. The word of God and the rule of Christian action is so plainly set forth in the word that we cannot mistake the intent of God if we honor the Bible as his divinely revealed will.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject for today's lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

What was the first difference which arose between the members of the Jerusalem church?

Why were the high priest and Sadducees "filled with jealousy" at the continuing success of the apostles?

Why do intelligent people resort to anger and violence to accomplish their will sometimes?

What advice did Gamaliel give to the Sadducees and Pharisees about handling the case of Peter and John?

Golden Text

How is the journey of Christians through life both a sharing and bearing of responsibility?

Is it wrong to expect another Christian to help us bear the loads of life?

The Problem

How rapidly did the Jerusalem church grow in the days and months following Pentecost?

Do we have any knowledge about the places where the Jerusalem Christians worshipped?

Why did Grecian Jews quarrel with the Hebrews over the matter of distributing food?

What does the Old Testament and the New Testament teach about the presence of the poor?

Who were the Grecian Jews?

What is the meaning of the word *diakonia*?

Solving the Problem

Who selected the men who would serve tables among the Grecian widows in the church?

Does the Bible place a special emphasis upon the number seven?

Does the New Testament set forth the procedures for the selecting and appointing of elders and deacons?

Who reserved the right in the Jerusalem church to make the appointment of the seven men?

The Response of the Church

What is the outstanding thing about the names of the men whom they chose for the daily ministration to the Grecian widows?

Which of the seven occupied prominent places in the preaching ministry of the church?

Who were the Nicolaitans?

Why is it significant that many of the priests obeyed the gospel?

Stephen, the Evangelist

Why was the preaching of Stephen so effective?

Who were the Libertines?

Why were Libertines unable to withstand the wisdom of the preaching of Stephen?

Lesson VIII—November 24, 1974

A SAINT MARTYRED

Lesson Text

Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the *synagogue* of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, who said, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us.

15 And all that sat in the council,

fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord;

58 And they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him."* (Acts 8:2.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 7:51-53.

Daily Bible Readings

November 18.	M.....	The First Murder (Gen. 4:1-8)
November 19.	T.....	Persecution of the Prophets (2 Chron. 36:11-16)
November 20.	W.....	Certainty of Persecution (John 16:31-33)
November 21.	T.....	Persecution of Jeremiah (Jer. 37:11-21)
November 22.	F.....	Patience in Suffering (2 Tim. 1:8-12)
November 23.	S.....	Confidence in Suffering (Rom. 8:12-18)
November 24.	S.....	Sufferers Rewarded (Rev. 2:8-10)

TIME.—A.D. 36.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Stephen, Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, men of Cilicia and Asia, false witnesses, and the Jewish leaders.

Introduction

Stephen became the first Christian to lose his life because of his faith in Christ. This is surprising since Peter had taken the earlier lead in preaching the gospel and withstanding the rulers of the Jews to their faces. However, Stephen was

engaged in open debate with the Libertines, some of whom were of Grecian background. If the Sadducees were looking for an occasion to charge the disciples, the Libertines provided them with a classic case in the person of Stephen. "They su-

borned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." They succeeded in stirring up the elders and scribes with this charge of blasphemy. Jesus, as you will remember, was accused with teaching against the law of Moses. When the high priest asked Jesus if he were the Christ, he said, "I am." (Mark 14:62.) This was the admission of Jesus which was construed as blasphemy. And this was the belief of Stephen that Jesus is the Christ.

The elders and scribes seized Stephen and brought him into the presence of the Sanhedrin court to charge him. And again false witnesses were set up to testify against Stephen who added a new accusation which also followed the pattern of procedure used against Jesus. "This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law." These words were calculated to stir up the people. The temple was the focal point in the worship of the Hebrews, and it was the means of livelihood for the priest. Any words spoken disparagingly of the temple would have infuriated the people. The false witnesses said that they heard Stephen say "that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us." Jesus had prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem. (Luke 19:41-44.) But his words were twisted and they claimed Jesus said: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another without hands." (Mark 14:58.) The words that Jesus actually used are recorded by John and referred to his own fleshly body when he told the Jews: "Destroy this temple, and in three days

I will raise it up." (John 2:19.) John states that following the resurrection of Jesus, they remembered this statement and believed even more.

Stephen undoubtedly preached the full gospel. The gospel clearly sees the abrogation of the law of Moses and the temple worship. Jesus declared this when he said: "But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here." (Matt. 12:6.) The gospel of Christ meant the end of the Mosaic law and the entire sacrificial system. These were the arguments Stephen used in his preaching. As Stephen stood in the presence of the high court, the people "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." (Acts 6:15.)

Stephen proceeded to make his defense against the false testimony. He recounted the history of the people of Israel. He spoke of Moses' prophecy that God would raise up a prophet like unto him. (Acts 7:37.) Stephen meant for the people to understand that he had Christ in mind. And he further reminded them that the "Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands." (Acts 7:48.)

The first part of Stephen's speech must have met with the approval of the high court. But the anger against Stephen began to mount when he drew the history of Israel to its fulfillment in the person of Christ. Stephen would have none of the charge that he had been subverting the Mosaic law. It was not he who stood guilty before the tribunal of God; but they. And their guilt was attested to in the very Scriptures which spoke of Jesus whom they had denied. Stephen's speech was indeed a great defense of Christ and his church based upon the history of the people of Israel.

The Golden Text

And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. (Acts 8:2.)

What we have here is a statement of fact. Devout comes from the Greek word *eulabeis*, and it is used only four times in the New Testament. (Luke 2:25; Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12.) The outstanding significant point of Stephen's burial is that the law prescribed the burial of an exe-

cuted person. (Deut. 21:23.)

But one of the Jewish traditions set forth in the *Mishnah* (body of the oral traditions of the fathers) forbade any public mourning for an executed criminal. Despite this rule, good and devout men respected the memory of Stephen and honored him with a proper burial.

The death of Stephen precipitated a wave of persecutions against the

Christians. The Sadducees and Pharisees took advantage of the false evidence against Stephen to drive the church out of Jerusalem.

and they found a willing accomplice in Saul of Tarsus. The forcible dispersion of the church, however, worked even greater glory to God.

The Text Explained

Stephen, the Evangelist (Acts 6:8-15)

And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, and set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us. And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

The names of Stephen and Philip were among the most notable disciples in the Jerusalem church. Stephen is first introduced as one of the seven men whom the apostles placed over the daily distribution of food for the Grecian widows. We may assume that Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew judging from his name. The first particular notice of Stephen did not grow out of his charitable responsibilities, but in his great effectiveness in preaching the gospel.

"Wrought great signs and wonders among the people." Luke does not inform us if Stephen received these miraculous powers by the imposition of the apostles hands before or after his appointment with the seven. Luke placed great importance upon the ministry of Stephen. We conclude this from the fact that Stephen's work went far beyond the daily distributions of charity. He preached the gospel.

and the wonderful miracles he performed supported the words of wisdom with which he spoke. Luke describes Stephen as being full of grace and power. That he was "full of grace" means that he was especially favored of God, and he taught with powerful effective force. Such was the persuasive power of Stephen the people were moved to respond to his message. On the other hand, the Pharisees and Sadducees were driven to angry frustration, and they became determined to stop the preaching of Stephen.

The preaching of Peter had driven the rulers of the Jews to take firm and direct action against the apostles. The preaching of Stephen created even greater anger in the Jews, and the reasons were fully apparent. The rulers were deeply pained because Peter had spoken of the death of Christ, his resurrection, and salvation in his name. For some reason, the Christians were not restricted from entering the temple area for worship and teaching. It could have been that the rulers of the Jews were undecided on the course of action which should be taken since their threats went unheeded by the apostles.

The preaching of Stephen was another matter, for the preaching of the gospel had reached another stage in the rapidly growing church in Jerusalem. Stephen drove the gospel wedge between the religion of the Jews and Christianity. He showed there was a difference between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, and between the temple worship of the Jews and the worship of Christians.

"The synagogue of the Libertines." (The reader may turn back to lesson VII for other details concerning this synagogue.) It cannot be precisely ascertained that there was only one synagogue of the Libertines, foreign freedmen (Libertini, slaves) in Jerusalem. The Libertines included Jews from Africa, Asia, and from Paul's home district in Cilicia. The powerful preaching of Stephen drove the foreign Jews,

many of whom had Greek cultural backgrounds, to open debate with Stephen. The Libertines were deeply committed to Judaism, as much so as the native born Jews of Judea. That Stephen and the Libertines shared a common Hellenic background may have triggered their fierce hostility. They understood that Stephen was drawing the line between Judaism and Christianity.

It would be well at this juncture in the lesson to keep in mind that Paul drew a line between the law and the gospel. Paul described the law to be a tutor whose responsibility was to lead the Jews to Christ. Paul declared that the law had been taken away and nailed to the cross, and that now all men are become one in Christ through the gospel. One of the great themes in the Pauline epistles is to show that Christ came in the fulness of time to fulfill the law. (Gal. 4:4.)

This was a startling exegesis of the law of Moses which declares that Jesus is the prophet whom Moses spoke of to Israel in the wilderness. (Deut. 18:15.) A great many of the Jews believed the apostles and Stephen, and became Christians. Stephen was indeed the voice crying unto the people that Jesus is verily the Christ, and this message would rise to a mighty volume in the preaching of the apostle Paul.

Stephen believed, as did the Jews that God was working in the historical stream of time to bring about the fulfillment of the law in the person of Jesus Christ. This was the burden of the sermon of Stephen. In the first part of Stephen's sermon, he detailed how God had worked providentially through the fathers in the Genesis record. What Stephen said in the first part of his sermon would have met the approval of the most demanding rabbi had he stopped short of declaring Jesus to be the Christ. Stephen set forth the history of the people of Israel in the clearest perspectives finally culminating in Jesus Christ.

"They were not able to withstand the wisdom." The power of reason and logic was the forte of the Greek world. Had not the sophists, Socrates, and Aristotle formulated formal logic to draw the line between falsehood and truth? The Liber-

tines considered themselves to be more than a match for Stephen, but in this they were grievously mistaken. They found themselves bested at every turn in the debate. Stephen took the logic of his accusers and used it with power and devastating force of argument. Stephen's accusers resorted to perjury and violence to stop his preaching.

The seizing of Stephen by the elders and scribes and his arraignment followed the usual formal procedure of the high court of the Jews. The same charges which led to the crucifixion of Jesus were identical to those brought against Stephen. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul several years later would be faced with similar charges and trials. And Paul, as had been true in the case of Jesus, was accused under Jewish Law and executed under Roman law.

The Trial of Stephen

(Acts 7:54-56)

Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said. Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

The sermon of Stephen culminated in an ugly riot. What had begun as a matter of procedure in law turned into a mob decision. The people believed the false accusation brought against Stephen that he had blasphemed the temple. The angry uproar of the people provided the rulers of the Jews with the pretext to seize Stephen and bring him before the Sanhedrin for trial. The procedures of the trial of Stephen was almost a replay of the court scene of Jesus with one exception. The crucifixion of Jesus was carried out strictly by Roman law. But this was not the case of Stephen, and there is no evidence that the Roman authorities were even aware of the transactions. The charge made against Jesus that he would destroy the temple was repeated in the perjured testimony against Stephen. They said that Stephen had said

that Jesus would destroy this "holy place, and the law."

The accusers of Stephen demanded that he answer the charges brought against him, which he did. His concluding words aroused the Jews to uncontrollable anger when he said to them: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers?" (Acts 7:51, 52.) We should keep in mind for future references that Saul of Tarsus was present on the occasion; and Luke, no doubt, heard about what happened that day many times from the apostle Paul.

As Stephen continued his sermon, the rulers of the Jews listened with increasing interest and mounting anger. Every word which Stephen had been saying about Christ seemed to be supporting their contention that he was speaking blasphemous words. And then suddenly to their utter dismay, Stephen turned the tables of the Sadducees and Pharisees. He charged them with having perpetrated the betrayal and murder of Jesus. The words of Stephen fell like the blows of a sledge hammer. Their pent up anger and frustrations could no longer be contained, and they burst forth in a maddened physical attack upon Stephen. As Stephen had declared what they had done in destroying the prophets, the bloody ritual was about to be repeated.

The Jews were "cut to the heart." This is a figure of speech of being "sawn asunder." "They gnashed on him with their teeth." Their actions are described as that of vicious animals.

In the midst of this violent display of hatred and raging emotions, Stephen stood calm and self-possessed "full of the Holy Spirit." At that very moment, Stephen was thrilled with a vision from God which sustained him in that critical period while the mob was making immediate plans to stone him to death. Stephen looking steadfastly into heaven "saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The mounting rage

of the council worsened with the statement of Stephen when he said: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Only a few years ago, Jesus had stood in that same court. Caiaphas was high priest then and was on this day. Jesus had been found guilty of blasphemy and was condemned to his death. Now Stephen was saying, "I see . . . the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." This statement of Stephen was regarded as one of terrible incrimination against the Jews. He declared that the words which Jesus had spoken to them were words of life and that they had crucified him. Stephen would have his accusers to know that he stood vindicated in the sight of God that day—not they.

Stephen saw the Son of man as the Messiah sitting at the right hand of God as king of the universe. Stephen was saying that the messianic reign of the Son of God is now under way.

The Stoning of Stephen

(Acts 7:57, 58)

But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Said.

"But they cried out with a loud voice." The voice was not the voice of one man, and certainly not the voice of Caiaphas who probably presided over the court proceedings. It was the voice of a single maddened mob. We can not be exactly certain about what happened. The Jewish leaders were correct to the letter of the law in condemning Jesus to the cross and secured the approval of the Romans for the actions. The Roman governor was not consulted in this instance. The governor may have judged it to be in his best interest not to become involved in this collision between the Jews and Christians. There seems to be little doubt that a fanatical mob action confronted Stephen.

The mob saw in Stephen a man who had blasphemed and deserved to be stoned. It can not be ascertained that the high court delivered a formal sentence of death against

Stephen. Quite to the contrary, the people "stopped their ears, and rushed on him with one accord." The witnesses who perjured themselves were present to cast the first stone according to the law. (Deut. 7.) The witnesses who cast the first stone laid their clothing at the feet of a young man who was standing nearby, who as named Saul of Tarsus.

We may assume that the proceedings were quasi-judicial. Stephen was judged guilty of blasphemy and the penalty was death under the law. Had the Romans called the execution into question, the Jews probably could have provided some legal defense in view of the high state of frenzied excitement which characterized the people.

In any case, the Sadducees were confident that the Governor would look in another direction during the proceedings and dismiss it as an ugly incident among the Jews which had gotten completely out of control.

"And stoned him." The procedure for a legal stoning was set forth in the Mosaic law. (Num. 15:35.) The *Mishnah* (the oral traditions of the fathers) seems to follow somewhat the following description: The execution took place outside the city walls. (Num. 15:35.) Jesus was executed outside the city walls. The hand of the witnesses would be the first to throw the stones. In this case, the witnesses laid their clothing at the feet of Saul of Tarsus. When the condemned man was ten cubits from the stoning site, he was called upon to confess his crime. Four cubits from the stoning place, the criminal was stripped of his clothing. He was then dropped from a place twice the height of the man. One of the witnesses would push the man face

forward so that he would fall face downward. The victim would then be turned on his back. If he were not yet dead, the second witness would drop a large stone upon his heart. Should the person still live, then all the congregation would stone him to death. We do not receive the impression that the Sadducees and Pharisees regarded the stoning a painful experience even though they had followed the usual procedures for the stoning of Stephen.

The Death of Stephen

(Acts 7:59, 60)

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

One fact stands out in the stoning of Stephen. It is not recorded that Stephen confessed any sins since he had not violated the Mosaic law. The guilt lay with his accusers. Peter had charged many of the Jews with the guilt of crucifying Jesus and they were equally guilty for the death of Stephen.

It seems that all who were present were disposed to cast stones at Stephen who was in a kneeling position at the time. Amidst the flying stones, Stephen lifted his voice to God in prayer saying: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The prayer of Stephen was similar to the prayer that Jesus prayed on the cross. Stephen prayed further: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And so Stephen died with a prayer upon his lips for his tormentors. He was another victim added to that long list of blood stained chapters of man's rebellion against God.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. Truth twisted out of its normal setting becomes fully a lie regardless of the elements of truth left in the version.

2. A true martyr does not seek death deliberately, but he is fully aware that his stand for principle and truth may cost him his life and he is willing to pay the supreme price.

3. Men will resort to angry vio-

lence when they no longer have reason and logic to support their positions as was true in the case of Stephen. *

4. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, and the words of Stephen's sermon will be forever enshrined in the pages of the sacred Scriptures giving testimony to Christ in every age.

5. Even in his death, Stephen ex-

emphiled the greatest of the Christian virtues which is the love that

a Christian must show even for his enemies.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Why was Stephen singled out to be stoned and not Peter and John who were equally emphatic in their preaching?

What charges did the Libertines bring against Stephen and how were they supported?

How were the words of Jesus about the temple and the law twisted to indict Stephen?

How did Stephen show that the accusations of his accusers were false?

Golden Text

What is the meaning of the Greek word *eulabeis*?

What did the law say about the burial of an executed person?

Stephen, the Evangelist

Where is Stephen first introduced in the New Testament?

What did Stephen do other than work in the daily ministrations of the food among the Grecian widows?

Were the Jewish Christians restricted from going into the temple area to worship?

Why were the Libertine Jews so angered with Stephen?

The Trial of Stephen

How did Stephen use the gospel to prove that Jesus is the Christ?

In what respects was the stoning of Stephen a mob action?

What charge did Stephen make about his accusers?

How did they react to Stephen's blunt statement?

Describe Stephen and his words while he was being stoned.

The Stoning of Stephen

Were the Romans aware of the stoning of Stephen at the time it took place?

Do you think it would have made much difference had they known it?

The Death of Stephen

Why did not Stephen make some kind of confession at the time of his stoning?

Repeat the last words of Stephen which he spoke in his dying moments.

Lesson IX—December 1, 1974

THE GOSPEL GOES TO SAMARIA

Lesson Text

Acts 8:4-8, 14-17, 25

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.

5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ.

6 And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did.

7 For *from* many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was much joy in that city.

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14 Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit:

16 For as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

25 They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"And there was much joy in that city."* (Acts 8:8.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 8:9-13, 18-24.

Daily Bible Readings

November 25. M..... Persecution Scatters the Church (Acts 8:1-8)
 November 26. T..... Philip's Work in Samaria (Acts 8:9-17)
 November 27. W..... Origin of Samaria (1 Kings 16:21-28)

November 28. T.....	Jesus in Samaria (Luke 17:11-19)
November 29. F.....	A Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-38)
November 30. S.....	A Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-34)
December 1. S.....	Unfriendly Samaritans (Luke 9:51-56)

TIME.—A.D. 34.

PLACES.—City of Samaria and Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Philip, the Samaritans, Peter and John.

Introduction

The martyrdom of Stephen unleashed smoldering hatred of the Jews against Jerusalem Christians. A campaign of terror was mounted against them. It seems that the opposition of the leaders of the Jews was directed mainly against the Hellenist Christians. This may be ascertained by the fact that Stephen became the main target of the leading priests and the council. The Christians for the most part were compelled to leave Jerusalem. That Philip, one of the seven, was preaching in Samaria is another support of this contention.

The violence and evil precipitated against the Christians was supported, if not inspired, by Saul of Tarsus. There is no way of knowing for certain why the apostles and other Hebrew Christians did not fall under the interdict of the bitter persecution; but for the time being, they were not. The apostles remained in Jerusalem apparently moving in the open. Perhaps the rulers of the Jews had no desire to risk an open confrontation with them because of their deep roots in the life of the Hebrew people. The uncompromising courage of Peter had been a forewarning to the council not to expect any easy victory over them and no compromise. It appears from the time of Stephen's death that the Jerusalem church was mostly composed of Hebrew Christians.

Luke described the circumstances that on the day of Stephen's death there arose "a great persecution against the church which was in

Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles." (Acts 8:1.) The most zealous of the Jews in the repression of the Christians was Saul of Tarsus. The intense bitterness of the persecutions deepened the Jews' resentment of the Christians. However, the persecutions and dispersion of the Christians brought the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus' command to his disciples: "and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) Jesus declared in substance to the woman at Jacob's well that the time had arrived for the coming of the Messiah, and that it was he who spoke to her. (John 4:1ff.)

It is seldom that man is capable of judging at the time the true significance of the meaning of events. Saul of Tarsus, the relentless persecutor of the church, was destined to become the greatest name among the Christians of the first century.

Luke described the activities of Saul of Tarsus: "But Saul laid waste the church, entering in every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison." (Acts 8:3.) The Sanhedrin armed Saul with the necessary legal authority. Saul went about his work driven by his zealous fanaticism for the ancestral traditions of the Jewish nation. He regarded the Christians as misguided enthusiasts who were following Jesus whom Saul regarded as an impostor.

20:30), so the ministry of Philip was confirmed by the signs which accompanied his work. The forcible ejection of the Christians from Jerusalem served a wonderful pur-

pose in the evangelizing of the regions beyond Jerusalem and Judea. Once again, the saying is true that man's extremity provides God with his opportunity to work his will.

The Text Explained

Philip Preaches in Samaria

(Acts 8:4-8)

They therefore that were scattered abroad, went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those that had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city.

The Jews who became Christians and were driven out of Jerusalem suffered nothing new in the history of the people of Israel. The Chaldeans drove the Judeans from their homeland into Babylonian captivity before the Christian era. Old Israel was not defeated, nor would new Israel (the seed of Abraham in Christ) be defeated and destroyed. Although the Christians were driven from their homes and pursued like animals, their spirit was not quenched and their faith was not lessened because "they went about preaching the word." They were a good people who brought a message of "good news" of the salvation of man from his sins. They would in time carry the gospel to the far flung outposts of the Roman empire and eventually to the hinterlands of the earth. (Acts 11:19ff.)

"And Philip went down to the city of Samaria." The evangelism of Philip is recorded by Luke to express the first steps in carrying the gospel eventually into all the earth. The preaching of Philip was forthright in the same spirit and character of Stephen, and later the apostle Paul.

The preaching of Philip in Samaria was a highly significant move for the spread of Christianity. There had been a deepening gulf between the Jews and Samaritans for centuries. The dividing of the kingdom of Israel at the time of Solomon's

death laid the groundwork for the defeat of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the deportation of the ten northern tribes into captivity. The Israelites who remained in the land intermarried with foreign immigrants who settled in their midst. The descendants of these people came to be known as Samaritans whom the Jews regarded as a mongrel race.

The separation started between the Jews and Samaritans when the son of Jehoida, the high priest, was expelled from the temple. (Neh. 13:28.) The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim and insisted that Moses intended that the people of Israel should worship in Mount Gerizim and not in Jerusalem. However, the Samaritans accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament. The Hasmonean king, John Hyrcanus I (135-104 B.C.) conquered the Samaritans and destroyed the Samaritan temple. Although the Roman occupation of Palestine freed the Samaritans from Jewish domination, the hostile relations between them continued. This unfriendly spirit between the Jews and Samaritans is brought out in several places in the New Testament, e.g., the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. (John 4: 1ff.)

The Samaritans looked for the coming of the Messiah as did the Jews, but their expectation was different. The Samaritan anticipation of the Messiah was based upon Moses' prophecy that God would raise up a prophet from among the people like unto him. (Deut. 18:15-18.)

Luke's designation of "the city of Samaria" may mean either the city rebuilt by Herod the Great, and given the name of Sebaste in honor of the Roman emperor. (*Sebaste* is the Greek equivalent of the Latin *Augustus*.) The city of Samaria became famous as the city built in biblical times by King Omri, king of Israel, as the capital of his kingdom. (1 Kings 16:24.) The city of

Samaria was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The ancient ruins of what was once a magnificent city may be seen today.

"And the multitudes gave heed with one accord." "Gave heed" is from *proseichon* which means to keep in mind the things which were spoken by Philip. The people were "spellbound." The people "gave heed with one accord unto the things which were spoken by Philip." We may surmise why the Samaritans listened with such great interest to the evangelist. In the first place, Philip did not picture a Jewish king ruling with power as David had done. Philip preached a crucified and resurrected Messiah who came to bring salvation to all men on equal terms. Philip without doubt reasoned from the Scriptures as he did with the Ethiopian eunuch that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. (Acts 8:35.)

Philip's preaching was convincing to the Samaritans. Luke records their favorable reactions "when they heard, and saw the signs which he did." The preaching of Philip was accompanied by healing miracles, the driving out of evil spirits and curing the palsied and making the lame walk. Signs were used in biblical times to bolster the faith of a person whom God had chosen for a great mission as in the case of Gideon. (Judges 6:36.) The Jews forever sought after signs. And so it was that the preaching of Philip was attested to by the wonderful miracles he performed. This power he received from God came by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. (Acts 8:17.)

The Samaritans were filled with great joy, as might be expected, over the healing of the demon possessed, the sick and the lame. At this juncture of Philip's evangelism, we meet Simon the Sorcerer who had deceived the people through magical trickery. The people thought Simon exercised the power of God. But when they heard Philip preach and perform miracles, the Samaritans knew that there was a difference. They believed Philip in and were baptized, and so was Simon.

Peter and John in Samaria

(Acts 8:14-17)

Now when the apostles that were

at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The good news of Philip's great successes in carrying the gospel to the Samaritans reached Jerusalem, and Peter and John were dispatched to Samaria. That John accompanied Peter into Samaria reminds us that once James and John were traveling with Jesus through Samaria. And because the inhospitable Samaritans would not provide Jesus and his disciples with food and lodging, James and John suggested that he call down fire from heaven to consume the people. (Luke 9:52ff.) John now had a different spirit.

The apostles learned upon their arrival that the Samaritans who had heard the word were baptized. Peter and John came into the midst of the Samaritan Christians and prayed for them "that they might receive the Holy Spirit." The tact was developed in a previous lesson that this special measure of the Holy Spirit was imparted only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. The miraculous gifts were imparted to the disciples to confirm them in the faith and to enable them to carry on the work of the Lord in the absence of the apostles and the New Testament, and to perform miracles to attest that their teaching and works were from God. (1 Cor. 12:4-11.) These gifts are to be distinguished from the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Luke states that "as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The Samaritans had received the remission of their sins having been baptized into Christ. It is not clear just what the nature of the reception of the Holy Spirit was which the Samaritan Christians received.

That there was some visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit is manifested by the desire of Simon to possess it, and to offer Peter a sum of money for it. Simon's trickery

and magic had been heretofore sleight-of-hand deceptions. Simon had misled the people to believe that he possessed the power of God. We should keep in mind that the Samaritans believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and Simon, no doubt, was a Samaritan.

"They laid their hands on him." The laying on of hands did not occur on Pentecost when the twelve received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4), nor when Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44). The measure of the Holy Spirit which the disciples in Samaria received is not to be confused with the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the apostles on Pentecost.

As Peter and John came to Samaria and found believers in Christ, so did Paul find believers in Christ when he came to Ephesus with one difference. The Ephesians knew only the baptism of John. Paul correctly taught them and they received baptism from the apostle. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied." (Acts 19:6.)

We do not know if all the Samaritans who believed in Samaria received this measure of the Holy Spirit; nor do we know if Simon received this measure of the Holy Spirit. However, one thrilling fact is evident. The Samaritans had long been despised by the Jews, and such had become an accepted pattern of life. Now as Christians, they were accepted into the church by the apostles from Jerusalem who confirmed their acceptance by imparting powers of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritan converts.

And a second, and even more important fact, is that the gospel leaven was spreading. The disciples of Jesus were fanning out from Jerusalem. Jesus had promised his disciples to make them "fishers of men." The kingdom was spreading; the gospel was being preached to ever growing numbers; and members were being added to the body of Christ.

The Apostles' Return to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25)

They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and

preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

"They therefore, when they had testified." Peter and John had been sent to Samaria to learn about the new work and to encourage the Samaritan converts and to bestow such gifts of the Holy Spirit upon them as God deemed best to confirm that the word being preached was from God.

We may interject the fact that Luke lingers upon the encounter of Peter and John with the case of Simon. Luke details the final disposition of Simon's case with Peter's charging Simon with impious thoughts and calling upon him to repent of his wickedness and to pray to God for forgiveness of his sins. (Acts 8:22-24.)

Peter and John are described by Luke as having testified. We are to conclude that they gave firsthand testimony of their experiences with Jesus beginning with the baptism of Jesus to his death, resurrection and ascension, and to Pentecost. They rehearsed what God had done with them, which is something far different from the usual Neo-Pentecostian practices of our day when modern so-called "tongue talkers" and "miracle workers" provide us with a recounting of personal experiences as deceitful as that of Simon the Sorcerer had been.

Peter and John not only recounted their personal experiences with Jesus, they spoke the word of the Lord to the Samaritans as Philip had been doing. Luke tells us that Peter and John on leaving Samaria preached the gospel in many of the villages on their way back to Jerusalem. Jewish pride was laid aside as the two apostles preached to the Samaritans who were generally despised by the Jews.

The importance of Philip's preaching the gospel in Samaria marked the first time that the church was firmly established outside Judea, and the spread of Christianity started from these two rival centers of worship based on the Mosaic law—Jerusalem and the city of Samaria. And from these two centers of the first churches, the preaching of the gospel proceeded and the growth of the church continued to radiate outward into Syria, Asia Minor and Europe.

Luke closes at this point the rec-

ord of Philip's work in Samaria. An angel of the Lord told Philip to leave Samaria and go toward the south to the way that led to Gaza, the old city which had been destroyed by Alexander Jannaeus, a Jewish Hasmonean king, in 93 B.C.

Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to preach to an Ethiopian eunuch, who had come to Jerusalem to worship God. Philip taught the Ethiopian the gospel and baptized him into Christ. A new departure is being made. According to the law, no eunuch could go into the temple to worship God but now, the eunuch could enter the church to worship God on equal grounds. The

Ethiopian, no doubt, preached the gospel upon his return to the land of the Nile more than five hundred miles from Jerusalem.

We next find Philip in Caesarea on the seacoast. After his departure from the Ethiopian, he preached to all the cities along the way. Philip must have settled down in Caesarea because we find him there twenty years later with a family. Paul visited Philip there. We may leave Philip at this point knowing that he had faithfully preached the word in the years between because Luke refers to him as Philip the evangelist.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. To be zealous for a great cause may be either a good or evil thing. Saul of Tarsus, full of zeal for the traditions of the fathers and the law, worked great hurt, and he worked great good when he was convinced of his errors.

2. We may become a wonderful instrument in the hands of God if we are willing to do his will.

3. The Christian religion is a religion of joy and peace, and a failure to understand this principle is to fail at one of the crucial places in life.

4. The hand of God will always turn us to good and in the right direction in life even in the times

when we are frustrated and feel that we are defeated.

5. A Christian needs the support and encouragement of his fellow Christians especially in new fields of evangelism in the same respect that Peter and John traveled to Samaria to assist Philip in his evangelism.

6. The gospel is the leaven of the kingdom. It will spread by word of mouth from heart to heart and from place to place.

7. We may give true witness to the work of God in our lives only to the degree that we are faithful to his word to do his will.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

When do we first meet Stephen in the book of Acts?

Is it possible for man to know the future turn of events as determined by God?

Golden Text

Why did the work of Philip create joy in the hearts of the Samaritans?

What convinced the Samaritans that the work of Philip was of God?

Philip Preaches in Samaria

What was the result of the rulers of the Jews driving the Christians from Jerusalem?

Discuss the origin of the Samaritans as a race of people distinct from the Jews.

Why were the Jews and Samaritans such utter religious enemies?

What expectation of the Messiah did the Samaritans have?

What happened to the temple that the Samaritans built on Mount Gerizim?

Why were the Jews forever seeking after signs from God?

Peter and John in Samaria

What did Peter and John do when they heard about the preaching of the gospel in Samaria by Philip?

Why did Peter and John lay their hands upon the Samaritan Christians?

Why was the Holy Spirit given to the Samaritans?

The Apostles Return to Jerusalem

What did Peter and John do on the return trip from Samaria?

What does it mean that John and Peter gave testimony?

May we compare this with the testimonial services of some religious groups today?

To what do you attribute the modern so-called "speaking in tongues" and "miracle healing"?

Lesson X—December 8, 1974

SAUL, THE PERSECUTOR, BECOMES PAUL,
THE PERSECUTED

Lesson Text

Acts 9:1-9, 17-19

1 But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven:

4 And he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:

6 But rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing

the voice, but beholding no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

17 And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord *even* Jesus who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

18 And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized;

19 And he took food and was strengthened.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Tim. 1:15.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 22:3-21.

Daily Bible Readings

December 2.	M.....	Saul the Persecutor (Acts 8:1-3)
December 3.	T.....	Luke's Account of Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-16)
December 4.	W.....	Saul's First Account of Conversion (Acts 22:3-21)
December 5.	T.....	Saul's Second Account (Acts 26:2-23)
December 6.	F.....	Further References to Conversion (Gal. 1:11-26)
December 7.	S.....	Saul's Conversion An Example (1 Tim. 1:12-17)
December 8.	S.....	Rewards for Faithful Service (2 Tim. 4:1-8)

TIME.—A.D. 41.

PLACES.—Phoenicia, Cyprus, Antioch, and Tarsus.

PERSONS.—The disciples, Barnabas, Saul of Tarsus, Agabus, and the elders.

Introduction

We are first introduced to Saul of Tarsus at the time Stephen was stoned. Paul confessed with deep shame his part in the complicity when he too stood under the interdict of the leaders of the Jews and addressed a great multitude of people at the time of his arrest. (Acts 20:21.)

Luke does not explain, at first, why he suddenly projected the name Saul of Tarsus into the pages

of sacred history. No doubt, other Jews of greater prominence than Saul of Tarsus were present. Luke soon makes us aware of the reason why the name of this rabid persecutor of the Christians is so abruptly announced.

We are aware, however, of the importance of his person as Paul recalled those days which were indelibly fastened in his memory. The apostle described himself as

circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. (Phil. 3:5, 6.) Paul was a prisoner in Rome at the time he wrote this statement. Stephen was the first martyr, and Paul would become another in the countless thousands over the centuries.

Paul stated something of his background before he became a Christian, to the churches in Galatia: "For ye have heard of my manner of life in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it: and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal. 1:13, 14.)

We must not overlook two other significant facts of Paul's back-

ground. He was a free born Roman. And because of his Roman citizenship, Paul appealed to be heard by Caesar when the Jews would have killed him in Jerusalem as they had Stephen.

The other fact is that Saul of Tarsus must have been a promising young Jew of extraordinary brilliance. He came as a young man to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of one of the greatest Jewish scholars of the age, Gamaliel. These facts are of greatest meaning. Paul was educated in the best sense in Hellenic and Jewish traditions. He spoke both Greek and Hebrew (Aramaic), and perhaps even Latin. As a Roman citizen, he could move freely through the provinces of Rome with the full rights and protections of Roman citizen. This surprising young Jew was destined to become one of the greatest Christians during the first century in point of service, and without a comparable equal since.

The Golden Text

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. (1 Tim. 1:15.)

These words were expressed by the apostle Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. His great work on earth was rapidly drawing to a close. Paul's theme in his evangelism is stated to the Christians in Rome: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16.)

Paul was overpowered by his sense of sin, and its destructive evils. This horror of sin was expressed also to the church in Rome by Paul: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:24.) Even though Paul described himself as the chiefest of sinners, he was a sinner who had obtained forgiveness of his sins through the mercy of Christ.

The apostle emphasizes the importance of this statement by prefacing the truth with the expression

—"faithful is the saying." This unique expression is in four other epistles; and in each statement. Paul appears to be quoting a statement with widespread understanding among the Christians. (1 Tim. 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Tit. 3:8.)

By the mention of "sinners," Paul's memory is troubled by the past. The apostle wrote in another connection: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. 15: 9, 10.) Paul begins the statement that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" in quiet sincerity and deep solemnity, but he is overpowered by the very concept and closes the statement with an emotional doxology of praise: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God. be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. 1:17.)

The Text Explained

On the Damascus Road
(Acts 9:1-4)

But Saul, yet breathing threaten-
ing and slaughter against the disci-

ples of the Lord went unto the high
priest, and asked of him letters to
Damascus unto the synagogues, that
if he found any that were of the

Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Luke begins in Chapter 9 to present Saul of Tarsus in great detail. He was momentarily presented at the scene of Stephen's execution. Luke hardly prepares us in his initial statements for the form of an introduction we would expect for such an important personage. Saul of Tarsus was destined to become the immortal apostle Paul to the Gentiles. Luke relates the conversion of Saul in three different settings in Acts.

The Jewish name of Paul was Saul. Saul, as we shall call him first, was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. He noted this fact with pride (Acts 21:39) because Tarsus was a famous ancient city, the seat of a provincial governor when Persia ruled the world. In the days of the Greek Syrian kings, the city was the center of a lumbering and linen industry. During the first century before Christ was born, Tarsus was a university town in which Greek philosophy influenced greatly the intellectual atmosphere. Tarsus was located in that part of the world where the wisdom of the Greeks and the jurisprudence and the political expertise of the Romans mingled with oriental thought, mysticism, and esoteric religions.

Saul no doubt caught the best from this world in which he grew up. Later Paul would be standing on secure ground when he preached his famous sermon in Athens on Mars Hill as he likewise did in Jewish synagogues. Indeed, Saul's training was permeated with the rich color of his Hellenic and Roman background. He faced the rigid and formal discipline in the finest rabbinical school of the age under Gamaliel.

Saul was a member of the party of the Pharisees who formed the party of those Jews most zealous for the traditions of the fathers. The Pharisees were formalists in the most rigid sense. They were

the implacable enemies of the church and the mortal foe of Jesus. These few biographical items serve to cause us to understand this great enemy of the Christians whom Luke calls by name.

Saul of Tarsus was not content with driving the Christians from Jerusalem; he felt they must be pursued and silenced wherever they could be found, not only within the province of Judaea, but also outside its borders. The apostle Paul described himself in his defence before Agrippa: "Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26: 11.)

It is puzzling that the high priest of the temple could exercise such high handed authority over Jews outside Palestine. At an earlier period in their history, Julius Caesar had given John Hyrcanus, the high priest, the title of ethnarch with authority over all Jews throughout the world in matters of religion. (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, 10: 2-3.) It must be assumed that the high priest was exercising an authority upheld by the Romans at the time Saul of Tarsus was dispatched to Damascus with letters from the high priest empowering him to arrest all Christians that he could find in the city. The high priest along with the Sanhedrin was encouraged in activities of this kind to keep the peace in the empire where Jews were concerned.

It is also interesting why Saul of Tarsus should have gone so far outside Judea to seek out Christians. The journey to Damascus from Jerusalem required about a week. Perhaps a large number of Christians had fled to Damascus. It is a known fact that a large number of Jews were living in Damascus at the time. At the beginning of the general Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D. 68, Josephus wrote that the Damascenes massacred 18,000 Jews.

Damascus is a most ancient city dating back to Abraham and long before. After 64 B.C. Damascus was a part of the Roman Empire although the Nabatean Arabs whose kingdom extended from the Gulf of Akaba to Damascus enjoyed certain privileges in Damascus because of their large population there. The Romans granted the rights primar-

ily for political reasons. Paul related that the governor under Aretas, the Nabatean king, tried to apprehend Paul when he was let down from the city walls in Damascus. (2 Cor. 11:32, 33.)

Luke called the early Christians as "any that were of the Way." Christians are referred to in such a manner six times in Acts. (Acts 5:2; 19:9, 23; 23:4; 24:14, 22.) This was a Jewish expression which was a synonym for a manner of life.

Armed with letters of authority from the high priest to carry out his mission, Saul of Tarsus set out to Damascus with men in his company who would help him execute his plans. As Saul and his escort came near to the approaches to Damascus, he suddenly encountered the most deeply disturbing experience of his life. Suddenly a great light which outshone the sun enveloped him and he fell to the ground. It was about midday; and as the lay on the ground, a voice spoke to Saul in his own Hebrew tongue (Acts 26:14): "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Meeting Christ on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:5-9)

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.

The meeting of Paul and Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road was fraught with consequences for Saul of Tarsus and the whole of mankind. What are we to make out of Paul's experience? The apostle later gave a fully consistent account of what happened in that meeting. In that moment when the dazzling light shown around Saul, he saw the Christ. (Acts 9:17, 27; 22:14; 26:16.) And in the voice which immediately followed, Saul heard him speak.

A number of thought provoking facts present themselves. What happened on the Damascus Road was no repeat of the Pentecost with

tongues of flame though there was a great light brighter than the sun. Saul and his escorts heard sounds, but only Saul understood the words being addressed to him. Just as truly, however, as Christ had risen from the dead and appeared alive to his apostles after his resurrection, now he appears unto Saul. Later, the apostle Paul explained this experience and its relation to his apostleship: "And last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also." (1 Cor. 15:8.) It seems that the men who were with Saul saw the light, but they were not affected by it as Saul who fell to the earth blinded. (Acts 22:9.)

Saul upon hearing the voice said: "Who art thou, Lord?" Lord is a term used here in reverence as Saul answers the unknown voice. The response to Saul's question gave him the direct knowledge. The apostle in relating this experience later gave the fuller expression of Jesus' response to his question: "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." (Acts 22:8.) Saul began to comprehend the meaning of the statement: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul had persecuted the Christians and driven them out of Jerusalem and rooted them out of their hiding places not knowing what he was doing.

Paul in the presence of King Agrippa and Festus provided the fuller version of the response that Jesus made to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad." (Acts 26:14.) The picture is that of an oxen yoked to a plow who kicks against the sharp prying pole used by the man to urge him on. The oxen only hurts itself in doing so. The harsh and implacable Saul who had been hounding the Christians learned that he was doing this to his own hurt.

Saul was then told to arise and go into the city and there it would be told him what he "must do." That Saul was converted on the Damascus road and became a Christian is not warranted by the statement of Luke. He had indeed met Jesus Christ, but there would be other things for Saul to do. The meeting was a shattering experience for him. Luke, says nothing of faith, repentance, or baptism in the setting on

the Damascus Road, but he does later.

The men who were accompanying Paul saw the light, but they did not seem to be affected by it as was Saul. "And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man." Paul recounted this experience to the Jews at the time of his arrest in Jerusalem. "And they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to me." (Acts 22:9.) Luke is entirely consistent in this account. The men who were with Saul heard the sound of a voice, but they did not understand the words of that voice, nor who it was that was speaking the words.

"And Saul arose from the earth." After Saul was able to regain his feet, he opened his eyes and could see nothing. He was blinded by the excess of the light. The men who were with Saul took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. All of a sudden, we see a different man. No longer is he Saul the proud, arrogant Pharisee, but a saddened and pathetic figure of a man. No longer is he a threat to the security and peace of the Christians. The letters of authority from the high priest no longer meant anything.

Luke records that Saul was three days in the city "without sight, and did neither eat nor drink." We may only imagine what must have been the tormented conscience of Saul. The logical assumption may be safely made that Saul of Tarsus was now a believer. The fact that he was unable to eat or drink for three days exemplifies that he was in a deep state of remorse and repentance for his past sins in persecuting the Christians. The extensive teachings of the apostle Paul in his letters about faith and repentance are so clear that we will not belabor the obvious fact here.

Toward the end of the three days, Saul received a vision in which a man came to him by the name of Ananias laying his hands upon Saul that he might receive his sight. We know nothing of Ananias other than he was a Christian in Damascus who feared Saul because he had *forewarnings of his* mission to Damascus. We can appreciate Ananias'

apprehensions when he received directions from Jesus to go to a "street which is called Straight" and inquire for the home of a certain Judas where Saul of Tarsus was agonizing in prayer. Jesus countered this fear of Saul with instructions to Ananias: "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." (Acts 9:15.)

Paul Becomes a Christian

(Acts 9:17-19)

And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

Ananias responded without further question to go to the street called Straight and entered the house of Judas where he found Saul. When Ananias came unto the presence of the man whom he sought, Ananias addressed him as "Brother Saul." We need not be surprised at the greeting. Both were Jews and shared the same cultural heritage, and both shared a common humanity. The assumption that Saul became a Christian on the Damascus road is not supported by Ananias calling him "Brother" in the light of what happened next in the house of Judas, and the teachings later of the apostle Paul.

Ananias proceeded to lay his hands upon Saul of Tarsus as he had been directed to do. "And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight." We may assume this miracle served a double purpose. Saul was assured of whom he had met on the Damascus Road, and Ananias was convinced that Saul of Tarsus was surely God's chosen vessel.

Afterwards, Saul was baptized. Luke provides additional details in words of Paul when he addressed the Jews at the time of his arrest

years afterwards: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16.) We may conclude from Paul's own words that becoming a Christian is not a simple matter of faith. That faith is the mainspring of action goes without saying: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith." (Eph. 2:8.) Paul declared that "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." (Rom. 2:4.) And Paul also declared that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:10.) The importance which Paul attached to baptism is attested to by his own example and teaching: "All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were bap-

tized into his death." (Rom. 6:3.)

Whoever would belabor that baptism is not a condition of salvation must contradict both the practice and teachings of Jesus, and the words of Paul and other inspired writers on the subject. Any attempt to discount baptism by any Bible scholar will only serve to confirm the truth that baptism is made a condition of salvation by divine command. (Matt. 28:18, 19.)

After Saul was baptized by Ananias, he "took food and was strengthened." From this time, the name of Saul is used by Luke until Acts 13:9, when Paul is used. Paul remained several days with the disciples in Damascus.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God can take and change the character and lives of men. As in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor of the Christians, became the great preacher to the Gentiles.

2. God uses men and such talents as they have, great or small. The apostle Paul was a Christian of many talents which he used to the glory of God.

3. We cannot approach God with-

out the awareness of our sins and the attached guilt.

4. A man's name is his greatest possession because his name speaks of his character and the manner of man that he is. We are reminded today of the differences in the two names, Saul of Tarsus and Paul the apostle.

5. We must meet Christ on the terms which he has set forth for us.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, places, and persons.

Introduction

At what place does Luke first introduce Saul of Tarsus?

Describe the heritage of the apostle Paul?

Describe Paul's advancement among the people of his own race in the religion of the Jews.

Was Paul a free born Roman citizen?

Describe the educational background of the apostle Paul.

Golden Text

What did Paul say about the power of the gospel?

How does Paul explain the horrors of sin?

What are we to understand by the statement—"faithful is the saying"?

How was Paul troubled by his memories of the past?

On the Damascus Road

Describe the city in which Saul grew up.

What can you say about Paul's knowledge of the Greek and Roman world?

How were the rulers of the Jews able to exercise authority over Jews outside of Palestine?

Was Saul converted to Christ on the Damascus road?

Meeting Christ on the Damascus Road

Why does Paul speak of himself as a "child untimely born"?

What great fact did Saul learn on the Damascus road?

Why was Saul told to arise and go into the city of Damascus?

How do we know that Saul repented of his sins?

Why was Ananias afraid to come to the place where Saul was?

For what special purpose had God chosen Saul?

Paul Becomes a Christian

Discuss the relationship of faith and baptism as conditions of salvation in Paul's teachings.

Name the conditions of salvation as taught by Paul.

Lesson XI—December 15, 1974

THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERTS

Lesson Text

Acts 10:30-48

30 And Cornelius said. Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel,

31 And saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side.

33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.

34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said. Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

36 The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) —

37 That saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38 *Even* Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39 And we are witnesses of all

things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree.

40 Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest,

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, *even* to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

42 And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

43 To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"There is no distinction between Jew and Greek."* (Rom. 10:12.)

DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 11:1-18.

Daily Bible Readings

December	9. M.....	Peter's Actions Challenged (Acts 11:1-3)
December	10. T.....	Peter Defends His Actions (Acts 11:4-10)
December	11. W.....	Peter Tells of His Mission (Acts 11:11-18)
December	12. T.....	Peter's Sermon at Caesarea (Acts 10:34-48)
December	13. F.....	All Nations To Be Blessed (Isa. 2:1-4)
December	14. S.....	Gospel for All (Rom. 10:11-21)
December	15. S.	Worldwide Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16)

TIME.—A.D. 41.

PLACES.—Joppa and Caesarea.

PERSONS.—Peter, six Jewish Christians, Cornelius and his household.

Introduction

Jesus commanded his disciples to "make disciples of all the nations." (Matt. 28:19.) The apostle Peter who took the lead in preaching the gospel on Pentecost was the first of the apostles to preach to the Gentiles. Peter crossed the barrier between the two races with the gospel in Caesarea. Herod the Great had built the city as a seaport, and named it after Caesar Augustus.

The gospel was heard by a Roman centurion, Cornelius, his family, and friends. Cornelius was a centurion nominally in command of a hundred men in a Roman band (cohort) which numbered between six hundred and a thousand men. Cornelius' status was that of a non-commissioned officer. The centurions were the backbone of the Roman army. Caesarea was the military headquarters for the Roman procurator of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. The centurions who are mentioned in the New Testament are treated with respectful courtesy.

Cornelius was no ordinary Gentile. He was of a class of people who became interested in the religion of the Jews because of its high moral and ethical standards. In that age, many Gentiles were not prepared to enter the Jewish religion as full proselytes. They were attracted by the belief in one God and the simple synagogue services. Some attended the synagogues, were conversant with the Scriptures, they prayed, and observed the sabbath.

Cornelius is described as "one that feared God." The Roman war; close indeed to the kingdom of God, and his knowledge of the Scriptures were, at least, sincere. About the time of the evening oblation (temple sacrifice), which was three o'clock in the afternoon, an angel appeared to Cornelius assuring him that his prayers and alms giving were worthy in the sight of God.

Cornelius was directed to send to Joppa for Peter who was lodging there, and to invite him to come to visit him in Caesarea. But Peter had to be prepared for meeting

with a Gentile. There were barriers to be overcome on both sides. Such a man as Cornelius who feared God would have had no scruples about entering the home of a Jew, but no orthodox Jew would have dared to enter the dwelling of a Gentile. A special revelation was necessary for Peter to overcome his Jewish heritage of race separation.

At the very time the messengers of Cornelius were approaching Joppa Peter had gone upon the flat roof of the tanner's house for prayer at noon, which was the appointed time for pious Jews to pray, who prayed three times daily. (Psalm 55:17; Dan. 6:10.)

Peter became hungry and desired to eat. While food was being prepared, Peter received a revelation from God in a vision. He saw a large sheet (like a sea sail) coming down from heaven with all manner of beasts and birds, clean and unclean, upon it. Peter was told three times to "kill and eat." (Acts 10:13.) Peter was not inclined to do so because of the food laws in the law of Moses. (Lev. 11.) While Peter pondered over the meaning of the vision, the messengers from Cornelius were at the door inquiring for Peter. Peter met the men and was informed that a divine communication had come to Cornelius, who would expect to hear important words from the apostle.

Peter was instructed of the Holy Spirit to give heed to the request, and he accompanied the messengers of Cornelius to Caesarea with six Jewish companions. Cornelius greeted Peter upon his arrival and fell down at Peter's feet, to worship him as a messenger of God. Peter forbade this, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." (Acts 10:26.)

The relation between the Jews and Gentiles were generally less than cordial. Cornelius and Peter exchanged information how God had brought them together. Peter then learned that God was using him as the vessel to cross the barrier between the Jew and Gentile, and to be the first Christian to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

The Golden Text

There is no distinction between Jew and Greek. (Rom. 10:12.)

This verse of scripture is expressive of the grace of God and the fact that it is made available to the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews. The apostle earlier stated that all men are equally guilty in the sight of God because of sin: ". . . 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." (Rom. 3:22, 23.)

Paul makes his point well. All have sinned and both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God. Paul makes it clear that in Christ the promise of salvation is unto all men a gift of God: "For as many of

you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." (Gal. 3:27-29.)

Christ becomes the supreme common denominator for the salvation of all men. Although the Mosaic law was the "middle wall" between the Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14, 15), the distance from God for both Jew and Gentile was the same because of sin. Christ tore down that "middle wall of partition," which is the law of Moses, and became the living way without social, or any other kind of distinction.

The Text Explained

Cornelius Speaks to Peter

(Acts 10:30-33)

And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, and saith. Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou has well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.

"And Cornelius said." The apostle Peter and his companions met with Cornelius and his household. This indeed was a momentous occasion in the history of the human race. Luke records the sermon of Peter, the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the Gentile household of Cornelius, and their conversion to Christ.

Cornelius related to Peter and his companions what his experiences had been. Peter was quick to perceive that they tallied with his own. The centurion told Peter that four days ago at that same time a man stood before him in "dazzling apparel." The man was a divine messenger. Luke tells us in his gospel

record that after the resurrection of Jesus, two men similarly clad stood at the opening of the empty tomb of Jesus. Cornelius added, in describing the vision, that the man informed him: "thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God."

An important fact is contained in this statement, particularly meaningful to Jews. Peter had carried with him six Jewish Christians from Joppa to defend himself later from any charges which might be brought against him. There were three times the number of witnesses required in a Jewish court of law. (Deut. 17:6.) The comment of Cornelius showed that he prayed according to the custom of the Jews (Acts 10:30), and he gave alms to the poor people (Matt. 6:1). Peter had declared to Cornelius: "Ye yourselves know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation." (Acts 10:28.)

Cornelius and Peter in their confrontation began to comprehend that God indeed was breaking down the barrier between Jew and Gentile through the gospel. Peter realized more clearly the implications of the words that what "God hath cleansed, make not thou common." (Acts 10:15.)

Cornelius repeated the content of verses 5 and 6 that he should send

to Joppa to the home of Simon the tanner and to call for Simon whose surname was Peter and request him to come to Cornelius' home. Cornelius responded to Peter's arrival with the comment: "Thou hast done well that thou art come." This was a most gracious expression on the part of Cornelius as he welcomed Peter into his home and thanked him for his coming.

Cornelius expanded his gracious welcome to an equally gracious request: "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord." We could not imagine a more receptive audience assembled to hear the gospel preached than on this occasion. Whatever apprehensions which troubled Peter because of his Jewish background were dispelled.

Peter's Response (Acts 10:34-43)

And Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

"And Peter opened his mouth."

Luke with the utmost brevity launches into the heart of Peter's sermon. Peter was addressing his words to an intelligent Roman who already understood much about the religion of the Jews; others who were present must have been similarly interested. We may judge this from the fact of their presence.

Peter was the first to declare the resurrection of Jesus to the Jews on Pentecost, and now he is the first to address a Gentile audience. Peter was beginning to comprehend the meaning of the gospel of Christ to all mankind. Peter then learned that the love of God extends to all men. Christians surely know best the meaning of the love of God which is expressed to the whole human race through Christ and are aware of the urgency to preach the word.

The sermon which Peter preached to the Gentile household is not unlike the sermon he preached on Pentecost in its approach. What Peter said is a consummate summary of the gospel from the time of the baptism of Jesus to his resurrection. The account was told in stern simplicity and in just a few words. The apostle Peter was confident of that which he spoke. He had faced down the chief priest and the council who would have stopped his preaching this very message. Peter declared unto Cornelius and those present the fact of the resurrection of Jesus and the meaning that this had for Cornelius and his household.

"Ye yourselves know." Verse 36 pointedly assumes that Cornelius and his companions already possessed some knowledge about the message that they would hear from Peter. It seems that there was a certain amount of general knowledge in circulation about Jesus throughout that part of the country beginning from the time Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist until they slew him on the cross. The burden of Peter's sermon is to inform Cornelius of the meaning of the cross and the resurrection.

Peter's sermon was peculiarly appropriate for the occasion. For the first time, Gentiles heard the gospel as a part of God's plan to save all men who would accept Christ. Peter followed a particular line of thought. He began with Jesus'

baptism and traced his personal ministry up to the cross and his resurrection. Peter was explaining the meaning of Christ to Cornelius through his understanding of the Scriptures. Cornelius knew who the prophets were, and Peter told him that the prophets had borne witness of Jesus.

"God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power is especially meaningful. Cornelius prayed to God as did the Jews and sought his help. He too, was not far from the kingdom of God. (See Mark 12:34.) Peter explained the meaning of what Jesus did and said as being the direct intervention of God in the affairs of men. Cornelius was seeking God, and Peter introduced Christ to him in order that he might be able to come to God. The fact that Cornelius was a deeply religious man and acquainted with the religion of the Jews, and being a Gentile, made him acutely receptive to what Peter was saying.

"And we are all witnesses." Peter pointedly declared that he and the other apostles were eye witnesses of all the things which occurred during the personal ministry of Jesus including his crucifixion and his resurrection from the tomb and that he was raised the third day. Peter carefully detailed the post-resurrection experiences telling that they had eaten and drunk with Jesus after he arose from the dead. In spite of the fact that the enemies of Jesus had inflicted upon him the most shameful form of death by nailing him to a cross (Deut. 31:23), God had raised him from the dead. The words of Peter were not lost upon Cornelius. He was well acquainted with the Roman cross and the disgrace of the Jew who was nailed there because of some odious crime.

Peter, indeed, would have Cornelius know that this Jesus had been raised from the dead for a purpose, and that God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power from heaven.

"And he charged us to preach." In the interim between the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus, he had commissioned his disciples to preach the gospel to every nation under heaven. (Mark 16:15.) And Peter said to Cornelius that Jesus had charged them "to testify

that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." The apostle John wrote in this connection: "And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of the judgment." (John 5:27-29.)

"To him bear all the prophets witness." Peter explained that all the prophets had borne witness to the fact "that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." Jesus himself had stated, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall in like manner perish." (Luke 13:3.) Peter preached repentance as a condition of salvation on Pentecost. (Acts 2:38.) Cornelius came to know that the gospel was meant for him, and that he must appropriate the means of salvation through the name of Jesus because there is no "other name given under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.)

The Conversion (Acts 10:44-48)

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Cornelius expressed his confidence in Peter by sending him to Joppa for him. What Cornelius heard from Peter was different from the usual synagogue service which Cornelius undoubtedly was familiar with, since he must have learned about God from the Jewish people. The circumstances of Cor-

ne;lius were somewhat similar to that of the Ethiopian eunuch because both had to be taught about Jesus Christ who had come to be the saviour of all men.

"The Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word." What happened while Peter was preaching to the household of Cornelius was a repetition of the Pentecost experience of the apostles. Peter later described what happened that day by comparing their own baptism of the Holy Spirit with that of Cornelius and his household: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15.) The apostles received the power to speak in tongues enabling Peter to communicate with the people who spoke many languages and to tell them what to do in order to become Christians. The baptism of the Holy Spirit served another important purpose. The Jews always sought for a sign from heaven. What happened to the apostles on the day of Pentecost mightily convinced the Jews that what they were doing and saying was of God. "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving." (1 Cor. 14:22.) On Pentecost the tongues were a sign to the unbelieving Jews. At the house of Cornelius the tongues were a sign unto Peter and the six Jews who come with Peter, that God would accept the Gentiles into the church. We should keep in mind that Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit before their water baptism which was required of them.

"Can any man forbid water?" The inspired writers of the New Testa-

ment set forth the conditions of salvation in the clearest of language. No person may rightfully come to God without faith. (Heb. 11:6.) And we understand this to mean faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Repentance is also a condition of salvation, and Peter's first sermon required it. (Acts 2:38.) Christ demanded of all an unconditional confession of his identity as the Christ, the Son of God. (Matt. 10:32.) An immersion in water is the final condition of salvation in the steps of the new birth. (Mark 16:15,16.)

What Peter was seeing and hearing in the household of Cornelius was a deeply moving experience. He no longer questioned either his right or the advisability of his being in the house of a Gentile. What was happening was of God. Peter then set forth the simple proposition: "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" No one did, not even the six Christian Jews who had accompanied Peter to Caesarea.

We should pay special attention that Peter gave no alternative to Cornelius and his household to be or not to be baptized as is characteristic of denominational practices in regard to this command. The church indeed was born from the baptismal waters on Pentecost.

"Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." We have no clear record that Peter did remain in the household for several days, but the implications are that he did. And in the meantime, the apostles and brethren who lived in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. (Acts 11:1.)

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The gospel is the great common denominator which brings all mankind to God on equal terms.

2. Cornelius was a man who was near to the kingdom of God, but he lacked yet the obedience to Christ which is required in the gospel.

3. Goodness is a compliment to any person, but goodness alone will not justify a person in the presence of God as is so clearly set forth in the example of Cornelius.

4. We must overcome, hard though it may be, the prejudice which might lead us to shut others from the kingdom of heaven.

5. The Scriptures determine the conditions for God's acceptance of the sinner. It is not our right to question why, but to render an unquestioned obedience out of respect for God who seeks our good now and forever.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

What was the military status of Cornelius?
How do you explain the knowledge that Cornelius had of the religion of the Jews?
How did Cornelius worship God?
Why did the Jews object to entering the home of a Gentile?
Why was Peter unwilling to arise and kill and eat the kind of creatures he saw let down on the sheet from heaven?
What lesson did Peter learn from this vision of the sheet?

Golden Text

In what respect is it that all men are equally condemned under sin?
How is it that all men are made to become equal under the law of Christ?
Why did Paul describe the law as a "middle wall" or a partition separating the Jew and Gentile?

Cornelius Speaks to Peter

Why did Peter take six Jewish Christians with him to Antioch?
Why was it important for Peter to protect himself in such a way?
How did Cornelius address Peter upon his arrival in the Gentile home?

Peter's Response

What was the general content of the sermon which Peter preached to the household of Cornelius?
Is there any reason to suppose that Cornelius knew something of Jesus and his death on the cross?
What did Peter say about his personal knowledge of these things?

The Conversion

What happened while Peter was speaking to the household of Cornelius?
How had Cornelius learned about God?
What accompanied the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by Cornelius and his household?
What did Paul say tongues were for?
What did this prove to Peter and the Jews who had accompanied him?
What question did Peter ask?
What did Peter command the household of Cornelius to do?

Lesson XII—December 22, 1974

ANTIOCH, GREAT MISSIONARY CHURCH

Lesson Text

Acts 11:19-30

19 They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

22 And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch:

23 Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord:

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and

much people was added unto the Lord.

25 And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul;

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people; and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

27 Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch:-

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius.

29 And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judaea:

30 Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

GOLDEN TEXT. — *"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."*
(Acts 11:26.)

DEVOTIONAL READING. — Acts 13:1-3.

Daily Bible Readings

December 16.	M.....	Gospel Goes to Antioch (Acts 11:19-28)
December 17.	T.....	Liberality of Antiochan Christians (Acts 11:27-30)
December 18.	W.....	Prophets and Teachers in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3)
December 19.	T.....	Paul Begins First Missionary Tour (Acts 13:4-14)
December 20.	F.....	Great Opportunity (Acts 14:23-26)
December 21.	S.....	Ministering for Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-31)
December 22.	S.....	Another Great Missionary Tour Begins (Acts 15:36-41)

TIME.—A.D. 41.

PLACE.—Antioch of Syria.

PERSONS.—Barnabas, Paul, Agabus, and certain disciples scattered abroad after the stoning of Stephen.

Introduction

The news that Peter had entered the home of a Gentile in Caesarea got to the Jerusalem church before his return. Upon Peter's return to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians contended with Peter because he entered a Gentile household and ate with them.

The Jews had not objected to Gentiles coming to their synagogues. As a matter of fact, Gentiles were encouraged to attend the synagogue services. The Jewish Christians, however, were confused when it appeared that the church would be thrown open to Gentiles and Jews on an equal basis. The Jewish Christians were being forced to make adjustments in their thinking toward the Gentiles. The fierce pride and racial prejudices of the Jews were formidable barriers which they would be compelled to overcome after they became Christians. Neither Peter nor the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem could have possibly envisioned the significance of carrying the gospel to the Gentiles in Caesarea.

Upon Peter's return to Jerusalem, "they that were of the circumcision contended with him." We are to understand by this expression that the Jewish Christians who were especially zealous for the law were unwilling to let down the ritual barriers of the law between them and the Gentiles.

Peter made no attempt to defend his actions to the Jewish Christians. He simply explained what had occurred in the household of Cornelius following his arrival there. The climax of Peter's recounting his experience came when he told them that Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit as they had received it "at the beginning."

The church had made remarkable progress in its brief history.

The gospel was preached in Samaria, and we know there were a number of Christians in Damascus. The gospel was being preached, and the borders of the church were being extended into the Gentile world. The conversion of Cornelius and his household was the signal that marked the beginning for the preaching of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The outcome of Peter's explanation was remarkable: "And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles hath God granted repentance unto the life." (Acts 11:18.) The conversion of the Gentile world would afterwards proceed on a scale so vast that no one in Jerusalem could have possibly imagined. Our present lesson is based upon the first major breakthrough in preaching the gospel to the Gentile world.

The Golden Text

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. (Acts 11:26.)

There is no certain way to know precisely how or why the disciples of Christ were first called Christians in Antioch. Some have believed that it was a name given to differentiate the Christians from the Jews. Some have assumed that

it was a nickname given in derision by the Gentiles to mark the identity of the disciples.

However, there is no suggestion in Luke's statement that would lead to the supposition that they were called "Christians" in Antioch growing out of contempt of the pagans. As a matter of fact, the

preaching of the gospel of Christ in Antioch was something new, and no doubt, created both attention and curiosity. In any case, the name "Christian" became fixed and

has now persisted for almost two thousand years of time. Peter said, "Glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4:16.)

The Text Explained

First Mission to the Gentiles

(Acts 11:19-21)

They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.

Following the scattering of the Jerusalem church after the death of Stephen, some of the Christians traveled a considerable distance going as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch preaching along the way. And some began preaching the Lord Jesus to the Greeks when they came to Antioch.

Heretofore, Luke has mainly concentrated on the evangelizing efforts of Peter, and in a lesser manner, the apostles in the city of Jerusalem. Luke now begins to introduce the reader to the preaching of the gospel outside the citadels of Judaism. Luke had detailed the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Now he will re-introduce Saul of Tarsus as the apostle God had chosen to preach to the Gentile world. The edict of Jesus that the gospel would be first preached in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth was entering the third stage.

The dispersed disciples followed the course of the sea coast. They had gone north out of Palestine, following the coastal plain of Phoenicia which ran along the sea coast adjacent to the Lebanon mountain ridge along the Mediterranean, with its great sea ports of Tyre and Sidon, some went to Cyprus and some traveled on to Antioch.

Antioch is not just the name of another city but it was the capital of the province of Syria, and was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Antioch had been founded

in 300 B.C.; and when Syria was incorporated into the Roman Empire in 64 B.C., Antioch was made a free Roman city with its own municipal government. Only Rome and Alexandria were larger cities, and all three had large Jewish centers of population. The city, like Corinth, was notorious for immorality.

Antioch provided a most favorable climate for the Christians in the city. The Jews and the Gentiles lived pleasantly and peacefully together. High ranking Roman officials governed the city. Four legions of Roman soldiers were garrisoned there to keep the peace in the general region. The presence of the Christians would not have excited any unusual curiosity or hostility among the Antiochians.

The Christian Jews who had fled Jerusalem and had come to Antioch sought out the Jews to teach them the word. This is understandable since they were seeking out their own kind. But Luke tells us that there were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who began to teach the Greeks also. These Cyprian and Cyrenian Christians began to make known to the Greek population that Jesus is the Saviour. They had immediate and great success, "and a great number turned unto the Lord." What they heard made sense to them, and they yielded their allegiance to the Lord Jesus. In Antioch, the evangelizing of the Gentiles was a beginning on a scale that would, in a matter of a few years, spread through the Roman world.

Barnabas Comes to Antioch

(Acts 11: 22-27)

And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch: who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was

added unto the Lord. And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the church, and taught much people: and that the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

The good news of the conversion of the Gentiles traveled back to Jerusalem. It will be remembered that Peter and John had gone from the Jerusalem church into Samaria to learn first hand about the work of Philip in that region. And so it was that Barnabas was sent to Antioch to look into the preaching of the gospel in that great Gentile city. It is an interesting fact that Barnabas was sent. Barnabas was a Cyprian Jew whose understanding and sympathy for the Gentiles would have been much broader than the Jewish Christian who had never set foot outside Judea.

"They sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch." We may understand that "they" were the apostles who sent Barnabas to Antioch. The apostles had sent Peter and John to Samaria to learn first hand about Philip's preaching in that region. Barnabas was the right man to go. The apostles knew Barnabas. His generous and unselfish spirit had already been manifested. (Acts 4:36, 37.) Barnabas means the "son of exhortation," and Barnabas lived up to his name. The Christians had brought to the Jews and pagans in Antioch the good news of the "Lord and Saviour." They had begun well, but they needed the great-souled Barnabas to exhort them to remain steadfast to the Lord in whom they believed.

When Barnabas entered among the Christians in Antioch, his heart was filled with joy over what he found. Barnabas is described as being "a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith." The presence of such a man in Antioch with such admirable qualities gave encouragement to the Christians. Luke states that "much people was added unto the Lord."

"And he went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul." It was Barnabas who first introduced Saul of Tarsus as a Christian to the Jerusalem church. (Acts 9:27.) Barnabas saw the need for the presence of Saul in

Antioch and went to seek him in Tarsus. We should keep in mind that Saul stayed a year with the church in Jerusalem, going in and out, and preaching the gospel. The Grecian Jews plotted to kill Saul, and they brought him to Caesarea, and sent him to Tarsus.

Barnabas and Saul made a great evangelistic team. Both were Jews with Hellenic backgrounds, who could communicate with the Gentiles. Antioch was indeed a cosmopolitan city with diverse people living there. Jew and Gentile, Christian and pagan lived side by side. The Syrian desert with its people of different religious beliefs joined to the city of Antioch.

Barnabas found Saul in Tarsus. Luke does not tell us of Paul's activities in the interim of time after he left Jerusalem. Barnabas brought Saul back to Antioch; and for a year, the two men worked together. We may be assured that Barnabas introduced Saul to the church in Antioch as he had done in Jerusalem. These two great men came to know each other well and Barnabas and Paul later traveled together on their first missionary journey into the Roman province of Asia Minor. (Acts 13: Iff.)

The evangelistic efforts of Barnabas and Saul were greatly rewarded. Luke said, "They were gathered together with the church, and taught much people." We surmise from this statement that the church was edified with their presence, and many obeyed the gospel.

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." This verse of scripture has already been addressed in the golden text. The word "Christians" is used in only two other places in the New Testament. King Agrippa said to Paul, "with but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." (Acts 26:28.) Peter wrote, "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4:16.)

Luke assures us of the fact that the Jewish Christians from Cyrene and Cyprus preached the word throughout the city. And when Barnabas was joined by Paul, they did the same. The Gentiles in Antioch naturally associated the disciples with Christ, whom they so fer-

vently preached and followed. It was the natural thing to simply call them Christians. They were simply the followers of Jesus Christ, and they became recognized simply as Christians.

Antioch became the Christian center for the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, as Jerusalem was for the preaching of the gospel first to the Jews. There is no reason to assume that they were called Christians for any reason other than they were followers of Christ.

The Famine and Relief (Acts 11: 27-30)

Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great famine over all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius. And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

"In those days" means that interim of time when the church at Antioch was being increased with a large number of Gentile converts, and during the year Paul and Barnabas preached in the great Gentile metropolis. Many think of prophets as those who foretell future events, but this is only partly so. The word is a compound of two Greek words. The prefix "pro" means "in front of"; and *phemi* which means "to speak." Therefore, the prophet is one who speaks before, in front of, in behalf of; hence he is a spokesman for God. Judas and Silas were Christian prophets. (Acts 15:32.) The Old Testament prophets thundered the judgments of God upon the people; they warned and pleaded with the people. The gift of prophecy in the apostolic church was a gift of

the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 14:29; 12:10.)

"And there stood up among them one named Agabus." This Agabus is mentioned again in Acts 21:10. At this time, Agabus signified by the Spirit that a great famine would seize the land in the reign of Claudius Caesar. This meant, of course, that a very great number of people would go hungry throughout the Roman world. The great famine occurred during the reign of Claudius; and this fact is documented from other contemporary sources. The reign of Claudius was from A.D. 41 to A.D. 54.

"And the disciples." The Christians of Antioch responded to the prophecy of Agabus with concern. Palestine, because of its adjacent position to the great desert region of that part of the world, was especially vulnerable.

The Christians in Antioch volunteered to help the church in Judea. We are not told how the relief was sent; but "every man according to his ability" sent relief to the distressed brethren in Judea. The great confidence of the Christians in Antioch is demonstrated by the fact that the money was placed in the hands of Barnabas and Paul to take to the suffering Christians in Judea.

Paul and Barnabas carried the money and delivered it to the elders. This is the first mention of the elders in the church. The word comes from the Greek word *presbuteros* from which we get our word "presbyters." In Acts 20:17 and verse 28, "elders" and "bishops" are used interchangeably as in Titus 1:5, 7.

A greatly important fact is brought out by Luke. The Judean Christians had been gracious to accept that the Gentiles were to be accepted into the church. The Christians in Antioch recognized their charitable responsibility to their Jewish Christian brethren in Judea, and they moved to relieve their distress.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. God's love for mankind transcends all racial and all human boundaries which man sets up to separate himself from his own kind, but all must come to God on his terms.

2. God's simple beginnings have

great endings beyond man's imagination. The preaching of the gospel to a Gentile and his family was the beginning of carrying the gospel to the whole Gentile world.

3. The evangelists who preached in Antioch preached a Lord who is

above all Lords and a Saviour who is able to save a man from his sins to live eternally with God.

4. Barnabas recognized the great character and worth of Paul and realized the time was right for him

to come to Antioch to work with Gentiles.

5. The name Christian has been worn honorably in every age because it is taken from the name of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion

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

Introduction

Why did a Jew find it objectionable to enter a Gentile household?

Who were they of the "circumcision"?
How did Peter justify his visit to the household of Cornelius?
How did the scattering of the Jerusalem church prove to be a blessing?
How did the Jerusalem church respond to Peter's explanation?

Golden Text

Why were the disciples first called Christians at Antioch?
Why do we know that the name Christian is an honored name?

First Mission to the Gentiles

At what places outside Palestine did the Christians go preaching the gospel?

What was the relative size of the city of Antioch?
Why was Antioch such an important city?

Barnabas Comes to Antioch

Why was Barnabas sent to Antioch?
What kind of a man was Barnabas?
In what way did Barnabas build up the Christians at Antioch?
Why were Paul and Barnabas especially fitted to work among the Gentiles?
How long did Barnabas and Paul work together in the city?
How many times is the word Christian used in the New Testament?

The Famine and the Relief

What are the roles of a prophet?
How many times is the name of Agabus used in the book of Acts?
What did Agabus say would happen in the reign of Claudius Caesar?
How did the Antioch Christians respond to the need of the Judean Christians?
To whom did they send their gifts?

Lesson XIII—December 29, 1974

POLITICAL OPPRESSION

Lesson Text

Acts 12:1-17

1 Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And *those* were the days of unleavened bread.

4 And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Pass-over to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison.

7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side, and woke him, saying, Rise up

quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him. Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him. Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed; and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.

10 And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth into the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street: and straightway the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said. Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered

the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying.

13 And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her. Thou art mad. But she confidently affirm-

ed that it was even so. And they said, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said. Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went to another place.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*"The word of God grew and multiplied."* (Acts 12:24.)
DEVOTIONAL READING.—Acts 12:18-25.

Daily Bible Readings

December 23.	M.....	Jesus Persecuted by a Herod (Matt. 2:1-12)
December 24.	T.....	John Persecuted by a Herod (Matt. 14:1-12)
December 25.	W.....	Peter Persecuted by a Herod (Acts 12:1-9)
December 26.	T.....	Paul Before (Herod) Agrippa (Acts 25:23-27)
December 27.	F.....	Unusual Death of a Herod (Acts 12:20-25)
December 28.	S.....	Herod (Antipas) Beheads John (Mark 6:1-14)
December 29.	S.....	A Herod Mocks Jesus (Luke 23:1-12)

TIME.—A.D. 44.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

PERSONS.—Herod, James, Peter, Roman soldiers, angel, the Jews, Mary. Rhoda, and disciples.

Introduction

Luke does not follow the tour of Paul and Barnabas among the churches of Judea administering to the needs of the Christians. He turns again to the church in Jerusalem and introduces a curious turn of events which befell the apostle Peter. Luke related the threats and intimidations of the Sadducees and Pharisees against Peter and John, the death of Stephen, and the harassing of the Christians in Damascus after the church in Jerusalem had been scattered. The Christians

who were driven from Jerusalem went about preaching the gospel as we have learned. The apostles continued to go about their work with the church in Jerusalem. Then suddenly a persecution arose from a totally unexpected source. At the time Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church, it appears that the apostles were exempt from the pressures of his hostile activities. But in the turn of events, this was to be changed; and the apostles would come under the threat of death.

The Golden Text

The word of God grew and multiplied. (Acts 12:24.)

After the leaders of the Jews had done their worst in putting Stephen to death and driving the Christians out of Jerusalem, God still defeated their intentions. Instead of accepting defeat, they went everywhere preaching the word. Gamaliel had warned the Sadducees and the council that they could not fight against God and win. The greatest periods of growth in the history of the church have occurred in those period of greatest opposition.

The new persecution instigated

against the apostles came not from the Jews, but from King Herod Agrippa I. Heretofore, the persecutions had been instigated by the Jews; and in the case of Saul traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians, it was with the knowledge and support of the Roman authorities. This king Herod had killed the apostle James and planned to do the same to Peter, and no doubt Herod would have extended his cruel measure to include others of the apostles and members of the Jerusalem church. This is the King

Herod who on a set day sat on his throne and made an oration to the people. "And the people shouted, saying, the voice of a god, and not of a man." (Acts 12:22.) Whereupon, an angel of God smote Herod and he died. Once again, the Christians were saved from their bitter enemies by the hand of God.

This is the setting of the golden

text. Luke tells us that against this background of renewed persecutions against the church that a great growth of the church was experienced. That "the word of God grew and multiplied," is a statement given to show the contrast between what man was attempting to do to stop the growth of the church and what God was doing for it.

The Text Explained

Martyrdom of James

(Acts 12: 1, 2)

Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hand to afflict certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

"Now about that time Herod." Luke intends to suggest a particular time period when Barnabas and Saul came to Jerusalem from Antioch with relief for the Judean Christians. This was in 44 A.D. following the persecutions of Herod who died in the same year. This Herod was King Agrippa I who was the grandson of King Herod the Great. He ruled in Palestine from A.D. 42 to 44. He was the son of Aristobulus, the nephew of Herod Antipas the brother of Herodias, and the father of Herod Agrippa II, King Herod I was sent to Rome in 7 B.C. following the execution of his father by Herod the Great in 6 B.C. He was about seventeen at the time. His mother, Bernice, accompanied him to Rome where they had close ties with the household of Caesar. One member of the royal household was Gaius (Caligula), the grand-nephew of Tiberius Caesar. When Gaius became emperor, he made Herod I ruler over the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias in southern Syria and was given the title of king. Two years later, the kingdom of Herod I was enlarged when the provinces of Galilee and Peraea were added to his kingdom. When Claudius became emperor in 41 A.D. he further enlarged Herod's kingdom by giving him Judea. The kingdom of Herod I at this time was almost as large as the kingdom ruled over by Herod the Great.

King Herod I was especially popular with the Jews. And this was an important relation to him which he greatly honored. The other Herods had enjoyed little favor with

the Jews. The reason for this relation grew out of the fact that he was the grandson of Mariamne, the Hasmonean princess, who was the wife of Herod the Great. The *Mishnah* relates how that Herod I read the "law of the kingdom" during the feast of the Tabernacles in a sabbatical year. When he read that a non-Jew could not be set over the Jews as king in Deuteronomy 17: 15, he wept aloud when he remembered that he was a descendant of Esau. But the people remembered his Hebrew descent from Mariamne and they said repeatedly, "Be not dismayed; you are indeed our brother!"

He catered to Jews seeking to win their favor and gain their good will. Herod must have recognized the great hatred of the Jews for the Christians, and he capitalized upon their resentment. The attitude of the Jews had radically changed toward the Christians after the death of Stephen. The apostles now became the targets of their tormentors. King Herod simply joined hands with the Jews in mounting new persecutions against the Christians. We do not know how many were put to death, but he killed James with the sword. This James was the brother of John. They were the sons of Zebedee. During the personal ministry of Jesus, they had shown an ambition to sit in high places next to Jesus in his kingdom, and they assured him that they would be able to drink the same bitter cup. (Matt. 20:20-25.) They indeed did. James was the first of the apostles to suffer the death of a martyr. His brother, John, was the last apostle whom Domitian Caesar sent into exile on the Isle of Patmos about A.D. 96.

James was killed with the sword. The Jews used stoning in capital punishment; the Romans crucified the non-Romans; and we may take

it that the sword was the instrument which Herod chose for the execution of James.

Arrest and Imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:3, 4)

And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And those were the days of unleavened bread. And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people.

"And when he saw that it pleased the Jews." The statement that this action pleased the Jews may be construed as being pleasing also to the rulers of the Jews. King Herod was seeking means to curry favor with the Jews, and this perfidious act met with the high approval of his subjects. He sought to enhance the favor he was finding with the Jews by seizing Peter also. This was during the Passover season during the days of unleavened bread. The law forbade Herod to take any direct action against Peter during this sacred Jewish season. Peter was then put in prison where he would be kept for the remaining period of the days of unleavened bread which lasted seven days.

"And when he had taken him." The purpose of Herod was to keep Peter safely in ward until after the Passover season, and then he planned to bring him forth and execute him. Luke brings out an interesting bit of information. Herod undoubtedly intended to make it impossible for Peter to escape the prison. He took unusual measures to forestall any attempt to free the apostle. Four quaternions of soldiers were appointed to guard Peter. This is to say that Peter was given to a band of four soldiers who guarded him at the same time. One soldier on each side of the prisoner was chained arm to arm. A third soldier was posted at the door, and a fourth soldier guarded the main door to the prison. The watches were divided into four so that each band of soldiers stood on guard for three hours and were then relieved. We recall that on a previous occasion when Peter was imprisoned by the Jews that he was enabled to escape. (Acts 5:19.)

The reason for keeping Peter in prison until after the Passover season had passed was to avoid offending the Jews. Then Herod planned to bring Peter forth and kill him. The Passover was held on the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan. The seven days that followed were called the days of unleavened bread since only unleavened bread could be eaten in the homes.

Peter Released from Prison (Acts 12: 5-11)

Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell: and he smote Peter on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. And he saith unto him. Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed; and he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and straightway the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a truth, that the Lord hath sent forth his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

"Peter therefore was kept in the prison." Peter was securely fastened in the prison waiting for the time when Herod would command his presence for some kind of mock trial which would result in the formal declaration of his death sentence. We can imagine the desperate concern of the Christians for Peter's safety. James had been killed and Peter awaited the same fate. The Christians were gathered together in earnest prayer to God for his safety. Herod had taken

every precaution to keep the apostle in safe custody. Only a miracle of God seemingly could now save Peter. Luke tells us that "Herod was about to bring him forth." There is a striking contrast between the grieving concern of the church for the apostle and what he was doing. "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers."

Peter had stood with confidence in God's power to save him when the high court of the Jews threatened him to cease preaching in the name of Jesus. Peter was not dismayed then, nor was he on this most fateful night. His was the sleep that grows out of the calm confidence that one is going with God whom he trusts implicitly.

As the apostle slept quietly through the night chained to a Roman soldier on either side of him, a light suddenly shined in the prison cell, and an angel of the Lord stood by his side. He smote Peter on the side and said, "Rise up quickly." The chains fell miraculously from the arms of Peter.

"And the angel said unto him." Peter was commanded to arise, to bind his girdle about his loins for an immediate exit from the prison, and to put on his sandals. Peter had been sleeping with his outer garment loosely folded about his person, and his sandals had been removed for comfort's sake. Peter quickly did as he was instructed to follow after the angel.

"And he went out, and followed." Whatever may have been the circumstances, there was no attempt to stop Peter from leaving the prison. The angel was in the form of a man. But for all Peter knew he thought he was seeing a vision. And the thought could have flashed through his mind that the vision would pass and he would find himself still in the prison in the custody of the soldiers.

"And when they were past the first and second guard." What Peter thought were the moving scenes of a vision was a real passage through the prison corridor fraught with danger for an escaping prisoner. The stranger and Peter passed quietly by the second soldier who was stationed near the inner door of the prison where Peter had been chained. They passed beyond the next soldier who was standing next

to the main door of the entrance to the prison. The next experience was equally strange. What must have been an enormously heavy iron gate at the entrance of the prison began to swing open as the angel and Peter approached it, and "they went out" and "passed on through one street" and immediately the angel departed from the presence of Peter. Peter had probably been imprisoned in the Tower of Antonia which was located north of the temple. It was a strong fortress heavily garrisoned with Roman soldiers, and the angel left him alone somewhere in the midst of the city.

"And when Peter was come to himself." Peter suddenly realized that he had not been asleep. He was standing alone in the heart of the sleeping city. Then Peter knew in one rushing moment of realization that God had sent an angel into the prison to deliver him from death. Herod had planned to bring him forth, and the Jews had been waiting with high expectation for that time. The rulers of the Jews had thrown off seemingly all restraint, and they were resolved to carry on the harshest persecutions against the Christians which now included the apostles.

Peter Rejoins the Disciples

(Acts 12: 12-17)

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid came to answer, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in, and told that Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was even so. And they said, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened, they saw him, and were amazed. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him forth out of the prison. And he said, Tell these things unto James, and to the brethren, and the departed, and went to another place.

"And when he had considered the thing." When Peter came to fully

realize that the experience had not been a vision, he considered the matter. By this we are to understand that the apostle gave the whole matter his closest thought. Peter realized that the hand of God had been moving that night. As Joseph stood in the presence of his brothers in Egypt, he came to realize that God had long been moving to save Joseph and his family. God had not planned for Peter to die at the hands of Herod. As Peter moved through the darkened streets of Jerusalem, "he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark." We may take it for granted that Peter had purposely made his way to the home of Mary. Luke does not even suggest that Peter had been divinely guided there. There are six Marys mentioned in the Scriptures and each one has a particular description: Mary of Cleopas (John 19:25); Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2); Mary the mother of Mark; Mary, sister of Lazarus (Luke 10:42); Mary, a Roman Christian (Rom. 16:6); and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:10).

It was in the home of Mary where many of the disciples had gathered to pray for his safety, and they had prayed all through the night. At another time, the disciples had gathered to pray when Peter told the disciples of the threats of the Sanhedrin. (Acts 4:31.) "The supplication of a righteous man avail-eth much in its working." (James 5:16.)

"And when he knocked at the door." The fact that the disciples had gathered in the house of Mary to pray leads us to assume that Mary's house must have been an accustomed place where the disciples came to pray. We may pause here to bring in an interesting fact which Luke introduces into the account. Mary is here identified as the mother of John Mark, and this is a fact of crowning importance for this is the Mark that would play such a prominent role in the history of the church. This is the Mark that wrote the gospel according to Mark. John Mark appears in other places in the writings of Paul. (See Acts 12:25; 13:13; Col. 4:10; Phile. 24, and 1 Pet. 5:13.) We remember Mark because he turned back on Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary

journey. When Paul and Barnabas were planning their second missionary journey, they had a sharp dissension over the taking of John Mark with Barnabas defending Mark. (Acts 15:39.) John Mark was, so to speak, on the ground floor of the early beginnings of the church. The scholars generally agree that the gospel of Mark was written before the other three records.

The next scene begins to unfold. As Peter knocked at the door, a maid by the name of Rhoda came to answer the knock. We need to know that entrance to such homes in ancient Palestine and even today may not be opened from the street. The door may only be unlatched from within to allow those who would enter to pass in. Many of the homes would lead into an open courtyard with the surrounding living quarters. "Rhoda" means rose. It was customary among the Jews to name their daughters after beautiful and lovely objects.

"And when she knew Peter's voice." Peter must have often come to the home of Mary, and Rhoda must have been often in his company and heard Peter speak. We may well imagine the excitement of the young girl when she recognized Peter's voice. So great was her excitement that she turned and ran to the others in the home telling them that Peter stood without. And even though they had been praying fervently for Peter's safety, they said to her, "Thou art mad." They could only say after Rhoda assured them that it was Peter's voice, "It is his angel."

"But Peter continued knocking." The door was finally opened to Peter, and they were amazed to find him standing there. We know that the disciples were praying for Peter, but there is no information about the content of their prayer. It appears that the last thing to be expected was to see Peter standing in the flesh before them. Peter, of course, passed into the home in the midst of the assembled company.

"But he, beckoning unto them." The disciples who were assembled seemed to have been just as excited as Rhoda upon seeing Peter. He finally had to beckon with his hand to calm their excitement over his sudden presence. Peter then recounted the experiences which had

taken place that night and how an angel had come to release him from the prison. It appears that James and others of the brethren were not present in the home. He commanded those assembled to tell

James and the others of his deliverance. Then Peter went "to another place." The assumption here is that Peter went somewhere, perhaps in hiding, to escape the murderous Herod.

Points for the Teacher to Emphasize

1. The persecutions of the early Christians in Jerusalem shows the contrast of what man was attempting to do to stop the growth of the church and what God was doing to cause it to grow.

2. When we seek the praise of men and value it more than to praise God, we are inviting defeat.

3. When man lays his careful plans to defeat the purposes of God,

God will not be mocked and he will not be defeated.

4. Unlike the frightened Peter who followed Jesus from afar on the night of his betrayal, the converted Peter was sleeping in quiet confidence while King Herod planned his death.

5. Often times we come to realize that God is working in our behalf when we are spared defeat and delivered from our frustrations.

Questions for Discussion

What is the subject of this lesson?

Repeat the golden text.

Give time, place, and persons.

Introduction

Who suffered persecutions in the city of Jerusalem following the death of Stephen?

What three major persecutions had been directed toward the Christians?

Golden Text

Has persecution hindered or stopped the growth of the church in the places where persecution was the most intense?

What did Herod plan to do with Peter?

What happened to King Herod?

How did the church respond to the new wave of persecutions?

Martyrdom of James

At what time did King Herod cause James to be put to death?

What was the relation of this King Herod to King Herod the Great?

Who made Herod Agrippa I the king over much of Palestine?

Why was Herod so popular with the Jews?

Who was Mariamne?

Who was the first apostle to suffer the death of a martyr?

Where is the apostle John when we read about him last in the New Testament?

Arrest and Imprisonment of Peter

How did the Jews react to the death of James?

Why did Herod put off killing Peter after his arrest?

What were the days of unleavened bread?

What measures were taken to keep Peter securely in prison?

Peter Released from Prison

What were the Christians doing in Peter's behalf?

What was Peter's state of mind that night when Herod planned to bring him forth to the people?

Describe the presence of the angel in the cell of Peter.

What did the angel say to Peter?

Did Peter comprehend what was taking place?

What did the angel command Peter to do?

Was any attempt made by the soldiers to stop the escape of Peter?

In what respect did Peter "come to himself"?

Peter Rejoins the Disciples

To whose home did Peter come?

What important disciple was related to Mary?

How many Marys are named in the Bible?

Who came to the door when Peter knocked?

What did Rhoda do when she recognized Peter's voice?

What did Peter tell the disciples in Mary's home?

Where did Peter go afterwards?