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**A Brief Bible History**

**By**

**James Oscar Boyd and John Gresham Machen**

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A Survey of the Old and New Testaments

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John Gresham Machen

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A BRIEF

BIBLE HISTORY

A SURVEY OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

JAMES OSCAR BOYD, Ph.D., D.D.

AND

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Contents

SECTION I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH IN OLD

TESTAMENT TIMES

LESSON PAGE

I. Before Abraham 7

II. The Patriarchs 10

III. Egyptian Bondage and Deliverance 13

IV. Moses as Leader and Lawgiver 16

V. The Conquest and Settlement of Canaan 19

VI. The Period of the Judges 22

VII. Samuel and Saul: Prophecy and Monarchy 25

VIII. David and Solomon: Psalms and Wisdom 28

IX. The Kingdom of Israel 31

X. The Kingdom of Judah, to Hezekiah 34

XI. Judah, from Hezekiah to the Exile 37

XII. The Exile and the Restoration 40

XIII. The Jewish State Under Persia 43

XIV. Israel's Religious Life 46

XV. "The Coming One" 49

SECTION II

THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF

THE CHURCH IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

I. The Preparation 55

II. The Coming of the Lord 58

III. The Baptism 61

IV. The Early Judean Ministry 64

V. The Beginning of the Galilæan Ministry 67

VI. The Period of Popularity 70

VII. The Turning Point 73

VIII. Jesus as Messiah 76

IX. The Prediction of the Cross 79

X. The Last Journeys 83

XI. Teaching in the Temple 86

XII. The Crucifixion 89

XIII. The Resurrection 93

XIV. The Beginnings of the Christian Church 96

XV. The First Persecution 99

XVI. The Conversion of Paul 102

XVII. The Gospel Given to the Gentiles 105

XVIII. The First Missionary Journey and the Apostolic Council 109

XIX. The Second Missionary Journey 112

XX. The Third Missionary Journey. The Epistle to the Galatians 115

XXI. The Third Missionary Journey. The Epistles to the

Corinthians and to the Romans 118

XXII. The First Imprisonment of Paul 122

XXIII. The Close of the Apostolic Age 125

Introduction

This book surveys the history of God's redeeming grace. It reviews

Old Testament history, disclosing the stream of God's redeeming

purposes flowing down through the older times. It reviews New

Testament history, disclosing the broadening and deepening of that

purpose for us men and for mankind in our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ and his Church.

The chapters included in this book appear also as a part of Teaching

the Teacher, a First Book in Teacher Training, and are issued in

this form to supply the demand for a brief Bible history, for

popular reading.

HAROLD MCA. ROBINSON.

SECTION I

The Development of the Church in Old Testament Times

By James Oscar Boyd, Ph.D., D.D.

LESSON I

Before Abraham

Genesis, Chapters 1 to 11

That part of the globe which comes within the view of the Old

Testament is mostly the region, about fifteen hundred miles square,

lying in the southwestern part of Asia, the southeastern part of

Europe, and the northeastern part of Africa. This is where the three

continents of the Eastern Hemisphere come together. Roughly speaking

it includes Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and

Egypt, with a fringe of other lands and islands stretching beyond

them.

The heart of all this territory is that little strip of land, lying

between the desert on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the

west, known as Syria and Palestine. It is some four hundred miles

in length and varies from fifty to one hundred miles in width. It

has been well called "the bridge of the world," for like a bridge it

joins the largest continent, Asia, to the next largest, Africa. And

as Palestine binds the lands together, so the famous Suez Canal at

its southern end now binds the seas together. To-day, therefore, as

in all the past, this spot is the crossroads of the nations.

Palestine has long been called the "Holy Land," because it is the

scene of most of the Bible story. Yet it would be a mistake to

suppose that that Bible story is limited to Palestine. The book

of Genesis does not introduce the reader to Canaan (as it calls

Palestine) until he has reached its twelfth chapter. There is a

sense in which the history of God's people begins with Abraham, and

it was Abraham who went at God's bidding into the land of Canaan.

The story of Abraham will be taken up in the second lesson; but the

Bible puts before the life of Abraham all the familiar story that

lies in the first eleven chapters of Genesis and that forms the

background for the figures of Abraham and his descendants.

The location of this background is the basin of the Tigris and

Euphrates Rivers. These two streams are mentioned in Gen. 2:14 (the

Tigris under the form "Hiddekel") as the third and fourth "heads"

of the "river that went out of Eden to water the garden" in which

our first parents dwelt. The region is at the southern end of what

is now called Mesopotamia. At the northern end of this river basin

towers the superb mountain known as Mount Ararat. But the "mountains

of Ararat," mentioned in Gen. 8:4 as the place where Noah's ark

rested when the waters of the Flood had subsided, are no particular

peak, but are the highlands of Kurdistan, which in ancient times

were called Urartu (Ararat). Between Kurdistan on the north and the

Persian Gulf on the south, the highlands of Persia on the east and

the great Syrian Desert on the west, occurred the earliest drama of

human history.

That drama was a tragedy. It became a tragedy because of man's sin.

The wonderful poem of creation in Gen., ch. 1, has for the refrain

of its six stanzas, "God saw that it was good." Best of all was man,

the last and highest of God's works--man, made in "his own image,"

after his likeness. On the sixth "day," when God made man, God said

of his work, "Behold, it was very good." More than that: through

the kindness of God man is put in a "garden," and is ordered to

"dress it and to keep it." Ch. 2:15. Adam sees his superiority to

the rest of the animal kingdom, over which he is given "dominion."

He is thus prepared to appreciate the woman as a helpmeet for him,

so that the unit of society may ever mean for him one man and one

woman with their children. Adam is also warned against sin as having

disobedience for its root and death as its result.

All this prepares us to understand the temptation, the miserable

fall of the woman and the man, their terror, shame, and punishment.

Ch. 3. And we are not surprised to see the unfolding of sin in the

life of their descendants, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel, and

growing until God sweeps all away in a universal deluge. Chs. 4, 6.

God's tender love for his foolish, rebellious creatures "will not

let them go." At the gates of the garden from which their sin has

forever banished them, God already declares his purpose to "bruise"

the head of that serpent, Rom. 16:20, who had brought "sin into

the world and death by sin," Gen. 3:15. Through the "seed of the

woman"--a "Son of man" of some future day--sinful man can escape

the death he has brought upon himself. And from Seth, the child

"appointed instead of" murdered Abel, a line of men descends, who

believe this promise of God. Ch. 5. In Enoch we find them "walking

with God," v. 24, in a fellowship that seemed lost when paradise

was lost. In Lamech we find them hoping with each new generation

that God's curse will be at length removed. V. 29. And in Noah we

find them obedient to a positive command of God, ch. 6:22, as Adam

had been disobedient.

In the Flood, Noah and his family of eight were the only persons to

survive. When they had come from the ark after the Flood, God gave

them the promise that he would not again wipe out "all flesh." Ch.

9:11. But after it appeared that God's judgments had not made them

fear him, God was just as angry with Noah's descendants as he had

been with the men before the Flood. Pride led them to build a tower

to be a rallying point for their worship of self. But God showed

them that men cannot long work together with a sinful purpose as

their common object; he broke up their unity in sin by confusing

their speech, ch. 11, and scattering them over the earth, ch. 10.

This second disappointment found its brighter side in the line of

men descended from Noah through Shem, ch. 11:10, who also cherished

God's promises. And the last stroke of the writer's pen in these

earliest chapters of the Bible introduces the reader to the family

of Terah in that line of Shem, and thus prepares the way for a

closer acquaintance with Terah's son, Abraham, "the friend of God."

QUESTIONS ON LESSON I

1. About how large is the world of the

Old Testament, and where does it lie?

2. What special importance has Palestine because of its position?

3. How much of the story in Genesis is told before we are

carried to Palestine?

4. Locate on a map the scene of those earliest events in human

history.

5. Show how the first two chapters of Genesis prepare for the

tragedy of sin and death that follows.

6. How does the brighter side of hope and faith appear from Adam

to Noah?

7. What effect did the Flood have on men's sin and their faith

in God?

8. Trace the descent of the man God chose to become "the father

of the faithful."

LESSON II

The Patriarchs

Genesis, Chapters 12 to 50

God's purpose to save and bless all mankind was to be carried out

in a wonderful way. He selected and "called" one man to become the

head and ancestor of a single nation. And in this man and the nation

descended from him, God purposed to bless the whole world.

Abraham was that man, and Israel was that nation. God made known

his purpose in what the Bible calls the Promise, Gal. 3:17, the

Blessing, v. 14, or the Covenant, v. 17. Its terms are given many

times over in the book of Genesis, but the essence of it lies

already in the first word of God to Abraham, Gen. 12:3, "In thee

shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

To believe this promise was a work of faith. It was against all

appearances and all probability. Yet this was just where the

religious value of that promise lay for Abraham and for his children

after him--in faith. They had to believe something on the basis

solely of their confidence in the One who had promised it. Or

rather, they had to believe in that Person, the personal Jehovah,

their God. They must absolutely trust him. To do so, they must "know

him." And that they might know him, he must reveal himself to them.

That is why we read all through Genesis of God's "appearing" or

"speaking" to this or the other patriarch. However he accomplished

it, God was always trying thus to make them better acquainted with

himself; for such knowledge was to be the basis of their faith. Upon

faith in him depended their faith in his word, and upon faith in

his word depended their power to keep alive in the world that true

religion which was destined for all men and which we to-day share.

Abraham's God is our God.

Not Abraham's great wealth in servants, Gen. 14:14, and in flocks

and herds, ch. 13:2, 6, but the promise of God to bless, constituted

the true "birthright" in Abraham's family. Ishmael, the child of

doubt, missed it; and Isaac, the child of faith, obtained it. Gal.

4:23. Esau "despised" it, because he was "a profane [irreligious]

person," Heb. 12:16, and Jacob schemed to obtain it by purchase,

Gen. 25:31, and by fraud, ch. 27:19. Jacob bequeathed it to his

sons, ch. 49, and Moses delivered it in memorable poetic form to

the nation to retain and rehearse forever. Deut., ch. 32.

When Abraham, the son of Terah, entered Canaan with Sarah his

wife and Lot his nephew and their great company of servants and

followers, he was obeying the command of his God. He no sooner

enters it than God gives him a promise that binds up this land with

him and his descendants. Gen. 13:14-17. Yet we must not suppose

that Abraham settled down in this Promised Land in the way that

the Pilgrim Fathers settled in the Old Colony. Although Canaan is

promised to the "seed" of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as a possession,

they did not themselves obtain a foothold in it. Apart from the

field of the cave Machpelah, at Hebron in the south, Gen., ch.

23, and a "shoulder" (\_shechem\_) or fragment of land near Shechem

("Jacob's Well"), in the center of Canaan, the patriarchs did

not acquire a foot of the soil of what was to become "the Holy

Land." Abraham wandered about, even going down to Egypt and back.

Isaac was sometimes at Hebron and sometimes at Beer-sheba on the

extreme southern verge of the land. Jacob spent much of his manhood

in Mesopotamia, and of his old age in Egypt. For after divine

Providence in a remarkable manner had transplanted one of Jacob's

sons, Joseph, into new soil, Gen., ch. 37, his father and his

brothers were drawn after him, with the way for their long Egyptian

residence providentially prepared for them, Gen. 50:20.

Side by side with the growth of a nation out of an individual we

find God's choice of the direction which that growth should take.

Not all, even of Abraham's family, were to become part of the

future people of God. So Lot, Abraham's nephew, separates from

him, and thereafter he and his descendants, the Ammonites and the

Moabites, go their own way. As between Abraham's sons, Ishmael is

cast out, and Isaac, Sarah's son, is selected. And between Isaac's

two sons, Esau and Jacob, the choice falls on Jacob. All twelve of

Jacob's sons are included in the purpose of God, and for this reason

the nation is called after Jacob, though usually under his name

"Israel," which God gave him after his experience of wrestling with

"the angel of the Lord" at the river Jabbok. Gen. 32:22. Those sons

of his are to become the heads of the future nation of the "twelve

tribes", Acts 26:7.

Even while Lot, Ishmael, and Esau are thus being cut off, the

greatest care is taken to keep the descent of the future nation pure

to the blood of Terah's house. Those three men all married alien

wives: Lot probably a woman of Sodom, Ishmael an Egyptian, and

Esau two Hittite women. The mother of Isaac was Sarah, the mother

of Jacob was Rebekah, and the mothers of eight of the twelve sons

of Jacob were Leah and Rachel; and all these women belonged to that

same house of Terah to which their husbands belonged. Indeed, much

of Genesis is taken up with the explanation of how Isaac and Jacob

were kept from intermarrying with the peoples among whom they lived.

The last quarter of the book, which is occupied with the story of

Joseph and his brethren, is designed to link these "fathers" and

their God with the God and people of Moses. The same Jehovah who had

once shown his power over Pharaoh for the protection of Abraham and

Sarah, and who was later to show his power over another Pharaoh "who

knew not Joseph," showed his power also over the Pharaoh of Joseph's

day, in exalting Joseph from the dungeon to the post of highest

honor and authority in Egypt, and in delivering Jacob and his whole

family from death through Joseph's interposition. What their long

residence in Egypt meant for God's people will be seen in another

lesson.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON II

1. In what promise does God reveal to Abraham his plan to bless

the world?

2. How was Abraham brought to believe in God's promise? What

difference did it make whether he and his descendants believed

it or not?

3. Did the patriarchs see that part of the promise fulfilled

which gave them possession of "the Holy Land"? Read carefully

Gen. 15:13-16 and Heb. 11:9, 10, 14-16.

4. Make a "family tree" in the usual way, showing those

descendants of Terah who play any large part in the book of

Genesis. Underscore in it the names of those men who were in

the direct line of "the Promise."

5. How were Isaac and Jacob kept from marrying outside their own

family?

6. Explain Joseph's words, "Ye meant evil against me; but God

meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to

save much people alive." Gen. 50:20.

LESSON III

Egyptian Bondage and Deliverance

Exodus, Chapter 1

God says through his prophet Hosea, Hos. 11:1, "When Israel was a

child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." See also

Matt. 2:15. There was a loving, divine purpose in the Egyptian

residence of God's people. What was it? What did this period mean in

the career of Israel?

Most obviously, it meant growth. From the "seventy souls," Ex.

1:5, that went down into Egypt with Jacob, there sprang up there a

populous folk, large enough to take its place alongside the other

nations of the world of that day. Observe the nature of the land

where this growth took place. Egypt was a settled country, where the

twelve developing tribes could be united geographically and socially

in a way impossible in a country like Palestine. However oppressed

they were, they nevertheless were secluded from the dangers of raids

from without and of civil strife within--just such dangers as later

almost wrecked the substantial edifice slowly erected by this period

of growth in Egypt.

Egypt meant also for Israel a time of waiting. All this growth was

not accomplished in a short time. It lasted four hundred and thirty

years. Ex. 12:40, 41. Through this long period, which seems like

a dark tunnel between the brightness of the patriarchs' times and

that of Moses' day, there was nothing for God's people to do but to

wait. They were the heirs of God's promise, but they must wait for

the fulfillment of that promise in God's own time, wait for a leader

raised up by God, wait for the hour of national destiny to strike.

As Hosea, ch. 11:1 expresses it, this "child" must wait for his

Father's "call." The Egyptian period left an indelible impression on

the mind of Israel. It formed the gray background on which God could

lay the colors of his great deliverance. It is because God knew and

planned this that he so often introduces himself to his people, when

he speaks to them, as "Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the

land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

In the third place, this Egyptian period meant for Israel a time

of chastisement. The oppression to which the descendants of Jacob

were exposed, when "there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not

Joseph," Ex. 1:8, was so severe, prolonged, and hopeless, v. 14,

that it has become proverbial and typical. Since every male child

was to be put to death, v. 22, it is clear that the purpose of the

Egyptians was nothing less than complete extermination. "It is good

for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth": if that be true, then

the children of Israel derived good from the school of discipline

in which they grew up. True, as we read their later story, we feel

that no people could be more fickle. Yet there is no other nation

with which to compare Israel. And it is very probable that no other

nation would have been serious-minded enough even to receive and

grasp the divine revelation and leading of Moses' and Joshua's time.

God, who had "seen the affliction of his people," who had "heard

their cry" and sent Moses to them to organize their deliverance,

wrote forever on this nation's soul the message of salvation in a

historical record. At the start of their national life there stood

the story, which they could never deny or forget, and which told

them of God's power and grace.

Exodus, Chapters 5 to 15

All this lay in Israel's experience in Egypt. The next lesson

will tell of the character and work of the man whom God chose to

be leader. The means by which Moses succeeded in the seemingly

impossible task of marching a great horde of slaves out from their

masters' country, was the impression of God's power on the minds

of Pharaoh and his people. It was a continued, combined, and

cumulative impression. Of course it could not be made without the

use of supernatural means. We must not, therefore, be surprised to

find the story in Exodus bristling with miracles. To be sure, the

"plagues" can be shown to be largely natural to that land where they

occurred. And the supreme event of the deliverance, the passage of

Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground, was due, according to the

narrative itself, to a persistent, wind, Ex. 14:21, such as often

lays bare the shallows of a bay, only to release the waters again

when its force is spent.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to remove the "hand of God" from

the account by thus pointing out some of the means God used to

accomplish his special purposes. It was at the time, in the way, and

in the order, in which Moses announced to Pharaoh the arrival of the

plagues, that they actually appeared. This was what had its ultimate

effect on the king's stubborn will. And when Israel was told to "go

forward," with the waters right before them, and when the Egyptians

were saying, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath

shut them in," Ex. 14:3--it was just at that juncture that the east

wind did its work at God's command; when Israel was over safely,

it went down. Such things do not "happen." It made a profound

impression on Israel, on Egypt, and on all the nations of that day;

all united in accepting it as the work of Israel's God. Ex. 15:11,

14-16; Josh. 2:10.

The important point for the nation was to know, when Moses and Aaron

came to them in the name of God, that it was their fathers' God who

had sent them. On account of this need, which both the people and

their leaders felt, God proclaimed his divine name, Jehovah (more

precisely, \_Yahweh\_, probably meaning "He is," Ex. 3:14, 15), to

Moses, and bade him pronounce the same to Israel, to assure them

that he was "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," and thus

what Moses came now to do for them was just what had been promised

to those fathers long before. The passover night was the fulfillment

of God's good word to Abraham. Ex. 13:10, 11. How that word went on

and on toward more and more complete fulfillment will be the subject

of the succeeding lessons.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON III

1. What advantages had Egypt over Palestine as the place for

Israel to grow from a family into a nation?

2. What value was there for Israel in a negative time of waiting

at the beginning of its history?

3. Compare the effect on Israel with the effect on a man, of

passing through a time of difficulty while developing.

4. Name the ten "plagues of Egypt" in their order. How far can

they be called "natural"?

5. If the east wind drove back the Red Sea, what did God have to

do with Israel's escape from the Egyptian army?

6. Why should we not be surprised to find many miracles grouped

at this stage of Bible history?

7. How did God identify himself in the minds of the people with

the God of their fathers? What was his personal name?

LESSON IV

Moses as Leader and Lawgiver

Exodus, Chapters 2 to 4

One of the things Israel had to wait for through those centuries in

Egypt was a leader. When the time came God raised up such a leader

for his people in Moses.

The story of how Moses' life was preserved in infancy, and of how

he came to be brought up at the court of Pharaoh with all its

advantages for culture, is one of the most fascinating tales of

childhood. Ex. 2:1-10. But not many who know this familiar tale

could go on with the biography of the man of forty who fled from

Pharaoh's vengeance. Moses found by personal contact with his

"brethren," the children of Israel, that they were not yet ready for

common action, and would not easily acknowledge his right to lead

them. After killing an Egyptian slave driver there was nothing for

Moses to do but to flee. Vs. 11-15.

He spent the second forty years of his life, Acts 7:23, 30; Ex. 7:7,

in the deserts about the eastern arm of the Red Sea--the region

known to the Hebrews as Midian. There he married the daughter of the

Midianite priest Reuel. (Jethro was probably Reuel's title, meaning

"his excellency.") While herding his sheep in the mountains called

Horeb (Sinai), Moses received at the burning bush that personal

revelation of the God of his fathers, which lay at the base of all

his future labors for God and his people. Ex. 3:1 to 4:17. It was

a commission to lead Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the

land promised to their fathers.

Though very humble as to his fitness for such leadership, Moses

was assured of Jehovah's presence and help. He was equipped with

extraordinary powers for convincing the proud Pharaoh that his

demands were God's demands; and he was given the aid of his brother

Aaron, who had a readiness of speech which Moses at this time seems

to have lacked.

Exodus, Chapters 16 to 24

How the two brothers achieved the seemingly impossible task of

winning out of Egypt, and of uniting a spiritless and unorganized

mass of slaves upon a desperate enterprise, is the narrative that

fills the early chapters of Exodus. But with Israel safe across

the Red Sea, Moses' leadership had only begun. He instituted an

organization of the people for relieving himself of his heavy duties

as judge. He determined the line of march, and sustained the spirits

of the fighting men in their struggle against the tribes of the

desert who challenged Israel's passage.

But, above all, Moses became the "mediator" of the "covenant,"

Heb. 9:19-21, between the Hebrews and Jehovah their God at Mount

Sinai. On the basis of the Ten Commandments, Ex. 20:2-17; Deut.

5:6-21, that guide to God's nature and will which formed the Hebrew

constitution, the people agreed to worship and obey Jehovah alone,

and Jehovah promised to be their God, fulfilling to them his

promises made to their fathers. By solemn sacrifices, according to

the custom of the time, when the symbolism of altar and priesthood

was well understood, this covenant was sealed.

Exodus, Chapter 25 to Numbers, Chapter 36

After long seclusion on the mount alone with God, Moses ordered the

erection of a house of worship. It had to be portable, so as to

accompany them in their wanderings and express visibly, wherever

set up, the religious unity of the twelve tribes. Aaron and his

sons were consecrated to be the official priesthood of this new

shrine and were clothed and instructed accordingly. Minute details

regulated all sacrifices, and similar minute instructions enabled

the priests to decide questions of ceremonial cleanness and

uncleanness in matters of food and health.

All these laws and regulations, mainly recorded in Leviticus,

were given through Moses, either alone or in association with his

brother. It is not surprising to learn that there were those who

challenged this exclusive leadership in every department of the

national life. We read of a willful disregard of divine orders even

in the family of Aaron, with immediate fatal results. Lev. 10:1-7.

Like punishment overtook those members of the tribe of Levi who

showed jealousy of the house of Aaron, and those elements in other

tribes that claimed rights equal or superior to those of Moses.

Num., chs. 16, 17. It would be strange, indeed, if God, who had

vindicated his servant Moses against Pharaoh, should let his own

authority as represented by Moses be challenged within the camp of

Israel. He punished to save.

Just as God took up the Sabbath and circumcision, old customs of

the preceding era, into the law of Israel, so also he spoke to this

people through an elaborate system of feasts and pilgrimages, which

bound up their whole year with the worship of God. Indeed, the

principle of the seventh part of time as sacred was extended to the

seventh year, and even to the fiftieth year (the year following the

seventh seven), for beneficent social and economic uses. Lev., ch.

25.

When at length the nation, thus organized and equipped, set forth

from Sinai, Num. 10:11, they required a leadership of a different

kind--military leadership and practical statesmanship. They

found both in Moses. He it was who led them through all the long

wanderings in the peninsula of Sinai, bearing their murmurings and

meeting their recurrent difficulties with a patience that seems

almost divine, save for that one lapse which was to cost him and

Aaron their entrance into the Promised Land. Num. 20:10-12.

At the border of the land, from the top of Pisgah in the long

mountain wall of Moab, Moses at last looked down into that deep

gorge of the Jordan Valley at his feet, which separated him from

the hills of Canaan. Beyond this river and the Dead Sea, into which

it empties, lay the land long ago promised to the seed of Abraham.

Moses had been permitted to lead the people to its very gateway; but

it remained for another, his younger helper, Joshua, to lead them

through the gate into the house of rest.

The Book of Deuteronomy

But before he surrendered his power to another and his life to his

Maker, the aged Moses rehearsed in the ears of Israel the great

principles of God's law. He pleaded earnestly with them to accept

it from the heart, to adapt it to the changed conditions of their

new settled life with its new temptations, and to hand it down as

their most precious heritage to their children after them. This is

the purpose and substance of the book of Deuteronomy, which gets its

name from the fact that it is a "second lawgiving." It is the Law of

Sinai repeated, but in oratorical form, charged with the feeling and

spirit of that "man of God," whose name is forever linked with the

Law and with the God who gave it to mankind.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON IV

1. How did Moses' forty years in Egypt and his forty years in

Midian help to prepare him for leadership?

2. What was the constitution of the new Hebrew State established

at Sinai? How was it ratified?

3. How was the tabernacle suited to the religious needs of

Israel during Moses' lifetime?

4. Show how the Law of Moses takes up the old principle of the

Sabbath and applies it to the life of Israel.

5. Where did Moses' leadership end, and what was his last

service to the nation?

LESSON V

The Conquest and Settlement of Canaan

The Book of Joshua

On the death of Aaron his son, Eleazar, succeeded him as high

priest. But when Moses died, it was not a son who succeeded him in

the political and moral leadership of Israel, for that position was

not hereditary. Joshua, a man of Ephraim, was divinely designated

for this work. He was fitted for the difficult undertaking by

military experience, Ex. 17:9-14, by personal acquaintance with

Canaan, Num. 13:8, 16; 14:6, 30, 38, and by long and intimate

association with Moses, Ex. 33:11; Num. 11:28; Deut. 34:9; Josh.

1:1. The book of Joshua, which records his career, divides naturally

into two parts, first, the conquest, chs. 1 to 12, and second,

the settlement, chs. 13 to 22. Two further chapters, chs. 23, 24,

contain Joshua's valedictory address.

Before Moses' death two and a half tribes had already received their

assignment of territory on the east of the Jordan, out of lands

conquered from the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. But the fighting men

of these tribes agreed to accompany the other tribes and share their

struggle till all had obtained an inheritance. So when the great

host passed over the Jordan, not far from where it empties into the

Dead Sea, the men of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh crossed with the

rest. Jehovah, who at the Red Sea a generation earlier had struck

terror into the hearts of all nations by his wonderful interposition

to save Israel and destroy its enemies, repeated here his saving

help, by stemming the swift current of the Jordan River, till all

had passed over dry shod to the western side.

Once over, they found themselves face to face with Jericho, a

city which commanded the passes into the mountain country beyond.

Spies previously despatched to learn the weakness of Jericho had

reported the panic of its inhabitants and so prepared the Hebrews

to believe God's word, when through Joshua he announced a bloodless

victory here at the beginning of their conquest. Without a blow

struck Jericho fell, and all its inhabitants were "devoted," at

Jehovah's strict command. Even their wealth was to be "devoted,"

that is, the cattle slain and the goods added to the treasury of

the sanctuary. Only Rahab, who had saved the spies, and her family

were excepted. One man, Achan, disobeyed the ban on private spoils.

His covetousness and deception, revealed by Israel's defeat in

the expedition against Ai which followed the fall of Jericho, and

detected by the use of the sacred lot, was punished by the execution

of all who were privy to the crime.

Better success attended the second attempt to take Ai. With these

two cities reduced, Jericho at the bottom and Ai at the top of the

valley leading up from the Jordan floor to the central highland,

Joshua was in a position to attack anywhere without fear of being

outflanked. Middle, south, and north was the order commended by

military considerations. Accordingly those cities which, because

in the middle of the land, felt themselves the most immediately

threatened, took the first steps to avert the menace. A group of

five towns lying just north of Jerusalem, with Gibeon at their head,

succeeded by a ruse in getting a treaty of peace from Joshua. The

Gibeonites deceived Joshua by representing themselves as having

come from a great distance to seek an alliance. Joshua's pride was

flattered and he fell a victim to the trick. The consequences were

serious, for these Canaanites, though reduced to vassalage, remained

as aliens in the heart of the land, and cut off the southern from

the northern tribes of Israel.

A confederacy of the chief cities in the region south of Gibeon,

headed by the king of Jerusalem, determined to strike the first

blow. But their campaign against the Gibeonites, now the allies

of Israel, ended in a quick advance by Joshua and his complete

subjugation of all these cities, the humiliation and death of their

kings, and the "devotion" of the inhabitants who fell into his hands.

A similar campaign followed in the north, with the city of Hazor

at the head of the Canaanite forces. At the "waters of Merom," a

small lake a few miles north of the Sea of Galilee, a surprise

attack by Joshua deprived his enemies of their advantage in horsemen

and chariots on the level ground they had selected for battle,

and resulted in the utter rout of the Canaanites and the general

slaughter of every soul that did not escape by flight from the

"devoted" towns.

Thus from Mount Hermon on the north to the wilderness of the

wandering on the south, the whole land had been swept over and

reduced to impotence by the Hebrew invader. It was time to apportion

it now to the several tribes. This was accomplished under the

direction of Joshua and Eleazar. Judah and Joseph, the two strongest

tribes, were assigned, the one to the south and the other to the

north of the main mountain mass. Levi's inheritance was to be "the

Lord," that is, the religious tithes, and his dwelling was to be

"among his brethren," that is, in designated towns throughout

all the land. A commission of three representatives from each of

the seven other western tribes divided the rest of the conquered

territory into seven fairly equal parts. These then were assigned

to the seven tribes by lot at the tabernacle at Shiloh. As for the

eastern tribes, when they returned to their homes across the Jordan,

they built an altar at the ford, as a permanent "witness" to the

unity of all the sons of Jacob, however the deep gorge of the Jordan

might cut them off from one another.

At Shechem, where Abraham built his first altar in Canaan, Joshua

had renewed the covenant between the people and their God as soon as

he had secured control of Mount Ephraim, the middle highlands. He

had not only read the Law of Moses to all the people here, but also

inscribed it on stones for the sake of permanence and publicity. And

now, when the conquest was complete and Joshua was nearing his end,

he reassembled the people at the same spot, to remind them there of

that solemn covenant, and to leave with them his final charge of

fidelity to their God and his one central sanctuary.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON V

1. How was Joshua specially fitted to succeed Moses as leader of

Israel?

2. Which tribes received their inheritance east of the Jordan?

How did these show their sense of the unity of all Israel (\_a\_)

at the beginning, and (\_b\_) at the close of the conquest?

3. What justification can be urged for the stern measures which

Israel took with the Canaanites and their possessions?

4. What was the plan of Joshua's campaign, and what relation did

the capture of Jericho and Ai bear to it?

5. How did the men of Gibeon deceive Joshua, and why? What

lasting damage was caused by his treaty with them?

6. Locate on a map the inheritance of each of the tribes.

LESSON VI

The Period of the Judges

The Books of Judges and Ruth

In Egypt, Israel had grown from a family into a folk. In the

wilderness the folk had become a nation. In the conquest the nation

had gotten its home. But in the period of the Judges which followed

the conquest this steady advance seemed interrupted. What do we find

at this time?

We find a loose confederacy of tribes, aware of their common origin,

yet too jealous of local names and rights to combine for a common

end, too selfish to help one another until the danger of one has

become a tragedy for all.

The nature of the land the Hebrews had occupied helped this divisive

tendency. The great gash of the Jordan Valley, its bed two or three

thousand feet below the mountain country on either side, cut off

the eastern minority from the western majority. In the west a plain

separated the foothills of the central range from the seashore. This

plain not only contained enemies like the Philistines whom only a

united Israel could have conquered, but also quickly altered the

type of its Hebrew settlers. Right across the mountain belt from the

sea to the Jordan stretched an almost unbroken plain (Esdraelon),

varying from sea level to the lower level of the Jordan. This cut

off the mountaineers to the north (Galilee) from those to the south

(Ephraim). And a glance at any physical map will show how even in

the mountain country deep, lateral valleys reach up from either side

so far toward the center that communication from north to south is

only by a series of violent grades, save along that narrow ridge

in the middle where runs the highroad between Hebron, Jerusalem,

Shechem, and Jezreel.

Under these conditions only some strong positive force could prevent

the disintegration of the Hebrew nation. Such a force the religion

of Jehovah was intended to be, and would have been, if the people

had remained faithful to it. It had one high priest, descendant

of Aaron, and associated therefore with all the memories of Moses

and Sinai. It had a single sanctuary, the seat of Ark and oracle,

the center of pilgrimage three times a year. It had one law for

all Hebrews, a law far superior to the codes of all other nations,

and revealing the nature and will of a single moral and spiritual

deity. All this provided the focus for a mighty nation, with a pure

"theocracy," that is, a government by God himself. But the people

did not remain faithful. They fell away in this time of the Judges.

The Book of Judges, which tells the story of this period, records a

long list of names, each one connected with some particular enemy of

Israel, some tribe or group of tribes delivered, and some definite

term of years during which the deliverer "judged" the people. On

this list the most conspicuous names are those of Deborah and of

Gideon in the north, of Jephthah east of the Jordan (Gilead), and

of Samson in the south. Most of the other judges are little more

than names to us. Deborah stands out, not only because she was a

woman, but also for her wonderful "song" preserved in the fifth

chapter, celebrating Barak's victory over the Canaanites near Mount

Carmel. Gideon is memorable for his strategems and his persistence,

and for his near approach to a real kingship, which was offered to

him and his house after his victory, but which he declined, saying,

"Jehovah shall rule over you." Ch. 8:23. His son Abimelech was

actually termed king in and around the city of Shechem for a few

years, but perished miserably for his sins. Ch. 9:6, 56. Jephthah's

career was mainly concerned with the region east of the Jordan,

but his admirable "apology" for Israel showed his sense of Hebrew

solidarity. Samson's picturesque story, with its petty loves and

hates, its riddles and its practical jokes, ended in a sacrificial

death which in part redeems its meanness. But neither Samson nor any

of his predecessors accomplished anything permanent.

Two words of caution belong to the study of this book and of these

times. First, we must not suppose that one judge necessarily follows

another in point of time because his story follows the other's

story in the book. Judges 10:7 shows that oppressions of different

sections of the land by different enemies might be taking place

at the same time, and suggests that the figures assigned to each

judge at the close of his story cannot safely be added together to

find the total length of this period. And second, those figures

themselves (nearly always forty or eighty) are to be taken as "round

numbers," rather than as precise data such as we look for to-day to

make out a table of chronology. In the same way the four hundred and

eighty years of I Kings 6:1 is evidently intended as twelve times

forty years, to represent the whole time from the Exodus to Solomon.

For when we have subtracted from the beginning of it one forty-year

term for the wanderings, and from the end of it three forty-year

terms for Eli, I Sam. 4:18, Saul, Acts 13:21, and David, I Kings

2:11, then we have left eight forty-year terms for the Judges. Eight

times forty is three hundred and twenty. Those three hundred and

twenty years would then correspond with the three hundred years

mentioned by Jephthah in Judg. 11:26 as dividing Moses' days from

his own. Under these circumstances we are wise to wait for further

light from archæology before fixing the precise date of any one of

these interesting persons.

There are three additions or appendices to the Book of Judges. The

first of them, including chs. 17, 18, tells how the Danites came

to live in the extreme north, and the origin of the idolatrous

sanctuary at that city of Dan which was reckoned as the northern

limit of Canaan--"from Dan to Beer-sheba." The second occupies

the three remaining chapters of Judges, and records the civil war

between Benjamin and the other tribes on account of "the sin of

Gibeah," Hos. 10:9. And the third appendix is the story of Ruth the

Moabitess which now makes a separate book in the Bible. Besides its

inherent charm the story claims special notice because of the light

it throws on that Bethlehem family which was soon to furnish the

nation its great king, David.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VI

1. What influences made for the loss of Hebrew unity as soon as

Joshua's generation was dead?

2. What forces remained to bind the tribes together? Why did not

these forces suffice?

3. How were the persons selected who ruled Israel in this

period? Were they "judges" in the same sense as our judges

to-day? What besides?

4. What three groups of tribes tended to draw together under

common leaders? Tell the exploits of one distinguished judge

belonging to each of these groups.

5. With what reserve should we use the figures in this book to

construct a chronology of the period?

6. Point out the relation of the book of Ruth to the closing

portion of the Book of Judges. What lends Ruth peculiar

historical interest?

LESSON VII

Samuel and Saul: Prophecy and Monarchy

The First Book of Samuel

Sometimes Eli and sometimes Samuel are called the last of the

Judges. But neither of these was a judge in the same exclusive sense

as Gideon or Samson. Eli was the high priest, but exercised the

office of judge for his time. Samuel was a prophet, who also "judged

Israel" in the interval between Eli's death and Saul's accession.

Both men mark the time of transition between the period of the

Judges and the monarchy. And the two names are most closely linked,

for it was under Eli's instruction, at the sanctuary in Shiloh, that

Samuel grew up.

The story of Hannah and her dedication of her little son to God as a

"Nazirite," I Sam. 1:11; compare Num. 6:1-8, to dwell all his life

at the house of God, I Sam. 1:28, has a peculiar charm for young and

old. It gives a picture of personal piety in a rude age, and thus

serves to correct our idea of the times. Beginning at a very early

age, I Sam. 3:1 to 4:1, Samuel became the chosen and recognized

mouthpiece of Israel's God.

That is the essential meaning of a prophet--one who speaks for

God. Exodus 4:16 is instructive, for it shows that as Aaron was to

be "a mouth" to Moses, while Moses was "as God" to Aaron, so the

prophet was God's mouthpiece or spokesman. Of course a prophet was

often a person who also spoke before--one, that is, who predicted

what should come to pass. And the fact that his words were actually

fulfilled became a proof of his divine commission, both in theory,

Deut. 18:22, and in practice, Isa. 44:26. But the bulk of the

prophets' messages were, like those of Samuel, addressed to their

own time. They were preachers of righteousness, warners against sin,

the nation's conscience, and the Lord's remembrancers.

It is the chief glory of Samuel that he was not only first in the

long fine of the Hebrew prophets--the most remarkable succession of

men the world has ever seen--but also the founder of the prophetic

order. By the prophetic order we mean the prophets as a group

conscious of their solidarity, the identity of their principles

and aim. Samuel gathered about his dominating personality those

persons who were sympathetic with him in spirit, and who shared with

him some of that power of testimony which "the word of Jehovah"

conferred. They seem to have lived together, I Sam. 19:20, in

communities similar to those two centuries later under Elijah and

Elisha. They used musical instruments in their devotions, which

were public as well as private. Ch. 10:5. They were the center

of patriotic zeal as well as of religious effort. In fact, the

belief in Israel's God was so evidently the bond that bound Israel

together, that for the common man patriotism and religion were in

danger of being regarded as one and the same thing.

It is not surprising, therefore, that out of Samuel's time and from

the forces which Samuel set in motion, there came two movements

which changed the course of the nation's history: an outward

movement for independence, and an inward movement for monarchy. A

revival of religion could not fail to rouse the subjected Hebrews

against their oppressors, the Philistines. The reverses they

suffered in battle against their better armed and better led enemies

put it into their minds to set up a king, "like all the nations."

Samuel, as the national leader, was God's agent in selecting,

consecrating, and establishing the first king. He chose Saul,

of the tribe of Benjamin, a man of heroic proportions though of

modest demeanor. Ch. 9:2, 21. His choice met the popular approval,

at first with general and outward acquiescence, though with much

inward reserve and individual revolt; but after his first successful

campaign with universal loyalty. Ch. 10:27; 11:12-15.

That first military effort of the new monarch was against the

Ammonites. But a greater test remained in the menace of the

Philistines, whose garrisons at strategic points in the mountains of

Israel served to keep the tribes in check. Under those circumstances

Saul was cautious, for he had but a small force, inadequately

armed, at his disposal. But the initiative, for which all Israel

waited, was taken by Saul's son, Jonathan. Unknown to his father,

Jonathan, accompanied only by his armor-bearer, but encouraged by an

indication of God's will and by the enemy's slackness, ch. 14:12,

attacked boldly a Philistine garrison that relied too much on the

natural strength of its position. He began in this way a panic in

the enemy's ranks, and soon drew after him in pursuit of them not

only Saul's small army but multitudes of Hebrews who in their hiding

places only waited such a signal to fall upon the hated oppressor.

The victory of Michmash was overwhelming, the mountain country was

cleared of the Philistines, and an independent people began to

enjoy the reign of their first king.

Unhappily Saul did not prove himself so well equipped for the

kingship in character and disposition as in personal prowess.

Jealousy, natural in a king whose claim to authority was so new

and weak, was heightened in Saul by a malady that induced fits of

sullenness and rage. His humility and modesty of other days gave

place to envy, vanity, and cruelty. Even God's express commands

through the same prophet on whose divine commission Saul's claim

to the throne rested were not heeded, for Samuel had to rebuke him

for disobedience and only refrained from publicly rejecting him at

Saul's abject entreaty. Ch. 15:30.

Room was found in Saul's heart for jealousy of the popularity and

success of David, ch. 18:8, the young man of Bethlehem in Judah

whom at first he had loved and attached to his person, ch. 16:21.

Jonathan, though heir to his father's throne and aware that David

had been designated as Jehovah's choice for king, ch. 20:15, 31,

had nothing but affection for David his friend. But Saul pursued

David openly, after failing in repeated secret attempts to make away

with him. And the close of Saul's life is marred by his vindictive

pursuit of his rival, till death in battle with the Philistines at

Mount Gilboa brought the first king of Israel to a miserable end and

left the way open for David to become his successor.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VII

1. Who shares with Samuel the leadership of Israel in the time

of transition from the judges to the kings, and what relation

did he bear to Samuel?

2. What was a prophet, what is meant by the prophetic order, and

what is Samuel's particular service and distinction among the

prophets?

3. What motive led to the popular demand for a king, and how did

Samuel as God's representative regard this demand?

4. Sketch the character of Saul. What was his achievement for

Israel? Wherein did he fail?

5. Compare Saul and Jonathan in ability and character.

LESSON VIII

David and Solomon: Psalms and Wisdom

The Second Book of Samuel; I Kings, Chapters 1 to 11; I Chronicles,

Chapter 10 to II Chronicles, Chapter 9

One of Saul's sons, Ish-bosheth, for a short time after the death of

his father and brothers in battle, attempted to maintain his right

to succeed Saul on the throne. But when Abner, his kinsman and the

head of the army, turned to David, son of Jesse, who was already

reigning at Hebron as king over Judah, all the tribes followed him.

Both Ish-bosheth and Abner soon perished.

With his new dignity David promptly acquired a new capital, better

suited than Hebron in location and strength to be the nation's

center. He captured the fortress of Jebus, five miles north of

Bethlehem, his old home, from its Canaanitish defenders, and

enlarged, strengthened, and beautified it. Under its ancient name of

Jerusalem he made it both the political and the religious capital of

Israel.

The Ark of the Covenant, which in Eli's time had been captured by

the Philistines, had been returned by them, and for many years

had rested in a private house, was regarded as the very heart and

symbol of the national religion. David therefore brought it first

to Jerusalem, and instead of uniting with it its former housing,

the old Mosaic tabernacle, he gave it a temporary home in a tent,

intending to build a splendid temple when he should have peace. But

war continued through the days of David, and at God's direction the

erection of a temple, save for certain preparations, was left to

Solomon, David's successor.

David was victorious in war. His success showed itself in the

enlargement of Israel's boundaries, the complete subjection--for

the time--of all alien elements in the land, and the alliance with

Hiram, king of Tyre, with the great building operations which this

alliance made possible. A royal palace formed the center of a

court such as other sovereigns maintained, and David's court and

even his family were exposed to the same corrupting influences as

power, wealth, jealousy, and faction have everywhere introduced.

Absalom, his favorite son, ill requited his father's love and trust

by organizing a revolt against him. It failed, but not until it had

driven the king, now an old man, into temporary exile and had let

loose civil war upon the land.

Solomon, designated by David to succeed him, did not gain the throne

without dispute, but the attempt of Adonijah, another son, to seize

the throne failed in spite of powerful support. The forty-year

reign of Solomon was the golden age of Hebrew history--the age to

which all subsequent times looked back. Rapid growth of commerce,

construction, art, and literature reflected the inward condition

of peace and the outward ties with other lands of culture. But

with art came idolatry; with construction came ostentation and

oppression; with commerce came luxury. The splendor of Jerusalem,

wherein Solomon "made silver ... to be as stones, and cedars ... as

the sycomore-trees," I Kings 10:27, contained in itself the seeds of

dissolution.

However, there are two great types of literature which found their

characteristic expression in the days of David and Solomon and are

always associated with their names--the psalm with David, and the

proverb (or, more broadly, "wisdom") with Solomon. Kingdom, temple

and palace have long since passed away, but the Psalter and the

books of Wisdom are imperishable monuments of the united monarchy.

The Psalms

The Psalter is a collection of one hundred and fifty poems, of

various length, meter, and style. As now arranged it is divided

into five books, but there is evidence that earlier collections and

arrangements preceded the present. Among the earliest productions,

judged both by form and by matter, are those psalms which bear the

superscription "of David," though it would not be safe to assert

that every such psalm came from David's own pen or that none not so

labeled is not of Davidic origin. Judged alike from the narrative

in the book of Samuel, and from the traditions scattered in other

books as early as Amos, ch. 6:5, and as late as Chronicles, I Chron.

15:16 to 16:43; ch. 25, David was both a skilled musician himself

and an organizer of music for public worship. It is not surprising,

therefore, to find a body of religious poems ascribed to him,

which not only evidence his piety and good taste, but also, though

individual in tone, are well-adapted to common use at the sanctuary.

The psalms are poems. Their poetry is not simply one of substance,

but also a poetry of form. Rime, our familiar device, is of course

absent, but there is rhythm, although it is not measured in the

same strict way as in most of our poetry. The most striking and

characteristic mark of Hebrew poetic form is the parallel structure:

two companion lines serve together to complete a single thought, as

the second either repeats, supplements, emphasizes, illustrates, or

contrasts with the first.

Proverbs; Job; Ecclesiastes

Poetry is also a term to which the book of Proverbs and most of

the other productions of "Wisdom" are entitled. While they are

chiefly didactic (that is, intended for instruction) instead of

lyric (emotional self-expression), nevertheless the Wisdom books are

almost entirely written in rhythmic parallelism and contain much

matter unsuited to ordinary prose expression. In the Revised Version

the manner of printing shows to the English reader at a glance what

parts are prose and what are poetry (compare, for example, Job,

ch. 2 with Job, ch. 3), though it must be admitted that a hard and

fast line cannot be drawn between them. Compare Eccl., ch. 7 with

Proverbs.

"The wise," as a class of public teachers in the nation (see Jer.

18:18), associated their beginnings with King Solomon (Prov. 24:23;

25:1), whose wisdom is testified to in the book of Kings, as well

as his speaking of "proverbs," that is, pithy sayings easy to

remember and teach, mostly of moral import. I Kings 4:29-34. But

the profoundest theme of wisdom was the moral government of God

as seen in his works and ways. The mysteries with which all men,

to-day as well as in ancient times, must grapple when they seek to

harmonize their faith in a just and good God with such undeniable

facts as prosperous sinners and suffering saints, led to the writing

of such books as Job (the meaning of a good man's adversities) and

Ecclesiastes (the vanity of all that mere experience and observation

of life afford). In the case of these Wisdom books, as in that of

the Psalms, the oldest name--that of the royal founder--is not to

be taken as the exclusive author. Solomon, like David, made the

beginnings; others collected, edited, developed, and completed.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VIII

1. In what tribe and town did David first reign as king? How did

he secure a new capital when he became king of all Israel? How

and why did he make this the religious capital also?

2. What advantages and disadvantages did David's continual wars,

and his imitation of other kings' courts, bring to him, his

family, and his people?

3. What was David's part in the development of religious poetry?

How does Hebrew poetry differ generally from English poetry in

form? Name the books of the Old Testament written chiefly or

wholly in poetry.

4. Who built the first Temple? Who were "the wise" in Israel,

whom did they venerate as their royal patron, and what did

they aim to accomplish by their writings?

LESSON IX

The Kingdom of Israel

I Kings, Chapter 12 to II Kings, Chapter 17

With the death of Solomon came the lasting division of the tribes

into two kingdoms, a northern and a southern, known as the Kingdom

of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. Rehoboam on his accession

announced a policy of repression and even oppression that alienated

completely the loyalty of Ephraim and the other northern tribes,

which were never attached to the house of David in the same way as

the tribe of Judah was. Under a man of Ephraim, therefore, Jeroboam

the son of Nebat, who in earlier years had challenged even Solomon's

title, the ten tribes revolted from Rehoboam and established a

separate state.

Rehoboam found himself too weak to prevent this secession, and he

and his descendants of David's dynasty had to content themselves

with the narrow boundaries of Judah. To be sure, in Jerusalem they

possessed the authorized center of public worship for the whole

nation. It was to offset this advantage that Jeroboam made Bethel,

that spot associated in the minds of the people with the patriarchs

themselves, his religious capital. And, influenced perhaps by

the Egyptian example of steer worship (for he had long lived as

a fugitive in Egypt in Solomon's reign), he made golden steers

and placed them in the sanctuary at Bethel and in that at Dan in

the extreme north. (See close of Lesson VI.) To these places and

under these visible symbols of brute force, Jeroboam summoned his

people to worship Jehovah. It was the old national religion but

in the degraded form of an image worship forbidden by the Mosaic

Commandments.

A throne thus built on mere expediency could not endure. Jeroboam's

son was murdered after a two years' reign. Nor did this usurper

succeed in holding the throne for his house any longer than

Jeroboam's house had lasted. At length Omri, commander of the army,

succeeded in founding a dynasty that furnished four kings. Ahab, son

of Omri, who held the throne the longest of these four, is the king

with whom we become best acquainted of all the northern monarchs.

This is partly because of the relations between Ahab and Elijah the

prophet. Ahab's name is also linked with that of his queen, the

notorious Jezebel, a princess of Tyre, who introduced the worship of

the Tyrian Baal into Israel and even persecuted all who adhered to

the national religion.

This alliance with Tyre, and the marriage of Ahab's daughter to a

prince of Judah, secured Israel on the north and the south, and left

Ahab free to pursue his father's strong policy toward the peoples

to the east, Moab and Syria. Upon Ahab's death in battle against

Syria, Moab revolted, and the two sons of Ahab, in spite of help

from the house of David in Jerusalem, were unable to stave off the

ruin that threatened the house of Omri. Jehu, supported by the army

in which he was a popular leader, seized the throne, with the usual

assassination of all akin to the royal family. His inspiration to

revolt had been due to Jehovah's prophets, and his program was the

overthrow of Baal worship in favor of the old national religion.

Though Jehu thoroughly destroyed the followers of Jezebel's foreign

gods, he and his sons after him continued to foster the idolatrous

shrines at Bethel and Dan, so that the verdict of the sacred writer

upon them is unfavorable: they "departed not from all the sins of

Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin."

Mesha, king of Moab, II Kings 3:4, lived long enough to see his

oppressors, the kings of Omri's house, overthrown and the land of

Israel reduced to great weakness. (See article "Moabite Stone" in

any Bible dictionary.) Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, witnessed the deepest

humiliation of Israel at the hands of Syria. But it was not many

years after Mesha's boasting that affairs took a complete turn.

Jehu's grandson, Jehoash, spurred by Elisha the prophet even on his

deathbed, began the recovery which attained its zenith in the reign

of Jeroboam II, fourth king of Jehu's line. Though little is told

of this reign in the Book of Kings, it is clear that at no time

since Solomon's reign had a king of Israel ruled over so large a

territory. It was the last burst of glory before total extinction.

There is a history lying between the reigns of Jeroboam I, founder

of the Northern Kingdom, and of Jeroboam II, its last prosperous

monarch, which has scarcely been referred to in this brief sketch of

its kings. It is the history of Jehovah's prophets.

Hosea; Amos; Jonah

Reference has already been made to the rise of the prophetic order

as such, in the time of Samuel. (Lesson VII.) With each crisis in

the affairs of the nation God raised up some notable messenger

with a word from him to the people or to the ruler. But all along

the fire of devotion to God and country was kept alive by humbler,

unnamed men, who supplied a sound nucleus of believers even to

this Northern Kingdom with its idolatrous shrines and its usurping

princes. I Kings 18:4; 19:18.

The greatest names are those of Elijah and Elisha. The earlier

struggle to keep Israel true to Jehovah focuses in these two men,

one the worthy successor of the other. Their time marked perhaps

the lowest ebb of true religion in all the history of God's Kingdom

on earth. It is no wonder, therefore, that such stern, strong men

were not only raised up to fight for the God of Moses and Samuel and

David, but also endowed with exceptional powers, to work wonders

and signs for the encouragement of the faithful and the confounding

of idolators and sinners. Such was the purpose of their notable

miracles.

Elijah and Elisha wrote nothing. But in their spirit rose up Hosea

and Amos a century later--men who have left a record of their

prophecies in the books that bear their names. Denunciation of

sin, especially in the higher classes, announcement of impending

punishment for that sin, and promise of a glorious, if distant,

future of pardon, peace, and prosperity through God's grace and

man's sincere repentance--these things form the substance of their

eloquent messages. Hosea is noteworthy for his striking parable of

a patient husband and a faithless wife to illustrate God's love

and Israel's infidelity. Amos, himself a herdsman from Judah sent

north to denounce a king and people not his own, is startling in the

suddenness with which he turns the popular religious ideas against

those who harbor them. See, for example, ch. 3:2, where Amos makes

the unique relation between Jehovah and Israel the reason, not for

Israel's safety from Jehovah's wrath, as the people thought, but

for the absolute certainty of Israel's punishment for all its sins.

These two prophets, the last of the Northern Kingdom, had the

melancholy duty of predicting the utter overthrow of what the first

Jeroboam had set up in rebellion and sin two centuries before.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON IX

1. When, why, and under whose lead did the ten tribes break away

from the house of David?

2. Outline the fortunes of the kings of Israel from Jeroboam I

to Jeroboam II.

3. Who were the outstanding prophets in the Northern Kingdom,

and what was the substance of their messages?

LESSON X

The Kingdom of Judah, to Hezekiah

I Kings, Chapter 12 to II Kings, Chapter 17; II Chronicles, Chapters

10 to 28; Obadiah; Joel; Micah; Isaiah (in part)

The revolt of Jeroboam and the ten northern tribes reduced the

dominion ruled by Rehoboam, grandson of David, to narrow bounds.

Before his disastrous reign was over, Judah was still further

humiliated by an invasion under Shishak, a Pharaoh of the

twenty-second dynasty of Egypt, who despoiled Jerusalem of the

treasures which Solomon had amassed. After the death of Rehoboam and

the short reign of his son, Abijam, Judah was ruled successively by

Asa and Jehoshaphat, each succeeding his father peacefully and each

reigning long and, on the whole, prosperously. Another invasion from

the south which threatened to be as disastrous as that of Shishak,

under "Zerah the Ethiopian" was repelled by Asa. Internal reforms,

both religious and civil, were carried out by these vigorous rulers.

The natural rivalry and intermittent warfare between north and

south, which had arisen through the division under Rehoboam, ceased

for a time after Jehoshaphat entered into alliance with King Ahab

and took Athaliah, Ahab's daughter, as wife for his son Joram. The

kings of Samaria and Jerusalem made common cause against Syria and

Moab, and a temporary success seemed to crown the new policy. But

prophets of Jehovah repeatedly warned the king who sat on David's

throne of the danger to the true religion from such an alliance with

Baal worshipers.

It was not long before their warnings were justified by the facts.

Athaliah, Joram's queen, was the daughter not only of Ahab but also

of Jezebel and brought with her to Jerusalem the fierce spirit and

heathen habits of her Tyrian mother. King Ahaziah her son lost his

life through his close association with King Jehoram of Israel,

his uncle, for Jehu made away with both kings at the same time,

and with all the princes of Judah, kinsmen of Ahaziah, on whom

he could lay his hands. The old tigress at Jerusalem, Athaliah,

now turned upon her own flesh and blood, the children of Ahaziah,

and murdered them all so as to secure the power for herself. One

grandson alone, the infant Joash, escaped, saved by an aunt who hid

him and his nurse from the cruel queen mother. Six years later this

child was proclaimed king in the Temple courts by Jehoiada, the high

priest. Athaliah was slain, and a new era began in Judah with the

destruction of Baal worship and the repair of Jehovah's Temple.

Joash was too weak to do more than buy off the king of Syria when

his army threatened Jerusalem, and he himself met his death in a

conspiracy. The same fate befell his son Amaziah, after a reign that

promised well but was wrecked on the king's ambition to subdue the

Northern Kingdom under him. Uzziah (or Azariah) succeeded to the

throne, though for half of his long reign he and his kingdom seem to

have been in a state of vassalage to Jeroboam II, the powerful ruler

of Israel. The latter part of Uzziah's reign was more prosperous, in

spite of the king's pitiable state--for he was stricken with leprosy

and had to live apart. It was on this account that he associated his

son Jotham with himself, and during the sixteen years of Jotham's

reign--most of which was included within the long nominal reign of

Uzziah--the Philistines, Ammonites, and Arabians were defeated in

warfare, while considerable building both in and out of the capital

helped to prepare the little kingdom for the troublous days just

ahead.

The mighty kingdom of Assyria, with its capital at Nineveh on

the Tigris River, was the force which God used to punish his

faithless people. Lying beyond the kingdoms of Syria, Israel's

nearest neighbors on the north, Assyria was not at first felt to

be the menace which in the end it proved to be. Whenever Assyria

was strong, Syria was weak, and the king in Samaria could breathe

freely. But there came a day when a king of unusual power ascended

the throne at Nineveh, Tiglath-pileser (or Pul, as he was also

called, see II Kings 15:19, 29), and the fate of both Syria and

Israel was sealed.

Ahaz, the son of Jotham who had just died, saw in this Assyrian the

means of delivering Judah out of the hands of Pekah, king of Israel,

and Rezin, king of Syria, who had joined forces to capture Jerusalem

and put a king of their own on the throne of David. By a great

present Ahaz bought the support of Tiglath-pileser, who sent an army

to attack Judah's foes. Syria was devastated, the inhabitants were

carried away captive from all the eastern and northern parts of

Israel (Gilead and Galilee), Phoenicia and Philistia were overrun,

and Ahaz, among other kings, went to Damascus in person to do homage

to this irresistible conqueror.

In the Northern Kingdom, reduced now to little more than the central

highlands of Ephraim and Manasseh, Hoshea, a protegé of the Assyrian

king, reigned for a few years. But he and his foolish advisers,

unable to read the signs of the times, looked to Egypt for help

and revolted. This time the end had come. Shalmaneser, now on the

Assyrian throne, came against Samaria, and after a siege lasting

almost three years, took and destroyed it. The whole population was

carried away, after the drastic policy of deportation practiced

by Assyria, and an alien population was introduced to take their

places. Thus ended the Northern Kingdom after lasting a little over

two centuries. And thus began that strange mixed people, known as

the Samaritans, who settled in the central part of the Holy Land.

The effect of Israel's doom upon the minds of the king and people

of Judah may be imagined. From the pages of Micah and Isaiah,

contemporary prophets in Judah, can be seen how God was speaking

to Judah through the ruin of Israel. Ahaz's policy of relying on

human help from Assyria instead of divine help from Jehovah was

refuted by its outcome. With Syria and Samaria ruined, there lay

nothing between Jerusalem and the Assyrian. And it is in Hezekiah's

reign--the next after that of Ahaz--that the ruthless conqueror from

Nineveh is found overrunning Judah itself. How king, prophet, and

people met that crisis will begin the next lesson, for it belongs

to the period when the Southern Kingdom is all that remained of the

organized Hebrew nation in Palestine.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON X

1. What were the relations between the kingdoms of Judah and

Israel in general?

2. Who altered these relations for a time? How? With what

consequences for Judah's politics and religion?

3. Who was Joash, and how did he come to the throne?

4. What was the occasion of Judah's first intimate contact with

Assyria? Discuss Ahaz's policy in the light of Isa. 7:1-9.

5. What were the stages in the downfall of the Northern Kingdom?

What became of the conquered people, and who replaced them?

See II Kings, ch. 17.

LESSON XI

Judah, from Hezekiah to the Exile

II Kings, Chapters 18 to 25; II Chronicles, Chapters 29 to

36; Isaiah (in part); Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Jeremiah;

Lamentations; Ezekiel, Chapters 1 to 32

Although outwardly Judah appeared to be the same after the fall of

the Northern Kingdom as before, it was not so. A very different

situation confronted Hezekiah from that which had confronted his

father Ahaz when he called on Assyria for help against Syria and

Israel. Now there were no "buffer states" between Assyria's empire

and little Judah. And it was only a score of years after Samaria

fell when Jerusalem felt the full force of Assyria. Sennacherib,

fourth in that remarkable list of the six kings[1] who made Nineveh

mistress of Asia, sent an army to besiege Jerusalem, with a summons

to Hezekiah to surrender his capital.

[1] Tiglath-pileser, 745-727 B.C.; Shalmaneser, 727-722; Sargon,

722-705; Sennacherib, 705-681; Esar-haddon, 680-668; Ashurbanipal,

668-626.

A different spirit ruled this king. Isaiah, the same great prophet

who had counseled Ahaz to resist Pekah and Rezin but had failed to

move him to faith in Jehovah, found now in Ahaz's son a vital faith

in the God of Israel in this far sorer crisis. In response to that

faith Isaiah was commissioned by God to assure king and people of

a great deliverance. The case, to all human seeming, was hopeless.

But the resources at God's disposal are boundless, and at one blow

"the angel of Jehovah" reduced the proud Assyrian host to impotency

and drove them away in retreat. II Kings 19:35. Scribes who record

the achievements of ancient monarchs are not accustomed to betray

any of the failures of their royal heroes. But between the lines

of Sennacherib's records we can read confirmation of the Bible's

report of some great catastrophe to Assyrian arms. Jehovah rewarded

the faith of his people in him.

The seventh century before Christ, which began just after this

event, witnessed both the rise of Assyria to its greatest height,

and its sudden fall before the Chaldeans, a people from the Persian

Gulf, who succeeded in mastering ancient Babylon and in winning

for it a greater glory than it had ever known in former times.

Even in Hezekiah's reign these Chaldeans, under their leader

Merodach-baladan, were already challenging the supremacy of Nineveh,

and in doing so were seeking allies in the west. When the king of

Judah yielded to the dictates of pride and showed to these Chaldean

ambassadors his treasures, Isaiah announced to him that the final

ruin of Judah was to come in future days from this source, and not

from Nineveh as might then have been anticipated.

Manasseh, Hezekiah's successor, was indeed taken as a captive to

Babylon for a time, but the captor was a king of Assyria. II Chron.

33:11. Manasseh was thus punished for his great personal wickedness,

for he is pictured as the worst of all the descendants of David, an

idolator and a cruel persecutor. Yet his reign was long, and at its

close he is said to have repented and turned to Jehovah. But this

did not prevent his son Amon from following in his evil ways. A

revolt of the people within two years removed Amon, however, and set

his young son, Josiah, upon the throne. Josiah's reign is important

for the history of Judah.

By putting together all that can be gleaned from Kings, Chronicles,

and the prophets, it can be seen that Josiah gradually came more and

more under the influence of the party in Judah that sought to purge

the nation of its idolatry and bring it back, not merely to the

comparatively pure worship and life of Hezekiah's and David's days,

but to an ideal observance of the ancient Law of Moses. The climax

in the progressive reformation in Judah was reached in Josiah's

eighteenth year, 622 B.C., when the king and all the people entered

into a "solemn league and covenant" to obey the Law of Moses both as

a religious obligation and as a social program.

The Law book which was found while workmen were restoring the Temple

passed through the hands of Hilkiah, the high priest, who therefore

committed himself, together with the priests, to this reform. And

what the true prophets of Jehovah thought of it may be seen, for

example, from Jer., ch. 11, which tells that this prophetic leader

preached in the streets of Jerusalem and through the cities of

Judah, saying, "Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them."

Josiah attempted to attach to Jerusalem all those elements in the

territory of the former kingdom of Israel which were in sympathy

with Jehovah's Law, and at Bethel itself he defiled the old

idolatrous altar and slew its priests. In fact, it was on northern

ground, at Megiddo, that Josiah met his tragic end and the new wave

of patriotic enthusiasm was shattered, when, in battle against

Pharaoh-necho and a great Egyptian army, the king of Judah was

killed.

Josiah's four successors were weak and unworthy of David's line.

After Jehoahaz, the son whom the people put on the throne to succeed

Josiah, had been removed by Necho, Jehoiakim, another son, reigned

for eleven years. He owed his throne to the Pharaoh and was at first

tributary to him. But early in his reign came the first of many

campaigns of the Chaldeans into Palestine, as Nebuchadnezzar, master

of Asia, extended his power farther and farther south after crushing

the Egyptians at Carchemish in 605 B.C. Jehoiakim had to bow to

Nebuchadnezzar's yoke and seems to have lost his life in a fruitless

attempt to shake it off. A great number of the leaders of Judah,

nobles, priests, soldiers, and craftsmen, were deported, together

with Jehoiachin, the young son of Jehoiakim, who had worn the crown

but three months, 598 B.C.

For eleven years more, however, the remnant of Judah maintained a

feeble state under Zedekiah, a third son of Josiah and the last of

David's line to mount the throne. In spite of his solemn oath to the

king of Babylon and in the face of the express warnings from Jehovah

through his prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, this weak and faithless

king revolted from Babylon, put his trust in the Egyptian army,

and prepared to stand a siege. But Jerusalem's end had now come,

as Samaria's had come before, and through a breach in the northern

wall the Chaldean army entered; the king fled and was captured,

blinded, and deported, and the whole city, including houses, walls,

gates, and even the Temple--that famous Temple of Solomon which had

stood nearly four centuries--was totally destroyed, 587 B.C. All

that remained of the higher classes, together with the population

of Jerusalem and the chief towns, were carried away to Babylonia,

to begin that exile which had been threatened even in the Law,

and predicted by many of the prophets, as the extreme penalty for

disobedience and idolatry.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XI

1. How did the fall of Samaria affect the Kingdom of Judah?

2. How did Hezekiah meet the threats of Sennacherib? What was

the outcome?

3. Which king carried through a reformation of religion? What

was the basis of the covenant he imposed on Judah? How did he

meet his end?

4. Describe the relations of the Chaldeans to Judah in the time

of Hezekiah, of Jehoiakim, of Zedekiah?

5. When did Jerusalem fall? Did it fall unexpectedly and without

warning?

LESSON XII

The Exile and the Restoration

Ezekiel, Chapters 33 to 48; Daniel; Ezra, Chapters 1, 2

When the northern tribes were carried away by Assyria they lost

their identity in the mass of the nations. Only individuals from

among them attached themselves to the organized nucleus of Judah.

From that time the one tribe of Judah stood out so prominently as

representative of the whole nation, that "Jew" (that is, man of

Judah) has been equivalent to Hebrew. Paul says that he was of the

tribe of Benjamin; the aged prophetess Anna is said to have been of

the tribe of Asher, Luke 2:36, and all the priests were of course

of the tribe of Levi; yet long before New Testament times all such

Israelites were commonly referred to as "Jews."

Judah did not lose its identity among the nations when Jerusalem

fell. The Jews who were not deported, among them the prophet

Jeremiah, were put under the government of a certain Jewish noble,

Gedaliah, who ruled the land from Mizpah as representative of the

great king. Many fugitives returned to live under his sway when

they found that it was beneficent. But Gedaliah was soon murdered

by a prince of David's house, whom the king of Ammon had set on to

do this mischief and then received and protected. The other Jewish

leaders feared to remain within reach of the king of Babylon after

this insult to him, and against the warnings of Jeremiah they all

went down to Egypt. That removal ended all organized Jewish life in

Palestine for nearly half a century.

In Babylon, however, an event occurred long before that time had

elapsed, which marked the political recognition of Judah's separate

identity as a nation. That event was the release of Jehoiachin

from prison by the new king of Babylon, Evil-merodach, successor

of Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoiachin, it will be remembered, was the

unfortunate prince of David's line who held the throne only three

months after his father Jehoiakim's death and was then deported to

Babylon in 598. From that time on, through all the remainder of

Nebuchadnezzar's long reign, he had been imprisoned in Babylon. But

now he was not only released, but given a pension from the royal

treasury for the rest of his life and a standing superior to all the

other captive princes in Babylon.

This was in 562, and many Jewish hearts must already have begun to

beat with fresh hope, as the old loyalty to David's house flamed

up, and the promises of a restoration recorded in the old Law and

the Prophets were echoed by the prophet of the Exile, Ezekiel. This

man, himself a priest by birth, had been carried to Babylon at

the same time as Jehoiachin, and through all those years of doom

had there preached to his countrymen, first to the portion exiled

with him while Jerusalem still stood, but after 587 to the whole

people united in a common catastrophe. His voice had even reached

to Jerusalem, as he joined Jeremiah in reminding King Zedekiah of

his oath to Nebuchadnezzar. With the elevation of Jehoiachin and the

stirring of the national hopes, Ezekiel became the prophet of hope.

He pictures the breath of Jehovah stirring to life the dry bones

in the valley of death. Ezek., ch. 37. And he warns the optimistic

people that only as God takes away from them their old stony heart

and gives them a heart of flesh, and sprinkles clean water upon them

to cleanse them from their pollution through idolatry, can they

be fit to form the new community wherein God shall indeed reign.

Ch. 36:25, 26. What such a community might outwardly and visibly

resemble, Ezekiel pictures in a long, detailed, descriptive vision

wherewith his book closes. Chs. 40 to 48.

Another outstanding Jew of the Exile was a man of an entirely

different type. Daniel, a noble youth carried away from Judah to

Babylon at the first clash of Nebuchadnezzar's armies with the

Jews, 605 B.C., and brought up at the court, succeeded through

interpreting a dream of the king in attracting his notice and

winning his favor, much as Joseph had done in ancient Egypt. Dan.,

ch. 2. From his position of political power, Daniel was able,

doubtless, to minister to the interests of his brethren, the Jewish

exiles. Possibly it is to him that Jehoiachin owed his astonishing

reversal of fortune. At any rate Belshazzar, the last ruler of the

Chaldean state, still maintained Daniel in power, in spite of the

very solemn warning of ruin to that state which Daniel fearlessly

pronounced. Ch. 5. When the Persians succeeded the Chaldeans as

masters of Babylon, this Jewish statesman still held his high

post, and retained it in spite of the bitter enmity of officials

who used his Jewish faith as a handle against him. Ch. 6. In fact,

there is no better way to understand the favor accorded the Jews

by Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, and the edicts preserved in Ezra

1:2-4; 6:3-5, than by supposing that Daniel, who had the king's ear,

brought to his attention the earlier prophecies of Jeremiah and of

other spokesmen for Jehovah, God of the Jews.

Certainly, however the affair was managed, it turned out entirely

to the Jews' liking. All who were willing to return to Palestine

were permitted and encouraged to go. They were assisted by the gifts

of their brethren who could not, or would not, leave Babylon. They

bore back with them the old vessels for the service of the sanctuary

which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off. And, best of all, they took

with them royal authority to erect the Temple of Jehovah on its

ancient site, at the expense of the king of Persia, that is, out of

taxes and tribute he remitted. At their head went a prince of the

old royal house, and a high priest who was grandson of that high

priest whom Nebuchadnezzar had executed half a century before. Their

number totaled forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, with

enough slaves in addition to make the entire company number nearly

fifty thousand.

Their purpose was threefold: to reoccupy the Holy Land, to rebuild

Jerusalem, and to erect a temple where Solomon's Temple had stood.

We should be likely to rate the importance of these three objects

in the same order as that in which they have just been named. But

not so the believing Jew. It was above all else the sacred house

of his God that he wanted to see restored, so that the prescribed

sacrifices of the Law might be resumed, the nation's sin might thus

be atoned for, and God might once more visibly dwell among his

people. All else was in order to this one great end. The origin

of Judaism, which lies in the movements of this time, cannot be

understood unless this supreme motive is clearly grasped. How

Judaism developed under the new conditions will be the subject of

the next lesson.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XII

1. What is meant by "a Jew"?

2. How did government of Hebrews by a Hebrew come to an end in

Palestine for the first time since Saul's day?

3. What was the first political event to arouse the exiled Jews

from their depression?

4. Compare Ezekiel and Daniel in their personality, position,

and audience.

5. When Cyrus captured Babylon in 539, what did he do for the

Jews, and how came he to do it?

6. How many Jews returned to Palestine under Cyrus, and what was

their uppermost motive?

LESSON XIII

The Jewish State Under Persia

Ezra, Chapters 3 to 10; Esther; Nehemiah; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi

For two centuries Judea, like the rest of western Asia, was under

the domination of the Persians, whose great royal names, Cyrus,

Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, are familiar to every student of

history. The Old Testament spans one of those two centuries of

Persian rule, 539-430, while for the other century, 430-332, we are

dependent for the little we know about the Jews upon some documents

recently discovered in Egypt, an occasional notice in classical

historians, and the brief narrative of Josephus, the Jewish

historian of the first Christian century.

Even in the century covered by the books of the Bible there are long

stretches of silence separating periods that are fairly reported.

First comes the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the leaders, civil

and religious, under whom the Jews returned and erected the Temple.

This story carries us, though with a seventeen-year gap in its

midst, from 538, the year after Cyrus took Babylon, to 515, the

sixth year of Darius the Great, and is recorded in the first six

chapters of the book of Ezra. To help us in understanding this time

we have also the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, though the last

six chapters of Zechariah belong to another age.

After the completion of the new Temple the curtain falls on Judea

and, save for a single verse, Ezra 4:6, we hear no more of it for

fifty-seven years. However, the interesting story of Esther belongs

in these years, for the Ahasuerus of the Bible is the Xerxes of

Greek history--that vain, fickle, and voluptuous monarch who was

beaten at Salamis and Platæa. The Jews must have been a part of the

vast host with which he crossed from Asia to Europe. But the drama

unfolded in the book of Esther was played far from Palestine, at

Susa, the Persian capital.

With the seventh year of the next reign--that of Artaxerxes I--the

curtain rises again on Judea, as we accompany thither the little

band of Jews whom Ezra, the priestly "scribe," brought back with him

from Babylonia to Jerusalem. This account is found in the last four

chapters of the book of Ezra, most of it in the form of personal

reminiscences covering less than one year.

The curtain falls again abruptly at the end of Ezra's memoirs, and

rises as abruptly on Nehemiah's memoirs at the beginning of the book

which bears his name. But there is every reason to believe that the

letters exchanged between the Samaritans and the Persian court,

preserved in the fourth chapter of Ezra, belong to this interval of

thirteen years between the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. For this

alone can explain two riddles: first, who are "the men that came up

from thee unto Jerusalem," Ezra 4:12, if they are not Ezra and his

company, ch. 7? And second, what else could explain the desolate

condition of Jerusalem and Nehemiah's emotion on learning of it,

Neh. 1:3, if not the mischief wrought by the Jews' enemies when

"they went in haste to Jerusalem," armed with a royal injunction,

and "made them to cease by force and power"? Ezra 4:23.

Some persons are inclined to date the prophet Malachi at just this

time also, shortly before Nehemiah's arrival. But it is probably

better to place the ministry of this last of the Old Testament

prophets at the end of Nehemiah's administration. Nehemiah's points

of contact with Malachi are most numerous in his last chapter, ch.

13, in which he writes of his later visit to Jerusalem. Compare Neh.

13:6 with ch. 1:1.

In Cyrus' reign the great Return was followed immediately by the

erection of an altar and the resumption of sacrifice. Preparations

for rebuilding the Temple, however, and even the laying of the

corner stone, proved a vain beginning, as the Samaritans, jealous of

the newcomers and angered by their own rebuff as fellow worshipers

with the Jews, succeeded in hindering the prosecution of the work

for many years. Ezra 3:1 to 4:5.

It was not until the second year of Darius' reign, 520, nearly

two decades later, that the little community, spurred out of

their selfishness and lethargy by Haggai and Zechariah, arose and

completed the new Temple, in the face of local opposition but with

royal support. Ch. 4:24 to 6:15.

Fifty-seven years later, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, 458,

came Ezra with some fifteen hundred men, large treasures, and

sweeping privileges confirmed by a royal edict, the text of which he

has preserved in the seventh chapter of his book. He was given the

king's support in introducing the Law of God as the law of the land,

binding upon all its inhabitants, whom he was to teach its contents

and punish for infractions of it. How Ezra used his exceptional

powers in carrying out the reform he judged most needed--the

dissolution of mixed marriages between Jew and Gentile forbidden by

the Law--is told in detail in his own vivid language in chs. 9, 10.

It helps us to understand Malachi's zeal in this same matter. Mal.

2:11. And the difficulty of this reform appears also from Nehemiah's

memoirs, since the same abuse persisted twenty-five years after Ezra

fought it. Neh. 13:23-27.

After the failure to fortify Jerusalem recorded in Ezra 4:8-23,

Nehemiah, a Jew in high station and favor at Artaxerxes' court,

obtained from his king a personal letter, appointing him governor

of Judea for a limited time, with the special commission to rebuild

the walls and gates of Jerusalem. The same bitter hostility which

the Samaritans and other neighbors in Palestine throughout had

shown toward the returned Jews, reached its climax in the efforts

of Sanballat and others in public and private station to hinder

Nehemiah's purpose. But with great energy and bravery, and with a

personal appeal and example that swept all into the common stream

of patriotic service, Nehemiah built the ruined walls and gates

in fifty-two days, instituted social reforms, ch. 5, and imposed

a covenant on all the people to obey the Law which Ezra read

and expounded. Chs. 8 to 10. Elements in the little nation that

joined with his enemies to discredit and even to assassinate him

were banished or curbed. The origin of the peculiar sect of the

Samaritan is connected with Nehemiah through his rigor in banishing

a grandson of the high priest who had married Sanballat's daughter.

This disloyalty of the priesthood is also one of Malachi's chief

indictments against his nation, and the basis of his promise that

a great reformer, an "Elijah," should arise to prepare the sinful

people for the coming of their God.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XIII

1. How long after the Return was the Temple finished? Who

hindered? Who helped?

2. What are the scene and the date of the book of Esther?

3. Compare the return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Ezra with

that under Zerubbabel (\_a\_) in date, (\_b\_) in numbers, (\_c\_)

in purpose and result.

4. Tell the story of Nehemiah: the occasion of his return, his

enemies, his achievements. In what did Ezra help him?

5. Associate the ministry of the three prophets of this period

after the Exile with the leaders and movements they

respectively helped.

LESSON XIV

Israel's Religious Life

It has often been said that while civilization owes its art and

letters to Greece and its law and order to Rome, it owes its

religion and ethics to Palestine. This is true, within limits,

provided we understand that what Israel contributed was not the

product of its "native genius for religion," but was due to the

persistent grace of its God, who took this "fewest of all peoples"

and made of it the custodian of his revelation and the cradle of his

redemption for the whole world. When, however, the Hebrew claimed

preëminence through these two things, a saving God and a righteous

Law, it was no idle boast. So Moses eloquently asks in Deuteronomy:

"What great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them,

as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? And what great

nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as

all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deut. 4:7, 8.

Religion as developed in Israel had two sides, an inward and an

outward. On its inward side it consisted of a faith in Jehovah

cherished in the hearts of the people, together with the sentiments

of reverence and love, and the purposes of loyalty and consecration,

which grew out of that faith. On its outward side religion consisted

of certain objects and ceremonies, adapted to express by act and

symbol the relation between God and his people.

But there is also another distinction often made in speaking of

religion, the distinction between individual religion and national

religion. Each member of the Hebrew nation held a personal relation

to his God. The Law of God addressed him individually as it said

to him, "Thou shalt not." And, on a still higher level, Moses

summed up that Law for him in these memorable words, "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Yet the entire body of

Israel, as such, held a relation to God which his spokesmen are

continually trying to illustrate and enrich by all sorts of figures.

God is Israel's "Rock," "Possessor" or "Purchaser," "Redeemer,"

"Father"--until Isaiah can even say to the nation, "Thy Maker is

thy husband," and Hosea and Ezekiel can portray God's dealings with

Israel under the allegory of a marriage.

It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that all the inward

religion was individual and all the outward religion national.

There was provision in the ceremonial law, not only for sacrifices

on a national scale, like those of the day of atonement, but also

for each man to express outwardly his own penitence or devotion or

gratitude or obligation to God by means of a personal sacrifice,

publicly offered but privately planned and provided. And, on the

other hand, the psalms and the prophets cannot be understood, unless

we realize the general religious life of the nation that lies back

of these highly individual forms of expression. That was why, when

David thinking of himself could write, "The Lord is my shepherd,"

the whole people could take that sentence and the psalm it begins

for use in public worship as the collective expression of Israel's

trust in its God.

The great fact of sin is responsible for the perversion of the true

relation between these different varieties of religious life. In

theory, every symbolic object and action at tabernacle or Temple

was merely the outward expression of an inward idea or feeling or

resolve. Every smoking sacrifice on the altar was supposed to come

from an offerer drawing near to God in the sincere belief "that he

is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Heb.

11:6. But in fact the offerer was in constant danger of looking upon

all the gifts and victims he brought as so many bribes with which

he might buy the favor of an offended God, or, worse still, might

obtain an "indulgence" to do some evil deed he planned. This is what

Jeremiah means when he cries, "Will ye steal, murder, and commit

adultery, and swear falsely ... and come and stand before me in this

house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that

ye may do all these abominations?" Jer. 7:9, 10.

If the private worshiper was in danger of abusing the worship of

God in this way, how much more was the priest, the professional

sacrificer and celebrant, in danger of looking upon all his duties

as a kind of authorized magic! "Do this external act, and that

inward benefit will surely follow." "Offer this lamb, and cease

to think about that black sin for which the lamb is the official

price." Yes, even this: "Go and do it again, but don't forget to

bring another lamb!" Is it any wonder that at length Malachi, after

lashing the priests of his late day for their laziness, cynicism,

and greed, cries out in Jehovah's name, "Oh that there were one

among you that would shut the doors [of the Temple], that ye might

not kindle fire on mine altar in vain!" Mal. 1:10.

All along the course of Hebrew history we find prophets and

psalmists protesting against this sinful perversion of ceremonial

religion. See for example I Sam. 15:22; Ps. 40:6-8; 50; Isa.

1:10-17; Micah 6:6-8.

And yet it would be a mistake to say that the prophet stood for

pure and spiritual religion, and the priest for merely external,

formal religion. Some of the greatest of the prophets, as Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, Zechariah, were priests. And how far the prophets could

become professional declaimers and deceivers may be seen, for

example, from Micah 3:5-8.

The Hebrew prophets, notably Amos and Hosea, are sometimes

represented as the "inventors" of "ethical monotheism," that is, of

religion as consisting in the worship of one God, who is the moral

ideal of man and demands moral living in man. But in fact, that is

precisely the basis of all genuine Old Testament religion, from the

very beginning. See Heb., ch. 11. And, particularly, that is the

basis of the entire Law, even of the ceremonial law. For that Law

must not be judged by its sinful abuse, but by the principles of

righteousness, holiness, repentance, and fellowship that underlie

every article in the sanctuary, every sacrifice on the altar, every

rite prescribed and observance commanded. At their best the priests

were allies of the true prophets, and external religion as centering

in the Temple was for the time a fitting expression of Israel's

personal and national faith. If it had not been so, then such

psalms as Psalms 24, 42, 65, 84, 122 could never have been written,

preserved, and used.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XIV

1. What ground had Israel for "glorying"? See Rom. 9:4, 5.

2. Give illustrations to show that individual as well as

national religion in Israel expressed itself externally, and

that spiritual as well as ceremonial religion belonged to both

the nation and the individual.

3. What sinful abuse of sacrifice were the prophets constantly

attacking? Did they thereby condemn Temple, altar, priesthood,

and ceremonial law in themselves?

4. Were all the prophets spiritually minded, or all the priests

merely "professional"? Give instances from history of

alliances between prophets and priests.

LESSON XV

"The Coming One"

The Old Testament points forward. The whole impression it leaves

upon us is that of an unfinished thing. Its history moves toward a

goal outside of itself. Its religion is a religion of expectation.

All its institutions are typical, that is, they represent more than

themselves, because they belong to a larger order of things which

appears imperfectly in them.

In the last lesson we saw how priest and prophet had their own

place in Israel. But both priest and prophet also typified a

perfect priesthood and a perfect prophecy, to be realized under

ideal conditions which were never present in those times. When, for

example, Aaron made atonement for the sins of the nation once each

year, as provided in Lev., ch. 16, he had to present first the blood

of the bullock which was the sin offering for himself, before he

presented the blood of the goat which was the sin offering for the

people. But ideally, in his position as mediator between God and the

sinful people, he was a sinless man; the blood of the bullock and

the pure, white garments he put on were supposed to indicate that

he was sinless for the moment. Nothing could be clearer than that

he typified a perfect high priest for God's people, who should be

really a sinless man--one who needed no mechanism of altar, victim,

and dress to make him pure from personal sin. See Heb., chs. 5 to

10, especially ch. 7:26-28.

Again Moses looks forward to the realization in the future of the

ideal communication between God and his people typified in the

prophet. "A prophet," says he, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto

thee." "From the midst of thee, like unto me." Deut. 18:15-19. This

ideal prophet will perfectly hear and perfectly transmit divine

truth to men. It was on the basis of this promise that many persons

described our Lord as "the prophet," meaning thereby that perfect

prophet promised by Moses. John 1:21, 25; 7:40.

But there was another institution of Old Testament times which more

than prophet or priest was associated in the people's minds with

the ideal future. This was kingship. God himself was theoretically

King--sole King--of Israel. Isa. 33:22. But at the entreaty of

his sinful and harassed people he instructed Samuel to "make them

a king." And while Samuel warned them of the evils which the

monarchy would bring with it because of the sinfulness of the men

who should be king, he nevertheless set up a throne that by its

very nature was unique. The king of Israel was in a peculiar sense

the representative of Jehovah. He ruled for God. He was his own

"anointed," set apart for the exercise of supreme authority over

God's people on earth and entitled to their religious as well as

patriotic devotion. See, for example, Psalms 21, 101.

After the failure of Saul to obey God's instructions, Samuel

anointed, at God's dictation and against his own human judgment,

David the son of Jesse. This man proved himself, not indeed sinless

nor the ideal king, but a man after God's heart, Acts 13:22, because

his dominant purpose was to do God's will. To David therefore was

given the remarkable promise contained in II Sam., ch. 7. In a

word, this promise was an irrevocable, eternal "covenant," granting

sovereignty to David's "house"--that is, his posterity considered as

a unit--over God's Kingdom on earth.

The story of how men came to understand better and better the

vastness of this covenant, which Isaiah calls "the sure mercies of

David," ch. 55:3, forms the subject of that special Old Testament

study called "Messianic Prophecy." In the psalms and in the

prophecies we are able to trace a growing faith, that by an ideal

king of David's line Jehovah will finally work his long delayed

will in and through Israel. This Person is commonly called "the

Messiah," because "Messiah" means "Anointed." Its Greek equivalent

is "the Christ." While other persons also were anointed with oil

when they assumed office, kings were always so anointed and the idea

belongs peculiarly to kingship. By the time our Lord appeared, no

other side of the work which this ideal, promised, longed-for Coming

One was to do, was so prominent as that of ruling for God as the

King of Israel. For this reason Jesus of Nazareth is known to all

who believe in his claims as "the Christ," and such believers are

thence called "Christians." This title of Christ connects Jesus with

the line of David, to which he actually belonged by descent, and it

also connects him with the promise to David, of which he was the

heir and the fulfillment.

We have thus seen that "the Coming One," Luke 7:19; John 11:27,

toward whom the eyes of Israel were directed, was to be prophet,

priest, and king. In all these offices and the various duties they

involved he was to be the one chosen from among the people--a man

therefore, "servant of the servants of God." Yet this is not all.

Alongside these promises there was a promise also that Jehovah

himself would come to dwell among his people. The Holy of Holies,

with its Ark of the Presence and its Mercy seat for revelation and

atonement, was itself typical of an ideal presence of God among men.

And through psalm and prophet we can trace this promise also. Now

it is terrible with its threat to sinners, and now it is glorious

with its hope for the oppressed. At length in Malachi we read in

the clearest words, "The Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to

his temple." Mal. 3:1, 5. Preceded by his "messenger" to "prepare

the way before him," Israel's divine Lord himself is to come for

judgment and salvation. See also Ps. 96:13; 98:9.

It was not made so plain to the men of ancient Israel just how these

two lines of promise were to be united, as it appears to us now in

the light of later facts. But we, who worship Jesus of Nazareth not

only as "Son of David according to the flesh," but as divine Lord

from heaven, "in two distinct natures and one person for ever,"

can look back on those old prophecies of "men who spake from God,

being moved by the Holy Spirit." II Peter 1:21. We can see in them

God's purpose to make this great Son of David a true "Immanuel,"

Isa. 7:14--a Person in whom God actually is "with us." God gave to

him such names as "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting

Father, Prince of Peace," because he should really be all that

these names imply. Isa. 9:6. For the Child who was born in little

Bethlehem, the "city of David," was not merely one who should be

"ruler in Israel," but also one "whose goings forth are from of old,

from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XV

1. How did the priests and prophets in Israel point forward to

an ideal Priest and Prophet?

2. What was the relation of Israel's king to Jehovah? In whose

"house" was this office made eternal? In what Person has this

promise been fulfilled?

3. How was the promise that God himself should be "the Coming

One" consistent with the promise of a human Prophet, Priest,

and King? Where is it indicated in the Old Testament that both

promises might be fulfilled in one Person?

SECTION II

The Life of Christ and the Development of the Church in New

Testament Times

By John Gresham Machen, D.D.

LESSON I

The Preparation

At the time when the Old Testament narrative closes, the Jews

were under the rule of Persia. The Persian control continued for

about one hundred years more, and then gave way to the empire of

Alexander the Great. Alexander was king of Macedonia, a country

to the north of Greece; but the language and culture of his court

were Greek. After Greece proper had been conquered by Alexander's

father, Philip, Alexander himself proceeded to the conquest of

the East. The Persian Empire fell in 331 B.C., and with the

other Persian possessions Jerusalem came into the hands of the

conqueror. In 323 B.C., when Alexander died, his vast empire, which

extended around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and to

the borders of India, at once fell to pieces. But the kingdoms

into which the empire was divided were to a large extent Greek

kingdoms. Short-lived, therefore, as Alexander's empire was, it

had the permanent effect of spreading the Greek language and Greek

civilization over the Eastern world. It became thus, as will be

seen, one of the most important factors in the divine preparation

for the gospel.

After the death of Alexander, the country of Judea became a bone

of contention between two of the kingdoms into which Alexander's

empire was divided--the Greek kingdom of Syria and the Greek kingdom

of Egypt. At last, however, the Syrian kingdom, with its capital

at Antioch, near the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea,

gained the upper hand. Judea became part of the territory of the

Syrian monarchs.

In the reign of Antiochus IV of Syria, called Antiochus Epiphanes,

175-164 B.C., the Jews began a war for independence. Antiochus

Epiphanes had desecrated the Temple at Jerusalem by setting up an

image of a heathen god in the Holy of Holies. The result was the

glorious revolt of the Jews under Mattathias and his sons--the

family of the Maccabees. The Maccabean uprising, of which a stirring

account has been preserved in the First Book of the Maccabees, an

apocryphal book attached to the Old Testament, certainly constitutes

one of the most glorious chapters in the history of liberty. The

uprising was successful, and for about one hundred years the little

country of the Jews, though surrounded by powerful neighbors,

succeeded in maintaining its independence.

At first the Maccabees had been animated by a religious motive; the

revolt had been due not to an interference with what may be called

civil liberty, but to the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes of the

Temple and to the attempt at prohibiting the worship of Jehovah. As

time went on, however, the Maccabean rulers became more worldly in

their purposes and thus alienated the devout element among their

people. Hence the little kingdom became an easy prey to the next

great world empire which appeared upon the scene.

That empire was the empire of Rome. Originally a small city-state

in Italy, Rome had gradually extended her conquests until she came

into conflict with Greece and with the Greek kingdoms of the Eastern

world. Weakened by many causes, the successors of Alexander soon

succumbed, and among them the monarchs of Syria. Judea could not

resist the new conqueror. In 63 B.C., the famous Roman general,

Pompey, entered Jerusalem, and Jewish independence was at an end.

The Roman control was exerted in Palestine for a time through

subservient high priests, until in 37 B.C. Herod the Great was made

king. Herod was not a real Jew, but an Idumæan; and at heart he

had little or no attachment to the Jews' religion. But he was wise

enough not to offend Jewish feeling in the outrageous way that had

proved so disastrous to Antiochus Epiphanes. Throughout his reign

Herod was of course thoroughly subservient to the Romans; though a

king, he was strictly a vassal king. Herod reigned from 37 B.C. to 4

B.C. His kingdom embraced not only Judea, but all Palestine. It was

near the end of Herod's reign that our Saviour was born. Thus the

reckoning of the Christian era, which was instituted many centuries

after Christ, is at least four years too low; Jesus was born a

little earlier than 4 B.C.

When Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C., Rome was still a

republic. But before many years had elapsed Julius Cæsar assumed the

supreme power, and the ancient Roman liberties were gone. After the

assassination of Cæsar in 44 B.C., there was a long period of civil

war. Finally Augustus was triumphant, and the Roman Empire began. In

the long reign of Augustus, 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, our Saviour was born.

The political events which have just been outlined did not take

place by chance. They were all parts of the plan of God which

prepared for the coming of the Lord. When Jesus finally came, the

world was prepared for his coming.

In the first place, the Roman Empire provided that peace and unity

which was needed for the spread of the gospel. War interrupts

communication between nations. But when the apostles went forth from

Jerusalem to spread the good news of Christ to the world, there was

no war to interrupt their course. Nation was bound to nation under

the strong hand of Rome. Travel was comparatively safe and easy, and

despite occasional persecution the earliest missionaries usually

enjoyed the protection of Roman law.

In the second place, the Greek language provided a medium of

communication. When the Romans conquered the Eastern world, they

did not endeavor to substitute their own language for the language

which already prevailed. Such an attempt would only have produced

confusion. Indeed, the Romans themselves adopted the Greek language

as a convenient medium of communication. Greek thus became a world

language. The original, local languages of the various countries

continued to be used (Aramaic, for example, was used in Palestine),

but Greek was a common medium. Thus when the apostles went forth to

the evangelization of the world, there were no barriers of language

to check their course.

In the third place, the dispersion of the Jews provided the early

missionaries everywhere with a starting point for their labors. As

a result not only of captivity, but also of voluntary emigration,

the Jews in the first century were scattered abroad throughout the

cities of the world very much as they are scattered to-day. But

there was one important difference. To-day the Jewish synagogues are

attended only by Jews. In those days they were attended also by men

of other races. Thus when Paul and the other Christian missionaries

exercised their privilege of speaking in the synagogues, they were

speaking not only to Jews but also to a picked audience of Gentiles.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON I

1. Name in order the foreign powers which possessed the country

of the Jews, beginning with Old Testament times and continuing

down to the present day.

2. What was the importance of the Maccabean uprising in the

preparation for the coming of the Lord? What would have

happened if Antiochus Epiphanes had been successful?

3. What was the importance of the Roman Empire for the spread

of the gospel? of the Greek language? of the dispersion of

the Jews?

LESSON II

The Coming of the Lord

John 1:1-18

When the Son of God came to earth for our salvation, the world was

ready for his coming. The whole course of history had been made to

lead up to him. And he was well worthy of being thus the goal of

history. For the One who came was none other than the eternal Son

of God, the Word who was with God and who was God. He had existed

from all eternity; he had been the instrument in creating the world.

He was himself truly God, the same in substance with the Father,

and equal in power and glory. Yet the One who was so great humbled

himself to be born as a man and finally to suffer and die. His

coming was a voluntary act, an act of the Father in giving him for

the sins of the world, and his own act which he performed because he

loved us. It was an act of infinite condescension. The Son of God

humbled himself to lead a true human life; he took upon himself our

nature. He was born, he grew in wisdom and stature, he suffered, he

died. He was always God, but he became also man. Who can measure the

depth of such condescending love?

What, then, was the manner of his coming? The story is told, in

beautiful narrative, in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke.

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

First, the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner, was announced

by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, a devout priest, as he was

ministering in the Temple. Luke 1:5-25. Zacharias was old; he had

given up hope of children. The promise seemed to him too wonderful

to be true; he doubted the angel's word. But the punishment which

was inflicted upon him for his doubt was temporary merely, and the

bitterness of it was swallowed up in joy for the child that was

born. The tongue of Zacharias, which had been dumb on account of

his sin, was loosed, and he uttered a wonderful song of praise. Vs.

57-80.

Luke 1:26-56

But before John was born, in fulfillment of the angel's promise,

there was a promise of a greater than John. Luke 1:26-56. "The

angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named

Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of

the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." It was a far

more wonderful promise than that which had come to Zacharias, not

only because of the greater glory of the promised Son, but also

because of the mystery of his birth. The child was to have no human

father, but was to be given by the power of the Holy Spirit. But

this time, despite the strangeness of the promise, there was no

unbelief, as in the case of Zacharias. "Behold, the handmaid of the

Lord," said Mary; "be it unto me according to thy word." And then

Mary went to Judea to visit her kinswoman Elisabeth, the wife of

Zacharias; and while in Judea she gave glorious expression to her

thanksgiving in the hymn which is called, from the first word of it

in the Latin translation, the "Magnificat"--"My soul doth magnify

the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Then Mary

returned to her own home in Nazareth.

Matthew 1:18-25

But another announcement of the Saviour's birth was made to Joseph,

who was betrothed to Mary. Matt. 1:18-25. Joseph was to have the

high privilege of caring for the child that was to be born. "Fear

not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," said the angel to Joseph in a

dream, "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

And here again, there was no unbelief and no disobedience. Joseph

"did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his

wife."

Luke 2:1-7

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, a town of the northern part of

Palestine, which was called Galilee. But the promised Child was to

belong to the house of David, and it was fitting that he should be

born at Bethlehem, a little town five miles south of Jerusalem where

David himself had been born. To cause him to be born at Bethlehem,

God made use of an event of world politics. Luke 2:1-7. A decree had

gone out from the emperor, Augustus, that the whole empire should be

enrolled. This enrollment or census seems to have been carried out

in the kingdom of Herod the Great by the Jewish method which took

account of family relationships. So, although at the time Joseph and

Mary were living at Nazareth, they went up to the home of Joseph's

ancestors, to Bethlehem, to be enrolled. And at Bethlehem the

Saviour was born. There was no room in the lodging place. The Child

was laid, therefore, in a manger that was intended for the feeding

of cattle.

Luke 2:8-20

But humble as were the surroundings of the newborn King, his birth

was not without manifestations of glory. Luke 2:8-20. Shepherds,

keeping watch in the fields by night, heard a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." The

shepherds went then to see the sign which had been made known to

them. It was a strange sign indeed--Christ the Lord, the promised

King, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!

Luke 2:21-38; Matthew 2:1-12

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary made the

offering according to the Old Testament law, and presented the

Child, as the first-born, to the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Luke 2:21-38. Then they must have returned to Bethlehem, for it was

at Bethlehem that gifts were presented by Wise Men from the East.

Matt. 2:1-12. The Wise Men had been guided to Bethlehem partly by a

wonderful star which they had first seen in their own country, and

partly by questions which were answered by the scribes.

Matthew 2:13-23

But the life of the infant Saviour was not all to be a hearing of

angels' songs and a reception of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

The Lord had come to suffer for the sins of the world, and the last

great suffering on the cross was anticipated by the persecution

which came in the early days. Matt. 2:13-18. The suspicions of

Herod, the jealous king, had been aroused by the questions of the

Wise Men. He sent to Bethlehem to put a possible rival out of the

way. But it was too late. The king's rage was vented upon the

innocent children of the little town, but God had cared for the

infant Saviour. The Lord was finally to die for the sins of the

world. But meanwhile many words of wisdom and grace were to fall

from his lips; his hour was not yet come. Joseph was warned of God

in a dream, and took the young Child and his mother away to Egypt,

out of the way of harm, until Herod the Great was dead. Then they

returned to Nazareth, where the Child was to spend long, quiet years

of preparation for his work.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON II

1. What life had our Saviour lived before he came to earth? Did

he cease to be God while he was on earth?

2. Why did he come?

3. Who was his forerunner? What sort of persons were the parents

of the forerunner?

4. How did Jesus come to be born at Bethlehem?

5. What was the character of his mother?

LESSON III

The Baptism

Luke 2:40-50

The New Testament tells very little about the boyhood and early

manhood of our Saviour. One incident, however, is narrated. Luke

2:41-50. Joseph and Mary, we are told, were in the habit of going up

from Galilee to Jerusalem every year in the spring at the feast of

the passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went up with them.

But when they left Jerusalem on the return, Jesus remained behind

in the Temple, to study the Old Testament; and when Joseph and Mary

found him, he replied to their inquiries, "Knew ye not that I must

be about my Father's business?" The incident shows the presence

even in the human consciousness of the boy Jesus of a knowledge of

the great mission that he was called to fulfill and of his special

relation to God.

Luke 2:51, 52

But the consciousness of these great things did not prevent our

Saviour from performing the humble tasks of daily life and from

being obedient to his human parents. Luke 2:51, 52. Jesus became a

carpenter, and since Joseph also was a carpenter, no doubt Jesus

learned the trade in early youth. Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55. For many

years, till he was about thirty years old, the Saviour of the world

labored at the carpenter's bench, and lived as an obedient son in a

humble home at Nazareth. Luke 3:23.

At last, however, the time came for the beginning of his public

ministry. Before that ministry is studied, it may be well to cast

a glance at the condition of the country into which Jesus now came

forward.

When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., his dominions were divided

among his three sons. Archelaus received Judea, the southern part

of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its chief city; Herod Antipas, the

"Herod" who is mentioned in the Gospels in connection with Jesus'

public ministry, received Galilee and a district to the east of the

Jordan River called Perea; and Philip received a region lying to

the east of Galilee and to the north of Perea. When Archelaus was

banished in A.D. 6, his territory was placed under the control of

Roman officials called procurators. The procurator who was in office

during Jesus' public ministry was Pontius Pilate. Herod Antipas,

with the title of "tetrarch," continued to rule until A.D. 39;

Philip until about A.D. 33. The public ministry of Jesus extended

from A.D. 26 or 27 to A.D. 29 or 30. During most of that time he

was in the territory of Herod Antipas and of Pontius Pilate, though

occasionally he entered the territory of Philip.

Matthew 3:1-12, and Parallels

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry was prepared for by the work

of John the Baptist. Matt. 3:1-12, and parallels. John was the last

and greatest prophet of the old dispensation, who came just before

the dawn of the new age. For centuries prophecy had been silent. But

at last a prophet came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare

the heart of the people for the promised Messiah.

Even in dress and in manner of life, John was like a prophet of the

olden time. His food was locusts and wild honey; he was clothed with

a rough camel's-hair garment; and his preaching was carried on in

the deserts. The substance of his message is summed up in the words,

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 3:2.

The phrase, "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God," was evidently

familiar to the hearers of John, and the meaning of the phrase, up

to a certain point, is perfectly clear. As the kingdom of Cæsar

is the place where Cæsar bears rule, so the Kingdom of God is the

place, or the condition, where God bears rule. In one sense, the

whole universe is the Kingdom of God, for nothing happens apart from

God's will. But evidently John was using the phrase in some narrower

sense; he meant by the Kingdom of God the condition where God's will

is wrought out to completion, where the sinful disobedience which

prevails in the world is banished and God is truly King.

The Jews expected an age which should be under the perfect control

of God. But they were surprised by what John the Baptist said about

the requirements for entrance into that age. They had supposed that

all Jews would have the blessing of the Kingdom, but John told

them that only the righteous would be allowed to enter in. It was

a startling message, since the hearers of John knew only too well

that they did not possess the righteousness which was required.

Repentance, therefore, or cleansing from sin, was necessary. And the

sign of cleansing was baptism.

Matthew 3:13 to 4:11, and Parallels

Among those who came to be baptized was Jesus of Nazareth. Matt.

3:13-15, and parallels. Jesus did not need to be baptized for his

own sake, for he had no sin to be washed away. But his baptism was

part of what he was doing for his people. Just as on the cross he

received the punishment of sin, though there was no sin of his own,

so in his baptism he represented the sinful people whom he came to

save.

When Jesus had been baptized, there was a wonderful event which was

perceived not only by him but also by John the Baptist. Matt. 3:16,

17, and parallels. The Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form

of a dove, and there was a voice from heaven which said, "This is

my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This event marks the

beginning of Jesus' public ministry as Messiah. He had been the

Messiah already, and he had already possessed the Holy Spirit; but

now the power of the Spirit impelled him to come forward definitely

as the promised One.

At the very beginning, however, there was temptation to be overcome.

Matt. 4:1-11, and parallels. Jesus was led up from the deep Jordan

Valley, where the baptism had taken place, into the wilderness on

the heights. And there he was tempted. The temptation was based

upon the holy experience which he had just received. The voice from

heaven had designated Jesus as Son of God. "If that be true," said

the Tempter, "if thou art really Son of God, use thy power to obtain

creature comfort, test out thy power by casting thyself down from a

pinnacle of the Temple, obtain the immediate enjoyment of thy power

by doing obeisance to me." The Devil quoted Scripture for his evil

purpose. But Jesus did not need to repudiate the Scripture in order

to refute him. The Holy Scriptures themselves contained a sufficient

answer to every suggestion of the Evil One. The great victory was

won. The Kingdom of the Messiah was not to be a worldly realm, and

it was not to be won by worldly means. The path to the Messiah's

throne led by the way of the cross. And that path our Saviour was

willing to tread for our sakes.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON III

1. What is known about the boyhood and youth of Jesus?

2. Describe the physical features and the political divisions of

Palestine at the time of our Lord. Where was Jesus born, where

did he spend his youth, and where was he baptized?

3. What was the meaning of John's baptism? Why was Jesus

baptized?

4. What was the meaning of each of the three temptations, and

how did Jesus overcome them?

LESSON IV

The Early Judean Ministry

John 1:19-34

After the temptation Jesus descended again into the Jordan Valley,

where the baptism had taken place. There he received the testimony

of John the Baptist. John 1:19-34. John had come not to perform a

work of his own, but to be a witness to the greater One who was to

follow. He put aside, therefore, all thoughts of personal ambition,

declared plainly that he was not the Christ, and rejoiced when his

disciples left him in order to follow the One whom he had come to

announce. John had had revealed to him, moreover, not merely the

fact that Jesus was the Saviour, but also something of the way in

which the salvation was to be wrought. Jesus was to die, like a

sacrificial lamb, for the sins of others. "Behold, the Lamb of God,"

said John to his disciples, "that taketh away the sin of the world!"

John 1:35-51

Two pairs of brothers, in those early days, left John to follow the

Saviour. John 1:35-42. One pair consisted of Andrew and Peter; the

other, no doubt, consisted of the two sons of Zebedee, James and

John, although John, who wrote the Gospel in which this narrative is

contained, has never mentioned his own name in his book. Two other

men, besides these four, came to Jesus on the following day--Philip

and Nathanael. Vs. 43-51.

John 2:1-11

After the meeting with these six disciples, our Lord ascended again

from the valley of the Jordan to the higher country of Galilee. And

there, in the village of Cana, he wrought the first of his miracles.

John 2:1-11. He was a guest at a wedding feast, and when the wine

ran out he supplied the lack by turning water into wine. Thereby he

not only manifested his power, but also indicated the manner of his

ministry. He was not to be an austere person like John the Baptist,

living far from the habitations of men. On the contrary, his

ministry was, for those whom he came to win, a ministry of joy. He

entered not merely into the sorrows, but also into the joys of men;

the One who was to die for the sins of the world was also willing to

grace a marriage feast!

John 2:12-22

After a brief sojourn at Capernaum, on the shores of the Sea of

Galilee, where he was afterwards to carry on a large part of his

ministry, Jesus went southward to Jerusalem at passover time. At

Jerusalem his first recorded act was an act of stern rebuke. John

2:13-22. The Temple area was filled with the tables of those who

sold the sheep and oxen and doves which were intended for sacrifice;

the sacred precincts of God's house had been made a place of

business. There was no hesitation on the part of Jesus; he made a

scourge of cords and drove the traffickers out. It is a mistake to

suppose that the wonderful gentleness of our Saviour or his gracious

participation in innocent joys was any indication of weakness.

Though always merciful to the penitent, Jesus could be indignant

against blatant sinners; and the righteous anger of the Saviour was

a terrible thing.

John 2:23-25

At Jerusalem Jesus won adherents because of the miracles which he

wrought. But he was able to distinguish true devotion from that

which was false. He "knew all men, ... and needed not that any one

should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in

man." John 2:24, 25.

John 3:1-15

One example of this knowledge was afforded by the case of Nicodemus,

John 3:1-15; Jesus knew what Nicodemus lacked. Nicodemus, a ruler

of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, to discuss the substance of

what Jesus had been saying. But our Lord would not waste time with

things that lay on the surface. He went straight to the heart of the

matter, and said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born anew." V. 7. None

of the learning, none of the worldly influence of Nicodemus would

avail; true life could come only by a new birth, which all, rich and

poor, learned and ignorant, must receive, and receive, not by their

own efforts, but by the mysterious power of the Spirit of God. Jesus

spoke, too, on that memorable night, of the sacrificial death which

he himself was to die for the sins of men. "As Moses lifted up the

serpent in the wilderness," he said, "even so must the Son of man be

lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

John 3:22-30

Then Jesus left Jerusalem, the capital, and carried on, through

his disciples, a ministry of baptism in the country districts of

Judea. John 3:22-30. He was thus engaging in a work which before had

belonged peculiarly to John the Baptist. Some of John's disciples

were perhaps inclined to be envious. But there was no envy in the

heart of John himself. He had come not for his own sake but to be

a witness to Jesus as Messiah. And now he rejoiced in the growing

prominence of Jesus. "The friend of the bridegroom," he said about

himself, "rejoices at the voice of the bridegroom. He must increase,

but I must decrease." Vs. 29, 30, in substance.

John 4:1-42

When this early Judean ministry was over, Jesus went back to

Galilee. On the way he passed through Samaria. John 4:1-42. The

inhabitants of Samaria were not of pure Jewish race, and although

they accepted the five books of Moses and looked for the coming

of a Messiah, they did not accept all of the Old Testament. They

were despised by the Jews. But even for the Samaritans, and for

the most degraded among them, the Saviour had a message of hope.

Wearied by his journey, our Lord was sitting by Jacob's well near

the city of Sychar. When his disciples had gone into the city to

buy food, a woman came to draw water at the well. For that woman it

was a memorable hour. Jesus was willing to labor, and that in the

midst of his weariness, for one sinful soul, as well as for all the

multitudes that had crowded around him in Judea. The woman was of

sinful life, and she could not hide her sin from Jesus. But Jesus

searched out her sin, not in order to condemn her, but in order to

bring to her the message of salvation. Attracted, then, by what

the woman had said, a number of the Samaritans came to Jesus and

recognized him as the Messiah and as the Saviour of the world.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON IV

1. Give an account of the testimony of John the Baptist to

Jesus. How did John know that Jesus was the Messiah?

2. What happened at Cana? Who, besides Jesus, was a guest at the

feast?

3. Give an outline of all the journeys of Jesus up to his

passage through Samaria.

4. Give an account, fuller than the outline given, of the early

Judean ministry. What did Jesus say when he was asked to give

a sign?

5. What is the meaning of the "new birth"? Is it still necessary

to-day if a man is to be saved? How does it come?

LESSON V

The Beginning of the Galilæan Ministry

After passing through Samaria, Jesus arrived in Galilee, and it was

in Galilee that a large part of his ministry was carried on. The

Galilæan ministry is narrated for the most part by the first three

Gospels, which are called Synoptic Gospels, whereas the Gospel

According to John deals more particularly with the work in Judea.

Luke 4:16-30

After the healing of a nobleman's son, when Jesus was at Cana of

Galilee, our Lord began his preaching in the Galilæan synagogues.

Early in this period he went to Nazareth, the place where he had

been brought up. Luke 4:16-30. But the people of Nazareth could not

believe that the carpenter's Son whom they had known was really

chosen by God to fulfill the glorious prophecies of Isaiah. When

rebuked by Jesus they even desired to kill him. Thus did they

illustrate, to their own eternal loss, the words of Jesus that "No

prophet is acceptable in his own country."

Leaving Nazareth, our Lord went down and dwelt at Capernaum, making

that city apparently the center of his work. But before the details

of the Galilæan ministry are studied, it will be well to cast a

hurried glance at the geographical features of the country where

Jesus' ministry was carried on.

The political divisions of Palestine have already been

mentioned--Galilee in the north, under the tetrarch, Herod Antipas;

Samaria and Judea to the south, under the Roman procurator, Pontius

Pilate. But the physical features of the country do not correspond

at all to the political divisions. Physically the country is divided

into four narrow strips, each about one hundred and fifty miles

long, running from north to south. The westernmost strip is the

coastal plain, along the Mediterranean Sea, into which Jesus hardly

went; then comes the low hill country, the "shephela"; then the

highlands, upon which Jerusalem is situated, reaching an altitude of

some 2500 feet above sea level. These central highlands of Palestine

are broken by the plain of Esdraelon, in southern Galilee. A little

to the north of this plain, in a hill country, lies the town of

Nazareth. East of the central highlands is the deep valley of the

Jordan River. The Jordan rises in the extreme north of Palestine,

one of its sources being on the slopes of the lofty Mount Hermon;

then flows southward to the lake called "the waters of Merom"; then,

issuing from that lake, it flows, after a short course, into the

Lake of Gennesaret, or Sea of Galilee, which is about twelve miles

long; then, issuing from the Lake of Gennesaret, it flows southward,

through a very deep valley to the Dead Sea, which has no outlet and

is extremely salt. During most of its course the Jordan Valley lies

far below the level of the sea, being on account of this peculiarity

absolutely unique among the river valleys of the world. The Dead Sea

is 1292 feet, and the Lake of Gennesaret 682 feet, below sea level.

It was on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret that a large part

of our Lord's ministry was carried on. Centuries of misrule have

now ruined the country, but in those days Galilee supported a large

population. The shores of the lake, particularly, were lined with

villages and towns. The work of our Lord was thus carried on amid

"life's throng and press," though from time to time he sought out

the desert places for rest and prayer.

Matthew 4:18-22, and Parallels

At the beginning of the ministry on the shores of the Lake of

Galilee, Jesus called the two pairs of brothers--Simon Peter and

Andrew, and James and John. Matt. 4:18-22, and parallels. They had

known Jesus before, and had devoted themselves to his service. But

now they were commanded to show their devotion by leaving their

ordinary occupation and becoming Jesus' permanent followers.

Mark 1:21-39, and Parallels

The Gospels give a vivid picture of a Sabbath which Jesus spent at

Capernaum near the beginning of his Galilæan ministry. Mark 1:21-34,

and parallels. As usual, he went into the synagogue. Our Lord knew

how to find God's handiwork in the flowers of the field; but he was

not like those who think that the worship of God through nature

is any substitute for the public worship of the Church. In the

synagogue the people were astonished at Jesus' teaching: "He taught

them as having authority, and not as the scribes." But they were

also astonished at his power; he commanded even the unclean spirits

and they obeyed him. He was not merely a teacher, but also a healer;

he brought not merely guidance, but also active help.

After the synagogue service, Jesus went into the house of Simon and

Andrew with James and John. In the house he healed Simon's wife's

mother who was sick of a fever. Others had heard of the wonderful

power of Jesus, and desired to be healed. But in order not to break

the Sabbath, they waited until sunset, when the Jewish Sabbath was

over. At sunset they brought to Jesus those who were sick and those

who were possessed with demons, and Jesus put forth his divine power

to heal.

It had been a crowded, busy day. Our Lord must have been weary as

night at last came. But even in such busy days, he took time to

seek the source of all strength. A great while before the dawn he

went out into a desert place and there prayed. Mark 1:35-39, and

parallels.

Matthew 9:1-8, and Parallels

After a tour in the Galilæan synagogues, with both preaching and

healing, our Lord returned to Capernaum. There, as is told in one

of the vivid narratives of the Gospels, Jesus healed a paralytic.

Matt. 9:1-8, and parallels. The sick man could not be brought in by

the door of the house because of the crowds. But he and his friends

were not to be denied. The four friends who bore his couch lowered

him through the roof into the place where Jesus was. They had found

the Healer at last. But bodily healing was not the first gift which

Jesus bestowed. "Son," said Jesus, "thy sins are forgiven." It was

a strange physician indeed who could forgive sins. The scribes said

that the word of Jesus was blasphemy. And so it was, unless Jesus

himself were God. As a proof of his divine power, the Lord said also

to the paralytic, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." And so the

man went away from the presence of the great Healer, whole in body

and in mind.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON V

1. Describe the political and the physical divisions of

Palestine. In what parts of the country was our Lord's

ministry carried on? Where was Nazareth? Capernaum? Point out

these places on a map.

2. Describe the call of the four disciples. When and where had

they followed Jesus before? What was their occupation?

3. Give an account of the Sabbath in Capernaum that is described

in the Gospels. What great divisions of Jesus' work were

illustrated on that day?

4. Describe the healing of the paralytic. What can be learned

from this incident about the nature of Jesus' person? Why were

the scribes offended?

LESSON VI

The Period of Popularity

During the first part of the Galilæan ministry, our Lord had the

favor of the people. Great crowds followed him so that he could

scarcely enter into a house. On one occasion he embarked in a little

boat and put forth a short distance into the lake, so as to be able

to speak to the throng on the shore.

This popularity, it is true, was not universal. The common people

heard Jesus gladly, but the official teachers were hostile. These

teachers, who are called scribes, belonged for the most part to

the sect of the Pharisees. At the time of Christ there were two

chief parties among the Jews--the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Sadducees were a worldly aristocracy, in possession of the

high-priestly offices at Jerusalem, favored by the Romans, and

satisfied with the existing political order. The Pharisees, on

the other hand, were a strict Jewish party, insisted on a strict

interpretation of the Mosaic Law, and added to the Law a great mass

of oral "tradition," which ostensibly consisted of interpretation

of the Law, but really meant an enormous and oppressive addition

to it. The Pharisees were opposed to Jesus for at least two

reasons. In the first place, they were envious of his success in

teaching, which endangered their own position. In the second place,

they were opposed to the contents of his teaching; he rejected

their interpretation of the Law, and rebuked them for paying such

attention to the detailed rules which were set forth in their

tradition as to forget the weightier matters of justice and mercy.

The conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees was precipitated

particularly by the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath. The

Sabbath controversy was carried on partly in Galilee and partly,

John, ch. 5, during a visit of Jesus to Jerusalem. The Pharisees had

developed for the preservation of the Sabbath an elaborate set of

rules which went far beyond what was set forth in the Old Testament.

They were offended, therefore, when Jesus refused to rebuke his

disciples for plucking the ears of wheat on the Sabbath Day, and

when he himself insisted on using the Sabbath to perform works of

mercy like the healing of the man that had a withered hand.

But for the present the opposition of the Pharisees was held in

check by the favor which our Lord had among the people.

This favor was due partly to the teaching of Jesus and partly to his

miracles. He interpreted the Scriptures in a fresh, original way;

"He taught as one having authority and not as their scribes." And he

had power to heal every manner of disease and to cast out demons. It

was no wonder that the crowds followed so wonderful a teacher.

Matthew 4:17

The Galilæan teaching of Jesus began with the proclamation of the

Kingdom of God. The message sounded at first somewhat like the

message of John the Baptist. Quite like John, Jesus came forward

with the summons, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But the new teacher differed from John in the more complete account

which he gave of the nature of the Kingdom, and especially in the

central place in the Kingdom which he assigned to himself.

Matthew, Chapters 5 to 7

The nature of the Kingdom of God is set forth in the great discourse

of our Lord which is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt., chs. 5 to 7. Having gone up from the shores of the Sea of

Galilee to the heights which surround the lake, our Lord taught his

disciples what was to be the life of those who should have a part

in the Kingdom of God. In one sense, the Kingdom lay altogether in

the future; it would be ushered in with full power only at the end

of the world. But in another sense, it was present already wherever

there were those who were truly submitting their lives to Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount contains certain features which are

fundamental in all of Jesus' teaching.

In the first place, God is presented, in the Sermon on the Mount,

as "Father." The fatherhood of God, in the teaching of Jesus, is

sometimes misunderstood. Jesus did not mean that God is Father

of all men. God stands indeed to all men in a relation which is

analogous to that of a father to his children; he cares for all, he

makes his sun to rise upon all. Matt. 5:45. But in the teaching of

Jesus and in the whole New Testament the lofty term, "Father," is

reserved for a still more intimate relationship. So in the Sermon on

the Mount the great world without is sharply distinguished from the

company of Jesus' disciples; it is only the latter who can say, "Our

Father which art in heaven."

There was nothing narrow in such teaching; for although in Jesus'

teaching the intimate relation of sonship toward God was offered

only to those who should be of the household of faith, yet the door

of the household of faith was open wide to all who would be willing

to come in. Indeed Jesus himself died on the cross with the purpose

of opening that door. Our Saviour did far more than teach men that

they were already children of God; he came to make them children of

God by his saving work.

In the second place, the Sermon on the Mount tells what kind of life

is led by those who should have entered into the Kingdom and been

made the children of God. That life is far more than obedience to a

set of external rules; the purity which Jesus demanded is a purity

of the heart. The life in the Kingdom is also far removed from all

pretense; the children of God engage in prayer and good works not

to be seen by men but to be seen by God. Finally, the life in the

Kingdom is a life of perfect trust; all anxious thought for the

morrow is banished, since God will care for his children.

One difficulty arises in the reading of the Sermon on the Mount. How

can such an ideal be attained? It might be possible to obey a set

of rules, like the rules of the Pharisees, but how is it possible

for sinful men to attain purity of heart? The righteousness of the

Kingdom of heaven exceeds by far the "righteousness of the scribes

and Pharisees." How can such righteousness be attained?

The answer to this question was partly understood even by the first

hearers of the Sermon on the Mount. The disciples of Jesus knew even

then that Jesus alone could give them entrance into the Kingdom;

they trusted in him already not merely as teacher but also as

Saviour. But the answer to the question is far plainer to us; for

we know the cross. The atoning death of Christ it was that gave men

the kind of righteousness required for entrance into the Kingdom

of God, for it gave them the righteousness of Christ himself. The

significance of the cross was spoken of by our Lord even during his

earthly ministry, but the full explanation of it was left to the

apostles. The saving work of Jesus could be fully explained only

after it had been done.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VI

1. What is the meaning of "the kingdom of God," in Jesus'

teaching?

2. Who were the Sadducees? Who were the Pharisees, and why were

they opposed to Jesus?

3. Give an outline of the Sermon on the Mount.

LESSON VII

The Turning Point

The teaching of Jesus was carried on in various ways. Sometimes

there were extended discourses like the Sermon on the Mount. On

the other hand, much of the most precious teaching of our Lord is

contained in brief sayings which were uttered in answer to some

objection or in view of some special situation. One other form of

teaching requires special attention--namely, the parables.

Mark 4:1-34, and Parallels

A parable is a narrative taken from ordinary life, but intended to

teach some spiritual lesson. It differs from an allegory in that

the application is not to be carried out in such detail. Ordinarily

a parable teaches simply one lesson; there is only one point of

similarity between the literal meaning of the parable and the

deeper spiritual truth. Thus when our Lord compared God's answer to

prayer with the answer which an unjust judge gives to an importunate

widow, the details in the two cases are not intended to be similar;

God is very different from the unjust judge. But there is one point

of similarity--importunity does have its effect in both cases.

The distinction between a parable and an allegory is not an absolute

distinction, and sometimes the two shade into each other. Thus the

parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, which Jesus uttered nearly at the

close of his earthly ministry, partakes largely of the nature of

allegory. The details to a considerable extent are significant--the

wicked husbandmen represent the Jews and their leaders, the servants

who were first sent represent the prophets, the son who was sent

last represents Jesus himself. But many of Jesus' parables are

parables pure and simple; they are not intended to be pressed in

detail, but teach, each of them, some one lesson.

The purpose of Jesus in using parables was twofold. In the first

place the parables were not clear to those who did not wish to

learn. In accordance with a principle of the divine justice, willful

closing of the eyes to the truth brought an increase of darkness.

But in the second place, to those who were willing to receive the

truth, the parables were made gloriously plain; the figurative form

of the teaching only served to drive the meaning home.

The ministry of Jesus did not consist merely of teaching. Along with

the teaching there went wonderful manifestations of divine power.

These manifestations of divine power were of various kinds. Many

of them were miracles of healing; Jesus had power to make the lame

to walk, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear. He also had power to

cast out demons. At the presence of the Son of God, Satan and his

ministers had put forth all their baneful power. But the demons were

obliged to flee at Jesus' word.

Matthew 8:23-27, and Parallels

Not all of the miracles, however, were miracles of healing. Some

of the most notable of them were of a different kind. But all of

them were manifestations of Jesus' divine power. When, on the lake,

in the midst of the frightened disciples, our Lord said to the

winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," the Ruler of all nature was

revealed. The particular form of Jesus' miracles depended upon his

own inscrutable will; but all of the miracles revealed him as the

Master of the world. He who had made the world in the beginning

could still put forth the same creative power. A miracle, as

distinguished from the ordinary course of nature, is a manifestation

of the creative, as distinguished from the providential, power of

God.

Matthew 14:13-21, and Parallels

Among the miracles of Jesus the feeding of the five thousand seems

to have been particularly important. Its importance is indicated

by the fact that it is narrated in all four of the Gospels. Matt.

14:13-21, and parallels. Even the Gospel of John, which is concerned

for the most part with what happened in Judea, here runs parallel

with the Synoptic Gospels and narrates an event which happened in

Galilee.

This event marks the climax of the popularity of our Lord and at

the same time the beginning of his rejection. Even before this time

he had been rejected by some; his popularity had been by no means

universal. He had been opposed by the scribes and Pharisees; he had

not been understood even by the members of his own household; and he

had been rejected twice at the town where he had been brought up.

But for the most part he had enjoyed the favor of the people.

At the time of the feeding of the five thousand, this popular

favor had reached its height. Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds

into a lonely place across the lake from Capernaum. But such was

his popularity that he could not escape. The people followed him

even when he tried to be alone; they had had no thought of food

or of lodging for the night, so eager had they been to listen to

his teaching. When evening came, therefore, they were in want. But

our Lord had pity on them because they were like sheep without a

shepherd. By a gracious manifestation of his divine power he made

the five loaves and two fishes suffice for all the multitude.

Matthew 14:22-34, and Parallels

After the feeding of the five thousand Jesus found at last the

solitude which he had sought; he went up into the mountain to pray.

The multitudes were making their way around the lake by the shore;

the disciples had taken the only boat and were rowing hard against

the wind. But about three o'clock at night our Lord came to the

disciples walking upon the water. It is no wonder that they bowed

before him and said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

John 6:22-71

Meanwhile the multitude had gone on foot around the lake to

Capernaum. When they found Jesus there before them they were

astonished. But their astonishment, unfortunately, was not of the

kind that leads to true and abiding faith. They had valued the

earthly bread which Jesus had given them, but were not willing to

receive the spiritual bread. Jesus himself, he told them, was the

Bread of life who had come down from heaven; only those could truly

live who would feed upon him by accepting his saving work. John

6:22-71.

It seemed to the Jews to be a hard saying. How could the Jesus whose

family they knew be the bread which had come down from heaven? Many

even of those who had formerly followed Jesus were offended at this

"hard saying." The popularity of Jesus at this time began to wane.

But there were some disciples who remained. Jesus had chosen twelve

men, whom he called apostles. He had had them as his companions,

and already he had sent them out on a mission to teach and to

heal. Turning now to them, he asked, "Would ye also go away?" Then

Peter, speaking for the others, showed the difference between true

disciples and those who are offended at every hard saying. "Lord,"

he said, "to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VII

1. What is a parable? How does it differ from an allegory?

2. Why did Jesus use parables? Mention some of the parables

recorded in the Gospels.

3. What is a miracle? Why did Jesus work miracles?

4. What is the particular importance of the feeding of the five

thousand?

5. Why were the people offended by the discourse on the Bread of

life?

LESSON VIII

Jesus as Messiah

The waning of Jesus' popularity was by no means sudden. Even

after the discourse on the Bread of life, we frequently find the

multitudes around him. But in general, from that time on our Lord

seems to have withdrawn from the crowds more frequently than before,

in order to devote himself to the instruction of his intimate

disciples.

Matthew 15:21-39, and Parallels

At this time our Lord withdrew into Phoenicia, northwest of

Palestine. In Phoenicia he healed the daughter of a Syrophoenician

woman. It was a foretaste of the rich streams of mercy which after

Pentecost were to flow out into the whole world.

After a brief stay in Phoenicia, Jesus returned to Galilee, where

he engaged again in controversy with the Pharisees and again, by

his divine power, fed a great multitude. This second time four

thousand men were fed. There were also miracles of healing, and in

general the essential characteristics of the Galilæan ministry were

continued.

Matthew 16:13-20, and Parallels

But before long Jesus departed again from Galilee, and finally went

with his disciples to the regions of Cæsarea Philippi, northeast

of Galilee. Near Cæsarea Philippi occurred the great confession of

Peter, which is one of the most important incidents of the Gospel

record. Matt. 16:13-20, and parallels.

"Who," Jesus asked of his disciples, "do men say that I am? And they

told him, saying, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And he

asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto

him, Thou art the Christ." Mark 8:27-29.

In this confession Peter recognized that Jesus was the "Messiah,"

the "Anointed One," or according to the Greek translation of the

same word, "the Christ." It was by no means the first recognition

of the fact. The Messiahship of Jesus had been revealed to Joseph

and Mary and Zacharias and Elisabeth even before Jesus was born; it

had been revealed to the shepherds and the Wise Men who greeted the

infant Saviour; it had been revealed to John the Baptist; it had

been revealed to the little group of disciples who left John at the

Jordan in order to follow Jesus; it had been proclaimed by Jesus

himself in his conversations with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan

woman; it had been recognized even by the unclean spirits.

But although Jesus had been proclaimed as Messiah before, the

confession of Peter was by no means a matter of course. Although

the disciples had already accepted Jesus as the Messiah it required

considerable faith and devotion to continue to accept him, for Jesus

was not the kind of Messiah whom the Jews had been expecting. They

had been expecting a Messiah who, as anointed king of Israel, would

deliver God's people from the Roman oppressors, and make Jerusalem

the center of the whole world.

Such expectations seemed to be set at nought by the Prophet of

Nazareth. No kingly pomp surrounded him; he mingled freely with the

common people; he lived in the utmost humility, having not even a

place to lay his head. Political Messiahship he definitely refused.

When, after the feeding of the five thousand, the people were about

to come and make him a king--that is, the Messianic king--he left

them and withdrew into the mountain. John 6:15. It is no wonder that

they were disappointed. All their enthusiasm seemed to be ruthlessly

quenched. Jesus would have absolutely nothing to do with the kind of

Messiahship which they offered.

By this attitude of Jesus not only the multitudes were discouraged.

Even the members of Jesus' household failed to understand, and the

very forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist himself, was assailed,

momentarily at least, by doubts. Conceivably the twelve apostles

also might have been discouraged. But their faith remained firm.

Despite all disappointments, despite the refusal of our Lord to

accept what were supposed to be prerogatives of Messiahship, Peter

was able still to say, at Cæsarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ."

But in what sense was Jesus the Christ? He was not an earthly king

who would lead the armies of Israel out to battle against the

Romans. He was not that sort of Messiah. What then was he? What was

Jesus' own conception of Messiahship?

In order to answer that question fully, it would be necessary to

return to the study of the Old Testament. Jesus accepted to the full

the Old Testament promises about the Messiah; what he rejected was

merely a false interpretation of them.

Even those promises of the Old Testament which make the Messiah a

king of David's line were fulfilled in Jesus. He was actually of

David's line, and he was born in David's city. He was also the King

of Israel.

Only his kingship was exercised in ways different from those which

the people generally were expecting. And there were other features

of the Old Testament promises which Jesus also fulfilled. Jesus

was not only Son of David; he was also Son of Man. The title "Son

of Man," which was Jesus' own Messianic designation of himself,

does not denote merely the humanity of Jesus in distinction

from his deity. On the contrary, it is plainly taken from the

stupendous scene in Dan. 7:13, where "one like unto a son of man" is

represented as coming with the clouds of heaven, and as being in

the presence of God. It indicates, therefore, not the human weakness

of Jesus, but his exalted position as supreme Ruler and Judge.

It is not surprising that for a time at least during his earthly

ministry Jesus used this title of the Messiah rather than the

other titles, for the title Son of Man was without the political

associations which Jesus desired to avoid. It had been employed, not

so much by the masses of the people, as by the circles which read

the books which are called the "Apocalypses." In these books, on the

basis of Daniel and other Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah was

represented not as a political king, but as a heavenly, supernatural

person. The title, therefore, was admirably fitted to designate

the lofty character of the Messiah's person, without the dangerous

political associations which had gathered around certain other

titles.

Indeed for a time, in the early Galilæan ministry, our Lord seems

to have kept his Messiahship somewhat in the background. Public

proclamation of his Messiahship would have aroused false, worldly

hopes of political upheaval. Before proclaiming himself again as

Messiah, our Lord needed to make clear by his teaching and by his

example what kind of Messiah he was; before finally setting up his

Kingdom he needed to show that that Kingdom was not of this world.

But he was Messiah and King from the beginning, and even at the

beginning his Messiahship had been made known.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON VIII

1. Mention some of the titles which are used to designate Jesus

as Messiah, and explain their meaning. Was the title "Son of

Man" ever used with reference to Jesus by anyone except Jesus

himself?

2. What was the significance of Peter's confession?

3. Why did Jesus become less popular than he was at first?

LESSON IX

The Prediction of the Cross

Peter's confession at Cæsarea Philippi was a triumph of faith, for

which Jesus pronounced Peter blessed. Through a revelation from God,

Peter had been made able to endure the disappointment involved in

Jesus' refusal of kingly honors. But another trial of faith was soon

to come.

Matthew 16:21-28, and Parallels

After Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah, our Lord began

to teach the disciples more of what his Messiahship meant. Matt.

16:21-28, and parallels. It meant, he said, not worldly honors,

and not merely a continuation of the humble life in Galilee, but

actual sufferings and death. This teaching was more than Peter could

endure. "Be it far from thee, Lord," he said, "this shall never be

unto thee." In such rebellion against God's will Jesus recognized

a repetition of the temptation which had come to him at the first,

immediately after the voice from heaven had proclaimed him to be

the Messiah--the temptation to use his Messianic power for his own

worldly glory. And now as well as then the temptation was resolutely

overcome. "Get thee behind me, Satan," said Jesus: "thou art a

stumblingblock unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but

the things of men."

Jesus was thus ready to tread the path of suffering which he had

come into the world, for our sakes, to tread. And he called upon his

true disciples to tread that path after him. Yet all the suffering

was to be followed by a greater glory than Peter had ever conceived;

and almost immediately there was a wonderful foretaste of that glory.

Matthew 17:1-13, and Parallels

Six days after the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, our Lord took Peter

and James and John, his three most intimate disciples, with him

up upon a high mountain--no doubt somewhere on the slopes of the

lofty Mount Hermon. There he was transfigured before them, Matt.

17:1-13, and parallels; "his face did shine as the sun, and his

garments became white as the light." With him appeared Moses and

Elijah, talking with him. And they were talking about what seems to

be a strange subject at such a moment. They were talking not of the

glories of Jesus' Kingdom, but of the "departure" which he was about

to accomplish at Jerusalem. Luke 9:31. The "departure" included not

only the resurrection and the ascension, but also the crucifixion.

Even the shining light of the transfiguration was intended to point

to the cross.

Matthew 17:14-20, and Parallels

After the glorious experience on the mountain, our Lord came at

once into contact with the repulsiveness of human misery. Matt.

17:14-20, and parallels. But he did not shrink from the sudden

transition. As he came down from the mountain, he found at the

bottom a boy possessed of a demon, who "fell on the ground, and

wallowed foaming." It was a depressing sight, very unlike the

brightness of the transfiguration. Even more discouraging, moreover,

than the condition of the boy himself was the powerlessness of the

disciples. They had tried to cast the demon out but had failed

miserably, not because the power might not have been theirs, but

because of their unbelief. The father of the boy, too, was lacking

in faith. "I believe," he said; "help thou mine unbelief." Jesus did

help his unbelief, and the unbelief of the disciples. He rebuked the

unclean spirit, and healed the boy.

At this period Jesus repeated on several occasions the prophecy of

his death. The tragedy on Calvary did not overtake him unawares. He

went deliberately to his death for our sakes.

Matthew 18:1-6, and Parallels

Even on such solemn days, when the shadow of the cross lay over the

path, the disciples were unable to overcome the pettiness of their

character. On the very journey when Jesus had told them about his

approaching death, they had quarreled about the question as to which

of them should be greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. Thereby they

had shown how far they were from understanding the true nature of

the Kingdom. If the Kingdom was finally to be advanced under the

leadership of such men, some mighty change would have to take place

in them. That change did take place afterwards, as we shall see, at

Pentecost. But at present the pettiness and carnal-mindedness of the

disciples added to the sorrows of our Lord. Despite the intimacy

into which he entered with his earthly friends, he towered in lonely

grandeur above them all.

After the transfiguration and related events near Cæsarea Philippi,

our Lord returned to Galilee. But apparently he did not resume

permanently his Galilæan ministry. Soon we find him passing through

Samaria, and laboring in Judea and in that country east of the

Jordan River which is called Perea. This part of Jesus' ministry is

recorded particularly in the Gospels According to Luke and According

to John, although Matthew and Mark contain important information

about the latter part of the period. The general character of the

period is fixed by the expectation of the cross. Jesus had set his

face toward Jerusalem to accomplish the atoning work which he had

come into the world to perform.

Luke 10:1-24; John, Chapter 5

At the beginning of the period Jesus sent out seventy disciples,

to prepare for his own coming into the several cities and villages

which he was intending to visit. The Seventy were in possession of

something of Jesus' power; they were able to report with joy that

the demons were subjected to them.

During the same period we find Jesus in Jerusalem at the feast of

tabernacles. Even during the period of the Galilæan ministry Jesus

had gone up to Jerusalem at least once, at the time of one of the

Jewish feasts; and in connection with the healing of a man at the

pool of Bethesda he had then set forth the true nature of his person

and his relation to God the Father. John, ch. 5. At the later period

with which we are now dealing, the same teaching was continued. Chs.

7, 8.

Matthew 11:27, and Parallels

It is particularly the Gospel of John which records the way in which

Jesus set forth the nature of his own person, but what is fully

set forth in the Gospel of John is really implied all through the

Synoptic Gospels, and in Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22 it is made just as

plain as it is in John. According to his own teaching, Jesus stood

in a relation toward God the Father which is absolutely different

from that in which other men stand toward God. In the plainest

possible way, our Lord laid claim to true deity. "I and my Father,"

he said, "are one." All the Gospels present the true humanity of

Jesus, the Gospel According to John, no less than the Synoptists.

But all the Gospels also set forth his deity. He was, according to a

true summary of the Gospel teaching, "God and man, in two distinct

natures, and one person for ever."

QUESTIONS ON LESSON IX

1. What trial of Peter's faith came just after his great

confession?

2. What was the meaning of the transfiguration?

3. What event took place just afterwards?

4. Give an account of Jesus' teaching at the time of the feast

of tabernacles. John, chs. 7, 8. How was this teaching

received?

5. Give an account of the mission of the Seventy and compare it

with the previous mission of the Twelve.

LESSON X

The Last Journeys

John, Chapter 9

During the latter part of Jesus' ministry, with which Lesson IX

began to deal, Jesus spoke some of the most beautiful of his

parables. A number of them, such as the Good Samaritan and the

Prodigal Son, are recorded only by Luke. From the same period the

Gospel According to John records some notable teaching of Jesus, in

addition to that which was mentioned in the last lesson. Part of

this teaching was introduced by the healing of the man born blind.

John, ch. 9. This miracle, which had been performed on the Sabbath,

had aroused the special opposition of the Pharisees. In answer to

them, our Lord pointed out the difference between those leaders of

the people who are like robbers breaking into the sheepfold or at

best like hirelings who flee at the first approach of danger, and

the good shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep.

Such a shepherd was Jesus himself, and his life was soon to be laid

down.

John 11:1-53

Finally, after various journeyings of Jesus in Judea and in Perea,

there occurred in Bethany, a little village near Jerusalem, one of

the most notable of our Lord's miracles. John 11:1-44. At Bethany

lived a certain Lazarus with his sisters Martha and Mary, whom Jesus

knew well. Lazarus fell ill during the absence of Jesus across the

Jordan in Perea; and the illness resulted in his death. On the

fourth day after Lazarus' death, Jesus came to Bethany. Martha came

to meet him; Mary remained mourning in the house, until her sister

brought word that Jesus had arrived. Then she, too, went to meet

the Lord. When Jesus saw her and her friends weeping for the one

who had died, he, too, wept with them. But he had power not only to

sympathize, but also to help. Going with the sisters to the tomb, he

caused the stone to be removed, then prayed, and then called with a

loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." At the word of Jesus, the dead

man came out of the tomb. Jesus was Master over death and the grave.

It was not the first time that our Lord had raised the dead. He had

raised the daughter of Jairus in Galilee and the son of the widow

of Nain. But the raising of Lazarus is especially important, not

only because of the wonderfully vivid way in which the incident

is narrated in the Gospel According to John, but also because it

served to hasten the crisis in Jerusalem. Both the Sadducees and

the Pharisees were now aroused. The movement instituted by Jesus

had reached alarming proportions. If allowed to continue it would

be full of danger. The Romans, it was feared, would regard it as

rebellion and would utterly destroy the nation of the Jews. The

diverse parties among the Jewish leaders were becoming more and more

united against the strange Prophet from Galilee.

John 11:54

For a short time still the crisis was delayed. Our Lord retired from

Judea to a city called Ephraim, near the wilderness. We also find

him, in this period of his life, again beyond the Jordan, in Perea.

In this Perean residence is to be placed a portion of the teaching

contained in the Synoptic Gospels, such as the teaching concerning

divorce, Matt. 19:3-12, and parallels, the words to the rich young

ruler, vs. 16-30, and parallels, and the parable of the Laborers in

the Vineyard. Matt. 20:1-16.

Luke 19:2-10

Before long, however, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the last time.

On the way, when he was passing through Jericho, in the Jordan

Valley, he healed two blind men, and converted the tax collector

Zacchæus. The conversion of Zacchæus was in accord with Jesus'

custom all through his ministry. The taxgatherers were despised

by the rest of the Jews at the time of Christ. They had allied

themselves with the Roman oppressors, and no doubt most of them

were guilty of abominable extortion on their own account. By the

Pharisees, particularly, they were regarded as belonging to the very

dregs of the people, with whom no true observer of the law could be

intimate. But Jesus was bound by no limits in his saving work. He

did not condone sin--either the sin of the taxgatherers or the sin

of the Pharisees. But he was willing to save from sin all who would

believe. The whole, he said, need not a physician, but they that are

sick. The Son of Man had come to "seek and to save that which was

lost."

John 11:55 to 12:1

Toiling up the long ascent from Jericho, our Lord arrived at last,

six days before the passover, at the village of Bethany, which is

less than two miles from Jerusalem. During the remaining time

before the crucifixion Jesus went every morning into the city and

returned in the evening to lodge with his friends at Bethany.

Matthew 26:6-13, and Parallels

Soon after his arrival at Bethany, when Jesus was reclining at table

in the house of a certain Simon the leper, he was anointed by Mary

the sister of Lazarus. Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8. This

anointing is not to be confused with a somewhat similar event which

had taken place some time before, when Jesus had been anointed by a

woman who had been a notorious sinner. Luke 7:36-50. The disciples

murmured at the waste. The precious ointment, they said, might have

been sold for a great sum, which could have been distributed to the

poor. Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, had a special cause for

dissatisfaction; in his case the mention of the poor was only a

cloak for covetousness. Judas kept the bag, and if the proceeds of

the ointment had been put into his keeping, he could have indulged

his thieving propensities. But all the murmuring, whether it

proceeded from more sordid motives or from a mere misunderstanding

of the true spirit of the woman's act, was rebuked by our Lord. The

woman, he said, had anointed his body beforehand for the burial. The

days just before the crucifixion were no time for true disciples

to murmur at an act which was prompted by overflowing love for the

Saviour who was so soon to die.

Matthew 21:1-11, and Parallels

On the day after the supper at Bethany, that is, on the day

after the Jewish Sabbath, on the ninth day of the Jewish spring

month Nisan, our Lord entered into Jerusalem. Matt. 21:1-11, and

parallels. It was a triumphal entry; Jesus was received publicly by

the multitudes as the Messiah, the promised King of Israel. Even the

manner of his entry was in accordance with prophecy; he came riding

over the Mount of Olives and into the city mounted on an ass, in

accordance with Zech. 9:9. The promised King of Israel at last had

come. The multitudes strewed palm branches in the way, and cried,

"Hosanna to the son of David."

QUESTIONS ON LESSON X

1. Where was Perea? Jericho? Bethany? Ephraim? Find on a map the

places mentioned in this lesson.

2. Give an account of all the times when Jesus, during his

earthly ministry, raised the dead. In what Gospels are these

incidents narrated?

3. What is the special importance of the raising of Lazarus?

4. Give an account of some of those parables of Jesus which are

contained only in the Gospel According to Luke.

LESSON XI

Teaching in the Temple

Despite the enthusiasm which the multitudes had shown at the time

when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, despite the shouts of those who

cried, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Jesus

knew that he was going to his death, and that Jerusalem would soon

turn against her King. "When he drew nigh," we are told in the

Gospel According to Luke, "he saw the city and wept over it, saying,

If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong

unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke 19:41, 42.

On the Sunday of the triumphal entry it was already late when Jesus

entered into the Temple area. He did nothing, therefore, that day,

except look about him; and then he returned to Bethany with the

twelve apostles. Mark 11:11.

Matthew 21:12-19, and Parallels

On Monday, however, the final conflict began. Entering into the

city, our Lord cast out of the Temple those who bought and sold,

just as he had done at the beginning of his public ministry. The

rebuke which he had administered several years before had had no

permanent effect. But Jesus did not hesitate to rebuke again those

who made God's house a place of business. The rulers, of course,

were incensed. But popular favor for a time put a check upon their

hate. On the way into the city, Jesus said to a fig tree, which was

bearing leaves only, "No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for

ever." The motives of our Lord's act are not fully known to us; but

at least he was able afterwards to point out through the case of the

fig tree the limitless power of faith. The disciples were exhorted

to pray in faith. But their prayers, Jesus said, must be in love; no

unforgiving spirit should be left in their souls when they prayed to

their heavenly Father for their own forgiveness.

The next day, Tuesday, was a day of teaching. Our Lord spent the day

in the Temple, meeting the attacks of his enemies. And he had an

answer to every inquiry; the trick questions of his enemies always

redounded to their own rebuke.

Matthew 21:23-32, and Parallels

First our Lord was questioned as to the authority by which he had

cleansed the Temple the day before. Matt. 21:23-32, and parallels.

He answered that question by another question: "The baptism of

John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" The chief priests

and elders could not say. They were not really sincere seekers for

divine authority. But Jesus was not content with having silenced

them. He also pointed out, positively, their sin in not receiving

the word of God which had come through John.

Matthew 21:33-46, and Parallels

Still more scathing was the rebuke which Jesus uttered through the

parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. Matt. 21:33-46, and parallels. The

wicked husbandmen had been put in charge of a vineyard. But when

the time came to render the fruit of the vineyard to the owner,

they killed the servants who were sent to them and finally the

owner's son. The chief priests and Pharisees needed no elaborate

explanation; they would probably in any case have applied the

parable to themselves. But as a matter of fact Jesus made the

application abundantly plain. "The kingdom of God," he said, "shall

be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing

forth the fruits thereof."

Matthew 22:1-14

Just as plainly directed against the wicked leaders of the people,

and against the rebellious nation itself, was the parable of the

Marriage of the King's Son. Matt. 22:1-14. Those who were bidden

to the feast refused to come in; but from the highways and hedges

the king's house was filled. So the covenant people, the Jews, had

rejected the divine invitation; but the despised Gentiles would be

received.

Matthew 22:15-40, and Parallels

The rulers would have liked to put Jesus to death at once; but they

still feared the people. So they adopted the underhand method of

trying to catch him in his speech. First came the Pharisees and

the Herodians, the latter being the partisans of the Herodian

dynasty, with their adroit question about giving tribute to Cæsar,

Matt. 22:15-22, and parallels; then the Sadducees, the worldly

aristocracy, who did not believe in the resurrection, with their

attempt to make the doctrine of the resurrection ridiculous, vs.

23-33, and parallels; then an individual Pharisee with his question

about the greatest commandment in the law. Vs. 24-40, and parallels.

Jesus had a wonderful, profound answer for them all. But only the

last inquirer seems to have been at all willing to learn. "Thou art

not far," Jesus said to him, "from the kingdom of God." Mark 12:34.

Matthew 22:41-46, and Parallels

Then, after all the questions which had been put to him, our Lord

put one question in turn. "David himself," he said in effect,

"calls the Messiah Lord; how is the Messiah, then, David's son?" In

this way Jesus was presenting to the people a higher conception of

Messiahship than that which they had been accustomed to hold. The

Messiah was indeed David's Son, but he was not only David's Son.

Matt. 22:41-46, and parallels.

Apparently on the same day, our Lord called attention to the poor

widow who was casting her mite into the collection box. A gift, he

said, is measured in the estimation of God not by its amount, but

by the sacrifice which it means to the giver. Mark 12:41-44, and

parallel.

Matthew, Chapter 23

Finally, on the same memorable Tuesday, our Lord denounced openly

the formalism and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Matt., ch.

23. It was also perhaps on the same day that certain Greeks desired

to see Jesus, John 12:20, 21--a foretaste of that entrance of

Gentiles into the Church which was to come after the resurrection.

We are not told exactly how Jesus received the Greeks, but the

importance of the moment was marked by a voice from heaven which

came as a divine confirmation of Jesus' message.

Matthew, Chapters 24, 25

When Jesus, on the same day, had gone out of the Temple and had

ascended to the Mount of Olives, a hill which lay on the way to

Bethany, he taught his disciples about the coming destruction of

the Temple and also about the end of the world. Matt., ch. 24, and

parallels. The time of the end of the world, he said, is unknown

to all except God, and in expectation of it men should always be

watchful. This duty of watchfulness he illustrated by the parables

of the Ten Virgins, Matt. 25:1-13, and of the Talents. Vs. 14-30.

Then our Lord drew a great picture of the last awful judgment of

God, when the wicked shall be separated from the good. Vs. 31-46.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XI

1. Where was the Mount of Olives? Describe the route between

Bethany and the Temple in Jerusalem.

2. Compare the two occasions when Jesus cleansed the Temple.

3. On what occasions during his ministry did Jesus speak about

John the Baptist?

4. Give a full account of the questions which were put to Jesus

on the Tuesday of the last week, and of the answers of Jesus.

5. What were the "woes" which Jesus pronounced against the

scribes and Pharisees?

6. What did Jesus say after the Gentiles came to seek him?

LESSON XII

The Crucifixion

Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16, and Parallels

On the Wednesday of the week before the crucifixion, the chief

priests and elders of the Jews took counsel how they might put Jesus

to death. The difficulty was that if they arrested so popular a

teacher in the midst of the crowds who had come to Jerusalem for

the approaching feast of the passover, there would be a tumult.

At first, therefore, the enemies of Jesus thought that they might

have to wait until the passover was over. But they were helped out

of their difficulty by one of Jesus' own friends. Judas Iscariot,

one of the twelve apostles, proved to be a traitor. He received a

promise of thirty pieces of silver, and watched for a time when

Jesus would be away from the crowds so that he could be delivered

quietly into the hands of his enemies, Matt. 26:1-5, 14-16, and

parallels.

Matthew 26:17-19, and Parallels

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Jesus arranged for the celebration of

the passover in company with the apostles. The passover feast

commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, especially the

passing over of Israel's first-born when the first-born sons of

the Egyptians were slain. The feast was opened on the evening of

Nisan 14, Nisan being a spring month, and the first month of the

Jewish year. According to Jewish reckoning, the evening of Nisan

14 constituted the beginning of Nisan 15. Starting from that time,

the feast continued for seven days, no unleavened bread being used

within that period. The first and most solemn act of the whole feast

was the eating of the paschal lamb on the evening of Nisan 14.

This passover supper was celebrated by Jesus and the apostles on

Thursday evening, Nisan 14. And the feast was to be continued into

the Christian era. The symbols were changed; bread and wine were to

be used instead of the paschal lamb. But the fundamental meaning

of the feast remained the same; both the passover and the Lord's

Supper had reference to the atoning death of Christ. The paschal

lamb prefigured the Lamb of God who was to die for the sins of the

world; the bread and wine also symbolized the body of Christ broken

for us and the blood of Christ poured out for the remission of

our sins. Thus what the passover symbolized by way of prophecy is

symbolized in the Lord's Supper by way of commemoration. And on that

last evening our Lord changed the symbols in order to suit the new

dispensation when, since the Lamb of God had once been offered up,

other sacrifices should be no more.

Matthew 26:20-35, and Parallels

Jesus gathered with his apostles for the feast in an upper room.

Matt. 26:20, and parallels. Then, lamentably enough, there was a

strife among the apostles as to who should be the greatest. Luke

22:24-30. As a rebuke of all such inordinate ambitions our Lord

gave an example of humility by washing the feet of his disciples.

John 13:1-20. The traitor, Judas Iscariot, then left the apostolic

company, John 13:21-35, and parallels, and the Lord's Supper was

instituted. I Cor. 11:23-25; Matt. 26:26-29, and parallels. Then

the denial of Peter was foretold; before the cock should crow twice

Peter would deny his Lord three times.

John, Chapters 14 to 17

Then followed some of the most precious teaching of Jesus--teaching

which is preserved only in the Gospel According to John. Chs. 14

to 17. Our Lord spoke of the mission which he had come into the

world to fulfill and of the mission which his apostles were to

fulfill through the power of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of Jesus'

redeeming work could not fully be explained until it had been

accomplished. And it was to be explained by the Holy Spirit speaking

through the apostles.

Matthew 26:36-46, and Parallels

After they had sung a hymn, our Lord went out with the eleven

apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane, outside of Jerusalem, on the

slopes of the Mount of Olives. Matt. 26:36-46, and parallels. There

he sought strength in prayer for the approaching hour when he was to

bear the penalty of our sins. The disciples were no help to him in

his agony; Peter and James and John slept while he prayed. But God

the Father heard his prayer.

Matthew 26:47 to 27:1

Soon the traitor came with the Temple guard, and Jesus was arrested,

Matt. 26:47-56, and parallels. On the same evening there was

an informal hearing of the Prisoner in the house of Annas, the

father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Matt. 26:57, 58, 69-75,

and parallels. Meanwhile Peter and "another disciple," who was no

doubt John the son of Zebedee, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, had

entered into the house. There Peter denied his Lord.

The next morning there was a more formal meeting of the sanhedrin,

the highest court of the Jews. Luke 22:66-71, and parallels. This

meeting was intended to confirm the results of the informal hearing

in the house of Annas. But both meetings were little more than a

form. The court had really decided the question beforehand; it had

determined to bring Jesus by any means, lawful or otherwise, to his

death. When faced by his enemies, our Lord declared plainly that he

was the Messiah, the Son of God. That answer was enough to satisfy

the accusers. Jesus was judged guilty of blasphemy.

Matthew 27:2-56, and Parallels

But the sanhedrin did not possess the power of life and death.

Before Jesus could be executed, therefore, the findings of the

sanhedrin had to be confirmed by Pilate, the Roman procurator.

And at first Pilate was recalcitrant to the Jews' demands; he

was not able to find in Jesus any cause of death. John 18:28-38,

and parallels. In his perplexity, Pilate sent the prisoner to be

examined by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was at the

time in Jerusalem. Luke 23:6-12. But this hearing also was without

decisive result.

At last Pilate yielded, against his better judgment, to the

importunity of the Jewish leaders and the mad shouts of the crowds,

who had turned now against the One whom formerly they had honored.

Matt. 27:15-30, and parallels. Pilate delivered Jesus up to the will

of the Jews. Before the execution, however, the Prisoner was cruelly

scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers. Then when a last effort

of Pilate had failed to placate the wrath of Jesus' enemies, John

19:4-16, our Lord was finally taken out of the city to be crucified.

Luke 23:26-33, and parallels.

The Prisoner at first was compelled to bear the cross on which he

was to be put to death, but when his strength gave way a certain

Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service. A crowd of people from

Jerusalem followed the Prisoner, and especially a number of women

who lamented. At last the place of execution was reached. It was

called "Golgotha," or according to the Latin translation of the

name, "Calvary." There they crucified our Lord. Matt. 27:33-56, and

parallels.

With him were crucified two thieves, of whom one repented at the

last hour, and received salvation. A number of sayings which Jesus

uttered on the cross are recorded in the Gospels. At the moment of

death, he cried, "It is finished." John 19:30. The meaning of that

saying is plain. The work for which our Lord came into the world at

last was done. The Lord of glory had died to wash away the sins of

all believers. The just penalty of sin had been borne by the One who

knew no sin.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XII

1. Summarize the teaching of Jesus on the last evening before

the crucifixion.

2. What happened in Gethsemane?

3. Describe the trial of Jesus before the sanhedrin and before

Pilate.

4. Why did the Jewish leaders put Jesus to death? Why did Jesus

consent to die?

5. Give an account of the crucifixion of our Lord.

LESSON XIII

The Resurrection

The death of Christ was the greatest event that history has ever

seen. By that event the grace of God triumphed over sin, and a lost

world was redeemed. Apart from Christ we all deserve eternal death.

But the Lord of glory, on Calvary, bore the guilt which belonged to

us, and made us children of God.

So great an event was accomplished without flare of heavenly

trumpets or blazing of heavenly light. To many, the death of Christ

seemed to be merely the execution of a criminal. But there were not

wanting some strange phenomena which marked the greatness of the

event. From twelve o'clock on the day of the crucifixion there was

darkness until three o'clock, when Jesus died. Then the veil of the

Temple was rent, there was an earthquake, and graves were opened.

Thus was nature made to recognize the suffering and the triumph of

her Lord.

After Jesus had died, his side was pierced by one of the soldiers

whom Pilate had sent at the instance of the Jews in order that those

who had been crucified should be killed and their bodies removed

before the Sabbath. From the body of Jesus there came out blood

and water. The event was witnessed by John the son of Zebedee, the

writer of the Fourth Gospel. John 19:31-42.

Matthew 27:57-66

Then, in the late afternoon of the same day Joseph of Arimathea, a

secret disciple of Jesus, removed our Lord's body from the cross

and placed it in a new tomb. Mark 15:42-46, and parallels. Another

secret disciple, or half-disciple, Nicodemus, came also to anoint

the body. John 19:39. Certain women also came to see where Jesus

was laid. Luke 23:55, 56, and parallels. The chief priests and

Pharisees, on the other hand, obtained a guard from Pilate, to watch

the tomb, lest the disciples of Jesus should steal the body of Jesus

away and say that he had risen from the dead. Matt. 27:62-66.

Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15

The next day was Saturday, the Old Testament Sabbath. The friends

of Jesus rested on that day. But very early on Sunday morning, the

women started to the tomb bearing spices in order to anoint the

body. But before they arrived, our Lord had already risen from

the dead. There had been an earthquake, an angel had rolled away

the stone from the sepulcher, and our Lord himself had risen. At

the sight of the angel, the soldiers of the guard, in their fear,

"became as dead men." Matt. 28:2-4. All that they could do was to

report the event to the chief priests who had sent them. Vs. 11-15.

Matthew 28:1, and Parallels; John 20:2; Matthew 28:5-10, and

Parallels

Then the women arrived at the tomb, and found it empty. Matt. 28:1,

and parallels. One of them, Mary Magdalene, went back to tell Peter

and John. John 20:2. The others remained at the tomb, and there

saw two angels who announced to them that Jesus was risen from the

dead. On their way back to the city Jesus himself met them, and they

fell down, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Matt. 28:5-10, and

parallels.

John 20:3-18

Meanwhile, at the message of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John ran to

the tomb, found it empty, and believed that Jesus really was risen.

John 20:3-10. But Mary Magdalene, after they had gone, stood weeping

at the tomb; she supposed that some one had taken the body of her

Lord away. Then Jesus himself came to her, her sorrow was changed

into joy, and she joined her voice to that of the other women who

told the disciples of the glad event. Vs. 11-18.

I Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-23

Thus far, Jesus himself had been seen only by the women. But now

he appeared to Peter, I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34, and to two of the

disciples who were walking to the village of Emmaus. At first the

two disciples did not know him; but they recognized him at Emmaus

when he broke the bread. Then, on the evening of the same Sunday, he

appeared to the apostles in Jerusalem. I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:36-49;

John 20:19-23. All doubts were removed when he showed them the

wounds in his hands and his side, and partook of food in their

presence. Then he interpreted the Scriptures to them, as he had done

to the two disciples on the walk to Emmaus, showing them that it was

necessary that the Messiah should suffer. Finally he breathed upon

them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

John 20:24-29

Thomas, one of the apostles, who had been absent from this meeting

with the risen Lord, refused to believe at the mere word of the

others. But Jesus dealt very graciously with the doubting disciple.

Again, one week later, he came to the apostles, the doors of the

room being shut, and presented to Thomas his hands and his side.

All doubts now melted away in the joy of meeting with the risen

Lord. Thomas answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God." John

20:24-29.

John 21:1-24; I Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16-20

The apostles then went back to Galilee in accordance with Jesus'

command, and in Galilee also Jesus appeared to them. First he

appeared to seven of the disciples on the shores of the Sea of

Galilee. Among the seven was John the son of Zebedee, who has given

an account of the event in his Gospel. John 21:1-24. Then there was

a great appearance of Jesus on a mountain. At that time, apparently,

not only the eleven apostles were present, but also five hundred

other disciples. I Cor. 15:6; Matt. 28:16-20. On the mountain Jesus

instituted the sacrament of baptism, and gave his disciples the

Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. The execution of

that commission has sometimes been attended with discouragements.

But the risen Lord promised always to be with his Church.

I Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:1-11

After the appearances in Galilee, the apostles returned to

Jerusalem. It was no doubt in Jerusalem that Jesus appeared to

James, his own brother, I Cor. 15:7, who during the earthly ministry

had not believed on him. Other appearances also occurred there. At

one or more of these appearances Jesus commanded the apostles to

wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit should come upon them. Then,

said Jesus, they were to be witnesses of him "both in Jerusalem, and

in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8. Finally, forty days after the resurrection, Jesus led his

disciples out to the Mount of Olives, on the way to Bethany, and

there he was taken from them in a cloud into heaven. The disciples

were saddened and bewildered by the departure of their Lord. But

their sadness was soon turned into joy. "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." Acts 1:10, 11. The disciples went then into the city, where

they were constantly in the Temple, praising God.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XIII

1. Describe the burial of Jesus. How long did his body rest in

the tomb?

2. Enumerate the persons who saw the empty tomb.

3. Enumerate, so far as the facts are known, the persons who saw

Jesus after the resurrection.

4. In what books of the New Testament are the facts about the

resurrection mentioned?

5. What is the importance of the resurrection of Jesus for our

Christian faith?

6. Describe the change which the resurrection produced in the

early disciples of Jesus.

LESSON XIV

The Beginnings of the Christian Church

The Christian Church is founded on the fact of the resurrection

of Jesus; if that fact had not occurred there would be no Church

to-day. The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth were evidently far

inferior to him in spiritual discernment and in courage. Evidently

they could not hope to succeed if he had failed. And with his death

what little strength they may have had before was utterly destroyed.

In the hour of his trial they had deserted him in cowardly flight.

And when he was taken from them by a shameful death, they were in

despair. Never did a movement seem to be more hopelessly dead.

But then the surprising thing occurred. Those same weak, discouraged

men began, in a few days, in Jerusalem, the very scene of their

disgrace, a spiritual movement the like of which the world has

never seen. What produced the wonderful change? What was it

that transformed those weak, discouraged men into the spiritual

conquerors of the world?

The answer of those men themselves was plain. Their despair, they

said, gave way to triumphant joy because the Lord Jesus had risen

from the dead, and because they were convinced of his resurrection

by the empty tomb and by the appearances of Jesus himself. No other

real explanation has yet been discovered to account for the sudden

transformation of the despair of the disciples into triumphant

joy. The very existence of the Christian Church itself, therefore,

is the strongest testimony to the resurrection; for without the

resurrection the Church could never have come into being.

Acts 1:12-26

After the ascension of Jesus, which was studied in the last lesson,

the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and obeyed the command of Jesus

by waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. But the period of

waiting was not a period of idleness; it was spent, on the contrary,

in praising God and in prayer. One definite action was taken--the

place of Judas, the traitor, who had killed himself in his remorse,

was filled by the choice of Matthias. Acts 1:15-26. At that time,

certain women and a number of other disciples were gathered together

with the apostles, making a total of about one hundred and twenty

persons. It was upon that little company of praying disciples, or

rather upon the promise of Jesus which had been made to them, that

the hope of the world was based.

Acts, Chapter 2

At last, at the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the passover,

the promise of Jesus was fulfilled; the Holy Spirit came upon the

disciples to fit them for the evangelization of the world. Acts

2:1-13. They were all together in one place; there was a sound as of

a rushing, mighty wind; cloven tongues, like tongues of fire, sat

upon each one of them; they were all filled with the Holy Spirit,

and began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them

utterance. When the crowd came together to see the wonderful thing

that had happened, Peter preached the first sermon of the Christian

Church. Vs. 14-36. At the preaching of Peter three thousand persons

were converted; the campaign of world conquest had begun. Vs. 37-42.

The campaign from the beginning was a campaign of witnessing, in

accordance with Jesus' command. Acts 1:8. The Christian Church was

to conquer the world, not by exhorting men to live a certain kind

of life, but by bringing them a piece of news. The Son of God, said

the Christian missionaries, died on the cross and then rose again.

That was the good news that conquered the world. Christianity from

the beginning was a way of life, but it was a way of life founded

upon a piece of news, a way of life founded upon historical facts.

The meaning of the facts was not revealed all at once, but it

was revealed in part from the very beginning, and throughout the

Apostolic Age the revelation came in greater and greater fullness,

especially through the instrumentality of Paul.

The life of the Early Church in Jerusalem was in some respects like

that of the Jews. The disciples continued to observe the Jewish

fasts and feasts and were constantly in the Temple. But a new joy

animated the company of believers. Their Lord was indeed taken from

them for a time, and they did not know when he would return, but

meanwhile he was present with them through his Spirit, and already

he had saved them from their sins.

Even in external observances the believers were distinguished from

the rest of the Jews. Entrance into their company was marked by

the sacrament of baptism, which signified the washing away of sin;

and their continued fellowship with one another and with the risen

Lord found expression in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which

commemorated the atoning death of Jesus. There were also common

meals. And those who had property devoted it, in a purely voluntary

way, to the needs of their poorer brethren. The disciples attended

diligently, moreover, to the teaching of the apostles, and engaged

constantly in prayer.

Acts, Chapter 3

The preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem was authenticated by

miracles. One notable miracle is narrated in detail in the book of

The Acts. Ch. 3. As Peter and John were going up into the Temple at

the hour of prayer, they healed a lame beggar, who was in the habit

of sitting at the gate. The miracle was the means of bringing to the

people something better than bodily healing; for when the crowd came

together in wonder at the healing of the lame man, Peter proclaimed

to them the good news of the salvation which Jesus had wrought.

Acts, Chapter 4

The Sadducees, the ruling class, being incensed at such a

proclamation, laid hands upon the two apostles, and brought them

before the sanhedrin. Acts 4:1-22. But even when Peter boldly

announced to them that the name of that Jesus whom they had put

to death was the only name which could bring salvation to men,

they were unable to do more than warn the recalcitrant preachers.

A notable miracle had been wrought, and they could not deny it.

When Peter and John came again to the company of believers, all the

company united in a glorious prayer of praise. The answer to the

prayer was plainly given. "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."

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XIV

1. Show how the Christian Church is founded upon the fact of the

resurrection.

2. Describe the choice of Matthias.

3. Who were gathered together in the "upper room" in Jerusalem?

4. Describe the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

5. Was the speaking with other tongues on the Day of Pentecost

the same as the gift of tongues described in the First Epistle

to the Corinthians? If not, what was the difference?

6. Why were the Sadducees opposed to the preaching of Peter and

John?

LESSON XV

The First Persecution

Acts 5:1-11

The life of the early Jerusalem church was full of a holy joy. But

even in those first glorious days the Church had to battle against

sin, and not all of those who desired to join themselves to the

disciples were of true Christian life. One terrible judgment of God

was inflicted in order to preserve the purity of the Church. Acts

5:1-11.

A certain Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, had sold a possession, in

accordance with the custom of those early days, and had laid part of

the price at the apostles' feet that it might be distributed to the

poorer disciples. Part of the price was withheld, and yet Ananias

and his wife pretended to have given all. Ananias was not required

to sell his field, or to give all of the price after he had sold

it. His sin was the sin of deceit. He had lied to the Holy Spirit.

Terrible was the judgment of God; Ananias and Sapphira were stricken

down dead, and great fear came upon all who heard.

Acts 5:12-42

The apostles and the Church enjoyed the favor of the people--a

favor which was mingled with awe. Many miracles were wrought by the

apostles; multitudes of sick people were brought to be healed.

But the Sadducees made another attempt to put a stop to the

dangerous movement. Acts 5:17-42. They laid hands upon all the

apostles, as they had laid hands upon two of them once before, and

put them all in prison. But in the night the apostles were released

by an angel of the Lord, and at once, in obedience to the angel's

command, went and taught boldly in the Temple. When they were

arrested again, Peter said simply, "We must obey God rather than

men. The Jesus whom you slew has been raised up by God as a Prince

and a Saviour, and we are witnesses of these things and so is the

Holy Spirit." Vs. 29-32, in substance. It was a bold answer, and

the sanhedrin was incensed. But Gamaliel, a Pharisee, one of the

most noted of the Jewish teachers, advocated a policy of watchful

waiting. If the new movement were of God, he said, there was no use

in fighting against it; if it were of men it would fail of itself as

other Messianic movements had failed. The cautious policy prevailed,

so far as any attempt at inflicting the death penalty was concerned.

But the apostles before they were released were scourged. The

suffering and shame did not prevent their preaching. They rejoiced

that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of

Jesus.

Acts 6:1-6

The early Jerusalem church was composed partly of Aramaic-speaking

Jews who had always lived in Palestine, and partly of Greek-speaking

Jews who were connected with the Judaism of the Dispersion. The

latter class murmured because their widows were neglected in the

daily ministrations. In order that the matter might be attended to

without turning the apostles aside from their work of teaching and

preaching, seven men were chosen to preside over the distribution of

help to the needy members of the church. Acts 6:1-6. But these seven

were no mere "business men." They were "full of the Spirit and of

wisdom," and at least two of them became prominent in the preaching

of the gospel.

Acts 6:7 to 8:3

One of these two was Stephen, a "man full of faith and of the

Holy Spirit." Stephen "wrought great wonders and signs among the

people," and also preached in the synagogues which were attended

by certain of the Greek-speaking Jews residing at Jerusalem. By his

preaching he stirred up opposition. And the opposition was of a new

kind. Up to that time the objection to the Early Church had come,

principally at least, from the Sadducees. But the Sadducees were a

worldly aristocracy, out of touch with the masses of the people, and

in their efforts against the Church they had been checked again and

again by the popular favor which the disciples of Jesus enjoyed.

Now, however, that popular favor began to wane. It became evident

that although the disciples continued to observe the Jewish fasts

and feasts, their preaching really meant the beginning of a new era.

The people were not ready for such a change, and especially the

leaders of the people, the Pharisees, who, since the crucifixion of

Jesus, had shown no persecuting zeal, came out in active opposition.

The result was at once evident. Stephen was arrested, and was

charged with revolutionary teaching about the Temple. The charge was

false; Stephen did not say that the Temple worship should then and

there be abandoned by the disciples of Jesus. But he did proclaim

the beginning of a new era, and the presence, in the person of

Jesus, of one greater than Moses. So, after a great and bold speech

of Stephen, he was hurried out of the city and stoned. As Stephen

was stoned, he called on Jesus, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my

spirit," and then kneeling down he prayed for forgiveness of his

enemies: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 6:8 to 8:3

Thus died the first Christian martyr. The Greek word "martyr" means

"witness." Others had witnessed to the saving work of Christ by

their words; Stephen now witnessed also by his death.

When Stephen was stoned, the witnesses had laid "their garments at

the feet of a young man named Saul." Saul was to become the greatest

preacher of the faith which then he laid waste. But meanwhile he was

a leader in a great persecution.

The persecution scattered the disciples far and wide from Jerusalem,

though the apostles remained. But this scattering resulted only in

the wider spread of the gospel. Everywhere they went the persecuted

disciples proclaimed the faith for which they suffered. Thus the

very rage of the enemies was an instrument in God's hand for

bringing the good news of salvation to the wide world.

Acts 8:4-40

Among those who were scattered abroad by the persecution was

Philip, one of the seven men who had been appointed to care for

the ministration to the poor. This Philip, who is called "the

evangelist," to distinguish him from the apostle of the same name,

went to Samaria, and preached to the Samaritans. It was a step on

the way toward a Gentile mission, but the Samaritans themselves were

not Gentiles but half-Jews. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard of

the work of Philip, they sent Peter and John from among their own

number, and through Peter and John the Samaritans received special

manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:4-25. Then Philip went

to a desert road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he preached

the gospel to an Ethiopian treasurer, who despite his employment in

a foreign country may have been of Jewish descent. Vs. 26-40. Yet

the preaching to him was another preparation for the spread of the

gospel out into the Gentile world.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XV

1. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Was the relief

of the needy in the early Jerusalem church what is now called

communism or socialism? If not, why not?

2. What was the fundamental difference between the two first

imprisonments of apostles in Jerusalem, and the persecution

which began with the martyrdom of Stephen? Why was the latter

more serious?

3. Outline the speech of Stephen.

4. Describe the progress of the gospel in Samaria.

LESSON XVI

The Conversion of Paul

The work of the Early Church was at first carried on only among the

Jews. The Lord Jesus, it is true, had commanded the apostles to make

disciples of all the nations, but he had not made it perfectly plain

when the Gentile work should begin, or on what terms the Gentiles

should be received. Conceivably, therefore, the early disciples

might have thought it might be the will of God that all Israel

should first be evangelized before the gospel should be brought

to the other nations; and conceivably also the men of the other

nations, when they finally should receive the gospel, might be

required to unite themselves with the people of Israel and keep the

Mosaic Law. The guidance of the Holy Spirit was required, therefore,

before the gospel should be offered freely to Gentiles without

requiring them to become Jews.

But that guidance, in God's good time, was plainly and gloriously

given.

One of the most important steps in the preparation for the Gentile

mission was the calling of a leader. And the leader whom God called

was one upon whom human choice never would have rested; for the

chosen leader was none other than Saul, the bitterest enemy of the

Church.

Saul, whose Roman name was Paul, was born at Tarsus, a center of

Greek culture, and the chief city of Cilicia, the coast country in

the southeastern part of Asia Minor, near the northeastern corner of

the Mediterranean Sea. In Tarsus the family of Paul belonged by no

means to the humblest of the population, for Paul's father and then

Paul himself possessed Roman citizenship, which in the provinces of

the empire was a highly prized privilege possessed only by a few.

Thus by birth in a Greek university city and by possession of Roman

citizenship Paul was connected with the life of the Gentile world.

Such connection was not without importance for his future service as

apostle to the Gentiles.

Far more important, however, was the Jewish element in his

preparation. Although Paul no doubt spoke Greek in childhood, he

also in childhood spoke Aramaic, the language of Palestine, and his

family regarded themselves as being in spirit Jews of Palestine

rather than of the Dispersion, Aramaic-speaking Jews rather than

Greek-speaking Jews, "Hebrews" rather than "Hellenists." Both in

Tarsus and in Jerusalem, moreover, Paul was brought up in the

strictest sect of the Pharisees. Thus despite his birth in a Gentile

city, Paul was not a "liberal Jew"; he was not inclined to break

down the separation between Jews and Gentiles, or relax the strict

requirements of the Mosaic Law. On the contrary, his zeal for the

Law went beyond that of many of his contemporaries. The fact is of

enormous importance for the understanding of Paul's gospel; for

Paul's gospel of justification by faith is based not upon a lax

interpretation of the law of God, but upon a strict interpretation.

Only, according to that gospel, Christ has paid the penalty of the

law once for all on the cross. According to Paul, it is because the

full penalty of the law has been paid, and not at all because the

law is to be taken lightly, that the Christian is free from the law.

Acts 9:1-19, and Parallels

Early in life Paul went to Jerusalem, to receive training under

Gamaliel, the famous Pharisaic teacher. And in Jerusalem, when he

had still not reached middle age, he engaged bitterly in persecution

of the Church. He was filled with horror at a blasphemous sect that

proclaimed a crucified malefactor to be the promised King of Israel,

and that tended, perhaps, to break down the permanent significance

of the law. It is a great mistake to suppose that before he was

converted Paul was gradually getting nearer to Christianity. On the

contrary, he was if anything getting further away, and it was while

he was on a mad persecuting expedition that his conversion finally

occurred.

The conversion of Paul was different in one important respect

from the conversion of ordinary Christians. Ordinary Christians,

like Paul, are converted by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of

Jesus. But in the case of ordinary Christians human instruments are

used--the preaching of the gospel, or godly parents, or the like. In

the case of Paul, on the other hand, no such instrument was used,

but the Lord Jesus himself appeared to Paul and brought him the

gospel. Paul himself says in one of his Epistles that he saw the

Lord. I Cor. 9:1; 15:8. It was that fact which made Paul, unlike

ordinary Christians, but like Peter and the other apostles, an

actual eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ.

A wonderful thing, moreover, was the way in which Jesus appeared to

Paul. He might naturally have appeared to him in anger, to condemn

him for the persecution of the Church. Instead he appeared in love,

to receive him into fellowship and to make him the greatest of the

apostles. That was grace--pure grace, pure undeserved favor. It is

always a matter of pure grace when a man is saved by the Lord Jesus,

but in the case of Paul, the persecutor, the grace was wonderfully

plain. Paul never forgot that grace of Christ; he never hated

anything so much as the thought that a man can be saved by his own

good works, or his own character, or his own obedience to God's

commands. The gospel of Paul is a proclamation of the grace of God.

Paul saw the Lord on the road to Damascus, where he had been

intending to persecute the Church. Acts 9:1-19, and parallels. As

he was nearing the city, suddenly at midday a bright light shone

around him above the brightness of the sun. Those who accompanied

him remained speechless, seeing the light but not distinguishing the

person, hearing a sound, but not distinguishing the words. Paul, on

the other hand, saw the Lord Jesus and listened to what Jesus said.

Then, at the command of Jesus, he went into Damascus. For three days

he was blind, then received his sight through the ministrations of

Ananias, an otherwise unknown disciple, and was baptized. Then he

proceeded to labor for the Lord by whom he had been saved.

Soon, however, he went away for a time into Arabia. Gal. 1:17. It

is not known how far the journey took him or how long it lasted,

except that it lasted less than three years. Nothing is said, in the

New Testament, moreover, about what Paul did in Arabia. But even if

he engaged in missionary preaching, he also meditated on the great

thing that God had done for him; and certainly he prayed.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XVI

1. Where was Paul born? Find the place on a map. What sort of

city was it.

2. What is known about Paul's boyhood home, and about his

education? In what books of the New Testament is the

information given?

3. Why did Paul persecute the Church?

4. Describe in detail what the book of The Acts says about the

conversion of Paul. Where does Paul mention the conversion in

his Epistles?

5. How did the conversion of Paul differ from the conversion

of an ordinary Christian? In what particulars was it like the

conversion of an ordinary Christian?

6. What did Paul do after the conversion?

LESSON XVII

The Gospel Given to the Gentiles

Saul of Tarsus was not only converted directly by the Lord Jesus;

he was also called just as directly by Jesus to be an apostle, and

especially an apostle to the Gentiles. But other instruments were

also used in the beginning of the Gentile mission. Even Peter, whose

work continued for a number of years afterwards to be chiefly among

the Jews, was led by the Holy Spirit to take a notable step in the

offering of the gospel freely to the whole world.

Acts 9:31-43

During the period of peace which followed after the persecution at

the time of the death of Stephen, Peter went down to labor in the

coastal plain of Palestine. Acts 9:31-43. At Lydda he healed a lame

man, Æneas; at Joppa, on the coast, he raised Dorcas from the dead.

And it was at Joppa that he received the guidance of the Holy Spirit

as to the reception of Gentiles into the Church. Ch. 10.

Acts, Chapter 10

At midday Peter went up upon the flat housetop to pray. There he

fell into a trance, and saw a vessel like a great sheet let down

from heaven, and in it all kinds of animals which it was forbidden

in the Mosaic Law to use for food. A voice came to him: "Rise,

Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never

eaten anything that is common and unclean. And a voice came unto him

again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.

And this was done thrice: and straightway the vessel was received up

into heaven."

The meaning of this vision was soon made plain. A Roman officer,

Cornelius, a devout Gentile, living at Cæsarea, which was a seaport

about thirty miles north of Joppa, had been commanded in a vision

to send for Peter. The messengers of Cornelius arrived at Peter's

house just after Peter's vision was over. The Holy Spirit commanded

Peter to go with them. Arriving at Cæsarea, the apostle went into

the house where Cornelius and his friends were assembled, and there

proclaimed to them the gospel of the Lord Jesus. While he was still

speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were present,

upon the Gentiles as well as upon the Jews. Then said Peter, "Can

any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who

have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" So the Gentiles were

baptized.

A very important step had been taken. Cornelius, it is true, was

a "God-fearer"--that is, he belonged to the class of Gentiles

frequently mentioned in the book of The Acts who worshiped the God

of Israel and were friendly to the Jews. Nevertheless, he was still

outside the covenant people, and under the old dispensation he could

not be received into covenant privileges until he united himself

with the nation by submitting himself to the whole Mosaic Law. Yet

now such restrictions were removed by the plain guidance of the

Spirit of God. Evidently an entirely new dispensation had begun.

Acts 11:1-18

At Jerusalem Peter's strange action in receiving Gentiles into the

Church without requiring them to become Jews gave rise to some

discussion. Acts 11:1-18. But the apostles had no difficulty in

convincing the brethren of the necessity for what he had done.

The guidance of the Holy Spirit had been perfectly plain. When

the brethren heard what Peter said, "they held their peace, and

glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted

repentance unto life."

The freedom of the Gentiles had not yet, however, fully been

revealed. For a time the case of Cornelius seems to have been

regarded as exceptional. The Holy Spirit had plainly commanded

Peter to receive Cornelius and his friends without requiring

them to be united to the people of Israel, but perhaps similar

definite guidance was required before others could be received. The

underlying reason for Gentile freedom, in other words, had not yet

fully been revealed.

The revelation, however, was not long delayed; it came especially

through the Apostle Paul. But meanwhile Paul was being prepared for

his work.

Acts 9:19-30, and Parallels

After the journey to Arabia, which was mentioned at the end of

Lesson XVI, Paul returned to Damascus, and preached to the Jews,

endeavoring to convince them that Jesus was really the Messiah.

His preaching aroused opposition, and the Jews, with the help of

an officer of King Aretas of Arabia, had tried to kill him. But

the brethren lowered him over the city wall in a basket, and so

he escaped to Jerusalem, Acts 9:23-25; II Cor. 11:31-33, where he

desired to become acquainted with Peter. No doubt he then talked

with Peter especially about the events of the earthly ministry of

Jesus and the appearances of the risen Christ. He also engaged in

preaching to the Greek-speaking Jews. But when these Greek-speaking

Jews sought to kill him, the brethren sent him away to Tarsus. He

was unwilling to go, being desirous of repairing the harm which

he had done to the church at Jerusalem; but a definite command of

the Lord Jesus sent him now forth to the country of the Gentiles.

Acts 9:26-30; 22:17-21; Gal. 1:18-24. He labored in or near Tarsus,

preaching the faith which formerly he had laid waste.

Acts 11:19-26

Meanwhile an important new step in the progress of the gospel into

the Gentile world was taken at Antioch. Acts 11:19-26. Antioch, the

capital of the Roman province of Syria, was situated on the Orontes

River, near the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. It was

the third greatest city of the empire, ranking immediately after

Rome and Alexandria. And among the great Gentile cities it was the

first which was encountered on the march of the gospel out from

Jerusalem to the conquest of the world.

At Antioch, certain unnamed Jews of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had been

scattered from Jerusalem by the persecution at the time of Stephen's

death, took the important step of preaching the word of God to the

Gentiles. Before, they had spoken only to Jews; here they spoke

also to the Gentiles. Gentiles were received no longer merely in

isolated cases like the case of Cornelius, but in large numbers.

To investigate what had happened, Barnabas, an honorable member of

the early Jerusalem church, Acts 4:36, 37, was sent from Jerusalem

to Antioch. Barnabas at once recognized the hand of God, and sent

to Tarsus to seek Paul. He and Paul then labored abundantly in the

Antioch church. At Antioch the disciples of Jesus were first called

"Christians"--no doubt by the Gentile population of the city. The

fact is not unimportant. It shows that even outsiders had come to

see that the Christian Church was something distinct from Judaism. A

distinct name had come to be required.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XVII

1. Describe the conversion of Cornelius in detail. What was the

importance of the event?

2. What was the meaning of Peter's vision on the housetop at

Joppa?

3. What important step was taken at Antioch?

4. Trace the part of Barnabas in furthering the work of Paul.

5. Show how every successive step in the offering of the gospel

to the Gentiles was taken under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

LESSON XVIII

The First Missionary Journey and the Apostolic Council

Acts 11:27 to 12:25

After a time of rapid growth in the Antioch church, a prophet,

Agabus by name, came down from Jerusalem and prophesied a famine.

The disciples determined to send relief to their brethren in

Jerusalem. This they did by the instrumentality of Barnabas and

Paul. Acts 11:27-30.

Meanwhile the Jerusalem church had been suffering renewed

persecution under Herod Agrippa I, who, as a vassal of Rome, ruled

over all Palestine from A.D. 41 to 44. James the son of Zebedee, one

of the apostles, had been put to death, and Peter had escaped only

by a wonderful interposition of God, Acts, ch. 12.

Acts, Chapters 13, 14

After Barnabas and Paul had returned to Antioch from their labor of

love in Jerusalem, they were sent out, under the guidance of the

Holy Spirit, upon a mission to the Gentiles, which is called the

first missionary journey. Acts, chs. 13, 14. This missionary journey

led first through the island of Cyprus, then, by way of Perga in

Pamphylia to Pisidian Antioch on the central plateau of Asia Minor.

At Pisidian Antioch, as regularly in the cities that he visited,

Paul entered first into the synagogue. In accordance with the

liberal Jewish custom of that day, he was given opportunity to

speak, as a visiting teacher. The congregation was composed not

only of Jews but also of Gentiles who had become interested in

the God of Israel and in the lofty morality of the Old Testament

without definitely uniting themselves with the people of Israel--the

class of persons who are called in the book of The Acts "they that

feared God" or the like. These "God-fearers" constituted a picked

audience; they were just the Gentiles who were most apt to be won

by the new preaching, because in their case much of the preliminary

instruction had been given. But the Jews themselves, at Pisidian

Antioch as well as elsewhere, were jealous of the new mission to

the Gentiles, which was proving so much more successful than their

own. Paul and Barnabas, therefore, were obliged to give up the work

in the synagogue and address themselves directly to the Gentile

population. So it happened very frequently in the cities that Paul

visited--at first he preached to both Jews and Gentiles in the

synagogues, and then when the Jews drove him out he was obliged to

preach to the Gentiles only.

Being driven out of Pisidian Antioch by a persecution instigated

by the Jews, Paul and Barnabas went to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe,

which, with Pisidian Antioch, were in the southern part of the great

Roman province Galatia, but not in Galatia proper, which lay farther

to the north. Then, turning back from Derbe, the missionaries

revisited Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, strengthening the

disciples and appointing elders; and then returned to the church at

Syrian Antioch from which the Holy Spirit had sent them forth.

The Epistle of James

During the progress of the Antioch church and of the mission which

had proceeded from it, the church at Jerusalem had not been idle. At

the head of it stood James, the brother of Jesus, who was not one of

the twelve apostles and apparently during the earthly ministry of

Jesus had not been a believer, but who had witnessed an appearance

of the risen Lord. James was apparently attached permanently to

the church at Jerusalem, while the Twelve engaged frequently in

missionary work elsewhere. From this James there has been preserved

in the New Testament a letter, The Epistle of James, which is

addressed "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion." This

letter was written at an early time, perhaps at about the time of

the first missionary journey of Paul. In the letter, James lays

stress upon the high moral standard which ought to prevail in the

Christian life, and he has sometimes been regarded as an advocate

of "works." But this judgment should not be misunderstood. The

"works" of which James is speaking are not works which are to be put

alongside of faith as one of the means by which salvation is to be

obtained; they are, on the contrary, works which proceed from faith

and show that faith is true faith. James does not, therefore, deny

the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Only he insists that

true faith always results in good works. Paul meant exactly the same

thing when he spoke of "faith working through love." Gal. 5:6. Paul

and James use somewhat different language, but they mean the same

thing. Faith, according to both of them, involves receiving the

power of God, which then results in a life of loving service.

Acts 15:1-35; Galatians 2:1-10

The wonderful success of the first missionary journey of Paul and

Barnabas caused great joy to the Antioch church. But the joy was

soon marred by certain persons, commonly called "Judaizers," who

came down to Antioch from Jerusalem and said that unless the Gentile

converts kept the Law of Moses they could not be saved. The demand

was directly contrary to the great principle of justification by

faith alone; for it made salvation depend partly upon human merit.

The entire life of the Church was in danger. But Paul, guided by a

revelation from God, determined to comply with the wishes of the

brethren at Antioch by going up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and

certain others, in order to confer with the leaders of the Jerusalem

church. Paul did not need any authorization from those leaders, for

he had been commissioned directly by Christ; nor did he need to

learn from them anything about the principles of the gospel, for the

gospel had come to him through direct revelation. But he did desire

to receive from the Jerusalem leaders, to whom the Judaizers falsely

appealed, some such public pronouncement as would put the Judaizers

clearly in the wrong and so stop their ruination of the Church's

work.

The conference resulted exactly as Paul desired. Acts 15:1-35;

Gal. 2:1-10. The Jerusalem leaders--James, the brother of the

Lord, Peter, and John the son of Zebedee--recognized that they had

absolutely nothing to add to the gospel of Paul, because he had been

commissioned by Christ as truly and as directly as the original

Twelve. Joyfully, therefore, they gave to Paul and Barnabas the

right hand of fellowship. God had worked for Paul among the Gentiles

as truly as he had worked for Peter among the Jews. With regard

to the propaganda of the Judaizers, the Jerusalem church, after

speeches by James and Peter presenting the same view as the view of

Paul, sent a letter to the Gentile Christians in Antioch and Syria

and Cilicia declaring them to be absolutely free from the Mosaic

Law as a means of salvation, and directing them to refrain, out

of loving regard for the Jews in the several cities, from certain

things in the Gentile manner of life which were most abhorrent to

Jewish feeling.

Such was the result of the "Apostolic Council," which took place at

about A.D. 49. It was a great victory for the Gentile mission and

for Paul, for it established clearly the unity of all the apostles

under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. No wonder the church at

Antioch rejoiced when the letter of the Jerusalem church was read.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XVIII

1. Describe in detail the release of Peter from prison in the

closing days of the reign of Herod Agrippa I.

2. Enumerate the visits of Paul to Jerusalem which have been

studied so far.

3. What happened, on the first missionary journey, at Paphos? at

Perga? at Pisidian Antioch? at Lystra?

4. Describe the Apostolic Council in detail. What was the

meaning of the letter which was sent out from the council?

LESSON XIX

The Second Missionary Journey

The Apostolic Council, which was studied in the last lesson, was

an important step in the progress of Christian liberty. By it the

Judaizers were definitely repudiated, and salvation was based upon

faith alone apart from the works of the law. But many practical

difficulties still remained to be solved.

Galatians 2:11-21

One such difficulty appeared at Antioch soon after the council. Gal.

2:11-21. The council had established the freedom of the Gentile

Christians from the Mosaic Law, but it had not been determined that

the Jewish Christians should give up the Law. No doubt the Jewish

Christians were inwardly free from the Law; they depended for

their salvation not at all upon their obedience to God's commands

as set forth in the Law of Moses, but simply and solely upon the

saving work of Christ accepted by faith. But so far as had yet

been revealed, it might conceivably be the will of God that they

should still maintain their connection with Israel by observing the

whole of the Law including even its ceremonial requirements. In

order, however, that the ceremonial requirements of the Law might

be observed, the Jews had always been accustomed to avoid table

companionship with Gentiles. What should be done, therefore, in

churches like the church at Antioch, which were composed both of

Jewish Christians and of Gentile Christians? How could the Jewish

Christians in such churches continue to observe the ceremonial law,

and still hold table companionship with their Gentile brethren?

This question faced the apostle Peter on a visit which he made

to Antioch after the Apostolic Council. At first he answered the

question in the interests of Gentile freedom; he allowed the unity

of the Church to take precedence over the devotion of Jewish

Christians to the ceremonial law. He held table companionship,

therefore, with the Gentile Christians, and he did so out of true

conviction with regard to the new Christian freedom. But when

certain men came to Antioch from James, Peter was afraid to be seen

transgressing the ceremonial law, and so began to withdraw himself

from table companionship with his Gentile brethren.

Peter's action, because of its inconsistency, endangered the

very life of the Church. Peter had given up the keeping of the

ceremonial law in order to hold table companionship with the Gentile

Christians. Then he had undertaken the keeping of the ceremonial law

again. Might not the Gentile Christians be tempted to do the same

thing, in order to preserve their fellowship with the greatest of

the original apostles? But if the Gentile Christians should begin

to keep the ceremonial law, they could not fail to think that the

keeping of the ceremonial law was somehow necessary to salvation.

And so the fundamental principle of Christianity--the principle of

salvation by Christ alone apart from human merit--would be given up.

The danger was imminent.

But God had raised up a man to fight the battle of the Church.

Absolutely regardless of personal considerations, devoted solely to

the truth, the Apostle Paul withstood Peter before the whole Church.

It is exceedingly important to observe that Paul did not differ from

Peter in principle; he differed from him only in practice. He said

to Peter in effect, "You and I are quite agreed about the principle

of justification by faith alone; why, therefore, do you belie your

principles by your conduct?" In the very act of condemning the

practice of Peter, therefore, Paul commends his principles; about

the principles of the gospel the two chief apostles were fully

agreed. Undoubtedly Peter was convinced by what Paul said; there was

no permanent disagreement, even about matters of practice, between

Peter and Paul. Thus did the Spirit of God guide and protect the

Church.

Acts 15:36 to 18:22

Soon afterward Paul went forth from Antioch on his "second

missionary journey." Acts 15:36 to 18:22. Journeying with Silas

by the land route to Derbe and to Lystra, where Timothy became

his associate, he then apparently went to Iconium and Pisidian

Antioch and then northward into Galatia proper, that is "Galatia"

in the older and narrower sense of the term. Finally he went down

to Troas, a seaport on the Ægean Sea. At Troas he must have been

joined by Luke, the author of The Acts, since the narrative in Acts

here begins to be carried on by the use of the first person, "we,"

instead of "they," thus showing that the author was present.

Setting sail from Troas, the apostolic company soon came to Philippi

in Macedonia, where an important church was founded. At last

Paul and Silas were imprisoned, and although they were released

through divine interposition and by the second thought of the city

authorities, they were requested by the authorities to leave the

city.

Arriving at Thessalonica, Paul preached in the synagogue, and

founded an important church, chiefly composed of Gentiles. But after

a stay shorter than had been intended, persecution instigated by

the Jews drove Paul out of the city. He went then to Athens, where

he preached not merely in the synagogue but also directly to the

Gentile passers-by in the market place.

At Corinth, the capital of the Roman province Achaia, embracing

Greece proper, large numbers of converts were won, and Paul spent

about two years in the city. Not long after the beginning of this

Corinthian residence, he wrote the two Thessalonian Epistles.

The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written just after Paul

had received his first news from the Thessalonian church. He had

been obliged to leave Thessalonica before he had intended. Would his

work in that city be permanent? Would the converts remain faithful

to Christ? These were serious questions. The Thessalonian converts

were living in the midst of a corrupt paganism, and Paul had not had

time to instruct them fully in the things of Christ. Every human

probability was against the maintenance of their Christian life.

But at last Paul received his first news from Thessalonica. And the

news was good news. God was watching over his children; the great

wonder had been wrought; a true Christian church had been founded

at Thessalonica. The letter which Paul wrote at such a time is very

naturally a simple, warm expression of gratitude to God. At the

same time, in the letter, Paul comforts the Thessalonians in view of

the death of certain of their number, gives instruction about the

second coming of Christ, and urges the converts to live a diligent

and orderly life.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written very soon after

the former Epistle. It reiterates the teaching of I Thessalonians,

with correction of a misunderstanding which had crept into the

church with regard to the second coming of Christ.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XIX

1. What practical question arose at Antioch after the Apostolic

Council?

2. How did Paul show the agreement in principle between himself

and Peter?

3. What was the inconsistency of Peter's action? Did Paul

necessarily condemn Jewish Christians who continued to observe

the ceremonial law? What principle was at stake at Antioch?

What does Paul in his Epistles say about Peter after this

time? Was there any permanent disagreement?

4. Why did Paul separate from Barnabas at the beginning of the

second missionary journey? What does Paul say afterwards about

Barnabas? Was there any permanent disagreement between Paul

and Barnabas or between Paul and Mark?

5. Describe what happened at Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica,

Berea, Athens, Corinth.

6. What was the occasion for the writing of I Thessalonians? of

II Thessalonians?

LESSON XX

The Third Missionary Journey. The Epistle to the Galatians

At Corinth, on the second missionary journey, the Jews made

charges before the Roman proconsul Gallio against Paul. But Gallio

dismissed the charges as concerning only the Jewish Law. It was

an important decision. Judaism was tolerated in the Roman Empire,

and if Christianity was regarded as a variety of Judaism it would

be tolerated too. Such was usually the practice of the Roman

authorities in the very early days; the Roman authorities often

protected the Christian missionaries against the Jews.

Finally leaving Corinth, Paul went by way of Ephesus, where he made

only a brief stay, to Palestine and then back to Syrian Antioch.

Acts 18:23 to 21:15

After having spent some time at Syrian Antioch, he started out on

his third missionary journey. Acts 18:23 to 21:15. First he went

through Asia Minor to Ephesus, apparently passing through Galatia

proper on his way. At Ephesus he spent about three years.

The Epistle to the Galatians

It was probably during this Ephesian residence that Paul wrote the

Epistle to the Galatians; and probably "the churches of Galatia" to

which the Epistle is addressed were churches in Galatia proper in

the northern part of the great Roman province Galatia. Another view

regards the Epistle as being addressed to the well-known churches

at Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, which were in the

southern part of the Roman province. When this view is adopted, the

writing of the Epistle is usually put at a somewhat earlier time in

the life of Paul.

The occasion for the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians can

easily be discovered on the basis of the letter itself. After Paul

had left Galatia, certain other teachers had come into the country.

These teachers were men of the Jewish race, and they are usually

called "Judaizers." What they taught can be established fairly well

on the basis of Paul's answer to them. They agreed with Paul in

believing that Jesus was truly the Messiah, and that he had risen

from the dead. Apparently they had no objection to Paul's doctrine

of the deity of Christ, and they agreed, apparently, that faith in

Christ is necessary to salvation. But they maintained that something

else is also necessary to salvation--namely, union with the nation

of Israel and the keeping of the Mosaic Law. The Judaizers, then,

maintained that a man is saved by faith and works; whereas Paul

maintained that a man is saved by faith alone.

The Galatian Christians had been impressed by what the Judaizers had

said. Already they had begun to observe some of the Jewish fasts

and feasts. And they were on the point of taking the decisive step

of uniting themselves definitely with the people of Israel and

undertaking the observance of the Mosaic Law. It was to keep them

from taking that decisive step that Paul wrote the Epistle.

At first sight the question at issue might seem to have little

importance to-day. No one in the Church nowadays is in danger of

uniting himself with Israel or undertaking to keep the ceremonial

law. If Paul had treated the question in Galatia in a merely

practical way, his letter would be of no value to us. But as a

matter of fact Paul did not treat the question in a merely practical

way; he treated it as a question of principle. He saw clearly that

what was really endangered by the propaganda of the Judaizers

was the great principle of grace; the true question was whether

salvation is to be earned partly by what man can do or whether it is

an absolutely free gift of God.

That question is just as important in the modern Church as it was in

Galatia in the first century. There are many in the modern Church

who maintain that salvation is obtained by character, or by men's

own obedience to the commands of Christ, or by men's own acceptance

of Christ's ideal of life. These are the modern Judaizers. And the

Epistle to the Galatians is directed against them just as much as it

was directed against the Judaizers of long ago.

Paul refuted the Judaizers by establishing the meaning of the cross

of Christ. Salvation, he said, was obtained simply and solely by

what Christ did when he died for the sins of believers. The curse of

God's law, said Paul, rests justly upon all men, for all men have

sinned. That curse of the law brings the penalty of death. But the

Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, took the penalty upon himself by

dying instead of us. We therefore go free.

Such is the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by Paul, and as

defended in the Epistle to the Galatians. That gospel, Paul said, is

received by faith. Faith is not a meritorious act; it simply means

accepting what Christ has done. It cannot be mingled with an appeal

to human merit. Christ will do everything or nothing. Either accept

as a free gift what Christ has done, or else earn salvation by

perfect obedience. The latter alternative is impossible because of

sin; the former, therefore, alone can make a man right with God.

But acceptance of the saving work of Christ means more than

salvation from the guilt of sin; it means more than a fresh start in

God's favor. It means also salvation from the power of sin. All men,

according to Paul, are dead in sin. Salvation, then, can come only

by a new creation, as Paul calls it, or, as it is called elsewhere

in the New Testament, a new birth. That new creation is wrought

by the saving work of Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit. And

after the new creation has been wrought, there is a new life on the

basis of it. In the new life there is still a battle against sin.

But the Christian has received a new power, the power of the Holy

Spirit. And when he yields himself to that new power, he fulfills

in its deepest import the law of God. Only he fulfills it not by

obedience in his own strength to a law which is outside of him, but

by yielding to a power which God has placed in his heart. This new

fulfillment of the law on the part of Christians is what Paul means

when he speaks of "faith working through love"; for love involves

the fulfillment of the whole law.

Such was the gospel of Paul as it is set forth in the Epistle to the

Galatians. Paul had received it from the Lord Jesus Christ. Without

it the Church is dead. It need not be put in long words, but it must

be proclaimed without the slightest concession to human pride, if

the Church is to be faithful to the Saviour who died. We deserved

eternal death; the Lord Jesus, because he loved us, died in our

stead--there is the heart and core of Christianity.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XX

1. Describe Paul's first visit to Corinth.

2. Where did Paul go at the beginning of the third missionary

journey?

3. What was the occasion for the writing of the Epistle to the

Galatians?

4. What great principle is defended in the Epistle? What is

the meaning of the death of Christ? What is the meaning of

"justification by faith"?

5. Give an outline of the Epistle, showing the three great

divisions.

6. Why does Paul give, in the first part of the Epistle, a

review of certain facts in his life?

LESSON XXI

The Third Missionary Journey. The Epistles to the Corinthians and to

the Romans

Another Epistle, in addition to the Epistle to the Galatians, was

written by Paul at Ephesus on the third missionary journey. This was

the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

In I Corinthians, the details of congregational life are more

fully discussed than in any other of the Epistles of Paul. Paul

had received information about the Corinthian church partly

through what was said by the "household of Chloe," who had come to

Ephesus from Corinth, and partly by a letter which the Corinthian

church had written. The information was not all of a favorable

character. In Corinth, a Christian church was in deadly battle with

paganism--paganism in thought and paganism in life. But that battle

was fought to a victorious conclusion, through the guidance of an

inspired apostle, and through the Holy Spirit of God in the hearts

of believers.

First Paul dealt in his letter with the parties in the Corinthian

church. The Corinthian Christians were in the habit of saying, "I

am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ," I

Cor. 1:12; they seem to have been more interested in the particular

form in which the gospel message was delivered than in the message

itself. Paul treated the subject in a grand and lofty way. The party

spirit in Corinth was merely one manifestation of intellectual

pride. In reply, the apostle directed his readers to the true

wisdom. And if you would possess that wisdom, he said, give up your

quarreling and give up your pride.

Then there was gross sin to be dealt with, and a certain lordly

indifference to moral purity. In reply, Paul pointed to the true

moral implications of the gospel, and to the law of love which

sometimes, as in Paul's own case, causes a Christian man to give up

even privileges which might be his by right.

In chs. 12 to 14 of the Epistle, Paul dealt with the supernatural

gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy and speaking with tongues.

These gifts were not continued after the Apostolic Age. But it is

important for us to know about them, and the principles which Paul

used in dealing with them are of permanent validity. The greatest

principle was the principle of love. It is in connection with the

question of gifts of the Spirit that Paul wrote his wonderful hymn

about Christian love. Ch. 13.

Paganism of thought was creeping into the Corinthian church in

connection with the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul dealt with

this question by appealing to the plain historical evidence for the

resurrection of Christ. That fact itself had not been denied in

Corinth. It was supported by the testimony not only of Paul himself,

but also of Peter, of the apostles, and of five hundred brethren

most of whom were still alive. Paul had received the account of the

death, the burial, the resurrection, and the appearances of Jesus

from Jerusalem, and no doubt from Peter during the fifteen days

which the two apostles had spent together three years after Paul's

conversion. In I Cor. 15:1-7 Paul is reproducing the account which

the primitive Jerusalem church gave of its own foundation. And in

that account Christianity appears, not as an aspiration, not as

mere devotion to an ideal of life, not as inculcation of a certain

kind of conduct, but as "a piece of information" about something

that had actually happened--namely, the atoning death and glorious

resurrection of Jesus our Lord.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

The First Epistle to the Corinthians did not end all difficulties

in the Corinthian church. On the contrary, after the writing of

that letter, certain miserable busybodies had sought to draw the

Corinthian Christians away from their allegiance to the apostle.

A brief visit which Paul had made to Corinth had not ended the

trouble. At last Paul had left Ephesus in great distress. He had

passed through a terrible personal danger, when he had despaired

of life, but more trying still was the thought of Corinth. Finding

no relief from his troubles he went to Troas and then across to

Macedonia. There at length relief came. Titus, Paul's helper,

arrived with good news from Corinth; the church had returned to its

allegiance. To give expression to his joy and thanksgiving, Paul

wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. In the Epistle he also

dealt with the matter of the collection for the poor at Jerusalem,

and administered a last rebuke to the Corinthian trouble makers.

In I Corinthians it is the congregation that is in the forefront of

interest; in II Corinthians, on the other hand, it is the apostle

and his ministry. In this letter, the Apostle Paul lays bare before

his readers the very secrets of his heart, and reveals the glories

of the ministry which God had intrusted to him. That ministry was

the ministry of reconciliation. God and men had been separated by

the great gulf of sin, which had brought men under God's wrath and

curse. Nothing that men could do could possibly bridge the gulf. But

what was impossible with men was possible with God. By the redeeming

work of Christ the gulf had been closed; all had been made right

again between God and those for whom Christ died.

The Epistle to the Romans

Arriving at Corinth Paul spent three months in that city. During

this time he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Paul was intending to

visit the city of Rome. The church at Rome had not been founded by

him; it was important, therefore, that in order to prepare for his

coming he should set forth plainly to the Romans the gospel which he

proclaimed. That is what he does in the Epistle to the Romans. In

the Epistle to the Romans, the way of salvation through Christ is

set forth more fully than in any other book of the New Testament.

In Galatians it is set forth in a polemic way, when Paul was in the

midst of a deadly conflict against a religion of works; here it is

set forth more calmly and more fully.

In the first great division of the Epistle, Paul sets forth the

universal need of salvation. The need is due to sin. All have

sinned, and are under God's just wrath and curse. Rom. 1:18 to

3:20. But the Lord Jesus Christ bore that curse for all believers,

by dying for them on the cross; he paid the just penalty of our

sins, and clothed us with his perfect righteousness. Ch. 3:21-31.

This saving work of Christ, and the faith by which it is accepted,

were set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures. Ch. 4. The result

of the salvation is peace with God, and an assured hope that what

God has begun through the gift of Christ, he will bring to a final

completion. Ch. 5:1-11. Thus, as in Adam all died, by sharing in the

guilt of Adam's sin, so in Christ all believers are made alive. Vs.

12-21.

But, Paul goes on, the freedom which is wrought by Christ does not

mean freedom to sin; on the contrary it means freedom from the power

of sin; it means a new life which is led by the power of God. Ch.

6. What the law could not do, because the power of sin prevented

men from keeping its commands, that Christ has accomplished. Ch. 7.

Through Christ, believers have been made sons of God; there is to

them "no condemnation"; and nothing in this world or the next shall

separate them from the love of Christ. Ch. 8.

Toward the spread of this gospel, Paul goes on, the whole course of

history has been made to lead. The strange dealings of God both with

Jews and Gentiles are part of one holy and mysterious plan. Chs. 9

to 11.

In the last section of the Epistle, Paul shows how the glorious

gospel which he has set forth results in holy living from day to

day. Chs. 12 to 16.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XXI

1. What was the occasion for the writing of I Corinthians? of II

Corinthians? of Romans?

2. Give outlines of these three Epistles.

LESSON XXII

The First Imprisonment of Paul

After the three months which Paul spent at Corinth on the third

missionary journey, he went up to Jerusalem in order to help bear

the gifts which he had collected in the Gentile churches for the

poor of the Jerusalem church. He was accompanied by a number of

helpers, among them Luke, the writer of the Third Gospel and the

book of The Acts. Luke had remained behind at Philippi on the second

missionary journey, and now, several years later, he joined the

apostle again. The portions of the journey where Luke was actually

present are narrated in The Acts in great detail and with remarkable

vividness.

When Paul came to Miletus on the coast of Asia Minor, he sent to

Ephesus for the elders of the Ephesian church, and when they came he

held a notable farewell discourse. There was a touching scene when

he finally parted from those who loved him so well.

Acts 21:15 to 28:31

Despite prophecies of the imprisonment that awaited him Paul went

bravely on to Jerusalem. There he was warmly received by James

the brother of the Lord and by the church. Acts 21:15-26. But the

non-Christian Jews falsely accused him of bringing Gentiles with him

into the Temple. Vs. 27-40. There was an onslaught against him, and

he was rescued by the Roman chief captain, who took him into the

Castle of Antonia which the Romans used to guard the Temple area. On

the steps of the castle he was allowed to address the people, ch.

22:1-22, who listened to him at first because he used the Aramaic

language instead of Greek, but broke out against him again when he

spoke of his mission to the Gentiles.

An appeal to his Roman citizenship saved Paul from scourging, Acts

22:23-29; and a hearing the next day before the sanhedrin, ch. 22:30

to 23:10, brought only a quarrel between the Sadducees and the

Pharisees. That night Paul had a comforting vision of Christ. V. 11.

A plot of the Jews to waylay Paul and kill him was frustrated

by Paul's sister's son, who told the chief captain. The chief

captain sent the prisoner with an escort down to Cæsarea where the

procurator Felix had his residence. Acts 23:12-35. Hearings before

Felix brought no decisive result, ch. 24, and Paul was left in

prison at Cæsarea for two years until Festus arrived as successor

of Felix. Then, in order to prevent being taken to Jerusalem for

trial, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen by appealing to

the court of the emperor. Ch. 25:1-12. Accordingly, after a hearing

before Herod Agrippa II, who had been made king of a realm northeast

of Palestine by the Romans, v. 13; ch. 26:32, Paul was sent as a

prisoner to Rome, chs. 27:1 to 28:16.

On the journey he was accompanied by Luke, who has given a detailed

account of the voyage--an account which is not only perhaps the

chief source of information about the seafaring of antiquity, but

also affords a wonderful picture of the way Paul acted in a time of

peril. The ship was wrecked on the island of Malta, and it was not

until the following spring that the prisoner was brought to Rome.

There he remained in prison for two years, chained to a soldier

guard, but permitted to dwell in his own hired house and to receive

visits from his friends. Acts 28:16-31.

During this first Roman imprisonment Paul wrote four of his

Epistles--to the Colossians and to Philemon, to the Ephesians, and

to the Philippians. Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians were all

written at the same time. Colossians and Ephesians were both sent by

the same messenger, Tychicus, and this messenger was accompanied by

Onesimus, who bore the Epistle to Philemon.

The Epistle to Philemon

Onesimus was a slave who had run away from Philemon, his master. He

had then been converted by Paul, and Paul was now sending him back

to his master. The little letter which the apostle wrote on this

occasion gives a wonderful picture of the way in which ordinary

social relationships like that of master and servant may be made the

means of expression for Christian love. Very beautiful also was the

relation between Philemon and the apostle through whom he had been

converted.

The Epistle to the Colossians

The church at Colossæ, to which the Epistle to the Colossians is

addressed, had been founded not by Paul but by one of his helpers,

Epaphras. A certain type of false teaching had been brought into

the church by those who laid stress upon angels in a way that was

harmful to the exclusive position of Christ. In reply, Paul sets

forth in the Epistle the majesty of Jesus, who existed from all

eternity and was the instrument of God the Father in the creation

of the world. This was no new teaching; it is always presupposed

in the earlier Epistles of Paul, and about it there was no debate.

But in the Epistle to the Colossians, in view of the error that was

creeping in through false speculation, Paul took occasion to set

forth fully what in the former letters he had presupposed.

The Epistle to the Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians is probably a circular letter addressed

to a group of churches of which Ephesus was the center. In this

letter the personal element is less prominent than in the other

Pauline Epistles; Paul allows his mind to roam freely over the

grand reaches of the divine economy. The Church is here especially

in view. She is represented as the bride of Christ, and as the

culmination of an eternal and gracious plan of God.

The Epistle to the Philippians

The Epistle to the Philippians was probably written later than

the other Epistles of the first captivity. The immediate occasion

for the writing of the letter was the arrival of a gift from the

Philippian church, on account of which Paul desires to express his

joy. Paul had always stood in a peculiarly cordial relation to his

Philippian converts; he had been willing, therefore, to receive

gifts from them, although in other churches he had preferred to make

himself independent by laboring at his trade. But the letter is not

concerned only or even chiefly with the gifts of the Philippian

church. Paul desired also to inform his Philippian brethren about

the situation at Rome. His trial is approaching; whether it results

in his death or in his release, he is content. But as a matter of

fact he expects to see the Philippians again.

Moreover, Paul holds up in the letter the example of Christ, which

was manifested in the great act of loving condescension by which he

came into the world and endured for our sakes the accursed death on

the cross. That humiliation of Christ, Paul says, was followed by

exaltation; God has now given to Jesus the name that is above every

name.

At the conclusion of the two years in prison in Rome, Paul was

released, probably in A.D. 63. This fact is attested not by the

book of The Acts, of which the narrative closes at the end of the

two years at Rome, but by the Pastoral Epistles of Paul and also

by an Epistle of Clement of Rome which was written at about A.D.

95. Clement says that Paul went to Spain. This he probably did

immediately after his release. He then went to the East again, for

it was in the East that I Timothy and Titus were written.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XXII

1. Outline the events in the life of Paul which occurred between

the departure from Corinth and the end of the first Roman

imprisonment.

2. What was the occasion for the writing of Colossians? of

Philemon? of Ephesians? of Philippians?

3. Give outlines of these Epistles.

LESSON XXIII

The Close of the Apostolic Age

The Pastoral Epistles

It was observed in the last lesson that Paul was released from

his first Roman imprisonment, and went then to Spain and then to

the East. At the time when I Timothy was written he has just left

Timothy behind at Ephesus when he himself has gone into Macedonia,

and now writes the letter with instructions for Timothy as to the

way of conducting the affairs of the church. Similarly, the Epistle

to Titus was written to guide Titus in his work on the island of

Crete.

After this last period of activity in the East, Paul was imprisoned

again at Rome. During this second Roman imprisonment he wrote II

Timothy, to encourage Timothy and instruct him, and to give to him

and to the Church a farewell message just before his own death,

which he was expecting very soon.

The two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, which are

called the Pastoral Epistles, are similar to one another in

important respects. They all lay stress upon soundness of teaching

and upon the organization of the Church. In the closing years of

his life Paul provided for the permanence of his work; the period

of origination was over and the period of conservation had begun.

It was not God's will that every Christian generation should have

revealed to it anew the whole of the gospel. What is true in one age

is true in all ages. It was a salutary thing, therefore, that the

Pastoral Epistles provided for the preservation of the faith which

was once for all delivered unto the saints.

Soon after the writing of II Timothy, Paul was beheaded at Rome.

This event, which is attested in altogether credible Christian

tradition outside of the New Testament, took place within the reign

of the Emperor Nero--that is, before A.D. 68. At the time of the

great fire at Rome in A.D. 64 Nero had persecuted the Christians, as

is narrated by Tacitus, the Roman historian. But at that time Paul

probably escaped by being out of the city; his execution probably

did not occur until several years later.

At about the time of the death of Paul disastrous events were taking

place in Palestine. James the brother of the Lord had been put to

death by the Jews in A.D. 62, according to Josephus the Jewish

historian, or a few years later according to another account. In

A.D. 66 the Jews rose in revolt against the Romans. In the war that

followed there was a terrible siege of Jerusalem. Before the siege

the Christians in the city had fled to Pella, east of the Jordan.

Jerusalem was captured by the Romans in A.D. 70, and the Temple

destroyed.

From that time on, the Church in Palestine ceased to be of great

relative importance; the gospel had passed for the most part to

the Gentiles. A number of the apostles remained for many years,

however, to guide and instruct the Church, and important books of

the New Testament were written in this period either by the apostles

themselves or by those who stood under their direction.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Even before the destruction of the Temple, the original disciples

had begun to labor far and wide among the Gentiles. It was perhaps

during this early period that the Epistle to the Hebrews was

written. The name of the author is unknown, but the book is truly

apostolic--that is, it was written either by an apostle or by

one who wrote under the direction of the apostles. The Epistle

is intended to celebrate the all-sufficiency of Christ as the

great High Priest, who has made atonement by his own blood, as

distinguished from the Old Testament types that were intended to

point forward to him.

The First Epistle of Peter

Some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the apostle Peter

left Palestine. In the course of his missionary journeys he went

to Rome, and it was perhaps from Rome that he wrote the First

Epistle of Peter, the word "Babylon" in I Peter 5:13 being perhaps

a figurative designation of Rome as the "Babylon" of that age.

The Epistle was addressed to Christians in Asia Minor, and was

intended to encourage the readers to Christian fortitude in the

midst of persecution. The gospel proclaimed in the Epistle is the

one great apostolic gospel of Christ's redeeming work which was also

proclaimed by Paul.

The Second Epistle of Peter; The Epistle of Jude

The Second Epistle of Peter was written by the apostle to warn his

readers against false teaching and urge them to be faithful to the

authority of the apostles and of the Scriptures. Closely related

to II Peter is the Epistle of Jude, which was written by one of

the brothers of Jesus. The apostle Peter, in accordance with a

thoroughly credible Christian tradition, finally suffered a martyr's

death at Rome.

The apostle John, the son of Zebedee, became the head of the Church

in Asia Minor, where, at Ephesus, he lived until nearly the end of

the first century. During this period he wrote five books of the New

Testament.

The Gospel According to John was written to supplement the other

three Gospels which had long been in use. It contains much of the

most precious and most profound teaching of our Lord, as it had been

stored up in the memory of the "beloved disciple"; and it presents

the glory of the Word of God as that glory had appeared on earth to

an eyewitness.

The Epistles of John

The First Epistle of John was written in order to combat certain

errors which were creeping into the Church in Asia Minor and in

order to present to the readers the true Christian life of love,

founded upon the Son of God who had come in the flesh, and begun by

the new birth which makes a man a child of God.

The Second Epistle of John is a very brief letter written to warn an

individual church of the same kind of error as is combated in I John.

The Third Epistle is addressed to an individual Christian named

Gaius, who is praised for his hospitality to visiting missionaries,

which was the more praiseworthy because it was in contrast to the

inhospitality of a certain Diotrephes. The little letter sheds a

flood of light upon the details of congregational life in the last

period of the Apostolic Age.

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is based upon a revelation which the apostle

John had received during a banishment to the island of Patmos, off

the coast of Asia Minor, not far from Ephesus. Probably the book

itself was written on the same island. The book contains letters to

seven churches of western Asia Minor which are intended to encourage

or warn them in accordance with the needs of every individual

congregation. The whole book is a tremendous prophecy, which

strengthens the faith of the Church in the midst of persecutions

and trials by revealing the plan of God, especially as it concerns

the second coming of our Lord and the end of the world. Details of

future events, especially times and seasons, are not intended to

be revealed, but rather great principles both of good and of evil,

which manifest themselves in various ways in the subsequent history

of the Church. The prophecy, however, will receive its highest and

final fulfillment only when our Lord shall come again, and bring in

the final reign of righteousness and the blessedness of those whom

he has redeemed.

QUESTIONS ON LESSON XXIII

1. When, where, and why were the three Pastoral Epistles written?

2. Outline the life of Paul after his release from the first

Roman imprisonment.

3. What is known about the latter part of the life of Peter?

4. What was the occasion for the writing of I Peter? of II

Peter? of Jude? What are the characteristics of these letters?

5. What is known about the latter part of the life of John?

6. What were the date and the purpose of the Gospel According to

John; of the Epistles of John; of the book of Revelation?

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