OUTLINES

OF

CADETS’ BIBLE LESSONS

THE WILLIAM BOOTH MEMORIAL
TRAINING COLLEGE

Reformatted by
College of Further Education
Australian Eastern Territory 2004

Revised with corrections including:
Change of all Bible references to The Holy Bible New International Version (© 1978, 1979); and references to The Doctrine Book of The Salvation Army (1969) to Salvation Story, Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine (1998) by International Headquarters 2006
SYLLABUS OF LESSONS

'Lesson' means a block of teaching to be incorporated flexibly, both with regard to length of time and order of presentation, into the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LESSON</th>
<th>THE BIBLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>General Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2., 3.</td>
<td>The condition of Palestine when he came</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The condition of the world when he came</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>His birth and childhood</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>His forerunner and baptism</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>His temptations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>His miracles</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Twelve Apostles</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Jesus as a teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>His teaching concerning the Kingdom of God</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>His teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>His teaching concerning love – The law of the Kingdom</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>His teaching concerning prayer – Communion with the Lord of the Kingdom</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The impact of the law of the Kingdom on the social order</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>The disciples learn the greatest truth about Jesus and about the Cross</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The approach of Calvary</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18., 19.</td>
<td>His trial</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>The Crucifixion</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>His Resurrection</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>The making of the Gospels</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>The Gospel according to Mark</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>The Gospel according to Matthew</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>The Gospel according to John</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>The task announced, and the power received</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30., 31.</td>
<td>The Task fulfilled in Jerusalem, and the beginning of opposition</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>The bonds of Judaism loosen</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Samaritans and Gentiles admitted to the Church</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>The apostle to the Gentiles</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>The First Missionary Journey</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>The Important Council at Jerusalem, and the Second Missionary Journey</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Paul's Second Missionary Journey</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Paul's Third Missionary Journey</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Paul Witnesses to High Places</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>The Journey to Rome</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>General Introduction to the Epistles and The Epistles to the Thessalonians</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42., 43.</td>
<td>The Epistles to the Corinthians</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Galatians</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Romans (1)</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Romans (2)</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Romans (3)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Philippians</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Ephesians</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Colossians, and the Philemon</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>The Epistle to Timothy and Titus</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>The Epistle to the Hebrews</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>The First Epistle General of John</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>The Epistle of James</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>The First Epistle of Peter</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>The Second Epistle General of Peter</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Abraham – the Man of Faith (1)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Abraham – the Man of Faith (2)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Isaac and Jacob</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>The Israelites in Bondage in Egypt</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62., 63.</td>
<td>The Deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian Bondage and their Journey to Sinai</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Israel Enter into Covenant with God at Sinai by their Acceptance of his Law</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>The Manner of Worship (1)</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>The Manner of Worship (2)</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Sinai to Mount Nebo</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>The Israelites Enter, and Begin to Possess, the Promised Land</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Samuel, and the rise of the Prophetic Line</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>Saul, The First King of Israel</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>David, the First King of Judah, and the Second King of Israel</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>The Reign of Solomon, and the Division of the Kingdom after his Death</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>Elijah and Elisha</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>Prophecy in Israel – Amos</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>Prophecy on Israel – Hosea</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>A Survey of the History of Israel and Judah, after the Division of the Kingdom</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>Prophecy in Judah – Isaiah (1)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>Prophecy in Judah – Isaiah (2)</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>Prophecy in Judah – Isaiah (3)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80., 81.</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>The Restoration (1) Zerubbabel and Joshua</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.</td>
<td>The Restoration (2) Nehemiah, Ezra and Malachi</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>Between the Testaments</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Early Chapters of Genesis</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>OLD TESTAMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Old Testament – The Book of Daniel</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION. Chapter One of *Salvation Story, Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* (1998), which we study, deals with important matters concerning the Bible. In this lesson we say something about the way in which the Bible we use came into its present form, a subject not covered in the doctrine lesson.

1. **THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES**
   (a) **Their Divisions**
      The Jews divided their Scriptures into three groups.

   (b) **The Law**
      i. These books known as the *Pentateuch* or the *five books of Moses*.
      ii. We can truly say that the law came by Moses (John 1:17), but at the same time understand that these books came into their present form long after his death.
      iii. Beside distinct law (moral and ceremonial) they contain much history, particularly of the origin and establishment of the Hebrew nation.

   (c) **The Prophets**
      i. Contains books written and inspired by prophets (see Latter Prophets above). (Not arranged in chronological order.)
      ii. Contains also books we would regard as historical (see Former Prophets above).

   (d) **The Writings**
      i. This is a varied group containing history, poetry, and Hebrew wisdom (Proverbs).
      ii. Sometimes the whole group is referred to as *the Psalms* because the Psalms is the first book of the whole division.
      *Note*: See Luke 24:44 for a reference made by Jesus to these three divisions.

   (e) **Their authority**
      i. In the time of Jesus and His apostles all reference to ‘the Scriptures’ related to these thirty-nine books alone. ‘Old Testament’ is a Christian term, obviously not used until there was a ‘New Testament’.
      ii. The Jews had other religious writings, but they separated these thirty-nine books as being those which were specially inspired by God.
      iii. These books were the Scriptures that Jesus knew and used, and although the message He gave transcended, and in some ways superseded, this former revelation, detail given in *Salvation Story, Ch. 1 Authority* (Page 6) will show with what respect He held, and taught others to hold, them.

2. **THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES – THEIR SOURCE AND GROWTH**

   (a) **The Old Testament**
      i. The Christian Church was first composed of Jews who naturally used the Old Testament as their sacred writings.
      ii. As Gentile converts were made they likewise accepted them.

   (b) **The Epistles**
      i. Many of these were written before the four Gospels appeared.
ii. In the early days of the Church when Christian believers were separated in different towns and countries, the apostles wrote letters to them about important things such as Christian:
(a) belief (as 1 John 2:26; 3:23; Jude 3,4);
(b) conduct (as 1 Peter 2:11-15);
(c) church discipline (as 1 Timothy 3:14-15; see also Acts 15:22-23, 28-29; 16:4).

iii. The Churches who received such letters preserved them carefully and often shared them with others (Colossians 4:16).

iv. Before long these apostolic writings were valued equally with the Old Testament Scriptures, e.g. 2 Peter 3:15-16, speaking of Paul's letters says, 'his epistles . . . also the other Scriptures'. See also 2 Peter 3:2.

(c) The Gospels (dealt with more fully in a later lesson).
   i. Christian believers desired to know all they could about Jesus.
   ii. Their source of information was the apostles and early disciples, who provided them with some written records and much instruction by word of mouth (see Luke 1:2).

(d) The Canon of the New Testament
   i. Just as the Jews had set aside the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as being specially inspired by God, so after a time the Church set aside the twenty-seven New Testament books as being equally inspired, and as having a quality that distinguished them from other Christian writings.
   ii. It was not until the latter half of the fourth century that statements which included all twenty-seven were set down, but the Church Councils were then putting on record decisions which had been arrived at long before – centuries before in the case of some of the books.
   iii. To distinguish this group the word ‘Canon’ was used. This word means ‘a rule for measuring’ and is so translated in 2 Corinthians 10:13-15; Galatians 6:16. By using it in this particular connection the Church meant that these books measured up to this standard of special divine inspiration.
   iv. These books were and are a ‘Canon’ in another sense. They are the standard by which Christian doctrine and conduct are measured. (See Article 1 of The Salvation Army Articles of Faith.)

3. HOW WE GOT THE ENGLISH BIBLE
   (a) William Tyndale (martyred 1536) made the greatest individual contribution. He translated the Pentateuch and the New Testament into English. Miles Coverdale, his disciple, completed the work.
   (b) In 1539 a version of the Great Bible appeared, notable because at that time a copy was placed in every Parish Church.
   (c) The Authorised or King James 1 version was completed in 1611.
   (d) Since 1611 many notable copies of the Scripture of greater age then those used by Tyndale have been discovered. The added information thus provided was used in the production of the Revised Standard Version – New Testament in 1881; Old Testament in 1885.
   (e) More recent translations (of either the whole Bible or of certain parts of the New Testament alone) are constantly appearing. Notable among these are the Moffatt Bible, the Revised Standard Version Bible (RSV), the New English Bible (NEB), the Good News Bible (GNB), the New International Version (NIV), the New King James Bible (NKJB) and The Message paraphrase.

CONCLUSION. The Bible has been miraculously preserved in spite of the attacks by bitter enemies. We must remember with gratitude those who have served us by helping to preserve it – often at the cost of their lives.
We may with confidence accept these tested and enduring Scriptures as the true word of God handed down to us without essential loss.
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

LESSONS 2 and 3

The Condition of Palestine when He came

INTRODUCTION. Some information concerning the conditions under which the people lived in the time of Jesus will help us to understand many things in the Gospels which would otherwise be obscure.

1. PALESTINE WAS A DIVIDED LAND (see map)
   (a) There were three main divisions of the land west of the Jordan: Galilee in the north; Samaria in the centre; Judea in the south.
   (b) After the death of Herod the Great, there were also three divisions east of Jordan (see par. 2(c)).
   (c) The Jews did not regard Samaria as part of the Holy Land.
      i. Samaritans were descendants of northern Israelites, and Colonists whom the Assyrians brought in after the fall of Samaria (see 2 Kings 17:24), 722 B.C.
      ii. The Jews who returned from the captivity about 200 years later refused to recognise these people of mixed blood as being true Israelites, and thereafter had as little to do with them as possible (see John 4:9).
      iii. An additional grievance to the Jews was that this territory divided Galilee from Judea.
   (d) Judea and Galilee were divided in other ways.
      i. In condition - Judea was a mountainous and infertile land with many ruined cities and little natural wealth. Galilee was fertile and had many busy towns; an abundant population, and more prosperity than Judea.
      ii. In the temperament of the people. Both were of true Jewish descent, but the Judeans were reserved; proud that they had Jerusalem and the Temple; counted themselves more learned and righteous than the Galileans whom they despised (John 7:41, 52; Acts 2:7). The Galileans were warm-hearted, more cosmopolitan and liberal in ideas than the Judeans, whose attitude toward them they deeply resented.

   All the people of Palestine spoke a language called Aramaic, but the Galileans with a special accent which ‘betrayed’ them (Matthew 26:73).

   (e) Jesus was a Galilean, being of Nazareth.
      i. All His apostles were of Galilee with the possible exception of Judas, the betrayer (Iscariot may mean ‘of Kerioth’, a Judean town).
      ii. In the main Galileans were friendly to Jesus, the Judeans increasingly His enemies.

2. THE JEWS WERE A SUBJECT RACE (Luke 3:1)
   (a) Under the rule of Rome whose emperor governed the whole Mediterranean world.
   (b) Under the rule of governors appointed by Rome. Palestine was part of the Roman province of Syria. More directly it was governed by:
      i. Herod the Great, at the time of the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:1).
         (a) Made King of Judea and Samaria in 37 B.C. He was an Idumean (not a Jew) and was hated by the Jews on this account also for his cruelty and heavy taxation.
         (b) He built extensively - particularly the restoration of the Temple.
         (c) He died when Jesus was a baby.
      ii. Herod’s sons ruled after their father’s death. They were not called kings.
         (a) Herod Antipas - over Galilee and Perea (east of Jordan).
             (The ruler responsible for the martyrdom of John the Baptist)
         (b) Philip - over a district across the Jordan, north-east of Galilee.
         (c) Archelaus—over Judea and Samaria.
      iii. A Roman Procurator over Judea and Samaria.
HIS FORERUNNER AND BAPTISM

(a) After a period of nine years Archelaus, for misgovernment, was replaced by a Roman Governor, who administered from Caesarea.
(b) From A.D 26 to 36 the Procurator was Pontius Pilate.

c) Thus when Jesus began His ministry there were three divisions east of Jordan (see map).
i. The tetrarchy of Philip.
ii. The Decapolis - a district of free towns, chiefly Gentile in population (Mark 5: 20).
iii. Perea - - a portion of the allotment given to Herod Antipas (Mark 10:1).

3. THE JEWS WERE GOVERNED BY THEIR OWN RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN ADDITION TO BEING UNDER ROMAN RULE

Religion governed their whole lives. It did this through:

(a) The Law - based on the Pentateuch, containing both the moral code and the ceremonial law, together with the Tradition which had been added to it.
(b) The Temple. Was the supreme place of worship where alone sacrifices could be made, and was the centre for national festivals, to which overseas Jews came (Deuteronomy 16:16).
(c) The Synagogues. These were brought into being during the exile – had no priest or altar, but were centres for prayer and teaching.
   All Jewish communities of ten adult males or more outside Palestine had synagogues.
(d) The Rabbis - the authorised teachers.
(e) The local Sanhedrin - situated in every town (Matthew 10:17). This was centred in the synagogue; it judged civil and criminal cases as well as purely religious matters.
(f) The supreme Sanhedrin.
   This was composed of seventy-one chief religious leaders, including the High Priest, who presided; it was the supreme court of the nation, and decided all cases according to the law of Moses. It could sentence to death, but could not execute without confirmation by Roman authority (John 18:31).
(g) The High Priest - was the chief religious ruler and the recognised representative of the nation in its dealings with the Roman Governor.

4. THE JEWISH RELIGION GENERALLY HAD DEPARTED FAR FROM ITS OLD TESTAMENT PATTERN (Romans 10:2,3)

(a) Very many rules had been added to the Law of Moses.
   i. Over the years the Rabbis were constantly discussing what should be done or not done in every department of life by one who would keep the law, and had written down very many rules in this connection, e.g. see Mark 7: 3, 4, and also the numerous rules about conduct on the Sabbath, which the Rabbis said were necessary if the requirement of the fourth commandment was to be met.
   ii. These additions were called the Tradition.
   iii. A greater part of the nation came to regard this Tradition to be of such absolute importance that they thought that the law of Moses could not be honoured at all unless it was honoured in this way.
   iv. This system of accepting a code of rules as being the regulating factor in the life is called 'Legalism' .
(b) Emphasis on the Tradition had some bad results chief of which was the part it played in the Crucifixion.
   i. It gave the common people a distaste for the law because the keeping of it in this way became so burdensome, e.g. Jesus spoke of the 'burdens you can hardly carry' imposed by the lawyers (Luke 11:46); Peter spoke of the 'yoke, that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear' (Acts 15:10).
   ii. In the lives of some who honoured it most, there developed disregard for the original commandments and for the need of heart religion (Mark 7:8, 9; Matthew 15:7-9).
   iii. When this development was carried to its extreme, it provided a cover for unkind & selfish deeds.
      (a) Some found a way of using the rules of the Tradition to excuse themselves from doing what God had commanded. Jesus said there were many such instances (Mark 7:13), and gave an example (verses 10-12).
      (b) They comforted themselves that the evil in their hearts did not matter if they covered it by observing the practices taught by the Tradition (Luke 11:39, 42).
   iv. Such men became the foes of Jesus.
      (a) They condemned Him and His disciples for not following the Tradition as closely as they did, e.g. Mark 2:23, 24; 3:2; 7:2.
HIS FORERUNNER AND BAPTISM

(b) They hated Him for tearing away their cloak of outward righteousness and exposing their heart sins, e.g. Luke 11:53, 54.

(c) They were active in bringing about His death.

(c) These bad results by no means applied in every case. There were many devout souls who followed the Tradition and sought for heart religion as well, e.g. Luke 1:6.

5. THE RELIGIOUS SECTS AND THE Scribes

(a) The Sadducees.

i. Mainly aristocratic - priestly and governing families.

ii. Took their stand on the Pentateuch and challenged the Tradition.

iii. Did not believe in life after death, angels or spirits.

iv. Were concerned to keep peace with Rome (John 11:48).

(b) The Pharisees.

i. Were the out and out legalists and defenders of the Tradition.

ii. Did believe in life after death, angels and spirits.

iii. Had developed in the Maccabean period as fighters for the purity of their ancient faith.

iv. Were opposed to Rome, but did not recommend violence.

(c) Their relationship.

i. Both were represented in the Sanhedrin - the Sadducees predominating.

ii. There was much bitterness between them on account of both doctrine and policy.

iii. They united in contempt for the common people, ‘who know nothing of the Law’ and in the end, were united in opposition to Jesus.

iv. In the early Church the Sadducees were the more active persecutors (Acts 5:17; 23:6-8).

(d) The Scribes, also called Lawyers, Doctors of the Law, Rabbis (see Luke 5:17, 21).

i. They were more than writers - were the teachers and preachers of Judaism.

ii. They were, of course, legalists, and the majority were Pharisees.

6. THE NATION WAS IN A STATE OF UNREST

(a) The common people were poor and were heavily taxed:

i. By the Romans who levied poll, house, road and water taxes, as well as customs charges (Luke 2:1; Matthew 22:17).

ii. By the local rulers, the sons of Herod, who lived in costly magnificence.

iii. By religious dues, paid to Temple and synagogue (Matthew 17:24).

(b) The nation was restless under Roman rule.

i. Taxes were collected for the Romans by oppressive agents (called Publicans/Tax Collectors), who frequently overcharged (Luke 19: 2, 8).

ii. Service for Romans could be demanded at any time (Matthew 5:41; 27:32).

iii. Any affront to Jewish pride was likely to cause riot, particularly at the time of national gatherings in Jerusalem (Luke 13:1).

iv. Many expected a Messiah who would make them a free people again (Acts 1:6).

v. Ardent nationalists had united to form the Zealots. These were violent men always ready to strike a blow against Rome (Acts 5:37). One of the twelve (Luke 6:15), and probably Barabbas (Mark 15:7), belonged to this group.

(c) This unrest ended in tragedy.

i. Jesus foresaw and wept over the ruin this situation foreshadowed (Luke 19:43, 44; 23: 28-31).

ii. In A.D. 65 the Zealots made open revolt. This culminated, A.D. 70, in the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple - the slaying of thousands of Jews and the enslavement of many others.
LESSON 4

The Condition of the World when He came

INTRODUCTION. We have considered the state of Israel and now look wider into the world to see that Jesus came ‘in the fullness of time’, in a day when men’s hearts were ready in some ways to receive Him, and when world conditions marvellously served the spread of His Gospel.

1. MEN’S HEARTS WERE PREPARED TO RECEIVE HIS MESSAGE
   (a) **The world was evil** - see the picture Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and the Pharisee in Luke 18:11. The two chief vices were gambling and sexual impurity; human life was held cheaply – not uncommon to abandon baby girls; there were hundreds of thousands of slaves.
   (b) **Old religions were failing.**
      i. The worship of the old gods did not satisfy. New gods and cults were being imported from the east (see Acts 17: 16, 21).
      ii. There was much in religion which helped to deprave rather than to elevate. In many cults new and old, disgusting practices formed a prominent part of the system of worship.
      iii. Religion was being used for political ends. It was planned that emperor worship would form a new and unifying state religion.
      iv. Men were seeking a way of salvation.
   (c) **The Jews were acting as witnesses to the true God.**
      i. There were more Jews outside of Palestine than in it.
      ii. They had synagogues in every important centre (Acts 15: 21).
      iii. In spite of the formality of some of their worship, they did give world-wide witness to One God, the Creator of all; and to the teaching that links religion with morality.
      iv. They also spread the message of an expected Messiah.
      v. Many disillusioned Gentiles were attracted to the purity of their faith.
      vi. This response was stimulated not only by synagogue worship, but by the universal use of the Septuagint - a translation of the Old Testament in Greek.

2. WORLD CONDITIONS WERE READY TO SERVE THE SPREADING OF HIS MESSAGE
   (a) The starting point was central. Palestine linked Europe, Asia and Africa. It had easy access to these lands, and their business flowed through it.
   (b) The known world was unified by:
      i. The Roman peace which broke down national barriers and gave protection to all law-abiding travellers.
      ii. Roman communications - the sea free from pirates; the land traversed by excellent roads.
      iii. Government officials, military and business men who travelled the world freely and constantly.
      iv. Other facilities for travel, such as a system of international finance.
      v. The Greek language, spoken by educated people everywhere. (This effected before Roman times by the conquests of Alexander the Great.)
   (c) The Jews were scattered over the world. Their synagogues were ready as starting points for witness, and they were among the world’s greatest travellers (Acts 2: 5; 18: 2).

3. HOW IT DID SPREAD
   This will be dealt with in later lessons in more detail, but we note here that:
   (a) After Stephen’s martyrdom, Christian Jews driven from Jerusalem witnessed to the dispersed Jews wherever they went (Acts 11: 19).
   (b) Roman law, in the earliest days of the growth of the Church, protected the Christians’ freedom of worship.
   (c) Paul and other Apostles successfully made use of all the factors we have mentioned, i.e. means of travel, contact with overseas Jewish communities, synagogue teaching, the Greek language and Roman protection.

4. TWO IMPORTANT REMARKS
   (a) *This lesson gives a challenge to present-day Christians*, inasmuch as the present world situation is strikingly similar to what we have described.
i. This is likewise a day of possibility for the spreading of the Gospel.
ii. The world is unified as never before. It is bound together by interests of trade and survival; communication has never been easier, nor ideas so easy to spread.
iii. Its moral condition is corrupt, and its deepest needs are unsatisfied - people delude (deceive) themselves with pleasure, or anxiously seek for soul satisfaction.

(b) This lesson encourages faith.

i. Greek culture, Roman government and Jewish prophecy each in different ways helped to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus.
ii. We thus see the hand of God overruling events for the accomplishing of His purpose.
LESSON 5

His Birth and Childhood

1. THE COMING OF JESUS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF ETERNITY (John 1)
   (a) Verse 14 the key to the lesson.
   (b) Coming of Jesus an act of God - He came not out of history, but into history.
   (c) The passage declares His deity (verses 1-4, 18), His mission (verses 9, 12, 17, 18), that He is both God and man (verse 14), and the manner of reception He received (verses 5, 10-12).

2. INFORMATION ABOUT HIS BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD
   (a) Given by Matthew and Luke only who give independent accounts.
   (b) Matthew tells of the Annunciation from Joseph’s standpoint, the birth in Bethlehem, the wise men, the flight into Egypt, and return to Nazareth.
   (c) Luke tells of the Annunciation from Mary’s standpoint, the journey to and birth at Bethlehem, the shepherds and the presentation of the Baby in the Temple.
   (d) Both witness to the miraculous birth, name Bethlehem as the birthplace, and Nazareth as the place of upbringing.
      Note: The correct date of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2: 1, 2) is now given as between 7 to 5 B.C.

   (a) Note the angelic announcement to Joseph and to Mary separately, the special act of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35), the name and saving mission (Matthew 1:21, 22), the name and kingly mission (Luke 1:31-33), and the descent from David.
   (b) ‘Jesus’ is the New Testament form of the Old Testament name ‘Joshua’.

   (a) Bethlehem - was also the birthplace of David (verse 4; 1 Samuel 16:1). Note the reason for being there.
   (b) The shepherds (a class despised by the stricter Jews as they worked on the Sabbath) were the first to welcome and to proclaim (verse 20) Him who was to be the Good Shepherd (John 10:11).

5. THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE (Luke 2:21-38)
   (a) In keeping with Jewish law, Jesus was named on the eighth day, and presented in the Temple after the fortieth day (verses 22-24 accord with Leviticus 12).
   (b) Simeon and Anna - examples of the godly souls in Israel (also verse 38) - the ‘salt’ of the nation.
   (c) Simeon’s spiritual guidance (verses 26, 27), and notable utterances (verses 32, 34, 35).

6. THE WISE MEN (Matthew 2: 1-18)
   (a) Not of necessity three of them.
   (b) May have been some time after the birth (see verse 7). Herod slew from two years old, and under (verse 16).
   (c) Note verses 4-6 … reference to Micah 5: 2.
   (d) Herod’s evil purpose and act, and the flight into Egypt (verses 13-18).

7. THE VISIT TO THE TEMPLE (Luke 2: 41-51)
   (a) Only one story of the boyhood of Jesus - at the age of twelve a Jewish boy became a ‘son of the law’ (verses 41, 42).
   (b) Jesus missing on the return journey (verses 43, 45).
   (c) Two remarkable things - His questions and answers (verses 46, 47). His first recorded words show awareness of God as His Father (verse 49).

8. THE YEARS IN NAZARETH
   (a) The reason for the return there (Matthew 2: 19, 20, 22).
   (b) Called the ‘silent years’ because only one event recorded (Jerusalem visit).
There is, however, information concerning His family – an illuminating statement (Luke 2:51, 52); He was Mary’s firstborn (Matthew I: 25; Luke 2: 7); He had four brothers and at least two sisters (Matthew 13: 55; Mark 6: 3).

Joseph, a carpenter, is not mentioned after Luke 2: 51, but Mary has constant mention. We infer Joseph died before Jesus became adult (see Mark 6: 3).

Indirectly, from His teaching we have insight into the nature of the Nazareth years. Consider what boyhood experiences lay behind such references as the following, which all appear in His recorded words:

From home life. - Hungry children; grinding the corn; the use of leaven; cutting fuel for the primitive oven; repairing garments; lost silver; useless salt; no food in the house; the shared bedroom; house lit by one lamp.

From village life. - Children at play and unemployed men in the market-place; merchants, stewards, slaves, robbers; building operations and court cases.

From the countryside. - Shepherds, sheep and goats, lost sheep, wolves, farmers digging and fertilising, ploughing, sowing, reaping, birds and wild flowers, hen and chickens, foxes, the clouds in the sky.

From His occupation. - Plough, yokes, lampstands.

Jesus learned not only from nature and from human nature, but also from the Scriptures. These He was taught at school, but He also read them Himself (Luke 4:16). They became for Him illumination, inspiration and confirmation, especially in the great crises of His life.
**INTRODUCTION.** Before we commence a series of lessons on the public ministry of Jesus, we have a lesson about John the Baptist and his work. This is necessary because we need to understand that:

i. Jesus started His public work at a time of religious revival.
ii. This revival was due in a large measure to the work of John the Baptist.
iii. John is thus called the Forerunner, not only because he came immediately before Jesus, but because he prepared the way for Him.

1. **WHO WAS JOHN?**
   
   (a) The son of a relative of Mary named Elizabeth (Luke 1:36), and Zechariah, a priest - godly people living in Judea (Luke 1: 5, 6, 39, 40).
   
   (b) His birth was remarkable - supernaturally foretold, and of aged parents (Luke 1: 7, 11-13).
   
   (c) His upbringing was unusual - a Nazarite, living a solitary life in preparation for a special task (Luke 1: 15-17, 80; Matthew 3:4).
   
   (d) Jesus likened him to Elijah (Matthew 11:14), and said ‘Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater’ (Matthew 11:11).
   
   (e) He suffered imprisonment and death for his witness against wrongdoing, being killed by Herod Antipas at the instigation of Herodias (Matthew 14:3-12).

2. **HOW DID HE PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS?**
   
   (a) By presenting himself as the forerunner spoken of in Isaiah – ‘the voice...calling...make straight the way for the Lord’ (John 1:23).
   
   (b) By announcing the imminent coming of a Great One – ‘Among you stands one you do not know’ (John 1:26).
   
   (c) By declaring the greatness of the ‘Coming One’s’ person and work, speaking of Him as: Of supreme might (Matthew 3:11); of supreme dignity (Matthew 3:11); a supreme judge (Matthew 3:12); a supreme Saviour - taking away the sin of the world (John 1:29), and baptising with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11). The One who would bring in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 3:2).
   
   (d) By insisting that the people needed to prepare themselves for this coming.
      i. Most Jews thought that the coming of the Kingdom would mean for them material and political blessing as a nation (Luke 24:21).
      ii. John may, himself, have shared these views as we gather from his inquiry in Matthew 11:3.
      iii. He, however, saw clearly that the Kingdom was a Kingdom of righteousness (i.e. of heart not of ceremonial righteousness), and that its blessings would come not to the Jews just because they were Abraham’s seed.
      iv. He, therefore, called all men to repentance (Luke 3:7-9) which:
         (a) he demanded from all classes of society;
         (b) must be individual;
         (c) must prove its reality by open confession (baptism an outward sign of an inward repentance), and by changed conduct (Luke 3:10-14).
   
   (e) By plainly admitting the incompleteness of his own mission, saying:
      i. That his successor’s importance would supersede his own (John 3:30; Acts 19:4).
      ii. That his successor’s baptism with fire would supersede his own baptism with water.

3. **WHOM DID HE INFLUENCE?**
   
   (a) All classes came to hear him - leaders, publicans, soldiers and common folk.
   
   (b) They came from different motives - some from curiosity or from political interests, but many because they were conscious of sin.
   
   (c) The common people had great respect for him, but not so the religious leaders (Matthew 21:26, 32).
   
   (d) His influence extended beyond Palestine - Apollos from Alexandria (Acts 18:25), and disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:3).

4. **WHY DID HE MAKE SO STRONG AN IMPRESSION?** Because:
HIS FORERUNNER AND BAPTISM

(a) After years of silence a prophet again appeared in Israel.
(b) Of his message, that the Kingdom was at hand.
(c) Of his character, his austerity and courage.

Austerity - see par. 1(c); courage - in denouncing the sins of religious leaders (Matthew 3:7), and of Herod, even though this resulted in imprisonment and death.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (Matthew 3: 13-17)

1. THE BAPTISM
   (a) With reluctance John baptised Jesus (verses 14, 15).
   (b) The event was accompanied by a sign from the Father and from the Spirit (verses 16, 17).
   (c) This sign had special significance for John (John 1:32-34).

2. THE REASON WHY JESUS WAS BAPTISED
   (a) Not because He had sins of which to repent.
   (b) But as an act by which He made Himself one with sinners – an identification He maintained in the Cross and eternally ('numbered with the transgressors'), and as an act by which He showed His agreement with John and John's message.

NOTES ON BAPTISM

1. WITH WATER
   Pharisees baptised proselytes - part of rite of admission of Gentiles to Judaism. Also used as symbol of purification after defilement. John used it to all Jews as an outward sign of inward repentance.

2. WITH FIRE
   Symbolical language to teach the divine energising and regenerating power of the Spirit of God within the soul. This is an act of God alone, and was fulfilled at Pentecost.
CONCERNING LOVE

LESSON 7

His Temptations

INTRODUCTION. We shall have a number of lessons to do with the public life of Jesus, but we must remember that behind all that was seen by people, there was a private life - a life of spiritual conflict. This lesson gives us an insight into this by giving us an example of the challenge of temptation He faced all through His life.

1. JESUS AND TEMPTATION IN GENERAL (Hebrews 2:16, 18; 4:15)
We need to know that:
(b) He was severely tempted. His temptations were:
i. Real - they made a real challenge to His mind and faith.
ii. Comprehensive – ‘in every way’ (Hebrews 4: 15).
iii. Associated with intense conflict - as in Gethsemane.
(c) His temptations have a likeness to ours.
i. In all points tempted like as we are (Hebrews 4:15; 2:16,18).
ii. He overcame by using the resources which are open to us - the word of God, prayer, obedience and faith.
(d) He wished us to know of, and learn from, His experience.
i. The account of the temptations in the wilderness must have come from His own lips.
ii. Told because He wished His disciples to understand Him more.
iii. Told because of the strength this would be to them in their temptations.

This story illustrates and confirms what is said above. We note:
(a) The significance of the time they occurred.
i. Following His baptism – a threshold of public ministry – had just received the assurance that He is ‘the beloved Son’ and an endowment of the Spirit for His task.
ii. Following forty days of solitary fasting and prayer, preparing mind and heart for His public work.
iii. Hence, all temptations are related to the way His mission should be accomplished, and the use He would make of the power and position He commanded - note the repeated words, ‘if you are the Son of God’.
(b) The form they took.
Much the same detail in Matthew and Luke – a difference in order only.
i. To turn stones into bread (to misuse His own power).
ii. To claim abnormal treatment from God so that He would not be hurt if He cast Himself from a pinnacle of the Temple (to force God to use His power).
iii. To receive power over the nations as a gift from the evil one (to acknowledge Satan’s power).
iv. There is no need to think that He was confronted by a visible presence or that His body was transported to different places. It means that these suggestions came to His mind, and that He had the insight to perceive that they came from the spirit of evil.
(c) Their nature as temptations.
i. Some temptations appeal to an inward desire to do an evil thing.
ii. Others are suggestion to reach a right end by using a wrong method.
iii. The temptations of Jesus are of this second type and thus explain how temptation can come to a holy heart.
(d) The means by which they were recognised and resisted.
i. By the word of God - the mind of Jesus garrisoned by Scripture teaching; the three quotations from Deuteronomy.
ii. By the Spirit of God – who being love regards a position of power as imposing obligation, and is totally against the Satanic spirit which thinks that power should be used for personal comfort and advantage (see Matthew 20:25-28).
3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE TEMPTATIONS TO SHOW HOW EACH WAS A TEMPTATION, AND WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE SUGGESTION MADE

(a) Stones into bread (Matthew 4:2-4).
   i. Based on the legitimate claim that He needed food.
   ii. Had application to Himself - to use His power to satisfy His own hunger, and in principle to secure Himself from want.
   iii. Had application to His mission - possibly included the idea that He should do the same for others. Many in the world were short of bread. If He met this need would they not acclaim Him and accept His spiritual food in consequence?
   iv. Rejected because against God’s method with His children (Deuteronomy 8:3). In the way of His will God will provide. He may will us to know want in order that we may learn spiritual lessons.
   v. Rejected because against God’s will for Jesus Himself. If Jesus had done this He would never more be brother to the needy.
   vi. Rejected because against God’s will for His mission. Men to be won not bribed. Men to hunger after righteousness, for its own sake (see John 6:14, 15, 26, 27).

(b) Casting Himself from the Pinnacle (Matthew 4:5-7).
   i. Based on the legitimate claim that as Son of God He should have the service and protection of the heavenly host (Matthew 26:53).
   ii. Had application to Himself. To enjoy this privilege and establish a right to it, and in principle to secure Himself from hurt.
   iii. Had application to His mission. Jews were expecting a Messiah who would arrive in some such dramatic way in Jerusalem. Would not such an entry convince them of His Messiahship? (See Mark 8:11,12; John 7:27).
   v. Rejected because against God’s will for Jesus Himself. It would separate Jesus from His fellow men among whom all (and in particular the righteous) suffer.
   vi. Rejected because against God’s will for His mission.

(c) Accepting dominion of the world as a gift from Satan (Matthew 4:8-10).
   i. Based on the legitimate claim that as Son of God He was to rule over the nations.
   ii. Had application to Himself. No delay or discomfort; the final goal reached at one stroke. In principle, that He would secure Himself from conflict with evil.
   iii. Had application to His mission. Issue between God and Satan could thus be settled once for all, with consequent apparent benefit to all mankind.
   iv. Rejected because against God’s rule of the universe (Deuteronomy 6:13). One only is to be recognised as Lord, and that is God.
   v. Rejected because against God’s will for Jesus. He was to be marked by a characteristic of undying antagonism to evil (Matthew 12:28, 29).
   vi. Rejected because against God’s will for His mission. He was to condemn and drive out the spirit of this world, replacing it with a new spirit and law.

4. BEHIND ALL THESE TEMPTATIONS LIES THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

(a) The Jews would have welcomed a Messiah who adopted these suggestions of the tempter.
(b) By rejecting them He settled that His people would reject Him.
(c) Yet, by the Cross, the power of the tempter was broken, for Jesus and for all people, and God’s objectives have been secured by God’s methods.

5. THE MESSAGE TO US

(a) Temptations of like nature will assail us-
   i. to avoid want, hurt, conflict with evil, and the Cross;
   ii. to seek for privileged treatment.
(b) We shall overcome only by the power of Jesus and the methods of Jesus.
CONCERNING LOVE

LESSON 8

His Miracles

INTRODUCTION. Miracles have prominent mention in the story of Jesus. The total number of His mighty works far exceeds those of which detailed accounts are given (Matthew 4:24; John 12:37), and we cannot study His life without saying something about them.

1. IT SHOULD NOT SURPRISE US THAT MIRACLES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH JESUS
   (a) A miracle is defined as ‘an intervention by God in what men have learned to look upon as the established course of nature’. ‘Intervention’ – a special coming or ‘a breaking in’.
   (b) Thus we can say that the Bible is a miracle (or has a miraculous cause), inasmuch as in it is supernatural revelation from God, i.e. God broke into the experience of mankind with teaching they could not otherwise know.
   (c) More strongly we can say that Jesus Himself is the greatest miracle, inasmuch as in Him God ‘broke into’ the experience of mankind in a manner never equalled before or since. In Jesus all the power of God was present without restraint (John 3:34, 35). The powers of the age to come were released in this world. Hence, in Him we see a unique life, and from Him receive unique words and expect unique deeds.
   (d) And the deeds He did should be thought of against the background of the miracle He was.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF MIRACLES TO THE ‘LAWS OF NATURE’
   (a) In the Scriptures miracles are called ‘wonders’, ‘signs’, ‘powers’ and ‘mighty work’.
   (b) They produce wonder because of their supernormal nature and are signs because as special acts of God’s power they indicate His presence and overruling control.
   (c) Likewise, they indicate His nature, His interest and His purpose, in relation to the affairs of mankind, as do all His works, whatever their nature (see in Acts 14:10, 15-17, an example of how God’s ‘normal’ acts and a ‘supernormal’ act both give testimony, and agreeing testimony, concerning Him).
   (d) Hence, though miracles differ from the customary method of God’s workings, they do not do violence to so-called ‘natural’ laws, but should be regarded as the working of a higher law used by God for some special result.

3. THE WAY IN WHICH THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CAN BE DIVIDED
   (a) Healing miracles - which show the power Jesus had over the sicknesses which affect people’s bodies and spirits. In this group are included: healing from various sicknesses; expelling demons; raising the dead.
   (b) Nature miracles - which show the power Jesus had over the forces of nature. Prominent examples are: the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000 respectively; stilling the storm; turning water into wine; the draught of fishes.

4. FEATURES WHICH MAKE THE MIRACLES OF JESUS DISTINCTIVE - ‘If I had not done among them what no one else did’ (John 15:24)
   (a) He had an authority others did not have.
      i. He acted as God in the flesh (‘I am willing. Be clean’ – Matthew 8:3), commanding evil spirits who confessed His authority.
      ii. He also had powers none other has had by virtue of His perfect manhood. Before His moral and spiritual uniqueness disease and death fled away.
         In contrast:
      iii. All other agents of God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament were careful to say that their mighty deeds were in no way due to their own power.
      iv. In the case of the disciples, the power was not only acknowledged not to be theirs, but to be in the name and in the power of Jesus, e.g. Acts 3:6, 16.
   (b) He claimed that His miracles were but lesser indications of still greater powers (John 15:24; 5:20). He claimed to have equal authority in the spiritual and eternal worlds, e.g.:
      i. The healing of the sick of the palsy - not only to heal the body, but to forgive sins.
      ii. The raising of Lazarus - not only to restore physical life to Lazarus, but to be the source of eternal life for all (John 11:25, 26).
   (c) All His miracles were of grace and helpfulness.
5. THE DANGER ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

(a) This has been already raised in the lesson on the temptations, i.e. that people would name Him a ‘wonder-worker’ and would will Him to be no more that this, and follow Him for the material benefits He could so wonderfully and constantly provide.

(b) To some extent this did happen.
   i. Many came solely for some physical benefit, or to see some marvel (John 6:2).
   ii. After the feeding of the 5000 they sought to make Him king (John 6:15).
   iii. This caused Jesus personal inconvenience (see Mark 1:45), and distress of spirit (John 6:26, 27)

(c) Jesus took steps to guard against the danger.
   i. He constantly taught that His message was more important than the ‘signs’ He gave (see John 6:27).
   ii. He showed that the miracles were ‘signs’ by using them on occasion as texts for teaching (see John 6).
   iii. He generally demanded faith (i.e. that He was One sent by God), before performing a miracle of personal healing.
   iv. He discourages publicity – ‘See that you don’t tell this to anyone’ (Mark 1:44).
   v. He refused to do miracles to order (Luke 11:16, 29, 30).

6. WHY THEN DID JESUS PERFORM MIRACLES? WHAT SPECIAL PURPOSE DID THEY SERVE?

(a) They were to be signs or evidence – that God was with Him (John 5:36); that the Kingdom of God had come; of the nature of God and of His kingdom, i.e. they show power and purpose to bless mankind and to conquer evil and its fruits (see par. 7); that His mission was to redeem the whole person (affecting both the physical and the spiritual).

(b) Hence, He expected them to produce conviction and faith on these matters (Matthew 11:3-5, 21; John 10:37, 38), which they did for some (Matthew 9:8; John 3:2; 7:31; 9:32, 33); (see also par. 8).

(c) He also performed miracles because of His compassion.

He saw human need and suffering and responded with help, and comfort, often at the cost of personal inconvenience; many such instances being interruptions to His planned programme (Matthew 14:14; 15:32; Mark 1:41; note also ‘He touched the man’).


(a) Jesus spoke of the deliverances He effected as being victories over the kingdom of evil (verses 21, 22)

(b) Not only cases of ‘possession’, but all distresses such as disease, death, hunger and grief are in the ultimate to be regarded as the fruit of sin.

(c) Hence, all miracles which delivered from these are rightly regarded as being blows to the kingdom of evil, and the grief it has brought to mankind.

(d) They can thus be regarded as acts prophetic of the day when the Kingdom of God comes in full effect and ‘sorrow and sighing will flee away’.

(e) Remember, however, that Jesus cast out evil not by a word of power, but by His Cross. Miracles could give to but a small fraction of humanity relief which availed for this side of the grave only, but His death and resurrection have a virtue which avails to give deliverance from sin and all its effects for ever, to all who receive Him.

8. THE MIRACLES DID NOT PRODUCE FAITH IN ALL WHO WITNESSED THEM

(a) Those whose hearts were prejudiced against Him did not deny that the wonder had been performed, but said that He had done the miracle by dependence on evil spirits (Luke11:15).

(b) Jesus well knew that no unbelieving heart can be convinced against its will (Luke 16:31).

9. JESUS CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO USE HIS MIRACULOUS POWERS FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT.

(a) The attitude He expressed in the wilderness He maintained all through, resisting both the suggestion to use miracles for His own comfort or for the success of His mission (Matthew 27:42).

(b) This means that He met all the demands of His own life without calling on any resources but such as are available to us.
INTRODUCTION. All teachers in the ancient world had followers who were known as learners or disciples.

In the Gospels the word ‘disciples’, is used to describe:

i. all who believed in Jesus;
ii. the inner circle of twelve men. These were also called ‘apostles’ which means someone who is ‘sent’ or ‘commissioned’.

1. THE KIND OF MEN JESUS CHOSE FOR APOSTLES

(a) Of humble origin - not from the ranks of the cultured and learned of that day (John 7:47, 48).

(b) The best suited to His purpose:
   i. Young - Peter possibly the only married man - Jesus calls them ‘lads’ (John 21: 5, Moffatt translation).
   ii. Enthusiastic and sincere.
   iii. Teachable - not set in their minds or prejudices.

(c) Yet diverse in character and temperament (see par. 5). United by their devotion to Jesus.

2. THE MANNER OF THEIR CALL

(a) Came into contact with Jesus in varied ways.
   Some introduced by others. Some called directly by Jesus Himself (John 1:35-51; Matthew 9: 9).

(b) Call came with progressive demand, e.g. Peter had been a companion and disciple of Jesus for some time before he was called to full-time service.

(c) All who were called did not follow (Mark 10:21, 22; Luke 9:59-62).

3. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY WERE CALLED (Mark 3: 14)

(a) That they should be with Him – He valued their companionship and friendship (Luke 22: 28).

(b) That He might send them forth to preach.
   i. They helped in His earthly ministry, working in Israel only (Matthew 10:1, 5-8). Others beside the twelve were used in this work (Luke 10:1).
   ii. They were to establish His church and to witness to the world later on (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

(c) That He might train them for this task.
   In the Gospels of Matthew and John there are many examples of the private instruction Jesus gave to the twelve.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS TO HIS APOSTLES

(a) While never aloof, Jesus showed a sense of detachment from them. He said ‘I’ and ‘you’ not ‘we’ – ‘My Father and your Father’ (John 20: 17).

(b) They spoke and acted freely in His presence, yet always regarded Him with a degree of awe (Matthew 8: 27; Mark 9: 32).

5. DETAIL OF THE APOSTOLIC BAND (Matthew 10: 2-4)

(a) Simon Peter - the spokesman of the party. Was impetuous and faulty, yet Jesus called him ‘a rock’ and believed in him (John 1:42; Luke 22:31, 32).

(b) Andrew - Peter’s brother, noted for bringing people to Jesus.

(c) John - son of Zebedee. The disciple Jesus loved. Was at the Cross and given the custody of Jesus’ mother (John 19: 26). Faults of ambition (Mark 10:35-37), and vindictiveness are noted (Luke 9: 52-56). Jesus called him and his brother ‘sons of thunder’ (Mark 3: 17).

(d) James - John’s brother. Closely linked with John in the Gospel (see above references). He was the first martyr of the group (Acts 12:2).

Note: All the above were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Peter, James and John are known as the three privileged apostles, because of the occasions on which they witnessed events not seen by the others (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33).

(e) Thomas - devoted, yet unhopeful (John 11: 16); (Didymus means, ‘a twin’), doubting yet convinced (John 20: 24-28).
(f) *Matthew* (Levi) - one of the despised tax gatherers, actually a ‘customs officer’ at Capernaum.

(g) *Judas Iscariot* - the betrayer (dealt with in a later lesson). Of the remaining five little is known.

(h) *Philip* - who brought Nathanael to Jesus.

(i) *Bartholomew* - probably another name for Nathanael.

(j) *James* - the son of Alphaeus, also called ‘the little’ or ‘the less’.

(k) *Thaddaeus* - also called Judas (John 14: 22).

(l) *Simon*, the Zealot - or the Canaanite.
INTRODUCTION. We sing of Jesus as our ‘Prophet, Priest and King’. We need to remember that He is the world’s greatest Prophet, and at the same time its greatest Teacher. In this lesson we need to note:

1. THE IMPORTANT PLACE TEACHING TOOK IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS
   
   (a) He taught constantly (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:43).
   
   i. Companies of people; in synagogues; in the open air; in the Temple courts.
   
   ii. Individuals (see John 3 and 4).
   
   iii. His disciples, e.g. Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7); Last Supper discourse (John 14-17).
   
   (b) He seized opportunity to teach, e.g. after the encounter with the young ruler (Matthew 19:22, 23); with the quarrelling brothers (Luke 12:14, 15).
   
   (c) He commissioned His disciples to be teachers also (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 5:42).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHING HE GAVE
   
   (a) It dealt with basic and eternal things. He often brushed aside the superficial or temporal question to announce fundamental truth, e.g. John 4:19-24; Luke 13:23, 24; Matthew 22:17, 21.
   
   (b) He claimed that:
      
      i. His teaching was from God (John 7:16, 17);
      
      ii. it superseded what had previously been taught (Matthew 5:17); note ‘But I tell you’ in Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44, also Matthew 24:35;
      
      iii. people would disregard it at their peril (Matthew 7:26, 27); but be eternally blessed and saved by heeding it (Matthew 7:24, 25; 13:23; John 5:24).

3. THE FORMS HIS TEACHING TOOK
   
   (a) Plain instruction. This was given chiefly to disciples, see examples under par. 1(a) iii.
   
   (b) Parables. These were narratives of actual or imaginary incidents in common life from which Jesus drew illustrations of spiritual truth. Matthew and Luke provide abundant examples.
   
   (c) Sayings, such as the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), and many others in the Sermon on the Mount. (One not mentioned in the Gospels is preserved for us in Acts 20:35.) Many of these sayings He doubtless uttered frequently.

4. THE REMARKABLE THING THAT IT WAS NOT WRITTEN DOWN
   
   (a) He committed His teaching to the memory of the humble folk who loved Him.
   
   (b) It was from this storehouse that by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit His teaching has been given to the world (John 14:26).

5. THE FEATURES WHICH MADE HIS TEACHING INTERESTING, INSTRUCTIVE, AND IMPRESSIVE, AND THUS REMEMBERED BY HIS HEARERS
   
   (a) It was adapted to the condition of His hearers, i.e. suited to their need and capacity. This affected both the matter and manner of His teaching. Notable examples in John 3 and 4, also Luke 15, see John 16:12.
   
   (b) It was abundantly illustrated. He linked the unknown spiritual truth He sought to teach to things they well understood, e.g. parables and other illustrations drawn from nature and the domestic life of the people.
   
   (c) It provoked thought. He asked questions and put them in the way of finding the answers themselves (Luke 7:40-43; Matthew 21:28-31).
   
   (d) Parable teaching got past the prejudiced mind (as in the case of David and Nathan - 2 Samuel 12:1-7); compare Matthew 21:40, 41, 45.
   
   (e) Sayings were repeated and stated in striking terms. Many in the, ‘parallel’ form of Jewish poetry (Matthew 10:39-41).
   
   (f) Hearsers were impressed by the personality and authority of the Teacher (Matthew 7:28,29).
   
   (g) The teaching was effectively demonstrated.
      
      i. Basic truths were translated into practical experience (Luke 10:27, 29, 30; Matthew 18:21-23).
ii. Above all He demonstrated it in His own life. All that He taught by word He taught by deed – love to God and others; faith and prayer; patience; forgiveness and mercy (John 13: 5, 13-15).

CONCLUSION. We need to remember what Jesus sought to tell Nicodemus (John 3:2, 3, 17), that He is more than a Teacher. He is the Saviour who makes it possible for His word to be fulfilled in us. He came not only to preach the Gospel, but that there might be a Gospel to preach.
CONCERNING LOVE

LESSON 11

His Teaching concerning the Kingdom of God

1. THE PROMINENCE THE WORD ‘KINGDOM’ HAD IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS
   (a) The subject of His first (Mark 1:15); of His last (Acts 1:3) announcements and of many of the parables.
   (b) The message He directed His disciples to proclaim (Matthew 10: 7).

2. THE MEANING THIS WORD HAD FOR THE JEWISH HEARERS
   (a) Not a new word for them – many references in Old Testament days by the prophets.
   (b) At the time when Jesus came national distress (see Lesson 2, par. 6) had brought the word into greater prominence.
   (c) The majority thought of the Kingdom as that which would provide political dominion, material prosperity, and exclusive blessing from God for Jews only.
   (d) They believed it would come by the act of God through a warrior Messiah.
   (e) The more spiritually minded taught that the Kingdom would not come until there was national repentance and strict observance of the law.
   (a) John the Baptist’s announcement that the Kingdom was at hand (Matthew 3: 2) aroused and excited the nation, but his word that this coming would involve judgment on the Jews themselves (Matthew 3: 9, 10) served to divide the spiritually minded from the materially minded among them.

3. THE MEANING GIVEN TO IT BY JESUS
   (a) As to the nature of the Kingdom, that it was:
      i. Spiritual - different from the kingdoms of this world, and not to be thought of as bringing material comfort for all (John 18: 36).
      ii. Moral - a Kingdom of righteousness. Its victories would be over sin and Satan, and won with spiritual weapons (Matthew 12: 28, 29).
         Here by God’s grace because Jesus had come – repentance should result. It could not now precede.
      v. Yet awaiting a final consummation from another act of God (Acts 1:6, 7; Revelation 11:15).
   (b) As to its members:
      i. Citizenship is offered to all irrespective of birth or race (Matthew 13: 38; 8:10, 11).
      ii. They became members by spiritual rebirth only (John 3: 1-8; Luke 18: 17).
      iii. They are marked by a Christlike character (Matthew 5: 1-12), the outstanding characteristic being Love (see Lesson 13).

4. THE CONFLICT THAT AROSE FROM THIS DIVERSITY OF IDEAS
   (a) Jesus refused to give the national glory and material blessings they expected, and offended them by His universal gospel.
   (b) The Jews would not accept Him as Messiah, nor submit to the demand His teaching presented.
   (c) This led to His being finally rejected by the nation, and crucified by its leaders.
CONCERNING LOVE

LESSON 12

His Teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God

INTRODUCTION. In this and the next lesson we move to the deeper truth that the citizens of the Kingdom are also members of a Family, in which the King is also the great Father, and the citizens are brothers and sisters. In speaking of God, Jesus almost exclusively used the name ‘Father’. In this lesson we seek to present not thoughts that this title produces in us, but the meaning it had for Him.

1. THE IDEA OF GOD AS FATHER WAS KNOWN IN OLD TESTAMENT DAYS
   Not only as Father to the nation (Deuteronomy 32:6), but also to the individual (Psalm 68:5; 103:13).

2. JESUS MADE THIS IDEA CENTRAL, AND GAVE THE WORD ‘FATHER’ A NEW AND GREATER VALUE
   (a) He hardly ever referred to God by any other title.
   (b) ‘Father’ is so used in His first and last recorded words (Luke 2: 49; 23: 46; Acts 1: 7).
   (c) To reveal the hitherto incompletely known nature of God was one of His greatest offices (John 1: 18; Matthew 11: 27).
      (a) As He fulfilled the greater work of revealing the nature of God, He did not need to concern Himself with the lesser work of proving the existence of God.

3. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE A SINGULAR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD AS FATHER
   (a) In nature, unity, power and glory (John 10: 30, 15; 17: 5).
   (b) The concordance provides abundant evidence of the use of the phrase ‘My Father’ in an exclusive sense (i.e. in a way we cannot share).

4. HE TAUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT GOD IS IN TRUTH THE FATHER OF ALL MANKIND
   (a) As Creator and merciful Provider, including the ungodly (Matthew 5: 45);
   (b) including all nations (John 4: 21, 23); (He gave a Samaritan woman a right to think of God as Father),
   (c) yet to each as individuals (Scripture references for (b) and (d) apply here also).
   (d) Desiring above all to give to each redeeming grace (Luke 15: 7; Matthew 18: 12, 14; Luke 11: 13).
   (e) Indeed, God is the only One who fulfils the full function of Fatherhood to mankind (Matthew 23: 9).
   (f) He gave this supreme revelation concerning God, by:
      i. teaching, direct and indirect (see above references);
      ii. expression of His own nature (John 14: 7, 9).

5. HE TAUGHT THAT GOD IS FATHER IN A SPECIAL SENSE TO THOSE WHO HAVE A SPECIAL UNION WITH JESUS HIMSELF
   (a) This is the relationship of a shared nature: not only cared for by the Father, but like Him in character.
   (b) This is true for those who through Jesus come to the Father, and who through Jesus receive the adopting Spirit (John 1: 12; 3:36; 14: 6; 17: 2).
   (c) This relationship bestows supreme benefits.
      i. Special care, provision and protection (Matthew 6:25 -33; 28:20).
      iii. A place in the heavenly home (John 14: 3; Matthew 5: 12).
      iv. Inconceivable blessing (John 17: 21).
   (d) This relationship imposes serious responsibilities.
      i. Obligation to maintain it (John 15:4).
      ii. Obligation to confess it - by word (Matthew 10:32, 33); by character (Matthew 5:16, 44, 45); by suffering for the Father’s honour (Matthew 5:11).
      iii. Obligation to regard all equally as children of God, and in a particular sense those ‘who belong to the family of believers’ (John 15: 12, Galatians 6: 10).
   (e) The Lord’s Prayer gives expression to all this teaching.

21
6. RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AS FATHER DOES NOT PERMIT ANY DIMINISHING IN THE DEMAND FOR ABSOLUTE REVERENCE

(a) To call God Father does not mean that He is soft and indulgent in His dealings with us.

(b) Jesus taught us to say ‘Our Father . . . hallowed be your name’ i.e. ‘May your name be held in complete reverence by us, and by all’.

(c) In God’s Fatherhood is retained the dignity of Deity, King and Judge. Hence from Jesus we have, as well as words of grace, words of most solemn warning when He is dealing with this subject.
CONCERNING LOVE

LESSON 13

His Teaching concerning Love - The Law of the Kingdom

INTRODUCTION. Jesus taught the way of love. This had been spoken of before, but never with such prominence and wideness of application as He gave to it, and never before did a life give such demonstration of it in practice. We seek to learn important things about this subject from His words and example.

1. THE WAY DECLARED
   (a) Teaching from the Old Testament (Matthew 22: 37, 39).
      i. Matthew 22: 37 - the duty of love to God is taken from Deuteronomy 6:5; words well known to Jews, being part of a passage recited twice daily in family worship.
      ii. Matthew 22: 39 - the duty of love to your neighbour is taken from Leviticus 19:18; though there given with a narrower application than that given by Jesus.
   (b) Teaching from Jesus. He:
      i. brought these two together in an association which can never again be broken; .
      ii. in the ‘Good Samaritan’ parable extended ‘neighbour’ to mean anyone (Luke 10:36, 37);
      iii. in Luke 6:27 (and elsewhere) brought ‘enemies’ within the scope of this commandment ;
      iv. gave emphasis to it as being His outstanding commandment in His farewell words to His disciples (John 13:34).

2. THE REASON BEHIND THE COMMAND
   (a) Love is God’s nature and God’s method.
   (b) Being children of God involves being of a nature like His (Luke 6: 35, 36; Matthew 5:44-48).
   (c) We thus should love God in response to the love He has for us, and in exhibition of the loving nature we receive as His true children.
   (d) Thus, as Christians, we should love others. Because:
      i. God loves them, with Calvary love;
      ii. we share His loving nature;
      iii. the two commands go together; a love to others which inspires service for them is a necessary way by which love to God is expressed (John 21:17; Matthew 25:40, 45).

3. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE
   We need to study this word (which has suffered debasement and misconstruction), in the light of what Jesus said and was.
   (a) It excludes none, having the singular characteristic of loving those who by human standards are not love-worthy.
   (b) Love to people does not mean that approval is given to all that they are and do, or that a blind eye is turned to what is evil in them. Jesus spoke words of strong condemnation to sinners, and even to His disciples (see Revelation 3:19).
   (c) It does mean an attitude of goodwill to all and of activity for their well-being (Luke 6:31-35), even at the cost of sacrifice.
   (d) Its demands are sovereign; it allows of no contrary motive at any time, or for any case.
   (e) It is of God, and is different from some of the characteristic motives which are active in fallen human nature.
   (f) It is, therefore, an outstanding mark of the new nature and of the superhuman grace needed to produce it, in regenerate lives (John 13: 35).

4. SOME DIRECTIONS AS TO HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE
   (a) To all mankind
      i. To give them the sort of treatment we would desire to receive ourselves (Luke 6: 31).
      ii. To refrain from judging them. We are to regard ourselves as not qualified to do this. We do not know all the facts, and our own faults pervert our capacity to assess impartially what we do see (Matthew 7: 1 -3).
CONCERNING LOVE

(b) To those who wrong us.
   i. An attitude of constant forgiveness (Matthew 18:21, 22). This attitude is further stimulated by the consideration that the forgiveness we are hoping for from God immeasurably outweighs any forgiveness we give to others (compare 10,000 talents (verse 24), and 100 denarii (verse 28), which illustration would certainly convey to the hearers a ratio of well surpassing 1,000,000 to 1).

(c) To those who hate and intend evil to us (Luke 6:27, 28).
   i. Neither resentment nor retaliation (see also Luke 9: 51-56),
   ii. but forgiveness and acts of active goodwill.

(a) A word of warning that no deed can be loving unless it is inspired by a loving heart (Matthew 6:1, 2)

5. THE LOVING NATURE AT WORK IN THE WORLD
   (a) It operates in the world with difficulty and with risk.
      i. Its spirit is contrary to the spirit of the world.
      ii. It is likely to be condemned as being impracticable, or resented because it is different, to the point of persecution to death, as with Jesus (John 15: 24, 25).
      iii. It always lays itself open to be taken advantage of.

(b) Nevertheless, in relation to the world, it can neither withdraw nor be inactive.
   i. Its appointment is to the world, as with Jesus.
   ii. It must be positively active in giving and service. By its nature it cannot be content with being negatively unoffending, and nothing more.

   (c) It operates in the world with the certainty of success.
      i. People were created to love God and each other; and God, by Calvary and Pentecost, has released the power which achieves this.
      ii. People are hungry for love, and almost all practise it in some aspects.
      iii. To be treated lovingly restores self-respect to the fallen and ashamed.
      iv. The futility of all other ways is constantly demonstrated.

6. THE IMPACT OF THIS TEACHING ON THE INDIVIDUAL
   (a) It comes with great blessing, producing trust which relies on His unchanging gracious love.
   (b) It comes with obligation; the receiving of the great blessing of sonship involves the obligation to be like God in loving others.
   (c) It comes with warning. If we reject the obligation, we forfeit the blessing (Matthew 18:34,35; 6:15; 7: 1).
INTRODUCTION. The teaching Jesus gave concerning prayer comes from two sources: the teaching He gave by example; the teaching He gave by word. We consider something of both.

1. THE DISCIPLES WERE NOT TOTALLY IGNORANT CONCERNING PRAYER (Luke 11:1)
   (a) The Jews were a praying people and some had been disciples of John, who emphasised prayer.
   (b) They perceived, however, the difference between their praying and that of Jesus, and asked to be ‘taught to pray’.

2. TEACHING GIVEN BY EXAMPLE. He honoured the Jewish forms of prayer, but in addition:
   (a) He lived in an habitual atmosphere of prayer.
      i. He lived in constant communion with the Father (as Mark 7:34),
      ii. but also spent long periods in private prayer. If the world’s greatest toiler did not allow work to crowd out this practice. We have record of His praying in the early morning (Mark 1:35), and at night (Luke 6:12).
      iii. Much concerning His prayer life was private even from His most intimate disciples and hence is not recorded.
   (b) Intensified praying was called forth by the special crises of His life. Among these we mention - the Baptism (Luke 3:21); the Calling of the Twelve (Luke 6:12, 13); the Transfiguration (Luke 9:29); the Last Supper (John 17); Gethsemane (Luke 22:44); Calvary (Luke 23:46).
   (c) He prayed not only for Himself but also for others (Luke 22:32; 23:34; John 17:11), and for us (John 17:20).
      (Note: His prayers for support and guidance are evidences of His humanity (see Salvation Story, Ch. 4).

3. TEACHING GIVEN BY WORD
   Of this we note:
   (a) There must be a right attitude of mind.
      i. To think of God as Father - present and interested (Matthew 6:8).
      ii. To think of God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ – so that we pray ‘in His name’ (John 14:13)-linking our prayers with His intercession, and offering such prayers as agree with His nature.
      iii. Not to think that the value of a prayer lies in the words which are used (Matthew 6:7).
   (b) There must be a right attitude of heart.
      i. No wrong motive - such as seeking to impress others with the appearance of sanctity (Matthew 6:5).
      ii. A true sense and humble confession of our need, e.g. Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14).
      iii. Offering all petition in the atmosphere of ‘Your kingdom come, your will be done’.
   (c) There must be a right relationship with others.
      i. Willingness to forgive (Matthew 6:15).
      ii. Differences put right first (Matthew 5:24, 25).
   (d) We must practise private prayer (Matthew 6:6).
   (e) Prayer must be persistent (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1).
   (f) There should also be corporate prayer (Matthew 18:19, 20).
   (g) Above all, prayer is indispensable -- for Christian life (John 16:23, 24; Mark 14:38), and for Christian service (Mark 9:28, 29).
   (h) The Lord’s Prayer is inspired by these principles, and thus is not just a prayer to be said, but a prayer to be studied.

CONCLUSION. In the books of the New Testament which follow the Gospels, we can see how the disciples learned this lesson.
INTRODUCTION. Under this title we consider the relation the teaching of Jesus has to the problems associated with family, commercial and political life, and all features of the relationships of men in human society.

1. THE IMPACT OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THESE MATTERS

   (a) In the world to which Jesus came there were many social wrongs, such as slavery and other denials of personal liberty and justice; neglect of the sick and the poor; gambling and gladiatorial displays; and yet we look in vain for a direct word from Him on many of these evils.

   (b) This does not mean He was not concerned about them.

   (c) It is the words He spoke and the Spirit He released that have swept away many of these things, and that now stimulate attack on those which remain. Consider the effect of Matthew 7:12.

   (d) This is because He dealt with underlying principles which availed to challenge evil conditions in His and in every succeeding age.

   (e) Some illustration of this is provided in the subsequent paragraphs.

2. JESUS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

   (a) He gave sanctity to family life (already highly honoured by the Jews) by:
      i. living for the greater part of His life as a member of a family;
      ii. finding abundant illustration from home life to teach the truths of the Kingdom;
      iii. condemning offences against natural family affection, e.g. neglect of needy parents (Mark 7:10-13); the unforgiving brother (Luke 15:28-30).

   (b) He spoke clearly of the sanctity of the marriage vow (Mark 10:2-12).

   (c) Challenged by His attitude the view which regarded women as being subordinate and inferior to men.

   (d) He likewise affected the world’s attitude to children (Mark 10:13-16 and elsewhere).

   (e) He taught, however, that when family claims clash with the claims of the Kingdom, the interests of the Kingdom must be put first (Luke 14:25-27; Matthew 19:29).

3. JESUS AND WEALTH AND POVERTY

   He taught that:

   (a) The best things in life are not secured by wealth (Luke 12:15; Matthew 16:26).

   (b) Great possessions are a danger:
      i. Encouraging self-indulgence and trust in the imagined security they give.

   (c) They are a sacred trust – lesson of accountability in the Parable of the talents (Matthew 25, and the verdict of the judgment in verses 42 and 43).

   (d) They must be sacrificed if they injure the soul, or conflict with the demands of discipleship - the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-24; 6:19-21, 24). 'Mammon' – the worship of money.

   (e) As for the poor and afflicted Jesus was Himself one with them (Luke 9: 58), and makes their cause His own. This is presented prominently throughout Luke’s Gospel, and in Matthew 25 where we learn of:
      i. the royal reward for those who serve the needy (Matthew 25:37-40), which service is wider than the giving of alms (i.e. visiting the sick and the prisoner). See also Matthew 10:40-42;
      ii. the divine judgment on those who withhold the help they could give (Matthew 25:45, 46).

   (f) There is a royal reward for those who accept sacrifice and poverty for His sake (Matthew 19:29).

4. JESUS AND INJUSTICE AND CRUELTY

   (a) Jesus stands also beside the victims of cruelty and injustice, making their cause His own, as indeed He shared their experience (Mark 10: 33, 34).
(b) His attitude to the guilty in such matters is evidenced all through His teaching, and the judgment pronounced on those who withhold help (see par. 3(e) ii) implies how much greater is the judgment on those who cause the distress (see Matthew 18:6, 7; Mark 14:21).
(c) By example and word He taught the oppressed to refrain from retaliation and to pray for their oppressors, but this does not cancel the judgment that God will exact on the guilty ones (Matthew 23: 34, 35).
(d) This teaching was clearly perceived by His apostles who echoed it in their conduct and teaching, e.g. Romans 12:19; 1 Peter 2:21-23.
(e) Jesus specially identifies Himself with those who suffer for His sake (Acts 8:3; 9:4).

5. HIS ANSWER TO A STATE PROBLEM (Matthew 22:15-22)
(a) This unsought-for event, designed for His downfall, drew from Him the teaching that as we receive benefits from the State, so we should submit to all its lawful demands.
(b) As in the case of a clash with family loyalties, Kingdom interests are paramount. If the State makes demands which conflict with our duty to the Kingdom, then the State is to be resisted.
   Give both to God and to Caesar, except when Caesar seeks to prevent the giving of our due to God.
(c) He forewarned His followers that such situations would arise. (See Matthew 10:17, 18; Acts 4:19).
INTRODUCTION. This lesson uses the word ‘Messiah’ frequently. ‘Messiah’ or ‘Messias’ is the Old Testament Hebrew word meaning ‘the Anointed One’. In the New Testament the Greek word ‘Christ’ is used with the same meaning [see Salvation Story, Ch. 4, Appendix 5].

1. THE TWO GREAT MATTERS DEALT WITH AT CAESAREA PHILIPPI (Matthew 16:13-25)
   (a) The question as to who Jesus is (verses 13-20).
       The question (verse 13); some views (verse 14); Peter’s great statement (verse 16); the importance of this statement (verses 17-19); the command to be silent (verse 20).
   (b) The disclosure that He would be killed by the Jewish leaders (verses 21-25). Important words ‘From that time on’ (verse 21); the amazing statement about being killed (verse 21); Peter’s protest and the stern rebuke he received (verses 22, 23); the Cross not for Jesus only (verses 24, 25).

2. THE TWO GREAT STUMBLING-BLOCKS TO THE JEWISH MIND ILLUSTRATED HERE (agreeing with the two parts above).
   (a) That one with the mind and programme of Jesus could possibly be the Messiah.
   (b) That the Messiah could possibly die a violent death at the hands of His own countrymen.

3. THE FIRST DIFFICULTY – THE INABILITY TO RECOGNISE THAT JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH
   (a) It arose because the people had a wrong idea of what the Messiah would be like.
       The Jews were not in agreement concerning the coming of a Messiah, but those who expected Him were generally agreed that He would:
       i. be pro-Jewish (i.e. anti-Gentile);
       ii. bring material blessings to all Jewry;
       iii. crush all enemies to make His people sovereign in the earth.
   (b) It arose also from resistant hearts, who resented Jesus’ call to righteousness of life, and His condemnation of their heart sins. To accept Him as Messiah and adopt His way would be a costly and sacrificial way they were not prepared to take.
   (c) As time went on it became clearer that Jesus was not going to fit the pattern of (a), and was not going to relax on (b). This resulted in:
       i. The falling away of formerly enthusiastic supporters (John 6:66).
       ii. The intensifying of hostility to the point of agreement to destroy Him, e.g. John 7:1.

4. HOW THIS DIFFICULTY WAS SOLVED FOR PETER AND FOR OTHERS
   Many sincere hearts:
   (a) saw that God was with Him;
   (b) were convinced by the majesty and beauty of His person;
   (c) received inward witness from God which swept away all mental doubts and queries, e.g. Peter (Matthew 16:17); see also John 11:27; Matthew 11:25-27.

*(Note: We do not say there were no exceptions to this way of thinking.)*

5. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REVELATION WHICH CAME TO PETER
   (a) He acclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, which was a greater thing than calling Him Messias.
       (There can have been few, if any, Jews who thought that the Messiah would be God Incarnate.)
   (b) Jesus said that on this foundation truth the church would be built (Matthew 16:18).

6. THE SECOND DIFFICULTY – THE INABILITY TO ACCEPT THE IDEA OF A SUFFERING MESSIAH
   (a) A martyred Messiah was inconceivable to the Jewish mind (John 12:32-34; 1 Corinthians 1:23).
They felt certain that:
   i. the Messiah would receive a devoted welcome from the nation;
   ii. their Messiah would most quickly crush all His opponents whether without or within the nation. (See Psalms 2:1-9).

This difficulty was equally real to the disciples.
   i. However plainly Jesus spoke about His death and resurrection, the disciples seemed incapable of heeding it (Luke 18: 31-34).
   ii. Thus when Jesus came to the Cross they were as devastated as though they had been given no warning at all (Mark 16:10, 11).

His followers were not incorrect in thinking of Him as an invincible Messiah, but in thinking that His glory would be shown in saving Himself from suffering and death, whereas He won the greater victory of accepting death and triumphing over it. To this supreme victory Peter later testified (Acts 2: 24).

7. HOW DID JESUS BECOME ASSURED ON THESE GREAT QUESTIONS HIMSELF?
   We cannot give an exhaustive nor absolute answer, but we are entitled to remark:

   (a) He lived a life which was fully illumined by the Spirit of God.
   (b) Concerning His deity:
      i. His first recorded words show that at an early age He was aware of a special relationship with God.
      ii. His awareness of a unique relationship to the Father is the ground upon which He was attacked in the temptations in the wilderness – ‘If you are the Son of God’.
   (c) Concerning His death at the hand of His people. Conviction regarding this would come by:
      i. Perception of the irreconcilable conflict between good and evil.
      ii. The record of the treatment given to the prophets (see Matthew 5:11, 12; 21:35-39).
      iii. Study of other Scriptures. There He found such convincing indications, that He could not understand why others did not see them too (Luke 24:25-27).
   (d) There were confirming signs on both points, such as accompanied the birth, baptism, transfiguration, and John 12:27, 28.

8. HOW FURTHER REVELATION CONCERNING THESE MATTERS WAS GIVEN BY THE TRANSFIGURATION (Luke 9: 28-36; recorded also Matthew 17: 1-13; Mark 9: 2-13)

   (a) The chief features of this event:
      Jesus, Peter, James and John climbed into a high mountain (not named) (Luke 9:28); Jesus at prayer (Luke 9: 29); He was transformed, shining with inner glory (Luke 9:29); Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him concerning His coming death (Luke 9: 30,31); the voice from the bright cloud - words as at the Baptism; also the command to ‘listen to Him’ (Luke 9:35); the disciples’ fear (Luke 9:34); all supernormal manifestations disappeared, and Jesus in His normal form alone remained (Luke 9:36) ; the charge to be silent until “the Son of Man had risen from the dead” (Mark 9:9); a reference which left them questioning (Mark 9:10).

   Note 1: Moses representing the Law and Elijah the Prophets compass between them the Old Testament revelation.
   Note 2: These events would be the more impressive happening at night time (see Luke 9:37) – ‘The next day when they came down.’

   (b) This experience confirmed both to Jesus and to the disciples:
      i. That He was the Son of God – the glory; the voice from Heaven; His superior position to Moses and Elijah.
      ii. That His death at Jerusalem was part of His Messianic mission, in accord with the march of events from the beginning of God’s dealings with men. (Moses and Elijah speaking of His coming death.)

   (c) The disciples, for whose special benefit this manifestation was granted, missed the full significance of what they had witnessed, not realising all its import until after the Resurrection. Note Mark’s comment (Mark 9:31, 32), and 2 Peter 1:16-18.
INTRODUCTION. An examination of the four Gospels will show how large a portion each writer gave to recording the events connected with the last days of the story. We are not able to cover all this detail, but say something about the most important matters.

1. THE EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK
   It is not easy, nor at some points is it possible, to fit the four accounts together, but the following is a probable order of events:
   - **Saturday** (the Jewish Sabbath): Supper in the house of Simon, the leper (John 12:1; Matthew 26:6).
   - **Sunday**: The triumphant entry and return to Bethany.
   - **Monday**: Visit to Jerusalem; the Temple cleansed.
   - **Tuesday and Wednesday**: Both days probably spent in teaching in the Temple courts, when questions were put by various opponents. Wednesday possibly the day when Judas went first to the chief priests.
   - **Thursday**: Preparation for the Last Supper; the Supper.
   - **Friday**: Gethsemane, the Betrayal and Arrest.

   *Note:* The Jews reckoned the day from sunset to sunset.

2. THERE IS A SYMBOLIC VALUE IN SOME OF THESE EVENTS WHICH SHOULD BE NOTED
   - The entry into Jerusalem;
   - the cleansing of the Temple;
   - the washing of the disciples’ feet; and
   - the bread and the wine at the Last Supper, need to be known not only by the detail of the happenings, but also by the special meaning which lay behind these acts.

3. IT WAS PASSOVER TIME
   - **(a)** The first of the three great feasts of the year.
     In the commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12:13-15), the Jews held a Passover celebration (one day), followed by a seven-day ‘Feast of unleavened bread’ (bread made without yeast).
   - **(b)** Jews from all parts of the land, and from other lands, were thronging to Jerusalem.
   - **(c)** Jesus and His company came too.

   - **(a)** The significance of the manner of this entry.
     By riding in this way on the ass, He presented Himself to the nation as Messiah and King. Zechariah 9:9 interprets this act (see Matthew 21:4, 5).
   - **(b)** The response of the crowd (verses 37, 38).
     i. People (many of them pilgrims) waved palm branches and acclaimed Him by crying out passages of Festival Psalms (see Psalm 118: 26).
     ii. The report of the raising of Lazarus helped to stimulate them (John 12:17, 18).
   - **(c)** The resentment of the Pharisees (verses 39, 40).
   - **(d)** The grief of Jesus (verses 41-44).
     i. He knew that notwithstanding the popular acclamation of that day He would be rejected by the nation, verse 44, ‘because you did not recognise the time of God’s coming to you’.
     ii. He wept as He foresaw the dreadful consequence of that refusal (verse 43).

5. THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE (Matthew 21:12, 13)
   - **(a)** The unholy traffic in the Temple.
     i. The part concerned was the outer court – the only part open to Gentiles.
     ii. Birds and beasts were sold for sacrifices.
     iii. Foreign money was changed to Jewish half-shekels, which coins alone could be used in paying the Temple tax.
     iv. The Temple was defiled not only by this marketing, but by the extortionate profit-making spirit in which it was conducted.
(b) The effect of the act and words of Jesus.
   i. The people were impressed with His fearlessness, and with His zeal for the universal honouring of God’s name.
   Note: ‘for all nations’ (Mark 11:17).
   ii. The chief priests (who are also credited with having a financial interest in these businesses) had still more cause to hate Him.

6. THE LAST SUPPER (Mark 14:13-26)
   (a) The Upper Room.
      i. Provided by friends – note the atmosphere of secrecy (verses 13-16).
      ii. It was probably this same room where Jesus appeared to His disciples on the Resurrection Day (Mark 16:14), and the room mentioned in Acts 1:13; 2:1.
      iii. It likewise may well have been the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, writer of this Gospel (see Acts 12:12).
   (b) The words spoken.
      i. Jesus prepared the disciples for the betrayal, the arrest, and the Cross (Mark 14:18, 27).
      ii. He gave the vital teaching about the coming of the Spirit, recorded in John 14-16.
      iii. He concluded with the great Intercessory Prayer (John 17).
   (c) Two great symbolic acts.
      i. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:2-17). By word and example Jesus taught the way of humble service. [Luke records that there had been strife among the twelve as to their respective rank (Luke 22:24)].
      ii. He used part of the meal – the sharing of the bread and wine – to teach that they were to receive His own Spirit within them. It was by virtue of His blood shed for them that this New Covenant (spoken of in Jeremiah 31:31-34) would be established.

7. GETHSEMANE (Mark 14:33-42)
   (a) We do not attempt to fathom the depths of His suffering – ‘we may not know, we cannot tell what pains He had to bear’
      i. The anguish of spirit was such that it affected His physical being also (Luke 22:44).
      ii. In the bitterness of the ‘cup’ there would be grief for His mother and for His friends – their weakness and spiritual danger; grief over Judas and the nation which was rejecting Him.
      iii. But above all the awful mystery which lies behind Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:21 – ‘God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us’
   (b) His prayer was marked by two features (verse 36).
      i. Of entreaty - that He might be spared from drinking ‘this cup’.
      ii. Of submission - that the Father’s will should be done.
   (c) His disciples (verse 33).
      i. Peter, James and John were closer than the others. In this supreme crisis He craved for both divine and human companionship (verse 50).
      ii. Judas carried out his act of betrayal.
      iii. The eleven failed both to watch and to pray, and finally they fled.
   (d) Mark is the only writer who mentions the escaping boy (verses 51, 52); most probably this was none other than Mark himself.
INTRODUCTION. The Jewish leaders’ decision that Jesus must be killed was of long standing. The Pharisees, with whom He had come into conflict in Galilee, had arrived at this decision early in His ministry (Mark 3:6). The Chief Priests and Jerusalem rulers in their turn had conflict with Him during His visits to the city and they had made attempts to arrest and to destroy Him (John 7:1; 8:59; 10:31, 39). Both of these parties (so much at variance at other times) found common purpose in working for the death of Jesus. Indeed, they had been in league to this end for some time (John 7:32).

1. THE EFFECT ON THE GENERAL PUBLIC OF THE RAISING OF LAZARUS RESULTED IN A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SANHEDRIN (John 11:45-53, 57)
   (a) This miracle (performed on the doorstep of Jerusalem) stimulated a surge of interest and faith in Jesus (John 11:45; 12:9, 11).
   (b) Hence a meeting was called (verse 47) with the High Priest, Caiaphas, presiding (verse 49).
   (c) They decided to kill Jesus as soon as possible (verse 53), also Lazarus (John 12:10).
   (d) They made their decision public, and advertised for an informer (verse 57).
   (e) Apart from the motive of hatred, they were moved by expediency (verses 48-50) – (the best thing to do in the circumstances).
   (f) Caiaphas uttered a greater word than he realised (verses 51, 52).

2. DURING PASSION WEEK THE FURY OF THE ENEMIES OF JESUS INCREASED DAILY
   (a) The crowd’s response to the Triumphant Entry; the Cleansing of the Temple; the praises of the children (Matthew 21:14, 15) were notable causes.
   (b) Matthew 21, 22; Mark 11, 12; Luke 20 contain detail as to how Jesus confounded them publicly when they sought to discredit Him as He taught the crowds in the Temple Courts. Herodians, Sadducees and Pharisees in turn were silenced (Matthew 22:46).
   (c) Finally, Matthew 23 records how He denounced the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and pronounced doom on the city.

3. THE ROOT CAUSE OF THIS HATRED
   (a) Each section of His enemies had their own reasons for hating Him, but one root reason was common to all.
   (b) He exposed and condemned, by His life and teaching, something corrupt in them which they would not admit, or of which they would not repent (John 3:19).
   (c) This helps to explain why Judas turned against Jesus. He had been wrong in heart and life for some time past (John 12:5, 6).

4. THEIR DILEMMA AND ITS SOLUTION
   (a) They wished to strike without delay, yet they feared the crowd.
   (b) They felt they must delay action until after the feast (Mark 14:1, 2,—‘not during the feast’).
   (c) The coming of Judas changed the situation (Luke 22:1-6).
   (d) He could provide a secret arrest and speedy action (Luke 22:6).

5. JUDAS BETRAYED JESUS IN GETHSEMANE LATE ON THE THURSDAY EVENING (already Friday with the Jews) (Luke 22:47-53)

6. THE MYSTERY OF JUDAS
   (a) What was his motive? It may have been love of money (John 12:6); jealousy; fear; the desire to force the hand of Jesus; retaliation for his disappointment over the ‘Kingdom’.
   (b) Jesus’ foreknowledge of his treachery does not mean that he was predestined to be a traitor.
   (c) Judas was later overcome with remorse and died wretchedly (Matthew 27:3-5).
7. THE SANHEDRIN ‘TRY’ JESUS
   (a) Before Annas (John 18:13) - former High Priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas. Had been deposed from the High Priesthood by a former Roman Governor, but was still a power in the Sanhedrin.
   (b) Before Caiaphas and some of the Sanhedrin, during the night (Mark 14:53, 55-65).
      i. Witnesses against Jesus were sought – those found disagreed (Mark 14:55-59).
      ii. Finally, Caiaphas asked Jesus if He claimed to be the Son of God (Mark 14:61).
      iii. His answer gave them what they wanted – ground for a verdict of blasphemy, meriting death (Mark 14:62, 64).
   (c) Before the full council at dawn (Mark 15:1). This Council passed the official verdict because, being held at night, the former proceedings were not legal. See Acts 4:3.

8. JESUS TAKEN TO PILATE
   (a) The reason. The Sanhedrin could condemn to death, but could not execute the sentence without the Governor’s sanction (John 18:31, 32).
   (b) The proceedings.
      i. To their annoyance, Pilate probed into the case.
      ii. An accusation of blasphemy would have no weight with Pilate, so they offered a threefold charge (Luke 23:2):
         Perverting the nation, i.e. stirring up the people to revolt; forbidding to pay tribute to Caesar (a deliberate lie); making Himself a King.
      iii. All these were offences against the Emperor and against Roman rule.
      iv. The clamour revealed that Jesus came from Galilee, and thus offered Pilate a way out. He sent Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:5-7).

9. JESUS BEFORE HEROD ANTIPAS (slayer of John the Baptist) (Luke 23:6-12)
   This depraved man treated the suggestion of Jesus as a King with derision, made sport of Him, and returned Him to Pilate.

    (a) Peter says ‘he had decided to let Him go’ (Acts 3:13); Mark says ‘knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over’ (Mark 15:10).
    (b) Pilate made several attempts to release Jesus.
        ii. He gave sentence that Jesus should be scourged and then released (Luke 23:16, 22).
        iii. He offered Him as the prisoner to be released according to the custom of the Festival (Luke 23:17).
    (c) The chief priests and crowd thwarted every such attempt.
        They shouted for Barabbas (a Zealot guilty of the very crime of which they were falsely accusing Jesus (Luke 23:25), and shrieked for Jesus to be crucified – the doom Barabbas would have suffered).
    (d) They prevailed over Pilate, by the threat of a Festival riot (Matthew 27:24), and by an implied threat that they would report him to Caesar for letting off an insurgent (John 19:12).
    (e) Even then Pilate’s final act was to wash his hands (to disclaim responsibility), and his final reference to Jesus was ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood. It is your responsibility’ (Matthew 27:24).
    (f) Pilate provided no accusation to put over the Cross. The words on the notice did not name any crime (John 19:19, 21).

NOTE CONCERNING THESE TRIALS: Both of these trials are marked for the offence they gave to the laws of that day.

1. IN THE CASE OF THE JEWISH TRIAL
   (a) The night sitting was illegal.
   (b) It was equally against Jewish law to hold such a court in the twenty-four hours preceding a Sabbath, or a great festival.
A further offence was that in cases where death sentence was involved, a day must elapse between the trial and the declaration of the sentence.

Outstanding illegalities in the proceedings were:
Verdict decided before the trial commenced; prisoner arrested before any charge was laid; the presiding judge led the prosecution; the Prisoner was mocked and ill-treated (compare Acts 23:3).

2. IN THE CASE OF THE ROMAN TRIAL
(a) There does not appear to be any normal procedure at all.
(b) Both Pilate and Herod found Jesus innocent, and He should have been both discharged and protected (Luke 23:14, 15).
(c) Apart from the gravest offence of sentencing to death an innocent man, the scourging of an unconvicted man, and the arguing with the crowd, were both serious breaches of Roman justice.

CONCLUSION. The length of this lesson has crowded out the story of Peter’s denial which, however, needs to be known. It is recorded in Matthew 26:69 ...; Mark 14:66 ...; Luke 22:54 ...; John 18:15 ...
THE CRUCIFIXION

LESSON 20

The Crucifixion

INTRODUCTION. Before proceeding with an account of the events of the Crucifixion, we say something of one of the profoundest subjects of all time - the meaning of the Cross. We need to see clearly that although the Cross was an act of man, it was equally an act of God.

1. JESUS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITHOUT HIS OWN CONSENT
   (a) It is true that the might of the Sanhedrin and of Rome were, in the eyes of men, the forces that worked their will on Him, but all this power did not hold Him a moment longer than He willed.
   (b) See His statement in John 10: 11,,17,, 18.
   (c) Jesus had constantly taught His disciples that a crisis ‘hour’ would come. Previous to this fateful ‘hour’ He had been saved from, or had deliberately avoided, arrest by the Council (John 7: 30; 8: 59; 11: 53, 54), but now He knew the time was come (John 13:1), and He entered Jerusalem by His own choice (Matthew 20:17-19).
   (d) The fact that He could have freed Himself at any moment He chose made all suggestions that He should do so a real temptation, e.g. Matthew 27: 42, 43; Luke 23: 39.

2. WHY THEN DID HE SUBMIT HIMSELF TO ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION? (‘as a Lamb to the slaughter’)
   (a) We know that at the crisis it was an agony for Him to do so (Gethsemane), but He did submit, because:
   (b) It was the Father’s will (Mark 14: 36).
   (c) His conflict with the evil in the nation was irreconcilable. The present rulers were in resistance to the Messenger of God as their fathers had been before them. Consequently for Jesus, there could be no other treatment than that which was given to the prophets which preceded Him (Matthew 23: 31, 32, 37).
   (d) It was the completing act of the revelation He came to give.
      i. His action at this time was in perfect accord with His manner of conduct and teaching all through, the outstanding characteristics of which were – unswerving loyalty to the Father; taking a stand for righteousness at all costs; using no weapons but those of righteousness and love.
      ii. This act crowned and completed His teaching. By accepting the Cross He showed His allegiance to these principles even to the point of death, thus demonstrating His conviction that they are more important than life itself.
   (e) It was the only way by which men could be saved (‘by His wounds we are healed’).
      i. A means whereby God could forgive evil without overlooking it (Romans 3:26).
      ii. A means whereby men could see the love of God for sinners (John 12:32; 1 John 3:16).
      i. A means whereby He who had been with men could now be in them in life-changing power (John 12:23, 24; 31; John 17:2).

3. THUS THE CROSS IS TO BE VIEWED IN TWO ASPECTS
   (a) As an act of man - showing the sinfulness of sin, not only its ugliness but also its resistance to, and rejection of, light (John 1:11; 3:19, 20; 15:23-25).
   (b) As an act of God - showing the strength of His insistence on righteousness, and the unlimited grace in His love (Romans 5:8).

4. THE MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR CRUCIFYING JESUS WERE NOT ABNORMAL VILLAINS
   (a) They were men of like passions as we are – neither better nor worse.
   (b) The motives that moved them are common to human experience of all ages; e.g.:
      i. Selfishness and pride, living for this world (Sadducees).
      ii. Prejudice, wilful blindness, outward religion only (among the Pharisees).
      iii. Sinful indulgence (among the Herodians).
      v. Silence and inaction (by friends, disciples and supporters).
THE CRUCIFIXION

(c) These motives, thought good enough for everyday life, were bad enough to crucify Jesus. Thus the Cross shows us our need of the salvation it provides.

5. CRUCIFIXION – AN AWFUL DEATH
   (a) Was reserved by Romans for slaves and outstanding criminals.
   (b) Was designed to provide every element of shame and torture.
       Note: No Roman citizen could be crucified.
   (c) It had an added horror for Jews. They saw it as coming within the meaning of Deuteronomy 21: 23; and thus regarded a crucified man as being ‘under God’s curse’ – a belief which increased the ‘stumbling-block’ of a crucified Messiah.

6. COMMENTS ON THE RECORD IN MATTHEW 27
   Verses 26-31. Condemned men were first scourged and put into the soldiers’ hands for such ‘horse-play’ as they chose to indulge in.
   Verse 32. Simon of Cyrene. No doubt unwillingly compelled to bear the Cross. Jesus was physically unable to do so. Mark describes him as father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Rufus later appears as a Christian in Rome (Romans 16: 13).
   Verse 34. This was a stupefying drink provided by Jerusalem ladies, out of pity for such sufferers, not to be confused with the drink given while Jesus was on the Cross (John 19: 28-30).
   Verse 35. The clothing of victims was given to the executing soldiers (usually four). The seamless robe was of some value.
   Verse 37. An ‘accusation’ (written charge) was carried before every condemned man, and nailed above his head to announce his crime to the public. Pilate had no accusation to make against Jesus, but used the inscription as a means of annoying the rulers (John 19: 19-22).
   Verse 38. The thieves, possibly accomplices of Barabbas (see later).
   Verses 39-44. Jesus reviled by passers-by, the chief priests, and the thieves, was also tempted to descend from the Cross. This had a twofold appeal – to spare Himself, His mother and His friends from the awful shame and suffering; to impress the crowd and stun His foes.
   Verse 45. Sixth to ninth hour means noon to 3 p.m. A period of darkness (Jesus had been on the Cross since 9 a.m. (Mark 15: 25)).
   Verse 46. The words of this bitter cry are the opening words of Psalm 22, the whole of which Psalm has a strange appropriateness to the experience of Jesus. In this cry is the mystery of the agony involved in the atonement, which we can neither fathom nor explain. In this dark hour He still says, ‘My God’ and at the last, ‘Father into your hands’ (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21).

7. THE SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS, which introduce some incidents not mentioned by Matthew. In probable order:
   (b) ‘Today you will be with me in paradise’ (Luke 23:39-43).
       Both thieves were bad men (verse 41); both reviled at first; but one asked for grace, and in that state and situation he received it.
   (c) ‘Woman, here is your son’ (John 19: 26, 27). Jesus committed His mother to the care of John.
   (d) ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Matthew 27:46).
   (e) ‘I am thirsty’ (John 19: 28).
   (f) ‘It is finished’ (John 19: 30). These words have a wide application not just that the agony of the Cross was ended, but the note of triumph of an accomplished work (see John 17: 4).
   (g) ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit’ (Luke 23: 46; cf. Psalm 31: 5).

8. THE BURIAL
   (a) The need for speedy burial (John 19: 31-38).
       i. The Romans commonly left the body of a crucified victim on the cross for days – some poor creatures remained alive up to a period of three days or more.
       ii. The Jews would not tolerate this – not for pity, but because exposed bodies would pollute the Festival Sabbath.
       iii. As this was rapidly approaching (at sunset), the bodies had to be disposed of without delay.
iv. Jesus was already dead (to the surprise of all – Mark 15: 44, 45), but the thieves, still living, were put to death after further brutal treatment, and their bodies were doubtless cast into some pit and covered with stones.

v. Jesus was thus spared from having His bones broken and, by the act of Joseph of Arimathea, was saved from a criminal’s grave.

(b) The burial.
i. This was done hurriedly (‘the Sabbath was about to begin’ – Luke 23: 54);

ii. Joseph provided the tomb and linen wrappings, and Nicodemus costly spices (John 19: 38, 39).

iii. Some women disciples, and almost certainly John, assisted. (John had witnessed the piercing with the spear - John 19: 34, 35).

iv. The women determined to return at the first opportunity (after the Sabbath) to shroud the body more perfectly (Luke 23: 55, 56).

   (a) They feared the disciples might remove the body.
   (b) The tomb was naturally secure – carved out of solid rock and closed with an exceedingly heavy stone (too heavy for a number of women to move – Mark 16: 3).
   (c) They sealed the stone to the rock, and set a guard.
INTRODUCTION. The Crucifixion, as we have indicated in previous lessons, was such a serious blow to the disciples that they relapsed into mourning and despair. They regarded the event as bringing to an end all Jesus had lived and worked for (e.g. Luke 24:21 – ‘We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel’. Yet a mighty transformation came to them and their whole outlook was changed. This was because ‘by many convincing proofs’ each learned the great fact that Jesus was not only risen from the dead, but was alive for evermore in unassailable power and glory. This at once became, and has continued to be, a supreme announcement of the Christian Church.

Each Gospel makes a contribution to the detail as to how this knowledge came to the disciples, and from them we set down the following:

   (a) Verses 1, 2. A great earthquake ‘at dawn on the first day of the week’.
   (b) Verses 3, 4. The guard was terrified by the tremor, the removed stone, and by an angelic appearance in the morning darkness.
   (c) Verses 11-15. They fled, some reporting to the Chief Priests, who by bribe (verse 12), and promise of protection (verse 14), persuaded them to testify that ‘his disciples came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep’ (verse 13).
   (d) Remarks.
      i. This explanation was not used when the Sanhedrin later on dealt with the apostles on the matter of the Resurrection (Acts 4, 5), nor were they confronted by these guards – for good reason – how could a witness testify as to what happened when he was asleep?
      ii. The angel did not roll away the stone to let Jesus out, but to show to the disciples that the Lord was not there.
      iii. The long linen wrappings (John 19: 40, cf. John 11: 44) with a large quantity of enfolded spices remained in position as did the head binding (John 20: 6, 7).
      iv. This proved no one had ‘taken’ the body and was convincing evidence to John (John 20: 8) that the Lord was risen indeed.

2. THE APPEARANCES OF THE RISEN LORD
   There were a number of those on the first Easter Day, and others during the forty days which followed. Luke says (Acts 1: 3) that there were ‘many convincing proofs’.

3. THE APPEARANCES ON THE FIRST EASTER DAY
   (a) To the women after they had left the tomb (Matthew 28: 9, 10).
   (b) To Mary Magdalene (John 20: 11-17).
   (c) To Peter (Luke 24: 34; 1 Corinthians 15: 5).
   (d) To the two journeying to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-32).
   (e) To the company in the Upper Room (Luke 24: 36-43; John 20: 19, 20).

4. APPEARANCES DURING THE FOLLOWING PERIOD
   (a) Eight days later when Thomas was present (John 20: 26-29).
   (b) In Galilee on the lake side to seven disciples (John 21: 1-14).
   (c) In Galilee on a mountain (Matthew 28: 16-20).
   (d) To over five hundred disciples at a time and place not named (1 Corinthians 15: 6).
   (e) To James (1 Corinthians 15: 7).
      Note: This is accepted as referring to James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19).
   (g) Subsequently, to Saul of Tarsus (1 Corinthians 15: 8; 9: 1; Acts 9: 17).

5. THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRIST’S RISEN BODY AND HIS PREVIOUS NATURAL FORM
   (a) It had undergone the change spoken of by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44.
(b) It could appear and disappear, and was unobstructed by material obstacles such as grave-clothes, the tomb and closed doors.
(c) Jesus was not always immediately recognised by those who had known Him before (Luke 24: 37; John 21: 4).
(d) Yet the body bore the wound marks (Luke 24: 39-43)

6. THE PURPOSES SERVED BY THESE APPEARANCES
Apart from serving the great purpose of making manifest the fact of the Resurrection, other ends were served during this period.
(a) The disciples received teaching concerning the Kingdom and the Scriptures, with hearts and minds open as they had never been before (Luke 24: 45; Acts 1: 3).
(b) They received direction and commission (Acts 1: 4, 5, 8; Matthew 28: 18-20; Acts 10: 42).
(c) They were prepared, by the appearing and disappearing of the Lord, to have constant fellowship with this unseen Master. They learned, as did Thomas, that they were in His presence all the time, whether He was seen or unseen.
(d) During this time Peter was restored and recommissioned (John 21: 15-17).

7. THE APPEARANCES WERE NOT GRANTED TO THE ENEMIES OF JESUS (Acts 10: 40, 41)
(a) Would not such an appearance have confounded or converted Caiaphas? Jesus taught that it would not of necessity have done so (Luke 16:31; cf. Matthew 28:17–‘but some doubted’).
(b) In any case, He would never compel belief.
(c) The bringing of the fact and claims of a Risen Saviour to the hearts of all mankind is the work of the Holy Spirit, which He unfailingly will do (John 16:8-11; 15:26), until such time as is spoken of in Revelation 1:7.
(d) The Lord did appear to Saul of Tarsus when in a convicted condition (see par. 4(g)), and to James, who is not generally counted as being a believer at that time.

8. OTHER EVIDENCES WHICH TESTIFY TO THE GENUINENESS OF THE RESURRECTION
(a) The great evidence provided by the coming of the Holy Spirit in redeeming power (Acts 2:32, 33; 5:30, 32).
(b) The evidence supplied by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.
(c) The conviction within our hearts of the truth of the statement ‘It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him’ (Acts 2:24). Such a life, which was life indeed, and which had vanquished sin and sickness, could not be overcome by death.
(d) The evidence all may have through personal relationship with the Living Christ.

CONCLUSION. The Resurrection seals and establishes that this is a universe where, in the last issue, when evil has done its worst, love and righteousness eternally prevail.
LESSON 22

The Making of the Gospels

Bible portions.
Acts 10: 36-43. Peter preaching the Gospel to Gentile hearers.
Acts 13: 23-31. Part of an address where Paul is preaching the Gospel to Jewish hearers.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD GOSPEL
   (a) The old English word ‘gospel’ translates a scriptural word which means ‘Good news’.
   (b) The ‘good news’ in this case is the message that God is come in human form to effect salvation for all who will accept it, e.g. Ephesians 1:13.
   (c) When we speak of the ‘Four Gospels’ we are using the word in a narrower sense, to mean ‘a written record of the good news’.

2. THE WAY IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN DECLARED TO MEN (Hebrews: 2: 1, 3, 4)
   (a) The ‘good news’ was announced by Jesus Himself, e.g. Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:18-21.
   (b) He committed to His disciples the task of carrying it to the world (Acts 1 8).
   (c) Faithful disciples fulfilled this commission by:
      i. teaching the truth wherever they went, e.g. Acts 8: 4;
      ii. providing the material from which written records were made;
      iii. taking steps to protect the message (whether spoken or written) from error, e.g. Galatians 1: 6-9.
   (d) For this great task they received special empowering and direction from the Holy Spirit, part of whose work it has been, and still is, to preserve and propagate the Gospel (Acts 1: 8; John 14: 26; John 15: 26, 27).

3. THE FOUR FEATURES OF THE MESSAGE THE DISCIPLES GAVE
   (a) They told what Jesus had done - with special emphasis upon the story of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. His acts.
   (b) They repeated what He had said - with emphasis upon His teaching concerning:
      i. God and His Kingdom.
      ii. Himself and the meaning of His mission and redeeming sacrifice.
      iii. Christian discipleship – its demands and benefits. His words.
   (c) They announced who He is - the Eternal Son of God; the Saviour of all men; the Lord and Judge of all men (Acts 10: 42; 13: 38, 39; 2: 36). His Person and Office.
   (d) They showed that the Gospel brought by Jesus completed and fulfilled the revelation of God given to Israel in Old Testament days (this item being prominent where Jewish hearers were being addressed – see Acts 13: 32-37, 40, 41). His accord with Old Testament revelation.
   (e) These features appear also in the written Gospels with prominence, varying according to the writer’s purpose.

4. THE STEPS BY WHICH A MOVE WAS MADE TOWARD PRESENTING THE GOSPEL IN A WRITTEN FORM
   (a) At first the teaching was given by word of mouth only.
   (b) There were many witnesses beside the apostles:
      i. Women disciples made a valuable contribution.
      ii. At a date some twenty-five years or so after the Crucifixion, Paul mentioned that the greater part of five hundred witnesses of the Resurrection were still living (1 Corinthians 15: 6).
   (c) During this time the Church had spread to many places outside of Palestine, and hundreds of Gentiles had become Christians.
   (d) There is evidence to show that at an early period there was in general use a written account of the sayings of Jesus. Paul shows that these were known by early converts and were accepted as the rule for Christian conduct (Acts 20: 35; Galatians 6: 2) at a time before any of the present Gospels were written.
There is also indication that ‘proof texts’ from the Old Testament, supporting the Gospel message, were also gathered and circulated in a written form. These may have been included with those mentioned under par. (d) of this section.

The demand for written records increased as the Church spread to more isolated places, and as death reduced the number of original eye-witnesses.

Then it was that some writers proceeded to set down accounts which contained more complete statements of the Gospel message.

5. LUKE’S INFORMATIVE WORDS ON THIS SUBJECT
From Luke 1: 1-4 we learn that at the time he produced his book of the gospel (probably in the period thirty or forty years after the Crucifixion):

(a) There was a statement of teaching most surely believed by the Church (verse 1, 2).
(b) This teaching had been given to the Church by original eye-witnesses in fulfilment of their special commission to do so (verse 2).
(c) That Luke, having taken trouble to satisfy himself of the accuracy of what he was setting down, prepared his written record especially for the benefit of Theophilus, a convert who had already received verbal instruction in these matters (verses 3, 4).
(d) That Luke was by no means the first to attempt this task of producing a written record (verse 1 – ‘many’).

6. EXAMINATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS WE HAVE
These will be dealt with individually in subsequent lessons, but there are some points that we can cover by considering them all together.

(a) No one of them gives a full account of the life and words of Jesus. From a wealth of available material (see John 21: 25), each writer selected and arranged his matter in the way which best served his purpose.
(b) Each gives some information not supplied by the others, yet the first three are so close in pattern and material used that they are called the ‘Synoptic’ Gospels (‘Synoptic’ means ‘being capable of being viewed together’ or of ‘being set side by side’).
(c) Mark’s Gospel is the shortest. Almost all of its matter reappears again in Matthew and a great part of it in Luke. It is generally accepted that, of the three, Mark’s was written first and that the other two writers had Mark’s material before them when compiling their own writing.
(d) Matthew and Luke add to Mark’s account. Some of what they add comes from a common source, but each again gives information the other does not give (more detail is given in the later lessons).
(d) John’s Gospel stands alone. By far the greater part of his record consists of information not given by the others, and his story of Jesus is told from a different viewpoint. The main features of this difference are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first three Gospels</th>
<th>John’s Gospel (see Lesson 27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dwell chiefly on the ministry in Galilee</td>
<td>Dwell chiefly on the ministry in Judea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give detail of the parable teaching of Jesus.</td>
<td>Gives no parables, but does give accounts of the more intimate and direct teaching Jesus gave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present to the world the outward and human aspects of Jesus.</td>
<td>Presents to the Church the inward and divine aspects Jesus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. THE PLACE OF THESE FOUR GOSPELS IN CHRISTIAN WITNESS
(a) By the end of the second century there was general agreement in the Church that these four Gospels were reliable and authoritative.
(b) There were at this time other writings which claimed to be accounts of the life and acts of Jesus. Copies of some of these remain to the present day, but they are known as ‘Apocryphal Gospels’ because the Church refused to accept them as accurate and reliable books.
INTRODUCTION. As a great part of the matter covered in this Gospel appears also in Matthew and Luke, we take it first.

1. AUTHORSHIP
   (a) The testimony of early Church leaders is that the writer was John Mark.
   (b) They add the valuable information that the writing was a fruit of Mark's close association with Peter.

2. JOHN MARK
   (a) Was the son of Mary of Jerusalem, at whose house the early disciples met (see Lesson 17, par. 6(a)).
   (b) He was related to Barnabas (Colossians 4:10), and went with Paul and Barnabas on the first part of their first missionary journey.
   (c) Paul would not accept him as a companion for the next campaign, because he had deserted on the first journey – hence a separation between Paul and Barnabas.
   (d) Later, he was restored to fellowship and service with Paul (Colossians 4: 10; 2 Timothy 4: 11). Note: These points will be dealt with in the lessons dealing with the Acts of the Apostles.
   (e) Mark was also a close companion and helper to Peter who refers to him in 1 Peter 5: 13 as ‘My son Mark’.
   (f) He probably produced this Gospel in Rome shortly after Peter’s death.

3. THE SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION
   We take it that the greater part came from Peter, but it is clear that Mark had liberal contact with all the early, prominent disciples, and would have some first-hand knowledge of his own, especially if he was the escaping boy mentioned in Ch. 14: 51 (see Lesson 17, par. 7(d)).

4. THE ASPECT OF JESUS MARK SPECIALLY PRESENTS
   (a) He shows Jesus as the Son of God, having authority on earth in the service of mankind.
   (b) He describes our Lord as He moved among people, and is chiefly concerned with His public ministry among the crowds.
   (c) He is occupied far more with telling what Jesus did than with what Jesus said. There is much action and little record of teaching. It depicts a ministry of intense activity. The words ‘at once’ and ‘without delay’ are in constant use.
   (d) He gives no account of the birth of Jesus, nor of His early years, starting his story of Jesus with an account of the Baptism (Ch. 1: 9).
   (e) In presenting the power and authority of Jesus he recounts the detail of many miracles. These show the power of Jesus both over disease of soul and body (Ch. 1: 23-27 - a demoniac delivered; Ch. 1: 40-42 – a leper; Ch. 2: 1-12 – one sick of the palsy; Ch. 5: 35-42 - Jairus’ daughter), and over the forces of nature (Ch. 4: 39-41 -- stilling the storm; Ch. 6: 47-51 -- walking on the sea).

5. THE READERS MARK HAD IN MIND
   This Gospel was intended for Gentile, and in particular for Roman, readers.

6. CHARACTERISTICS WHICH DEMONSTRATE THIS PURPOSE
   (a) There are the fewest possible references to the Old Testament – a writing unknown to Gentiles.
   (b) Jewish customs are explained, e.g. Chapters 7: 2-4; 15: 42.
   (c) All Aramaic words used are translated (see par. 7(b) i).
   (d) So far as Roman readers are concerned:
      i. The portrait he gives of Jesus would specially appeal to them.
      ii. He uses several Latin word forms (Latin words spelled with Greek letters). These words do not appear in the other Gospels.
      iii. He introduces Simon of Cyrene as the father of Rufus (Ch. 15:21) – a Christian in Rome (Romans 16:13).
7. CHARACTERISTICS WHICH INDICATE PETER'S INFLUENCE
   (a) Peter's words (Acts 10:37-41) give an outline which is the same as that of this Gospel, and verse 38 could be regarded as its 'text' (see par. 9).
   (b) Behind Mark's writings we can almost hear the voice of an eye-witness describing a scene he is at that moment watching.
      i. The words spoken are reported in direct speech, and often in the present tense (i.e. a modern translation is covered with quotation marks). Moreover, six times the original Aramaic is given - Boanerges (Ch. 3: 17); Talitha koum (Ch. 5: 41); Corban (Ch. 7:11); Ephphatha (Ch. 7: 34); Abba (Ch. 14: 36); Eloi (Ch. 15: 34).
      ii. Revealing words which describe the emotions and attitudes of Jesus and His hearers are provided by Mark, but not by Matthew or Luke. A comparison of the three accounts of the healing of the possessed boy will serve as one example among a number (Matthew 17: 14-27; Mark 9: 14-32; Luke 9: 37-45).
   (c) Peter's feelings and failings are recorded with more detail and emphasis than in the other Gospels (Chapters 8:33; 9:6; 14:37; 16:7).

8. MARK REVEALS THAT IN THIS MOST ACTIVE MINISTRY JESUS SOUGHT CONSTANTLY FOR THE RELIEF OF REST AND PRAYER, WHICH HE SECURED ONLY WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY
   (a) During His Galilean ministry, Jesus was constantly thronged by the crowd, e.g. Chapters. 1: 37; 2: 2; 3: 10; 4: 1; 5: 24; 6: 54-56.
   (b) At times they made normal life impossible for Jesus and His companions (Chapters. 1: 45; 3: 20; 6: 31).
   (c) To escape the importunate (very persistent) throng; to seek spiritual refreshment; and, to give His disciples opportunity to receive personal instruction, Jesus at times sought out unfrequented places (Chapters 1: 35; 3: 13; 6: 46).
      i. He went beyond the confines of Galilee to Gentile country (Tyre), and to Caesarea Philippi.
      ii. More than once He travelled secretly, e.g. Chapter 9: 30.
   (d) Even then His privacy and quiet were often disturbed, but Mark records with what grace and self-sacrifice He met these undesired interruptions (Chapters 6: 32-34; 7: 24-26, 30).

9. AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS GOSPEL
   Chapter 1: 14-9. The ministry in Galilee and northern Palestine.
   Chapter 10 The ministry in Peraea and last journey to Jerusalem.
   Chapters 14, 15. The story of the Crucifixion.
   Chapter 16 The Risen Lord.
LESSON 24

The Gospel According to Matthew

1. AUTHORSHIP
   (a) The Church has traditionally accredited this gospel to the apostle Matthew.
   (b) A second century Church Father - Papias - recorded that Matthew collected the sayings of Jesus and this may be a reference to part of the gospel.
   (c) However, it is nowhere stated in the gospel that Matthew is in fact the author.
   (d) Many today find it difficult to accept that this gospel was written by a close follower of Jesus for he relied so heavily on Mark's gospel and other second-hand sources. However, they acknowledge that Matthew's collection of sayings may well have been included in the gospel and think this may have given rise to the title.

2. THE WRITER
   (a) Whoever the writer, we need not think of him as merely a compiler of sources although this was part of his task;
   (b) He was a Jew, one working within the life of the church for whose liturgical and homiletic needs he was writing.

3. HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION
   This book is one where all four features of the Gospel message, mentioned in Lesson 22, par. 3, are included.
   (a) He tells what Jesus did - covering practically all the ground dealt with in Mark, adding some valuable extra information.
   (b) He tells what Jesus said – this takes up three-fifths of the book.
   (c) He makes abundant use of Old Testament testimony (see par. 6(a) ii).
   (c) He prominently declares the Deity and office of Jesus.

4. THE READERS MATTHEW HAD IN MIND
   (a) This is clearly a Gospel for the Jews, and all the matter is selected and presented accordingly.
   (b) In this Gospel, therefore, Jewish customs are not explained as they are in Mark’s Gospel.
   (c) Matthew alone uses the term the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ whereas the others always say the ‘Kingdom of God’. The Jews were reticent about using the name of the Deity (Matthew does use the ‘Kingdom of God’ five times).

5. THE ASPECT OF JESUS SPECIALLY PRESENTED
   (a) Jesus is presented as the promised King and Messiah of the Jews.
   (b) Moreover, He is presented as a Messiah who not only fulfils, but surpasses, the hopes and ideas of Old Testament expectation and prediction.

6. CHARACTERISTICS WHICH DEMONSTRATE THIS PURPOSE
   (a) The outstanding words are closely connected with Jewish Messianic hope.
      i. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven’ over thirty times; the word, ‘Kingdom’ over fifty times; Jesus presented as King over twenty times.
      ii. The word ‘fulfil’ in relation to Old Testament quotation constantly appears, e.g. Chs. 1:22; 2:15,17,23. Counting Old Testament allusions as well as direct quotations, over one hundred and twenty references are found. These touch twenty-five of the thirty-nine Old Testament books, but are chiefly from the Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah.
      iii. The words ‘righteous’ and ‘righteousness’ - (the Jewish ideal contrasted with ‘beauty’ for the Greeks, and ‘courage’ for the Romans). These words occur more in Matthew than in the other three Gospels combined.
   (b) The family line of Jesus is traced to David, the great King; and to Abraham, the father of the nation and receiver of the covenant (Ch. 1:1).

7. THE WAY IN WHICH THE TEACHING OF JESUS IS PRESENTED
   (a) In this Gospel matter concerning a subject is gathered together in a systematic way. This is clearly marked where the teaching is concerned. We find six portions of considerable size.
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Five of them are:

i. Chs. 5 – 7
The Sermon on the Mount = the character and conduct of the citizens of the Kingdom
Ch. 7: 28

ii. Ch. 10:5-42
The charge to the twelve = instructions regarding the proclaiming of the Kingdom
Ch. 11: 1

iii. Ch. 13:3-52
Parable teaching to the crowd and to the disciples = nature of the Kingdom
Ch. 13: 53

iv. Ch. 18
Further instructions to disciples. Their questions answered (verses 1 and 21) = more about the character of the citizens of the Kingdom
Ch. 19: 1

v. Chs. 24, 25
Discourse to the disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem and about the last things (verse 3) = the consummation of the Kingdom
Ch. 26: 1

(Note: The suggestion that these teachings come from a carefully compiled source is strongly confirmed when we note:

i. That all belong to the subject – ‘Teaching given by Jesus to His disciples’
ii. The close identity of the wording used for the concluding verses.)

(c) The sixth long passage (following public teaching and debate in the Temple Courts). Ch. 23, The denunciation of the Pharisees and lament over Jerusalem = no place in the Kingdom for false righteousness.

(d) There is much other teaching scattered throughout the narrative.

8. THE CONTENTS OF MATTHEW IN RELATION TO THE OTHER GOSPELS

(a) Apart from this valuable teaching record (of which the greater part of the Sermon on the Mount, other important passages, and ten parables are not mentioned in other Gospels), Matthew makes a contribution to the history of the life of Jesus.

(b) He alone tells of:

i. Joseph’s account of the Annunciation (Ch. 1:18-25).
ii. The wise men; the Bethlehem massacre; and the stay in Egypt (Ch. 2).
iii. Judas’ thirty pieces of silver; his remorse and end (Chs. 26:14-16; 27: 3-10).
iv. The dream of Pilate’s wife (Ch. 27:19).
v. The Jews’ cry, ‘Let his blood be on us and on our children’ (Ch. 27:25).
(Note: This does not exhaust the list – it mentions chief items only.)

9. MATTHEW’S GOSPEL AND THE GENTILE WORLD

(a) The fact that this Gospel was directed to the Jews does not diminish its value for us.

(b) He presents the Messiah to the Jews, but shows Him to be so glorious that He is the King and Saviour to whom ‘all authority in heaven and on earth’ has been given (Ch. 28:18).

i. At the beginning of his Gospel he tells of the Gentile wise men who come to acknowledge and worship Israel’s King.

ii. He concludes with a message for ‘all nations’ (Ch. 28:19).

(c) He shows constantly that the Gospel transcends the confines of Israel, e.g. Chs. 3:9; 8:10-12; 10:18; 13:37,38; 21:43.

(d) This Gospel appropriately comes first in the New Testament as it shows the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament; between the Covenant given to Israel, and that for all mankind.
10. **AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS GOSPEL**

Chs. 1, 2. The birth and infancy of Jesus.
Chs. 3-4:11. The preparation for the public ministry.
Chs. 4:12-18:35. The ministry in Galilee.
Chs. 19, 20. The ministry in Peraea and the last journey to Jerusalem.
Ch. 21-25. Teaching in Jerusalem.
Chs. 26, 27. The story of the Crucifixion.
Ch. 28. The Risen Lord.

1. AUTHORSHIP
From early Christian days Luke has been named as the author of this Gospel and of The Acts of the Apostles. Both books are dedicated to a certain ‘Theophilus’ and are marked by a unity of language and style.

2. LUKE
(a) Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament, each time as being with Paul in Rome:
   - 2 Timothy 4:11 – ‘Only Luke is with me’ and at an earlier time (Philemon 24), and Colossians 4:14, where he is called ‘our dear friend Luke, the doctor’.
(b) As in this last reference he is not included with the names Paul describes as ‘the only Jews among my fellow workers’ in verse 11, it is accepted that Luke was a Gentile and hence the only Gentile numbered among New Testament writers.
(c) Although not named, he appears in The Acts of the Apostles as a fellow-traveller and co-worker with Paul.

3. HIS SOURCES OF INFORMATION
   (a) We have discussed the statement in Luke 1:1-4 in Lesson 22, par. 5, and it would seem most probable that during the two years Paul was held in Caesarea (Acts 24:27), Luke used the time in preparing this Gospel; reading all the available records; and, in particular, questioning all the ‘eye-witnesses’ he would have opportunity of meeting in Palestine.
   (b) There is strong suggestion that through Luke a notable contribution to the Gospel story from women witnesses has been given to the world.
      i. The beautiful stories in Luke Chs. 1, 2 cannot have come from anyone but Mary, the mother of Jesus herself – she who ‘treasured all these things in her heart’ (Luke 2:51).
      ii. Luke knew the women disciples by name (Ch. 8:2, 3), and what they had done for Jesus (Ch. 23:49, 55, 56).
      iii. He records a personal story from the Bethany home (Ch. 10:38-42), and iv. He alone gives detail about Herod (Chs. 9:7-9; 23:8-12), concerning whom his most likely source of information would have been the Joanna he mentions in Ch. 8:3.

4. THE READERS LUKE HAD IN MIND
   (a) Theophilus certainly, but also the vast company of Gentile Christians like him, who had been taught about Jesus, but had no full and authoritative written record such as Luke could supply.
   (b) In accordance with this purpose to consider Gentile readers:
      i. He explains Jewish customs and localities, e.g. ‘Capernaum, a town in Galilee’ (Ch. 4:31); ‘the hill called the Mount of Olives’ (Ch. 21:37); ‘the feast of unleavened bread. ... called the Passover’ (Ch. 22:1); ‘Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem’ (Ch. 24:13).
      ii. He substitutes Greek for Hebrew words, e.g. ‘Master’ for ‘Rabbi’; ‘Lawyer’ for ‘Scribe’.
      iii. He links Gospel events with world history dates, e.g. Chs. 2:1, 2; 3:1, 2.
      iv. He does not give the prominence Matthew does to Old Testament reference.
      v. He traces the family line of Jesus to Adam, the father of the human race.

5. THE SPECIAL ASPECT OF JESUS LUKE PRESENTS
The next section (Section 6) shows how he presents the Lord in many aspects, but the one unifying and overall aspect is one properly appropriate to Gentiles – Jesus Christ the Saviour of all nations (Ch. 24:47).

6. THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GOSPEL
There are many but they can all be seen – against the background of the book of The Acts of the Apostles - to be those aspects of what Jesus said and did, which became so important in the matter of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and of guiding and building up the young churches in Christian faith, worship and conduct.
THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

(a) Jesus is specially presented as Saviour.
ii. He gives special prominence to forgiveness. It is Luke alone who gives the examples he provides in Chs. 7:42, 47; 15:21, 22; 18:13, 14; 23:34.

(b) And as the Saviour for all.
Luke shows that:
i. The Gospel is for all – Jew and Gentile alike, indeed which in certain circumstances it might be the Jews who would be the excluded ones, e.g. Chs. 2:32; 4:25-27; 7:9; 13:28-30; 23: 47; 24: 47.
ii. It breaks down racial antipathies (i.e. between Jew and Samaritan). John was rebuked for his attitude (Ch. 9:52-56); Samaritans praised on occasions when Jews are rebuked, e.g. the Good Samaritan (Ch. 10:33, 36, 37); the thankful Samaritan (Ch. 17:15-19).
iii. Sex is no bar – women are welcomed and valued. Notice is taken of the women who served Jesus (see par. 3(b)); notice is taken of women whom Jesus helped, and for whom He showed consideration, e.g. the widow of Nain (Ch. 7:12-14); the healed women (Chs. 8:47, 48; 13:11-13, 16); and the daughters of Jerusalem (Ch. 23: 27, 28).

In the first two chapters Elizabeth, Mary and Anna have special mention, and in Ch. 21:2, 3, a poor widow.

Luke alone records the parables of the lost silver (Ch. 15:8-10), and of the needy, but persistent widow (Ch. 18:1-5).
iv. That ‘all’ includes the poor, of whom some will find acceptance more readily than the rich, e.g. Chs. 1:52, 53; 4:18; 6:20; 12:15; 14:12-15, 21; 16:19-25.
v. That ‘all’ includes the outcast, those for whom others have no place, e.g. the fallen woman (Ch. 7:37-39, 47, 50); Lazarus the beggar (Ch. 16:19-26); Zacchaeus, the publican (Ch. 19:7-9); the penitent thief (Ch. 23:42, 43).

(c) Yet in concern for all, sight is not lost of the individual, e.g. Ch. 15:7; the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son.
Many other illustrations already given bear this same message, e.g. the publican, praying in the Temple; the trembling woman and the hidden Zacchaeus picked out of the crowd.

(d) This is the Gospel that calls attention to the need for prayer.
i. From the example given by Jesus. He tells of His praying at His Baptism, and with His last breath.
ii. From Lesson 14, par. 2(b), we can see how much we depend on Luke for the information noted there.
iii. From the teaching of Jesus. He supplies in Chs. 11, 18, valuable passages in which are provided the three prayer parables of the importunate(persistent) neighbour, the importunate (persistent) widow and the Pharisee’s and Tax Collector’s prayers.

(e) This is the Gospel of joy, praise and worship.
i. It begins and ends with this note (Chs. 1:14; 24:52, 53).
ii. In the first two chapters the four great psalms of praise appear: by Mary (Ch. 1:46-55); by Zechariah (Ch. 1:68-79); by the heavenly host (Ch. 2:13, 14); by Simeon (Ch. 2:29-32). These have enriched the worship of the Christian Church through all succeeding years.
iii. Thus, in this Gospel is found the praise of Heaven and the praise of earth, e.g. Chs. 2:20; 17:15; 18:43.

(f) Lastly, as we would expect from the writer of The Acts of the Apostles, it is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.
i. It is John’s Gospel which gives us the teaching of Jesus concerning the Spirit, but it is Luke’s Gospel which gives constant testimony to the working of the Holy Spirit behind the events recorded.
ii. Against mention of the Spirit by Mark four times, Matthew five times, Luke mentions Him fifty-four times.
iii. These are too many to indicate, but verses 15, 35, 41 and 67, from Ch. 1, will serve as illustrations.
7. THE CONTENTS OF LUKE IN RELATION TO THE OTHER GOSPELS
(a) The information that he alone gives is considerable, consisting of about half of his book.
(b) All of Chs. 1, 2 come in this category as does a great part of the information given in the section from Ch. 9:51 to Ch. 18:14. This section deals chiefly with events in the Peraean ministry.
(c) Of the six miracles he alone records, notable cases are – the widow’s son at Nain; the ten lepers; the healing of Malchus (Ch. 22:50, 51; Compare John 18:10).
(d) Of the eleven parables he alone records notable examples are - the good Samaritan; the rich fool (Ch. 12:16-20); the prodigal son; the barren fig tree; the rich man and Lazarus, beside the three prayer parables already mentioned.
(e) When comparing the parables given by Matthew with those given by Luke, we note that Matthew’s group are, in the main, nature parables on the subject of the Kingdom, whereas Luke’s record is almost exclusively human nature parables, which tell of men and women in human situations.

8. AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS GOSPEL
Chs. 1, 2. The birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus. The infancy and childhood of Jesus.
Chs. 3 - 4:13. The preparation for the public ministry.
Chs. 4:14 - 9:50. The ministry in Galilee.
Chs. 9:51 - 19:27. The ministry in Peraea and the last journey to Jerusalem.
Chs. 22, 23. The story of the Crucifixion.
Ch. 24. The Risen Lord.
The Gospel According to John

(See Lesson 22, par. 6(e))

1. AUTHORSHIP
(a) The fathers in the early Church have informed us that this Gospel was written at Ephesus, by the apostle John, late in his life-time, and after some years of residence in that city.
(b) The book has in it reference to the writer who, although not giving his name (Ch. 21:24), reveals himself to be the one who reclined next to Jesus at the Last Supper (Ch. 21:20).
(c) Elsewhere he claims to be an eye-witness of the Crucifixion (Ch. 19:34-35), and of the earthly life of Jesus (Ch. 1:14).
(d) He expects that his readers will know him or know of him, and will accept without question the verity of the testimony he gives.

2. JOHN
(a) The son of Zebedee and the brother of James. These were prosperous fishermen on the Lake of Galilee (there were hired servants (Mark 1:20)).
(b) John had been a disciple of John the Baptist (Ch. 1:35-37), and was one of the first of the twelve to become a disciple of Jesus.
(c) His mother, Salome, was prominent among the women disciples, and was ambitious for her sons (Matthew 20:20-21), as they were also for themselves.
(d) He was one of the privileged ‘three’ and above all was, at the Cross, given the charge to care for Mary the mother of Jesus.
(e) History records that he lived to a great age (hinted at in Ch. 21:21-23), spending his last years at Ephesus.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK
The number of events recorded are far fewer than in the other Gospels, so it is possible to make a comprehensive analysis with ease and with brevity. We thus set down what this Gospel contains, before we discuss its characteristics.

Ch. 1:1-18. Introduction presenting Jesus as the Eternal Son come in the flesh, and that He is the ‘Life and Light of men’.
Ch. 1:19-51. The testimony of John the Baptist. The first disciples won.
Ch. 2:1-11. In Cana – the first miracle, ‘water into wine’.
Ch. 2:13-25. In Jerusalem - at Passover time (verse 13); signs and teaching.
Ch. 3. In Jerusalem. Discourse with Nicodemus - Jesus ‘the source of Eternal life’.
Ch. 4:1-42. In Samaria. Discourse with the Samaritan woman – Jesus ‘the water of life’.
Ch. 4:46-54. In Galilee. Healing of the nobleman’s son.
Ch. 5. In Jerusalem at festival time. Healing of the crippled man, and the discourse arising from it.
Ch. 6. In Galilee at Passover time (verse 4). The 5,000 fed, Jesus walks on the sea; and the discourse on ‘the Bread of Life’.
Chs. 7, 8. In Jerusalem (the Feast of Tabernacles - Ch. 7:2). Teaching in the Temple. Jesus ‘the Light of the world’ (Ch. 8:12).
Ch. 9. In Jerusalem. Sight given to the blind man, and the discussion which followed.
Ch. 10. In Jerusalem. More teaching - the sheepfold and ‘the Good Shepherd’.
Ch. 11. In Bethany. The raising of Lazarus - Jesus the source of Resurrection Life.
Ch. 12. In Jerusalem (the last Passover - verse 1). The triumphant entry, and teaching concerning His mission (verses 24-25), and passion (verses 31-33).
Chs. 13-17. Teaching given at the Last Supper.
Chs. 18, 19. The Crucifixion Story.
Ch. 20. The Risen Saviour appears.
Ch. 21. The appearance by the Sea of Galilee, and the great catch of fish.

4. CHARACTERISTICS THIS ANALYSIS DISCLOSES. That:
(a) Most of the events recorded are centred in Jerusalem. Place.
(b) Those Jerusalem stories are connected with festival times, i.e. when Jesus had in his audience the representatives of all Jewry (see also Ch. 10:22). Times.
John mentions three Passovers, thus establishing that the public ministry of Jesus extended over three years, if not more; a point not made clear in the other Gospels.

(c) The main part of the Gospel deals with the things Jesus said.

(d) As with the other Gospels, the teachings have a special subject:

i. Matthew records the words which teach about the Kingdom of God.

ii. Luke records the words which teach about the people to whom the Gospel comes.

iii. John records the words by which Jesus taught both publicly and privately about Himself, His Person and His Mission.

(e) In keeping with this new subject there is a new list of outstanding words. Among these are:

i. ‘Love’, ‘Life’, ‘Light’, ‘Truth’ and words associated with truth, such as ‘I tell you the truth’.


iii. ‘World’ - used in the sense of describing fallen humanity.

(f) Some acts of Jesus are recorded, but these are chosen and presented to serve the teaching. John notes that there were many miracles (Chs. 7:31; 11:47), but he gives detail of eight only. These John calls ‘signs’ adding in some cases, detail of the teaching which accompanied the sign, and in other cases, signifies the teaching by the context.

5. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE TEACHING WAS GIVEN

(a) In contrast to Matthew and Luke this teaching does not include parable. It is possible that parable teaching was not suited to this subject. (The word ‘parable’ used (Ch. 10:6) is different from the word used elsewhere. It is better translated ‘allegory’ or, ‘proverb’.) Nevertheless, the language is full of pictorial allusions which can be regarded as parables in germ. Illustration of this is provided by what are called the seven great affirmations.

- ‘I am the Bread of Life’ (Ch. 6:35).
- ‘I am the Light of the world’ (Ch. 8:12).
- ‘I am the Gate of the sheep’ (Ch. 10:7).
- ‘I am the Good Shepherd’ (Ch. 10:14).
- ‘I am the Resurrection and the Life’ (Ch. 11:25).
- ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life’ (Ch. 14:6).
- ‘I am the true Vine’ (Ch. 15:1).

6. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

This is plainly declared in Ch. 20:31, ‘These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.’

7. THE SPECIAL ASPECT OF JESUS JOHN PRESENTS

(a) This is in agreement with the purpose and is illustrated by what has already been said. It is to show Jesus as ‘The Eternal Son of God and the Source of Redeeming Life’.

(b) In this emphasis on the Deity of Jesus, there is equal insistence on the humanity of Jesus (Ch. 1:14; note Ch. 3:14 - ‘Son of Man’ and Ch. 3:18 - ‘God’s one and only Son’).

8. THE READERS JOHN HAD IN VIEW

(a) Particularly the Church, but generally all - ‘Whoever believes’ out of the world that God has loved (Ch. 3:16).

(b) This ‘all’ includes the high and the low; Jew and Gentile; Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.

(c) This ‘all’ includes the generations yet unborn (Ch. 17:20).

9. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS BEING A LATER WRITING

(a) John completed the testimony given by the other writers concerning the Person and the Office of Jesus, and the virtue of the atonement made by Him.

(b) By far the greater part of this Gospel is matter not given before.

(c) John effectively provided the Church with safeguard against heresies which had arisen, and in particular those which denied either the Deity or the humanity of Jesus.
10. IN COMPLETE CONTRAST TO MARK, JOHN GIVES PLENTIFUL RECORD OF THINGS NOT SEEN OR KNOWN BY THE PUBLIC

(a) There are stories of the intimate life of the Apostolic band.
   i. The first interview Jesus had with five of them, and a closing interview with seven of them is given in the first and last chapters.
   ii. Account is given of their private conversations, of their misunderstandings and unspoken thoughts, e.g. Chs. 4:26, 27; 11:11-14; 12:4-6, 16; 13:28-29; 16:17-18; 20:24-25.

(b) There is some record of the private proceedings of the Sanhedrin (provided probably by Nicodemus) (Chs. 7:45-53; 11:47-53; 12:10-11).

(c) There is the only detailed account we have of what transpired when Jesus was privately examined by Pilate (Chs.18:33-38; 19:8-11).
   Note: John does not use the word ‘Sadducee’ but often chooses to refer to the national leaders and those allied with them as ‘the Jews’ e.g. Chs. 5:10; 7:1, 11, 13; 19:38; 20:19, where it is clear it is the leaders opposed to Jesus who are being mentioned, and not the Jewish people as a whole.
   There are occasions, however, when he does use the word in its widest sense, e.g. Chs. 3:1; 4:9; 5:1, etc.
1. THE WRITER
   
   (a) We have already discussed Luke in Lessons 25 and 26, and we have seen that he was a Gentile; a Physician; a Christian evangelist ('Luke' (NIV) my fellow-worker —Philemon 24), and a loyal friend to Paul.
   
   (b) In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, which is addressed to the same Theophilus (Ch. 1:1), he pursues the same subject as in his former book, i.e. Jesus Christ the Saviour of all men (Chs. 4: 12; 26:22-23), recording the acts done through His saving power.
   
   (c) Scholars remark on the accuracy of his record. It has been found possible to check and to verify many of his references. This is noticed, particularly in the exactness with which he gives the correct titles of officials who bore diverse, and far from common, names.

2. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK
   
   (a) The Acts of the Apostles (not regarded as the original title) is somewhat misleading, as most of the apostles hardly figure at all in this record.
   
   (b) All that is set down can be covered by four names, namely: Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul.
   
   (c) The book is a record of acts of the Spirit of God, working through men and women in the first thirty years or so of Church history.
   
   (d) Consequently, the Spirit of God, under one title or another, has frequent mention.

3. THE THEME
   
   Is the birth and growth of the Christian Church during this period. This growth is shown to have two developments:
   
   (a) An outward growth which increased the number in the Church from a small group into a multitude, and extended its place of influence from Jerusalem into many centres of the Mediterranean world.
       Key verses - (Chs. 1:8; 2:39).
   
   (b) An inward growth in understanding of the universal nature of God’s grace, by which the Church emerged from being a Jewish sect to being a world religion, which could unite all people in a Christian fellowship and spiritual family.

4. A GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK SHOWING THE WORKING OUT OF THIS THEME, following the pattern of Ch. 1:8.
   
   (a) The Church in Jerusalem and Judea (Chs. 1 to 8:4).
       i. Ch. 2. Peter, the prominent name. Pentecost, and the first witness given, not only to Jerusalem citizens, but also to people from afar.
       ii. Chs. 3 to 5. Growth throughout the province until all is affected (see Ch. 5:16, 28).
       iii. Chs. 6 to 7. Stephen - announces that the Church transcends the limiting bounds of Judaism; is martyred, and stimulates a persecution which scatters the Church (Ch. 8:1).

   (b) The Church in Samaria. (Ch. 8: 5-25). Evangelized by Philip.

   (c) To the uttermost part (Chs. 8:26-28).
       i. Ch. 8:26 to Ch.11:30. The period of transition.
          (a) Ch. 8:26-40. An Ethiopian Eunuch admitted to the Church by Philip.
INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

(b) Ch. 9:1-31. Saul, the appointed apostle to the Gentiles (verse 15) converted.

(c) Chs. 10:1 to 11:18. Peter’s prejudice is broken down; he admits Cornelius (a Gentile who was not a proselyte) to the Church, and then defends his action.


Note: Luke cannot follow the development of the Church in all territories, so he records that which he knows best – the way by which the Gospel was carried to Rome, the capital city of the empire.

(a) Chs. 13:1 to 14:28. From Antioch in Syria into the nearest provinces of Asia Minor.

(b) Ch. 15. The Jerusalem Council declared Gentile Christians to be free from Jewish obligations, with certain minor exceptions.

(c) Chs. 16:1 to 18:28. Into Europe - Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth.

(d) Chs. 19:1 to 20:38. To Ephesus and the district of Asia.


There is record of growth in numbers and in territory occupied; growth in knowledge of the mind of Christ; but also of growth in persecution; and later, of attack within the Church by false teachers.

5. THE SOURCES OF LUKE’S INFORMATION

(a) His own experience. The ‘we’ references (Chs. 16:10-17; 20:5-38; 21, and onward), show that a great deal of this part of the book is from his own records.

(b) Paul, and other companions of Paul, could supply detail of Paul’s conversion and of all after Ch. 12.

(c) Philip, the deacon, whom Luke visited at Caesarea (Ch. 21:8-10), could tell the stories related in Chs. 6 to 8.

(d) Peter, other apostles, and John Mark could cover all remaining sections.

6. THE VALUE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES IN NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY

(a) This book provides almost the only information we have of the first days of the Christian Church.

(b) It alone gives the story of Pentecost, and of the original gospel preached by the apostles.

(c) It provides an historical framework for Paul’s letters.

7. ITS SPECIAL VALUE TO PRESENT-DAY CHRISTIANS

(a) There may be those who suppose that faith is harder for them than for those who knew Jesus in the flesh.

(b) In The Acts of the Apostles, however, we see men and women who, though the bodily presence of Jesus was no longer with them, had a triumphant and fruitful Christian experience in circumstances which often appeared to be all against them.

8. A SECONDARY PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

(a) Possibly by Luke’s special design, The Acts of the Apostles served to prove to the Roman government that, contrary to the accusations of its enemies, Christian faith and practice did not encourage rebellion against the State.

(b) As we go through this book we shall see that in his encounters with Roman officials, Paul is shown:

i. often to receive favour and protection from them;

ii. never to be found guilty when charged before them as being a law breaker.
LESSON 29

The Task Announced, and the Power Received
(Acts 1-2:11)

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1. This we divide into two sections:
Verses 1-11. The story of the forty days following the Resurrection.
Verses 12-26. The appointment of a successor to Judas.

SECTION I – CHAPTER 1:1-11

THE STORY OF THE PERIOD FROM THE RESURRECTION TO THE ASCENSION

1. ITS CONTENTS
   In this portion we find:
   (a) References to the appearances of the Risen Lord (verse 3 and onward).
   (b) An account of the Ascension (verses 9 -11).
   (c) An account of teaching given by Jesus during this period, referring to:
       i. the apostles’ appointed task; and
       ii. the equipping they would need for this task.

2. THE APOSTLES’ TASK (verse 8)
   (a) They were to be witnesses for Christ.
   (b) They were to commence at Jerusalem, where their Master had been rejected and crucified, and advance through Judea and Samaria to the ‘ends of the earth’.
   (c) No one had ever been given a task of such magnitude before.

3. THE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS TASK
   (a) They already had some, the fruit of their discipleship, i.e. knowledge of Jesus, and of what He had said and done.
   (b) In this period they received deeper convictions concerning Him, that:
       i. His risen life had power over death and was beyond the reach of the might of men or of Satan;
       ii. that although He ascended to the Father:
           (a) He would come again (verse 11);
           (b) He would continue His work for men using them as His necessary co-workers.
   (c) They were again reminded that their preparation for the work was not completed. They would need the Presence and the Power of the Spirit.
       i. In the Upper Room Jesus had said that the Comforter would come.
       ii. He now told them that the Spirit would come soon – in Jerusalem, ‘in a few days’ (verses 4-5).
       iii. Their question (verse 6) shows how much they still stood in need of enlightenment.
           (a) Their ideas of the Kingdom were still materialistic and national.
           (b) The book of The Acts of the Apostles is a record as to how the guidance of the Spirit of Truth changed this way of thinking.

SECTION 2 – CHAPTER 1:12-26

TELLS HOW MATTHIAS WAS APPOINTED TO TAKE THE PLACE OF JUDAS

1. THE CHRISTIAN COMPANY (verses 13-15)
   (a) Numbered about one hundred and twenty (verse 15); women as well as men (verse 14).
   (b) They were constant in prayer (verse 14), Temple worship and praise (Luke 24:53).

2. THE ELECTION OF MATTHIAS
   (a) Peter based the need to replace Judas on a verse in the Psalms (verse 20).
   (b) Matthias was chosen by lot (verse 26), being one who met the requirement of verses 21-22.
(c) This primitive method of seeking to discover God’s will disappear after Pentecost; from that time the guidance of the indwelling Spirit was sought (see Chs. 13:2; 15:28).

(d) Later, Paul was called by God to apostleship.

CHAPTER 2: 1-11

THE PROMISED COMFORTER COMES

1. THE DAY OF PENTECOST (verse 1)
   (a) Pentecost, the second great feast of the Jewish year - fifty days after the Passover.
   (b) Was a religious anniversary when the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai was remembered, and was also a harvest celebration, when two loaves of bread made from newly reaped corn were offered in the Temple.
   (c) Pious Jews from far countries were gathered for the celebration (verses 5, 9-11).
   Note: There were proselytes numbered among this company (verse 10), but not heathen Gentiles.

2. THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT AND THE ACCOMPANYING SIGNS
   (a) The Spirit came suddenly upon the whole company (the 120), and yet to each individually (verse 3).
   (b) There was the ‘blowing of a violent wind’ (verse 2), and the appearance of fire (verse 3).
   (c) The outward effect on the disciples was that they uttered praises to God (verse 11), ‘speaking with other tongues’ (verse 4).
   (d) The sound of the wind and of the praising company of disciples (who must have emerged from their meeting place) was effective in gathering a huge crowd of people – large enough to have representatives from so many countries.
   (e) Dividing themselves (no doubt) among these amazed listeners, the disciples gave their first Christian witness.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNS OF WIND, FIRE AND TONGUES
   (a) These were signs which passed away, but there is a special meaning attached to them.
   i. The ‘wind’ had been used as a type of the Spirit, either in force upon a company as that of the resurrecting wind in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 37:9-10), or more gently upon the individual, as by Jesus in John 3:8.
      Note: ‘Wind’, ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’ are all expressed by one word – both in Hebrew and Greek.
   ii. The ‘fire’ was the sign of accepted sacrifice, as with Elijah at Carmel, and of cleansing for service, as with Isaiah (Isaiah 6:6-8).
   iii. The ‘speaking with other tongues’:
      (a) Spoke of universal fellowship and unity into which all nations would be brought by the Gospel in contradistinction to the confusion and divisions of Babel (Genesis 11:9), when the Spirit of God was rejected by the people.
      (b) It also fulfilled in part the word of Jesus Christ about Christian witness being given to the ‘ends of the earth’ and was prophetic of the time when the Gospel would be preached to all mankind.
   (b) In other parts of the New Testament, ‘speaking with tongues’ does not refer to speaking in foreign languages, but to utterance of unintelligible sounds, which need interpretation. Paul discusses this speaking in an unknown tongue in 1 Corinthians 14.

4. THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF PENTECOST
   (a) Was the change which took place in the apostles. As a result of the Spirit of God coming into them in the power of the Risen Lord:
      i. their fear was changed to boldness;
      ii. their doubt to certainty;
      iii. their hearts were purified (see Ch. 15:7-9);
      iv. they received the power Jesus had promised.
   (b) Thus they were able to witness by a changed life and by a Spirit-directed word.
   (c) This was the miracle that did not cease - which was repeated in their converts, and is repeated today.
5. THERE IS AN APPROPRIATENESS IN THAT THIS EVENT HAPPENED AT THE PENTECOSTAL FESTIVAL

(a) Apart from the fact that Pentecost brought together such a world representative crowd to witness the coming of the Spirit, there was a special significance in the relation this event had to the festival celebrations.

(b) At the time when the nation was commemorating the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and the inaugurating of their covenant with God (Exodus 24:7-8), the Spirit bestowed the blessing of the New Covenant foretold by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

(c) At the festival when loaves made from the first reaping of the wheat harvest were being offered (Leviticus 23:16-17), the first ‘harvest of souls’ the fruit of the ‘corn of wheat which had fallen’ into the ground at Passover time (John 12:23-24), was gathered in (Acts 2:41).
INTRODUCTION. The signs which accompanied the coming of the Spirit attracted and astonished the crowd. All were agreed that something extraordinary was happening. It was explanation that was wanted - 'What does this mean?' (Ch. 2:12-13). Later, direction was asked for -- 'What shall we do?' (Ch. 2:37).

1. THE FIRST CHRISTIAN PREACHING (Ch. 2:14-41)
   (a) Out of the twenty-two verses (verses 15-36) which give Peter’s message, eleven verses are Old Testament quotations. (A translation which prints these quotations as such will be a great help.) They are:
   (b) How Peter dealt with the question - ‘What does this mean?’ (verse 12).
      i. He disposed of the accusation of drunkenness (verse 15). (The Jews did not drink wine until the evening, and on festival days tasted nothing until the morning service was concluded.)
      ii. He explained what had happened (verses 16-21). The Spirit of God had been poured out upon them according to the word spoken by Joel.
      iii. He explained why this had happened (verses 22-26).
         (a) It was connected with the Person, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus of Nazareth.
         (b) Concerning Jesus he said:
            (i) The miracles He had done were evidences that God was with Him (verse 22).
            (ii) That He had been slain by wicked hands (verse 23).
            (iii) That He is risen from the dead (verses 24-32): by God (verse 24); according to Psalm 16. The words about not remaining in the grave could not apply to David himself whose tomb was there in Jerusalem but applied to David’s greater Son - the promised Messiah; Peter and his companions were witnesses of this Resurrection (verses 29-32).
            (iv) That He is risen to the throne of God, as Son of God (verses 33-35); to enjoy all rightful glory and majesty (verses 34-35); to bestow on all people this gift which God alone can give (verse 33).
      (c) Thus the coming of the Spirit - proved that Jesus is Lord and Christ (verse 36); made manifest the enormity of the crime the nation had committed in rejecting its Messiah, and in such a manner (verse 36).
   (c) How Peter dealt with the question - ‘What shall we do?’ (verses 37-40).  
      Note: The crowd’s immediate reaction was fear. What would an enthroned Messiah do but take vengeance on His enemies? Peter’s quotation in verse 35, and from Joel in verse 20, would strengthen this idea. Few of this company could have any personal accountability for the Crucifixion, but they felt their share in the national guilt.
      i. He reminded them that Joel had announced a day of offered salvation (verse 21), as well as a day of judgment.
      ii. He urged them to disassociate themselves from the national crime by publicly professing Jesus as Christ (verses 38, 40).
      iii. He declared the truth he taught would be verified to them in that they too would receive the Spirit, who (apart from any special outward manifestations) would give them knowledge of the ‘forgiveness of sins’ (verses 38-39).
2. THE NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY (verses 41-47)
(a) Three thousand gladly received Peter’s good news and joined the band of disciples (verse 41).
(b) They needed, and received, further instruction (verse 42).
(c) They still faithfully observed all Jewish religious practices (verse 46),
(d) yet kept closely together in a new fellowship which was marked by:
   i. Uniting for prayer (verse 42).
   ii. Sharing common meals (not the whole company at one place) (verses 42, 46).
   iii. Sharing their possessions, with special concern for the poor (verses 44-45).
(e) It was a time of great joy (verse 47) – they were in favour with all the people, and their number constantly increased.

3. THE MIRACLE WHICH PROVOKED THE FIRST MOVEMENT OF OPPOSITION (Ch. 3)
(a) The apostles worked many miracles (Ch. 2:43).
(b) One example is given because of its result.
(c) A man, lame from birth (Chs. 3:2; 4:22), was healed by faith in Christ, by Peter and John, in the Temple Courts when many people were about (verses 1-8).
(d) The result of this miracle:
   i. A great crowd gathered (verses 9-11).
   ii. Peter seized the opportunity to witness of Jesus (verses 12-26).
      (a) He plainly declared this to be an evidence of the power and Deity of Jesus (verses 12-13, 16).
      (b) He declared the guilt of his hearers (verses 14-15).
      (c) He persuaded them by - sympathetic (verses 17-18), directing, and confirming words from Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19); and from Genesis (Genesis 12: 3), to repentance and faith in Christ (verses 19-26).
      (d) His preaching was interrupted by the Temple authorities and police, who arrested the two apostles and locked them up for the night (Ch. 4:1-3).

4. THE APPEARANCE BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (Ch. 4:1-22)
This was the same company who had condemned Jesus.
(a) They were offended because of the growth of the new community and because of its doctrine of a risen Jesus (verse 2).
(b) Peter was not afraid. He answered their question (verse 7), and then turned to the attack -- ‘whom you crucified’ (verse 10), whom you rejected (verse 11), and proclaimed Jesus as Saviour and as the only Saviour (verses 7-12).
(c) The Council could not deny the miracle (verses 14,16); could not accuse the apostles of any crime, and knew that public opinion was on the side of the apostles (verses 13-21).
(d) They could do nothing beyond commanding Peter and John to be silent about Jesus (verses 17-18),
(e) an order which the apostles refused to obey (verses 19-21).

5. THE UNDISMAYED CHURCH (Ch. 4:23-33)
(a) Verses 23-30 give a most valuable record as to how the Church prayed.
   i. They saw in Psalm 2 prediction of persecution for them as had been the case with Jesus (verses 25-27).
   ii. They reposed in God’s almighty protection and overruling power (verses 24, 28).
   iii. They prayed for boldness, and for further evidences of God’s blessing (verses 29-30).
(b) Their prayer was answered (verses 31, 33).

6. THE FIRST TROUBLE IN THE CHURCH IN CONNECTION WITH THE SHARING OF POSSESSIONS (Chs. 4:34 to 5:11)
(a) An example of a true disciple – Barnabas (Ch. 4:36-37).
(b) An example of two false disciples – Ananias and Sapphira (Ch. 5:1-11).
   i. Their sin was deceit.
      (a) Sharing was not commanded by the Church – it was a voluntary matter (verse 4).
      (b) They offended, not by retaining part, but by saying they had given all, when they had not done so (verse 8).
ii. The Church learned that the Spirit of God acts in judgment as well as in grace (verse 11).

7. THE SECOND PERSECUTION (Ch. 5:12-42)
   (a) The Church continued to prosper and to spread its influence afar (verses 12-16).
   (b) The angered Sanhedrin determined to take drastic action, and arrested all the apostles, who were delivered from prison (verses 18-20), but rearrested (verses 25-26).
   (c) The twelve were charged:
      i. with disobeying a previous order;
      ii. with accusing the Sanhedrin of responsibility for the slaying of Jesus (verse 28).
   (d) Peter answered boldly (verses 29-32).
   (e) The Council determined to put them to death (verse 33).
   (f) Gamaliel, a learned and revered Pharisee, counselled against this action, and prevailed (verses 34, 38-40).
   (g) The apostles were beaten and cautioned (verse 40), but were not in the least deterred by these threats (verses 41-42; cf. Matthew 5:11-12).

CONCLUSION. By this time the Christian company had greatly increased in numbers (5,000 – Ch. 4:4), and had triumphantly covered Jerusalem and the district of Judea with the message (Ch. 5:16, 28).
INTRODUCTION. The Acts of the Apostles provides a detailed record of the witness given by Stephen. This is because of its great importance and its far-reaching effect. The story concerning him commences with his appointment as a ‘deacon’.

1. THE SECOND CHURCH DIFFICULTY OVER THE SHARING OF POSSESSIONS (Ch. 6:1-6)
   (a) This trouble was ‘inequality in distribution’.
      i. Church organisation had by no means kept pace with Church expansion (Chs. 5:14; 6:1).
      ii. On this account (not of deliberate intent) some poor widows were overlooked in the ‘daily distribution’ - a formidable task with so many to serve.
      iii. The neglected ones were ‘Grecians’. This word here does not mean Greek people, but Jews of overseas birth who were not well acquainted with Aramaic and so formed Greek-speaking communities.
   (b) The trouble was quickly and effectively remedied by the appointing of seven ‘deacons’ to oversee this business and so relieve the overburdened apostles (verses 2-6).
      i. All of these bear ‘Greek’ names (verse 5).
      ii. Notable among them is Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch, and two who became especially prominent – Stephen and Philip.
      iii. It is to be noted that for this ‘Social work’ appointment, the requirements were: ‘Men who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom’ (verse 3).

2. STEPHEN’S EVANGELICAL MINISTRY AND ARREST (Ch. 6:8-12)
   (a) Stephen not only succeeded with his administrative task, he stood out as a notable preacher for Christ, and as a worker of miracles (verses 8, 10).
   (b) He addressed himself particularly to the Jews from overseas, who had synagogues for their own communities in Jerusalem (verse 9).
      (Note: Saul of Tarsus would probably be connected to the ‘Cilician’ group.)
   (c) His opponents could not refute his teaching, and determined to silence him.
   (d) They perceived in his words statements that could well be regarded as dishonouring to the Jewish faith to the point of blasphemy. They therefore arrested him on this charge, and brought him for trial before the Sanhedrin (verses 11-12).

3. THE CHARGE MADE AGAINST HIM (Ch. 6:11-14)
   (a) ‘Blasphemy against Moses and against God’, a more serious charge than that laid against the apostles in Chs. 4 and 5, and a situation where public feeling would run high against him.
   (b) From the various accusations (verses II, 13-14), and from the nature of his defence, it is clear that Stephen had realised that one could fulfil the law of Christ without having to keep strictly to all the detail of Jewish legalism, and he had said words to the effect that:
      i. The rejection of Jesus had been a terrible sin.
      ii. Outward observance of the Law was of no value if its spiritual meaning was dishonoured. (He called these people who so trusted in their Jewish rites, ‘uncircumcised in heart’ (Ch. 7:51.).)
      iii. The worship of God was not confined to any special locality (see his words in Ch. 7:48-49).
   (c) All of these things had been said by Jesus, but they furnished Stephen’s opponents with the accusation that he had spoken against the Law, and against the Temple.

4. STEPHEN’S DEFENCE (Chs. 6:15 to 7:53)
   (Note: As in the case of the apostles tried before him, Stephen not only defended his own actions, but used the opportunity to attack the sins of his judges.)
BONDS OF JUDAISM LOOSEN

(a) The words of Stephen may appear to be nothing more than a review of national history, but by giving attention to four main ideas we can see the skilful use he made of this history. These four key ideas are:

i. The 'Holy Place' in Jewish history.
ii. Instances of Change over the years in their religious practices.
iii. Their hostile attitude to God-appointed leaders, and
iv. Their attitude to the Law itself.

(b) The 'Holy Place' in Jewish history.
Stephen defended his right to say the Temple was not the only holy place inasmuch as the Jews had regarded many places as holy - even outside of Palestine.

i. God had called and covenant with Abraham in Mesopotamia (Ch. 7: 2-3).
ii. God had manifested His presence with Joseph and their fathers in Egypt (verses 10, 36).
iii. Mount Sinai was most holy because of its association with the call of Moses (verses 30-33), and the covenant of the Law-giving (verse 38).
iv. The holy Tabernacle had been moved from place to place (verses 44-45).
v. Jerusalem had not been a holy place until the time of David (verses 45, 47).
vi. He was saying only what a great prophet had said centuries before him (Isaiah 66:1-2).

(c) 'Change' in Jewish religious practices (on which point Stephen was being charged, Ch. 6:14).
There had been considerable change in the past. Notably:

i. Abraham had followed God for some years before the rite of circumcision was instituted (verses 3, 8).
ii. He had never been called upon to observe the Law, because it was not given until the time of Moses (verse 38).

(d) Hostile attitude to God-appointed leaders and saviours.

i. His judges were defending Moses? Their fathers were the ones who had repeatedly rebelled against him (verses 27, 35, 39).
ii. In turn, Joseph (verse 9) and many prophets had been rejected (verse 52).
iii. His judges were even greater offenders, in that they were 'betrayers and murderers' of the guiltless Jesus, the Great Prophet, testified to by Moses (verse 37), and the other prophets (verse 52).
iv. All these rejections were evidences of a consistent national resistance to the Spirit of God (verse 51).

(e) Attitude to the Law itself.
They who claimed to be defending it were themselves disobedient to its claims (verse 53), as their fathers had been before them (verse 41).

5. STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM (Ch. 7:54-60)

(a) Stephen sealed his doom by publicly acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God in Glory (verse 56 - in words strongly reminiscent of those used by Jesus Himself before the same court - Luke 22: 69).

(b) This to Stephen's judges was a blasphemous declaration. The rushing at him (verse 57) was the common reaction to such a situation.

(c) He, on this charge, suffered death by stoning.

Note: For some reason they managed to avoid having the sentence countersigned by the Roman Governor.

(d) Stephen died as his Lord had died, with a prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies (verse 60), and with committal of his soul to God (verse 59), but with this distinction that Stephen prayed to, and committed his soul to, the Lord Jesus.

(e) Saul of Tarsus, a bitter opponent of Stephen, was present - apparently in some official capacity (verse 58; Chs. 8:1; 22:20).

6. THE GREAT PERSECUTION WHICH ENSUED (Ch. 8:1-4)

(a) The Christian company was now subject to violent persecution, their belief and practice being regarded as a blasphemous betrayal of the Jewish faith.

(b) Their persecutors (Saul, an outstanding leader among them) pursued the Christians into their homes. They were arrested and imprisoned, and those who would not recant were beaten and, in some cases, put to death (verse 3; Chs. 22:4, 19; 26:9-11).
(c) With the exception of the apostles, those who escaped the hands of their persecutors became refugees from Jerusalem (verse 1).

(d) This experience did not silence, but helped to spread, their Christian witness (verse 4).
INTRODUCTION. It will help in this and later lessons if we define the four religious classes into which the Jews divided the people of those days.

i. The Jews. - These were they who were born of Jewish blood, and who were living according to the demands of Jewish religious law.

ii. ‘Proselytes of righteousness’ (or ‘judgment’). - These were Gentiles who had become such complete converts to the Jewish faith that they had agreed to become as Jews. This involved acceptance of the full obligations of the law, and admission to the community of Israel by the rites of circumcision, baptism and sacrifice. This, of course, involved for them separation from Gentile customs and former Gentile connections.

iii. ‘God-fearers’, ‘God-worshippers’ or ‘devout men’. - These were Gentiles also attracted by Jewish life and teaching, which was so superior to heathen standards (see Lesson 4, par. 1(c)), but who were not prepared to accept all the obligations of becoming full proselytes. If, however, they were prepared to promise to keep the moral law and to have full respect for Jewish customs, the Jews admitted them to synagogue worship (not the Temple), and received them as ‘Proselytes of the Gate’ or ‘God fearers’, by which title we shall in future refer to them (see Acts 10:2; 13:16; 16:14; 17:17).

iv. Heathen Gentiles. - These were they who had no knowledge of, or connection with, the Jewish faith at all.

Note: The Samaritans who figure prominently in this lesson stood as a group apart. They were of mixed blood, having links both with the Jews and with the Gentile world. They practised circumcision; had their own copy of the Pentateuch; their own Temple and priesthood. Some particulars concerning them are given in Lessons 2 and 3, par. 1(c).

1. THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN SAMARIA (Ch. 8:5-25)
   (a) The great persecution brought the Christian witness to Samaria by the word of Philip (verse 5).
   (b) Many believed, being especially impressed by the miracles he did (verse 6), and were baptised; but did not then receive the gift of the Spirit (verse 16).
   (c) Peter and John sent to investigate (verse 14) signified their approval by being, after earnest prayer (verse 15), the means by which this gift was given (verse 17).
   (d) Simon, the sorcerer (verse 9), was impressed:
      i. by the miracles of Philip, and thus professed faith, and accepted baptism (verse 13);
      ii. by the fact that the Holy Spirit was given by means of the laying on of the apostles’ hands. He coveted, not to receive the Spirit, but to have the bestowing power the apostles appeared to have and, in his extreme ignorance, offered money on this account (verses 18-19).
   (e) For this he was strongly condemned and rebuked by Peter (verses 20-23).
   (f) Peter and John carried the message to other parts of Samaria (verse 25), and thus the witness was given in the third district named in Acts 1:8.
   (g) It was most appropriate that this step of admitting Samaritans was sealed by the act of leading apostles.

Note: This is the last mention of John in the Acts of the Apostles.

2. PHILIP’S FURTHER MINISTRY - the Ethiopian eunuch, and the campaign in the coastal towns (Ch. 8:26-40)
   (a) Philip was directed by the Spirit:
      i. to a place - the road leading south-west from Jerusalem (verse 26);
      ii. to a person - an official of the Ethiopian court, apparently a ‘God-fearer’ returning from worship in the holy city (verse 27).

Note: Ethiopia lay to the south of Egypt.
SAMARITANS AND GENTILES ADMITTED

(b) The Old Testament Scripture (Isaiah 53) was the medium used in this case to bring a soul to faith in, and acceptance of, Christ as Saviour (verses 28-38).

(c) Philip continued his witness working northward from Azotus, in all the cities until he came to Caesarea (see map), where he apparently remained for a number of years (Ch. 21:8).

3. GOD-FEARING GENTILES ADMITTED TO THE CHURCH - the Spirit gives guidance to Cornelius and to Peter (Ch. 10:1-20)

(a) Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, stationed at Caesarea (verse 1); a ‘God-fearer’ with a like-minded household (verse 2); notable for his faithfulness in prayer and almsgiving (Ch. 10:4); but not a full proselyte (Ch. 11:3).

(b) He received divine guidance to send for Peter (verses 3-6) – and obeyed it (verses 7-8).

(c) Peter was at Joppa (see map), where he had arrived while on a tour of visitation of Christian communities at a time when persecution had died down (Ch. 9: 31-32, 38, 43).

(d) Divine guidance came also to Peter:
   i. in the form of a thrice repeated vision, the full meaning of which he did not at once grasp (verses 9-17);
   ii. by direct conviction that he was to accompany three men who were coming to him with a special request (verses 19-20).

4. GOD-FEARING GENTILES ADMITTED TO THE CHURCH - the result of following the Spirit’s guidance (Ch. 10:23-48)

(a) Accompanied by six Jewish companions (verses 23, 45; 11:12), Peter went to Caesarea and found a Gentile congregation of some size awaiting him (verses 24, 27).

(b) By this time he understood the meaning of his vision, and made the important statements recorded in verses 28, 34-35.

(c) He preached the Gospel of Jesus; especially that He is the Saviour from sin (verses 36-43).

(d) As he spoke, his hearers believed, and to them the Spirit was given (verse 44) with signs accompanying (verse 46; 11:15), to the amazement and illumination of Peter and his friends (verses 4.5; 11:16).

(e) In all these events the Spirit had led. It was He who admitted these Gentiles to the Church on the ground of their sincere hearts, and of their trust in Jesus (Ch. 15:7-9).

(f) How could Peter regard as being common or unclean those whom God had cleansed and received? (Ch. 10:15). He must still continue to follow as the Spirit led, and thus recognise these Gentiles as brothers in Christ:
   i. by administering to them the public sign of acceptance to the Church - baptism;
   ii. by staying to instruct them further, and eating with them for some days (verses 47-48).

5. PETER'S DEFENCE FOR HIS ACTION (Ch. 11:1-18)

(a) On his return to Jerusalem, Peter was challenged for his conduct at Caesarea by those in the Church, who stood rigidly for the Jewish law and its excluding claims (verses 1-2).

(b) They regarded it as a wrong thing that he should have entered into full fellowship with Gentiles who were not full proselytes (verse 3).

(c) Peter and his companions from Joppa (verse 12) gave a full account of all that had transpired, showing how it was the Spirit who had:
   i. guided Peter throughout;
   ii. of His own will come fully upon these Gentiles (verses 4-16).

(d) He again pressed the point - if God has given them 'the same gift as He gave us' and 'they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have', how can we continue to make a difference? (verse 17).

(e) All protesting voices were thus silenced (verse 18) but this was not the end of the matter. It remained for many a ‘burning question’ as we see in the later part of The Acts of the Apostles, and in some of the epistles.

6. PERSECUTION BY HEROD AGRIIPPA 1 (Ch. 12:1-17)

(a) This king was grandson to Herod the Great, and was at this time the sole governor, under Rome, of the whole Palestine territory - hence his authority in Jerusalem.

Note: He held this position from A.D. 41 to his death in A.D. 44, information which helps in dating events in this book.

(b) He had a great desire to please the Jews.
(c) He killed James Zebedee with the sword, and purposed to do the same with Peter, who was arrested and imprisoned at Passover time (verses 1-3). (An indication that the Christians had never regained favour with the Jerusalem crowd.)

(d) Peter was miraculously delivered from prison and restored to the praying company at the house of Mary, John Mark's mother (verses 5-16).

(e) Verse 17 indicates that there were other companies of believers in the city, and that James (the Lord's brother) was then a prominent leader.

(f) Peter left Jerusalem. In Ch. 15 there is mention of his being there again, but his later activities have no mention in The Acts of the Apostles.
INTRODUCTION. In the story of Stephen’s martyrdom, and of the great persecution which followed, we have been introduced to Saul of Tarsus. This is the dominant name in the remainder of The Acts of the Apostles, and in the greater part of the rest of the New Testament. Before proceeding with the story we need to know something more about him.

1. HIS EARLY YEARS (Acts 22: 3; Philippians 3: 5-6)
   (a) His place of birth (see map).
      i. Tarsus - the chief city of Cilicia - was situated on the River Cydnus, a few miles from the coast.
      ii. It was a communication centre, serving as a seaport, and being the chief town on the great road which, passing through the mountains to the north, linked it with the central countries of Asia Minor.
      iii. It was a commercial centre – in addition to transport and trading activities it produced goats’ hair cloth in quantity.
      iv. It was a centre of learning, being one of the three principal university cities of that day.
      v. It was a proud city – enjoying self-government under the emperor.
      vi. In such a city Saul, as a boy, would have opportunity to see peoples of all races and all conditions.
   (b) His family.
      i. He came of proud Jewish stock – ‘a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and of the tribe of Benjamin’.
      ii. His father was a Pharisee who, although he lived outside of Palestine, had the strictest love for his Jewish blood and faith.
      iii. His father was a Roman citizen. (This had nothing to do with his nationality. Roman citizenship was a special privilege given to men of any race as a reward for service done to the Roman government, or was purchased by payment of a considerable fee.)
      v. Beside his Hebrew name ‘Saul’ he had a Gentile name – ‘Paul’.
      vi. We know at one time that he had a married sister, living in Jerusalem.
   (c) His training.
      i. He was taught a trade (as were all Jewish boys). In his case, it was weaving in the local goat hair industry.
      ii. He was sent when young to Jerusalem to be educated as a Jewish Rabbi, his tutor being the great Gamaliel, one of the most noted teachers the Jews have possessed.
      iii. He was a diligent scholar, and was most ardent in his religion, becoming a Pharisee himself, and keeping the observances of this strict sect with conscientious carefulness (Philippians 3:6).
   (d) Paul claimed that God’s hand was upon him from his birth, and we can see how all the factors noted above served to prepare him, in some way or another, for the totally unexpected task God had for him to do.

2. SAUL AS A PERSECUTOR (Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; see also Lesson 32, par. 6)
   (a) Saul obviously did not agree with the counsel given by his great teacher Gamaliel (Ch. 5:34, 38-39), although later he was to prove its wisdom.
   (b) He was sure the Christian doctrine was blasphemous, and was thus convinced that to let it go unchallenged would be to fail shamefully in zeal for God (Ch.26:9).
   (c) He thus became a chief and an unceasing persecutor.
   (d) Not content with his apparent success in driving Christianity from Jerusalem he took on himself the formidable task of persecuting Christian refugees in their new locations (Ch. 26:11).
To carry out this project he, surprisingly enough, was prepared to go beyond Palestine as far as the city of Damascus, which involved for him and his party a 135-mile journey, and some days of travelling.

3. SAUL’S CONVERSION (Acts 9: 3-19; also recorded in Chs.22:5-16; 26:12-19.)

(a) Near to Damascus Saul was confronted by Jesus - a great light shone about him and a voice spoke.
   i. He saw Jesus – this he consistently affirmed (1 Corinthians 15:8).
   ii. He heard His voice (Ch.9:4-6).
   iii. It was a shattering experience. In this moment he knew that the Jesus he was opposing was the Son of God and that he, Saul, was all wrong in his thinking and action.

(b) In Damascus.
   i. For three days (in the house of a man called Judas) he fasted and prayed in a condition of blindness (Ch.9:8-9).
   ii. Ananias, one of the group of Christians Saul had designed to capture, was sent to minister to him (Ch.9:10-16).
   iii. By the hand of Ananias he received:
      (a) Healing and baptism.
      (b) Confirmation that he was to be a chosen vessel to witness for Christ (Chs. 9:18; 22:12-16.).

4. HIS PERIOD OF RETIREMENT (Galatians 1:15-18)

(a) During a period approaching three years in duration Saul retired to ‘Arabia’ (a designation which gives little idea as to location). Of this there is no record in The Acts of the Apostles.
(b) The shattering experience he had suffered was enough to break him physically and mentally. He needed time for prayer, thought, study of the Scriptures, and for complete readjustment of his mind.
(c) Here he learned to count as loss much upon which he had previously set the highest value (Philippians 3:7-8)
(d) Here he received clarification to his mind concerning the nature of the work and witness he was to give for Christ.

5. HIS WITNESS IN DAMASCUS (Acts 9:19-25)

(a) Returning to Damascus he preached Christ in the synagogue with convincing power (verses 20-22).
(b) The former persecutor suffered persecution himself, and to save his life had to escape from the city (verses 23, 25).

6. HIS SHORT VISIT TO JERUSALEM (Acts 9: 26-30; Galatians 1:18-24)

(a) He went to Jerusalem to make contact with the Christian leaders there, but was not accepted by the disciples until Barnabas had overcome their natural suspicion (verses 26, 27).
(b) He witnessed for Christ among the same type of people to whom Stephen had spoken and with the same result - they sought his death (verse 29).
(c) By the urge of the disciples and by the guidance of a vision he received (Ch. 22:17-18, 21), he left Jerusalem and went, via Caesarea, to his home in Tarsus (verse 30).

7. SOME YEARS OF UNRECORDED MINISTRY (Galatians 1:21), estimated to be a period of above ten years.

(a) Information is not given in The Acts of the Apostles concerning this period, but something can be gathered from two epistles.
(b) It is clear they were years of strenuous, but effective, Christian witness in his own district of Cilicia, and in neighbouring Syria (Galatians 1:21).
   i. We have record of churches having been established in these provinces (Acts 15:23).
   ii. Several of the experiences mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 must have occurred during these years.

(a) Antioch in Syria was a magnificent and wealthy city in which lived a large community of Jews.

(b) The Christian Church there was started by Jerusalem disciples who were seeking refuge from the great persecution (Ch. 11:19).

(c) The church in Antioch became a notable centre of the church in later years, but it was already so in the time of The Acts of the Apostles, for these reasons:
   i. Gentile converts were brought in (Ch. 11:20-21). (‘Grecian’ here signifies Gentile people.) Note verse 20 - Jesus is preached as ‘Lord’. (‘Christ’ (Messiah) was a significant title to Jews, but not to Gentiles.)
   ii. It developed into a church where Jewish and Gentile believers shared full fellowship. They ate together (Galatians: 2:11-12).
   iii. Its members, nevertheless, maintained for their part full union with the all Jewish Jerusalem church, sending relief to them in time of need (Ch. 11:27-30).
   iv. The public, recognising them to be separate from the Jewish community, gave them the name of ‘Christians’ (Ch. 11:26).
   v. The church became notable also for its missionary spirit.

(d) Barnabas, being sent to inspect its condition and conduct:
   i. Approved, and stayed to minister (Ch. 11:22-24);
   ii. sought out Saul and brought him as a helper (Ch. 11:25-26);
   iii. went with Saul to carry the gift mentioned above (Ch. 11:30);
   iv. returned to Antioch with Saul and John Mark (Ch. 12:24-25).
LESSON 35

The First Missionary Journey
(Acts 13, 14)

INTRODUCTION. The next lessons deal with three great missionary journeys. Before we proceed with
detail concerning the first of these, there is an introductory word to say to the whole subject:

1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE TRAVEL NARRATIVES

(a) The time taken on these journeys was longer than is suggested by a casual reading (Chs. 13:49; 14: 3, 23).

(b) The distances covered were considerable. In the first journey – which was the shortest –
well over one thousand miles were covered, and many of these with delay and difficulty.

(c) Furthermore, most of the time was given to pioneering work – in places where there were
few, if any, existing friends, but many adversaries.

(d) All the places visited are not mentioned by name.

(e) Paul and his companions had no reserves of money which could render them free to devote
all their time to their evangelistic mission.

(i) They had to work their way, and earn their keep.

(ii) Often they were in real need, with little idea as to how they would manage, and

(iii) at times, besides enduring vicious persecution, had to face the further handicap of
sickness (read 2 Corinthians 11:26-28).

(f) Paul’s skill as a weaver and a tent-maker was a great help in finding employment and pay,
but it involved incessant labour (Acts 20:33-34).

2. THE EVANGELISTIC METHOD EMPLOYED

(a) These pioneers made for important and busy centres, where the work they did could well be
expected to spread to other places.

(b) They always went first to the Jewish synagogue (provided there was a Jewish community in
the town), and started their witness there. Paul’s standing as a Rabbi ensured that normally
he would have a welcome and an invitation to teach.

(c) The synagogues provided an audience not only of Jews, but also of the ‘God-fearing’
Gentiles who were associated with synagogue worship.

(d) Converts were usually won from both Jewish and the Gentile groups, and synagogue
witness was maintained unless, as often happened, Gospel-resisting synagogue rulers
expelled the Christian missionaries.

3. BARNABAS AND SAUL CHOSEN FOR MISSIONARY SERVICE (Acts 13:1-3)

(a) At the time of his conversion, Saul learned that he was to travel far in the service of his new
Master, and he might well have been eager to leave Antioch.

(b) Nevertheless, the word to ‘go’ came not as previously from the circumstance of
persecution, or of the will of man, but by a direct leading from the Holy Spirit Himself (verse
2).

(c) Obediently Barnabas and Saul set out, with the blessing and prayers of the Antioch Church,
to a large extent not knowing where they were going, as did their great forefather Abraham.

(d) John Mark travelled with them as a young assistant (verse 5).

4. THE CAMPAIGN IN CYPRUS (Acts 13:4-12)

(a) Cyprus was the home of Barnabas (see Ch. 4:36-37), who appears to have been at that
time the leader of the party.

(b) The Gospel was preached through the island from Salamis to the chief city (Paphos), where
the Roman governor, Sergius Paulus, desired to hear the message (verse 7).

(c) The judgment which came on Elymas, the sorcerer, was a sign:

(i) to the Governor of the greater power that was with these Christian witnesses;

(ii) to Barnabas and Saul of the opposition they were to meet, but also of its
powerlessness to frustrate the work of God (verses 8-12).

5. THE EVENTS AT PERGA (Acts 13:13)
FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(a) We have noted that Saul had spent some years witnessing in Cilicia, so upon leaving Cyprus they struck into untouched territory (see map).
(b) The leadership now passed to Saul who, embarking on a mission when he was going to deal specially with Gentile people, dropped his Jewish name, and adopted from then on his Roman name, Paul.
(c) Some detail of their circumstance or plans at this time did not suit John Mark, who refused to go further, and went home. In Paul's eyes he did not have justifying reason for doing so (Ch. 15:37-38).
(d) It appears that they did not teach in Perga, but went on to Antioch (Pisidia).
   i. Witness was given in Perga on the return journey (Ch. 14:25).
   ii. There is indication in Galatians 4:13 that Paul was not well at this time.

6. ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA (Acts 13:14)
   (a) This town (founded by the same king as was Antioch in Syria, hence the same name) was important, being the civil and military centre for south Galatia. It was also a commercial town, being connected by roads with all parts of Asia Minor.
   (b) In such a town beside citizens of a wide range of race and culture, many strangers and travellers could be reached with the message.
   (c) The journey from Perga involved travelling over a hundred miles, and climbing for a great part of this distance over difficult mountain roads.

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENTS AT ANTIOCH
   There are three matters which are especially notable. These are:
   (a) Paul's synagogue address (Ch. 13:16-41).
      i. This is the only example we have of Paul's synagogue preaching.
      ii. In it Paul deals with subjects which have prominence in his epistles.
      iii. It can thus be regarded as an introduction to the study of his letters – verses 38-39, are particularly important.
   (b) The turning to the Gentiles, reported in Ch. 13:46-47.
   (c) The pattern of all the events, which was so clearly repeated in other places (see paragraphs 2 and 9).

8. PAUL'S MESSAGE TO A JEWISH AND A GOD-FEARING GENTILE AUDIENCE (Acts 13:14-41)
   (a) He reviewed Old Testament history (verses 16-22), some of which may have been in the readings earlier in the service (verse 15).
   (b) Showing in each case that his statements were in accord with scriptural prediction, Paul said:
      i. Jesus had come as Messiah, fulfilling the word to David and the word from John the Baptist (verses 23-25).
      ii. He had been put to death through the ignorance and wickedness of men, but had been raised again (verses 27-37).
      iii. Through Him salvation was offered to all who believe.
   (c) He presented this offer as 'good news' (verse 32) because:
      i. It includes an offer of full remission of sins, and of eternal life (verses 38-39, 46).
      ii. It is offered to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of faith (verse 26).
      iii. It offers that which can be obtained by no other means – not even by rigorous adherence to the Law of Moses (verse 39).
   (d) He warned of the judgment incurred by rejecting it (verses 40-41).

9. THE RESULT OF THIS TEACHING (Acts 13)
   (a) Many Jews and God-fearers believed (verse 43), and many more were attracted (verse 44).
   (b) The Gentiles particularly were responsive to a message which offered God-fearers a way to full righteousness, without any insistence that this could not happen unless they became full Jewish proselytes.
   (c) Rigid Jews hardened in opposition.
      i. Their trust in salvation through keeping the Law was affronted by Paul's statement in verse 39.
      ii. They were angered at their Gentile adherents leaving Jewish teaching to follow these new teachers (verse 45).
   (d) Thus Paul and Barnabas took the momentous step recorded in verse 46.
FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(e) The apostles stayed long enough to spread the message through the region (verse 49), but in the end their opponents brought about their expulsion from the city, and the district over which it had government (verse 50).

10. AT ICONIUM (Acts 14:1-5)
(a) This was an important centre some eighty miles along the imperial road, and in another province.
(b) The pattern of events here was similar to the happenings in Antioch.

11. IN LYSTRA (Acts 14:6-20)
(a) A shorter journey took them into another area of government (verse 6).
(b) In Lystra, the people were predominantly Gentile heathen (verse 11).
(c) They would have worshipped Paul and Barnabas as gods (verses 8-14,18).
(d) Paul’s words (verses 15-18) provide an example as to how he spoke to people who had no knowledge of the message of the Old Testament.
   i. He spoke from ‘natural revelation’ concerning God’s unity, power and benevolence, thereby condemning idol-worship.
   ii. An expanded and more elaborate form of this manner of speaking is given in the account of his words to the Athenians in Ch.17.
(e) There was probably only a small Jewish community here. It was Jews from Antioch and Iconium (so far had their persecuting fervour brought them) who roused the mob against the apostles.
(f) Paul was all but killed (verses 19-20).

(a) The farthest point reached was Derbe (verses 20-21).
(b) Instead of proceeding onward to Tarsus, they bravely retraced their steps in consideration of the needs of their converts.
(c) In each centre the churches were standing, in spite of persecution.
(d) Encouragement was given, and necessary organisation was attended to (verses 22-23).
(e) After preaching in Perga, a sea journey brought Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch, where the Church rejoiced to hear their report (verses 25-28).
The Important Council at Jerusalem, and the Second Missionary Journey (1)
(Acts 15 to 17:15)

1. THE SPECIAL COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM (Acts 15:1-31)
   (a) Certain men, claiming an authority they did not have (verse 24), came to Antioch and set forth the doctrine that Gentiles could not be saved unless they became full proselytes (verse 1).
   (b) Paul and Barnabas strongly opposed this teaching, and eventually headed a deputation which took this question to Jerusalem (verse 2).
   (c) In Jerusalem they met a party who supported these travelling teachers (verse 5).
   (d) The matter was settled by a special council meeting.
      i. Peter once again reported how God had, for him, settled the question by sending the fullness of the Spirit upon Cornelius while he was still in his Gentile condition (verses 7-9).
      ii. Barnabas and Paul (who wisely gave Barnabas the first place here) were able to provide numerous examples of other cases similar to that of Cornelius and his company (verse 12).
      iii. James, the brother of the Lord (James, the apostle, was then dead), as presiding elder spoke last.
          Supporting Peter he gave a decision which was approved by the company, with the conviction that it was in accord with the mind of the Spirit (verses 13-19, 28).
   (e) This decision, set down in a circular letter, freed Gentile believers from having to conform to the demands of the Mosaic Law (i.e. in its ceremonial, but not in its moral, aspect), with some minor reservations regarding food whereby they would avoid being objectionable to their Jewish brethren (verses 23-24, 28-29).
   (f) The deputation returned to Antioch with this letter and with two certifying witnesses, Judas and Silas (verses 27, 30-31).

2. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY COMMENCED – INSPECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN TO EXISTING CHURCHES (Acts 15:36 to 16:5)
   (a) Paul set out with Silas to revisit churches which had been founded by Paul.
   (b) His proposal to go with Barnabas broke down because they could not agree as to whether or not John Mark should be one of the party (Ch. 15:37-39; see also Lesson 23, par. 2).
   (c) Silas was a chief man in the Jerusalem Church (Ch. 15:22), and he shared with Paul the privilege of Roman citizenship.
   (d) Encouragement was given to already existing churches.
      i. After calling at churches in Syria and Cilicia they came to the places which had been evangelised in the previous journey - Derbe and Lystra (Ch. 15:41).
      ii. At Lystra, Timothy was added to the party. He was most probably a convert of the first journey, and proved to be a faithful companion and comfort to Paul to the end of the apostle’s life (Ch. 16:1-3; see 2 Timothy 1:4-5).
      iii. To these south Galatia churches they reported the result of the Jerusalem conference, and gave them a written copy of its decision (Ch. 16:4-5).

3. THE ENTRY INTO EUROPE (Acts 16:6-11)
   (a) At Antioch in Pisidia, Paul, looking ahead, could see to the right, and to the left, untouched territories before him, but by the Spirit’s guidance he was prevented from taking any direction, save that which led forward to Troas on the sea coast (verses 6-8).
      Note: Troas was 600 miles from Antioch in Syria.
   (b) Paul, being called by a vision into Macedonia, left Troas and sailed with his two companions and Luke for Europe (verses 9-11).

4. IN PHILIPPI (Acts 16:12-40)
   (a) Philippi was the chief town of this area and was a Roman colony (i.e. a self-contained and self-governing town, many of whose citizens were of military stock). It was situated on the
Egnatian Way, one of the great Roman roads which connected the eastern part of the empire to Rome itself.

(b) The Jewish community here was small and, having no synagogue, they met for worship by the riverside (verse 13).

(c) Here a notable convert was made, a God-fearer named Lydia, who, being a person of means, offered lodging to the party (verses 14-15).

(d) Opposition arose in Philippi, not from Jews but from business people.
   i. Paul cured a fortune-telling girl (verses 16-18).
   ii. Her employers, stirring up the crowd, brought Paul and Silas before the magistrates accusing them (as Jews) of being disturbers of the peace.
   iii. Without trial they were beaten and imprisoned (verses 19-24).

(e) An earthquake in the night, and the apostles’ conduct before and after it, so impressed the keeper of the prison that he was ready to listen to, and believe, their teaching (verses 25-34).

(f) The city authorities, probably knowing there was no real charge against Paul, or possibly as the result of action by Luke and Lydia, ordered the prisoners to be released in the morning (verses 35-36).
   i. Paul made protest against the treatment received without trial, and injustice, which if reported would go seriously against these magistrates, all the more so because Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, and as such had special legal protection (verse 37).
   ii. The magistrates apologised in person, and made request for the Christian leaders to leave the town (verses 38-39).

(g) Paul and Silas went at their own convenience leaving Luke behind, being assured that the converts would now be treated respectfully by the city governors (verse 40).

5. IN THESSALONICA (Acts 17:1-10)
   (a) A journey of some ninety-four miles on the Egnatian Way brought them to the capital of Macedonia, Thessalonica (the modern Salonica), then, as now, a busy town and an important seaport (verse 1).
   (b) The happenings here closely followed the order of events at Antioch in Pisidia and Iconium.
      i. Synagogue witness resulted in the winning of many converts; some of them Jews, and very many, both men and women, from the company of God-fearing Gentiles (verses 2-4).
      ii. There was bitter opposition from unbelieving Jews who, stirring up the mob, but failing to lay hold of Paul or his companions, brought their host Jason and other Christians before the court, laying a charge of treason against the company of believers (verses 5-8).
      iii. Jason and his friends were bound over to keep the peace (verse 9).
      iv. The Christian company sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (verse 10).
      v. 1 Thessalonians 2:14 refers to the persecution all the believers endured in this city.
   (c) Verse 6 shows how far, at least in Jewish circles, news of the nature of Christian activity had travelled.
   (d) The stay in this town was long enough for Paul to need to work at his trade (1 Thessalonians 2:9), and for there to be communication with the Philippians, who generously sent funds (Philippians 4:15-16).

6. IN BERE A (Acts 17:10-14)
   (a) The synagogue reception to the Christian message in Berea is the best recorded of any place, and many converts, Jewish and Gentile, were won (verses 10-12).
   (b) The violent Thessalonian persecutors, however, followed the campaigners, and stirring up the populace caused the brethren to send Paul away (verse 13).
   (c) With an escort of Berean followers he travelled to Athens leaving Silas and Timothy behind (verse 14).
1. **ATHENS** (Acts 17:15)
   
   (a) Athens, although a great deal of its ancient glory had departed, still had importance in that in it was the premier university of the empire, and gathered its students from all lands.
   
   (b) It was also the headquarters of all the chief philosophical schools, two of which are mentioned in verse 18.
   
   (c) It was a religious centre to that age, being full of temples and altars to all known types of deities (verse 16).
   
   (d) Its citizens were not to be praised. They were given more to novelties and arguments than to sincere seeking for truth (verse 21).

2. **PAUL’S MINISTRY IN ATHENS** (Acts 17:16-22)
   
   (a) Alone at this time, he witnessed to Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue, but also to all classes in the city centre (verse 17), becoming known as one who taught concerning Jesus and the Resurrection (verse 18).
   
   (b) A group of philosophers gave him a special hearing (not a trial) in the court (which had oversight of matters of education and religion), in a place called the ‘Areopagus’ on the summit of Mars’ hill (verses 18-20, 22).
   
   (c) Here Paul had the task of presenting his message to a purely Gentile and yet cultured company. He could not speak to them as he did to a synagogue congregation, but had to speak in terms of natural revelation.
   
   (d) We thus have a demonstration of his declaration, ‘I have become all things to all men, that by all possible means I might save some’ (1 Corinthians 9:22).

3. **A DIGEST OF HIS ADDRESS** (Acts 17:22-31; see also Lesson 35, par. 11 (d))
   
   A study of the philosophies held by his hearers will reveal that he spoke particularly to their condition, but without that study we can note that taking a subject provided by Athens itself (‘The unknown God’), Paul spoke chiefly of God as:
   
   (a) Creator, Preserver and Governor of all (verses 24-26), offering men fellowship (verse 27).
   
   (b) Condemning by the light they already had, their practice of idolatry and worship of many ‘gods’ (verse 29).
   
   (c) Coming into the experience of men in a new way with fresh revelation and demand (verses 30-31), this new subject being Paul’s special message (verse 18).

4. **THE RESPONSE** (Acts 17:32-34) – as nearly always is the case:
   
   (a) Some believed, including Dionysius, one of the city’s chief philosophers (verse 34).
   
   (b) Others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject’ (verse 32).
   
   (c) Others mocked (verse 32).
   
   Note: While still at Athens Paul was joined by Timothy whom he sent away again to inquire into the welfare of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

5. **CORINTH** (Acts 18:1)
   
   (a) Corinth was the chief city of Achaia (see map to note its central position in the empire).
   
   (b) It had two ports, one on each side of the isthmus which connected it with the northern part of Greece (ships could be transported across this).
   
   (c) It was a great commercial and sporting centre (Isthmian games).
   
   (d) It had great wealth and many notable buildings and temples.
   
   (e) It had the name to be the most depraved city of that day, especially for immorality and drunkenness (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ‘that is what some of you were’)
   
   (f) Here, more than elsewhere in Greece, Paul would meet all conditions of people.

6. **PAUL’S CONDITION IN CORINTH** (Acts 18:2-5, 9-10)
   
   (a) He came alone with a feeling of great inadequacy (1 Corinthians 2:3).
   
   (b) He was encouraged by:
   
   i. Finding Aquila and Priscilla, who were fellow-countrymen, and fellow craftsmen. These remained firm friends to Paul throughout the rest of his life.
   
   ii. The arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia (verse 5).
iii. A vision from the Lord which gave him promise of protection and success in his work
(verses 9-10).

7. HIS MINISTRY IN CORINTH (Acts 18:6-8, 11)
   (a) This lasted about two years (verse 11).
       Note: He had been here some time before receiving the vision.
   (b) He won converts through his teaching in the Jewish synagogue (verse 8).
   (c) Unbelieving Jews became his bitter enemies (verse 6).
   (d) Most of his ministry was given to Gentile hearers (verses 6-8).
   (e) During Paul’s stay in Corinth, the first and second epistles to the Thessalonians were
       written.

8. A JEWISH PLOT AGAINST HIM FAILED (Acts 18:12-17)
The recently appointed Governor, Gallio, rejected the charge against Paul, it being a matter over
which the civil court had no authority.

9. HIS RETURN TO ANTIOCH (Acts 18:18-22)
   (a) He returned to Antioch by way of Ephesus and Jerusalem.
   (b) At Ephesus:
      i. He stayed for a few days giving to the Jews a short but accepted witness, and a
         promise to return (verses 19-21).
      ii. Priscilla and Aquila, who left Corinth with Paul, remained.
   (c) After calling at Jerusalem, he returned to Antioch (verse 22).

10. A SPECIAL SERVICE DONE BY AQUILA AND PRISCILLA (Acts 18:24-28).
    (a) In Ephesus they made contact with a man named Apollos, who:
        Was a Jew, born at Alexandria; was sound in his knowledge of the Scriptures; was fervent in
        spirit; was teaching in the synagogue, and was a disciple of John the Baptist (verses 24-25).
    (b) He so impressed Aquila and Priscilla that they took pains to ‘explain to him the way of God
        more adequately’ (verse 26).
    (c) This teaching he accepted, and after a time went to Corinth where he did a great work
        (verses 27-28; see also Ch. 19:1; 1 Corinthians 3:4. ‘I follow Apollos’.
THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

LESSON 38

Paul’s Third Missionary Journey
(Acts 18:23 to 21:17)

1. EPHESUS (Acts 19:1) was a great centre:
   (a) The centre of government of the province of Asia, having a vast cosmopolitan population
       and widespread contact with other parts through its sea and road communications.
   (b) It was a place of pilgrimage:
       i. being the centre of worship of the goddess Diana, whose image (reported to have
           fallen from the sky – Ch. 19:35) was enshrined in the largest Greek Temple ever
           constructed – a magnificent building (one of the seven wonders of the ancient
           world), made more glorious by the wealth of treasure it contained;
       ii. having a huge open-air theatre and other notable centres of entertainment;
       iii. as an headquarters of those who practised curious and magical arts.
   (c) Paul had long seen its value as a centre for witness (Chs. 16:6; 18:19-21), and he was now
       able to devote more than two years to such a mission.
   (d) In such a centre he was able not only to influence the town and the whole province but also,
       by means of correspondence and the many ‘lieutenants’ he employed, to keep in touch with
       all the churches he had so far founded, e.g. Ch. 19:22.
   (e) Of this correspondence there is preserved the great epistle we call 1 Corinthians.

2. THE MINISTRY IN EPHESUS (verses from Acts 19 and elsewhere)
   (a) After leaving Antioch, Paul visited the Galatian and Phrygian churches and came on to
       Ephesus (Ch. 18:23).
   (b) Paul’s synagogue teaching continued for three months only (verse 8), the unbelieving Jews
       becoming as bitter and as obstructive enemies as any he had ever encountered.
   (c) When the synagogue was closed to him he continued an intensive teaching ministry:
       i. In the school of Tyrannus, daily for two years (verses 9-10).
       ii. In people’s houses (Ch. 20:20).
   (d) He became well known on account of the special miracles God performed by him
       (verses 11-12).
   (e) The work had great success (verse 20) the effect reaching far beyond the town itself (verse
       10), as his opponents also testified (verse 26). Most probably it was during this period that
       many of the Asian churches (mentioned in the Book of Revelation) were formed.
   (f) During these years Paul was by no means free from adversity and trouble.
       i. He maintained himself by manual labour (Ch. 20:33-35).
       ii. Toward the end he was most seriously ill (2 Corinthians 1:8-9).
       iii. He was violently opposed by bitter enemies (1 Corinthians 15:30-32).
   (g) A vivid background picture of this period can be gathered from Paul’s own words - all
       referring to this time, but recorded elsewhere.

3. SOME NOTABLE EVENTS OF THE EPHESUS PERIOD (Acts 19)
   (a) Disciples of John the Baptist were led to faith in Jesus, in accord with the message of their
       great teacher (verses 1-7).
   (b) The sons of Sceva, endeavouring to use the name of Jesus as an incantation, were
       confounded (verses 13-18).
   (c) There was a great public burning of magical books and writings -- these would have been
       worth several thousand pounds (verse 19).
   (d) A great riot hastened Paul’s departure (verses 23-41).
       i. Paul had intended to stay until Whitsun (1 Corinthians 16:8), but a riot broke out
           against the Christians some time before this, and caused him to leave earlier (Ch.
           20:1).
       ii. Demetrius, a silversmith, instigated it because the trade of selling silver images and
           tokens to the worshippers of Diana was noticeably reduced (verses 24-27).
       iii. The town clerk succeeded in quietening the uproar after a time (verses 35-41).
       iv. Christians and influential friends saved Paul from danger (verses 30-31).
       v. Many of the demonstrators mistakenly thought it was an anti-Jewish demonstration
           (verses 32-34).
       Note: Alexander was not a Christian, but a Jew who was trying to explain this
       mistake to the crowd. He may be the man mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:14-15.
vi. This happening made the opposing Jews madder than ever against Paul and the Christians.

4. PAUL IN MACEDONIA AND GREECE (Acts 20:1-5)
   (a) Paul visited the Macedonian churches (notably Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea) (verses 1-2).
   (b) Then went to Corinth to deal with matters (verse 2), detail of which is given in 1 and 2 Corinthians.
   (c) While in Corinth for three months (verse 3) he wrote the Epistle to the Romans.
   (d) Apart from other business, Paul was collecting from each church contributions of money for the relief of the church at Jerusalem. (The names in verse 4 are of some of the church representatives who were carrying these gifts) – (Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3).
   (e) A plot against Paul’s life caused him to return via Macedonia instead of taking ship from Corinth (verse 3).

5. FROM TROAS TO JERUSALEM (Acts 20: 6 to 21:17)
   (a) At Troas (Ch. 20:6-12), Luke came with Paul from Philippi immediately after Easter (verse 6). Note - the Christians meeting on the first day of the week and the incident concerning Eutychus.
   (b) At Miletus (Ch. 20:17-38) - some forty miles south of Ephesus.
      i. Here Paul said farewell to the leaders of the Ephesus Church (verse 17).
      ii. Apart from the verses referred to in par. 2(g) note:
          his announcement concerning his predicted arrest (verses 22-23, 25); his confidence (verse 24); his charge to them (verses 28-31); his farewell (verses 32-36-38).
   (c) At Tyre (Ch. 21:3-6) – a week of Christian fellowship.
   (d) At Caesarea (Ch. 21:8-14). Paul stayed with Philip, and was again warned by Agabus of impending arrest at Jerusalem (verses 8-12). He, nevertheless, felt it his duty to go (verses 13-14).
   (e) Paul, with his large company of friends, arrived at Jerusalem, and was welcomed by the brethren (verse 17).
INTRODUCTION. Paul writing to the Romans at the end of the third missionary journey, told them that he had in his evangelistic pioneering missions covered all the territory from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:18-20), and that having ‘no more place … to work in these regions’, purposed to come to Rome, with a view to carrying the Gospel to regions beyond (Romans 15:23-24). Our next lessons tell us in what ways his prayer expressed in verses 30-32 were answered. (See also Acts 19:21.)

   (a) Paul presented to the Jerusalem elders his gifts, and a report of the success of his ministry among the Gentiles (verses 17-19).
   (b) They gave the disquieting news that there were ‘many thousands’ (verse 20) of Jewish Christians, strict observers of the Law, who were prejudiced against Paul, being influenced by a report that he was persuading Jews to abandon their distinctly Jewish practices (verses 20-21).
   (c) They suggested that he should disprove these accusations by showing that he himself still observed Jewish law, even in its above normal demands, i.e. vow making and keeping (verses 23-25).
   (d) This Paul did, although it involved for him considerable expense and his remaining in the Temple precincts for seven days (verse 26).

   (a) Trouble came from his Ephesian enemies – one of these recognising him in the Temple roused the crowd to fury by accusing Paul (falsey):
      i. of bringing a Gentile into the court forbidden on pain of death to the feet of all who were not Jews;
      ii. of being an enemy of the Jewish people, their Law, and their Holy Place (verses 27-30).
      Note: The same cries as were made against Stephen (Acts 6:13).
   (b) Paul’s life was saved:
      i. because, being unwilling to dispatch him on consecrated ground, the crowd were dragging him into the outer court (verse 30);
      ii. by the swift action of the Roman troops in the castle over-looking the Temple court (the scene of many an uproar), who came to Paul’s rescue, and took him to the castle (verses 31-36).

   (a) Paul’s request to speak from the castle steps was granted by Lysias, the Captain (Ch. 21:37-40).
   (b) Speaking in Hebrew, Paul (Ch. 22:1-2) said:
      i. Who he was (Ch. 22:3).
      ii. That he had been a persecutor of the Christians (Ch. 22:4-5).
      iii. How he had been converted (Ch. 22:6-16).
      iv. How he had been commissioned to witness to ‘all’ men (Ch. 22:15); (and following rejection by the Jews in Jerusalem) to the Gentiles (Ch. 22:17-21).
   (c) The word ‘Gentiles’ inflamed the crowd, and put an end to his speaking (Ch. 22:22-23).
   (d) Lysias refrained from questioning Paul under the lash when he learnt that Paul was a Roman citizen (Ch. 22:24-29).

   (a) To discover what the Jews had against Paul, Lysias took him before the Sanhedrin (Ch. 22:30).
   (b) Paul came into conflict with the High Priest (verses 1-5)
   (c) But he set the Sadducees and Pharisees against each other by bringing up the question of the doctrine of resurrection (for all men, not that of Jesus) – (verses 6-9).
   (d) This brought the proceedings to a riotous conclusion (verse 10).
PAUL WITNESSES IN HIGH PLACES

5. THE EVENTS WHICH BROUGHT PAUL TO CAESAREA (Acts 23:11-35)
   (a) Paul had an assurance from the Lord that sustained him through all the coming days (verse 11).
   (b) Paul’s nephew was able to report a murderous plot against Paul, in which the Sanhedrin was shamefully involved (verses 12-22).
   (c) Lysias hurried Paul away by night to Felix the governor, with a very large escort, and a letter of explanation (verses 23-33).

6. PAUL EXAMINED BEFORE FELIX (Acts 24:1-22)
   Before Felix the governor (the position formerly held by Pontius Pilate) after five days:
   (a) The Sanhedrin through their advocate, Tertullus, charged Paul with
      i. being a ‘troublemaker’ (an encourager of disrespect for the Roman law) among Jews everywhere;
      ii. being a ringleader of the Nazarenes;
      iii. profaning the Temple (verses 1-7).
   (b) Paul cleared himself of these charges (verses 10-21) saying
      i. His visit to Jerusalem was to worship and to bring alms (verses 11, 17).
      ii. Although called an heretic by the Council, he was a good Jew and inoffensive to all men by principle (verses 14-16).
      iii. His accusers could produce no evidence whatsoever that he had ever been guilty of causing public disturbance (verses 12-13), or that he had caused trouble in the Temple (verses 18-19).
      iv. His examination before the Sanhedrin had produced no accusation (verse 20).
      v. The only ‘riot’ he admitted being responsible for was the one in the Sanhedrin itself (verse 21).
   (c) The governor ‘adjourned the proceedings’ until he could hear the chief captain’s evidence (verse 22).

   (a) Felix had a guilty and sordid past – married three times, his present consort being Drusilla, who was a Jewess (sister to the Agrippa and Bernice, mentioned in the next chapter), who had forsaken her lawful husband for Felix.
   (b) This guilty pair were condemned by Paul’s witness to righteousness (verses 24-25).
   (c) But Felix, hoping for a bribe, denied Paul his acquittal and on his recall to Rome two years later (to answer a complaint from the Jews), added a further injustice by leaving Paul a prisoner (verses 26-27).

8. PAUL AND FESTUS (Acts 25:1-12)
   (a) Paul’s enemies tried hard to effect Paul’s death.
      i. Their accusations before the new governor failed (verses 7, 8).
      ii. They renewed their assassination plot (verse 3).
   (b) Paul closed all further legal proceedings by using his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar (verses 10-12).

   (a) Herod Agrippa 2 was the last of the Herods; Bernice was his sister. They came to pay a courtesy visit to the new governor (Ch. 25:13).
   (b) This gave opportunity for Paul to testify before the king, and for Festus to have help in a difficulty.
   (c) Festus publicly admitted that Paul was innocent (Ch. 25:23-25), and that he was in a dilemma having to send Paul to Rome without having a charge to make against him (Ch. 25:26-27).
   (d) Paul again testified concerning his conversion and call, giving some detail not recorded elsewhere (Ch. 26:1-23).
   (e) He appealed earnestly to Agrippa, who brushed aside Paul’s application (Ch. 26:27-28).
   Note: Agrippa’s words (verse 28) are not those of conviction.
   (f) All were convinced that Paul was not guilty of offence against Roman law (Ch. 26:30-32).
INTRODUCTION. Since Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem one happening after another had seemed certain to bring about his death. This lesson tells how still further dangers were averted by God’s overruling hand.

1. THE VOYAGE FROM CAESAREA TO THE FAIR HAVENS (Acts 27:1-13)
   
   (a) Paul, accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus of Thessalonica was, with other prisoners, put in the charge of a centurion called Julius, who throughout the journey treated Paul with special consideration (verses 1-2).
   
   (b) Ships in those days did not put to sea in the winter months, but these travellers, although starting toward the end of the year, hoped to get through in time.
   
   (c) This hope was not realised. Almost from the first they were subjected to a succession of delays and adversities.
   
   (d) The vessel first taken, after calling at Sidon (verse 3), had to abandon its purposed course (verses 2, 4) and sailing north of Cyprus put in to Myra (verse 5).
   
   (e) Here the party transhipped to one of the large vessels which carried grain from Egypt to Rome, and which now had 276 persons aboard (verses 6,37).
   
   (f) Adverse winds interfered both with the time schedule and with the projected course so that, being driven to the south of Crete, they had to run for shelter into a harbour called The Fair Havens (verses 7-8).
   
   (g) This harbour, being open to some points of the compass, did not provide a good place in which to winter, so the seamen proposed to make for the only all-weather harbour on that coast, thirty-four miles to the west (verse 12).
   
   (h) Paul advised against this.
      i. It was now late in the year, October or even November (the fast, the Day of Atonement, was past - verse 9).
      ii. He warned that danger would attend any further sailing (verse 10).
      iii. His advice was not taken (verses 11,13).

   
   (a) Not long out of Fair Havens the ship was caught by a fierce north-east wind (customary enough in those parts to be named by seamen), and was driven helplessly before it (Ch. 27:14-15).
   
   (b) Later the crew were able to get the ship’s boat aboard (Luke helping) and to support with ropes the leaking hull, but a considerable part of the ship’s rigging and cargo had to be thrown overboard, and the situation continued to worsen, until it became clear that the vessel was doomed (Ch. 27:16-20).
   
   (c) After fourteen terrible days and nights of buffeting, the sinking ship was driven near to land, and being providentially run aground, was broken to pieces by the still tempestuous sea, without the loss of a single life (Ch. 27:27-29, 38-41,44).
   
   (d) The escaped company found themselves destitute, wet and cold, on the island of Malta, but were quickly relieved by the kind help of the inhabitants, among whom they stayed for three months (Ch. 28:1-2,11).
   
   (e) Paul’s witness during this experience.
      i. He prayed and received confirmation from the Lord that, although the ship would be lost, all lives would be spared and that he would come safely to Rome (Ch. 27:21-26).
      ii. He encouraged his fellow voyagers with this message, and later directed and encouraged them again (Ch. 27:33-36).
      iii. He frustrated an attempt by the seamen to abandon the ship (Ch. 27:30-32).
      iv. He did some notable works of healing among the Maltese people (Ch. 28:7-9).
   
   (f) Paul’s further deliverances.
      i. From being killed by the guard (Ch. 27:42-43).
      ii. From the bite of a venomous snake (Ch.28:3-6).
3. **PAUL COMES TO ROME** (Acts 28: 10-15)
   (a) An uneventful voyage brought the travellers (their losses having been made good - verse 10) to their landing in Italy, at Puteoli (verses 11-13).
   (b) Paul was greatly encouraged by being met at Puteoli and on the journey to Rome by Christian friends (verses 14-15).

4. **PAUL IN ROME** (Acts 28:16-31)
   (a) His circumstances, apart from his being under arrest, were comfortable (verses 16, 30-31).
   (b) He witnessed to the Jewish community (verses 17-23), gaining converts and making enemies (verses 24-27).
   (c) He witnessed to the Gentiles (verse 28).

5. **PAUL’S SUBSEQUENT HISTORY**
   (a) Luke tells us Paul stayed for two years in Rome.
   (b) Although we lack explicit detail of events after this, it is gathered from other sources that he was then released and continued his evangelistic mission in both new and old fields of labour.
   (c) Imprisoned once again in Rome, tradition tells that he suffered martyrdom by the sword in the period A.D. 64-67.
   (d) It is clear that during his prison years he kept in touch with his beloved friends and converts by messengers, and by letters.
   (e) Such epistles as Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy are from Paul the prisoner.

**CONCLUSION.**
   (a) Apart from all other illustration, Paul himself provides the strongest example of the two ways in which the Church grew in spite of the sternest opposition in the period of The Acts of the Apostles.
      i. In a widespread advance in the extent of territory covered.
      ii. In growth from the strictest Jewish exclusiveness to the all embracing Christian love which knows neither ‘Jew nor Greek; slave nor free; male nor female’ all being one in Christ Jesus.
   (b) Through the written records left by these early witnesses, ‘they being dead yet speak’ and have truly become witnesses to the, ‘uttermost parts of the earth’ and indeed to the utmost part of time.
   (c) Our study of this period is not completed. More information will be given concerning it in the study of the Epistles.
LESSON 41

General Introduction to the Epistles and The Epistles to the Thessalonians

1. THEIR TITLES
   (a) Twenty-one of the twenty-seven New Testament books are epistles, and are attributed to five writers - Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude.
   (b) Some of these were addressed to the Church as a whole (General Epistles), and others to a particular church or group of churches, and some to individuals.
   (c) Paul’s epistles bear the name of the receiver; other epistles bear the name of the writer.

2. THE REASON WHY THEY WERE WRITTEN (see Lesson 1, par. 2 (b))
   (a) Often this was the only means by which church leaders could keep in touch with the widely dispersed churches.
   (b) More particularly:
      i. to meet a special need - for rebuke, correction, instruction, or encouragement;
      ii. to answer questions on important matters;
      iii. to ensure that directions were preserved in a written form.
   (c) Otherwise, to fulfil the functions that letters normally serve:
      i. to give thanks for gifts or messages received;
      ii. to inquire concerning welfare;
      iii. to inform concerning the writer’s condition and plans;
      iv. to give news concerning friends or to introduce new friends.

3. THE NATURE OF THEIR CONTENTS
   (a) Their contents agree with the purposes indicated above, in par. 2(b) and (c).
   (b) Apart from the purposes mentioned in par. 2(c), matters of importance were dealt with, such as have reference to:
      i. Church conduct and organisation.
      ii. Questions of faith, i.e. the teaching of sound doctrine, and the condemning of false teaching.
   (c) Concerning their contribution to the Gospel message, they do not deal in any detail with what the Lord did or said, but give great prominence to speaking about who He is and to the nature of the salvation He provides.

CONCLUSION. Thus, these epistles are to be read with what is said about them above in mind. They are letters, and not formal sermons or lectures, although it is true to say that they contain some of the profoundest statements ever made by man.

___________________

THE FIRST EPISTLE

1. THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA
   Lesson 36, par. 5; Acts 17:1-10 give the account of the founding of this Church.
   (a) There were a considerable number of believers of whom the majority were Gentiles (Acts 17:4).
   (b) The church was born in days of bitter persecution from unbelieving Jews who were able to influence both the mob and the town authorities (Acts 17:5-9), and also cause disturbance far beyond the town limits (Acts 17:13).
   (c) Paul had special anxiety for this church because he had to leave these young believers to face alone a persecution which had driven their shepherd from them
   (d) On this account he sent Timothy from Athens to see how they were doing (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5), and later, while at Corinth, sent these two epistles.

2. THE REASON WHY THE FIRST EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN
   (a) To tell of his maintained concern for them (Ch.1:2-3, and elsewhere).
To let them know of Timothy’s safe arrival at Corinth, and of Paul’s joy at the report brought concerning their steadfastness in adversity (Ch. 3:6-9).

To explain why he had not come himself (Ch. 2:17-18), and to tell of his purpose to do so when possible (Ch. 3:10-11).

To encourage them to stand firm and make progress (see next paragraph). Note the repetition of the word or idea of ‘comfort’.

To deal with a matter of doctrine and to emphasise necessary teaching concerning Christian conduct (see next paragraph).

3. MATTERS GIVEN SPECIAL PROMINENCE IN THIS EPISTLE
   (a) Paul refuted possible accusations against his personal character.
       i. No doubt his enemies would have said terrible things about his character and his motives.
       (a) He certainly was not after their money (Ch. 2:6,9).
       (b) He ever acted as a minister accountable to God (Ch. 2:3-5, 10), who had given evidence of his blessing (Chs. 1:5; 2:13).
       (c) He had shown toward them a most tender love - as a nursing mother (Ch. 2:7-8); and as a father (Ch. 2:11).
   (b) He encouraged them to endure persecution.
       i. Persecution was the lot of Christians everywhere. (It was an experience they shared with their Lord, with Paul and with others) (Chs. 2:14-16; 3:3-4).
       ii. Their brave stand was a means of great encouragement and example to others (Chs. 1:6-8; 3:7-8).
   (c) He emphasised important items of Christian conduct, giving the most weighty motives to:
       i. Chastity (Ch. 4:3-8).
       ii. Brotherly love (Ch. 4:9-10).
       iii. Industry and integrity (Ch. 4:11-12).
       iv. Sobriety (Ch. 5:6-8).
       v. The call to sanctification and progress (Chs. 3:10,13; 4:10; 5:22-24).
       vi. Other matters covered by simple statements (Ch. 5:12-21).
   (d) He dealt with an anxiety of theirs concerning the Lord’s second coming (Ch. 4:13 to 5:10).
       i. Teaching concerning the second coming had been prominent in Paul’s message as indeed, in addition to the above reference, it is in this epistle (Chs. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 5:23).
       ii. Some Christians had died, and the believers thought that these had lost their share in the final glory of the Kingdom as a consequence.
       iii. Paul set down:
           (a) This was a wrong idea (Ch. 4:13-14). Those passed from this world, and those still in it at the Lord’s appearing, will share equally in the Lord’s triumph (Ch. 4:15-17).
           (b) The time of the Lord’s coming is not known (Ch. 5:1-2).
           (c) The Christian’s duty is to be ready (Ch.5:5-8).
           (d) To be in Christ is to be for ever with the Lord - in life or in death (Ch. 5:9-10).

4. THIS IS PREDOMINANTLY A GENTILE EPISTLE
   (a) There are no direct Old Testament references.
   (b) The apostle addresses them as those who ‘turned to God from idols’ (Ch. 1:9).

THE SECOND EPISTLE

1. THE REASON WHY IT WAS WRITTEN
   (a) To deal with continued misapprehension concerning the second coming:
       i. correcting the idea that it was near at hand;
ii. condemning the conduct of some who, believing this, were living in idleness, depending on others to provide for them.

(b) To give further encouragement to this still persecuted church.

2. THE OUTLINE OF ITS MESSAGE

(a) Encouragement to face persecution (Ch. 1).

(b) Further teaching concerning the second coming (Ch. 2:1-12).
   i. It was a mistaken idea to think that this coming would take place soon (Ch. 2:2).
   ii. The strife between good and evil would reach far greater proportions before the end came (Ch. 2:3-9).

(c) In the light of this teaching:
   i. They were to stand firmly for right, and live in patient faith (Chs. 2:15-17; 3:3, 5).
   ii. There must, in particular, be no further signs of indolence; a matter spoken about clearly in the first epistle.
   iii. Any who disregarded this instruction, which Paul had given by example as well as by word, were to be put out of the church until willing to reform (Ch. 3:6-15).

3. FURTHER REMARKS

(a) There is a suggestion that some opponents had sent forged communication in Paul’s name, and that the apostle took special precaution to nullify this danger (see Chs. 2:2; 3:17-18).

(b) There is evidence that in the early days of the church the idea that the Lord would return soon was the common expectation.

(c) Paul appears to have shared this view (e.g. ‘we who are still alive and are left’ – 1 Thessalonians 4:17), but in later writing he makes it clear that he was persuaded that he himself would meet the Lord through the gateway of death.

(d) These epistles are appropriately studied first, because they are the first of Paul’s writings of which we have record.

Note: For study purposes, concentration on the detail given will not replace the need to read these short epistles through as a whole.
INTRODUCTION TO BOTH EPISTLES

1. BOTH WERE WRITTEN DURING THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY
   They were written to deal with a special situation in the church, the first epistle being sent not long before Paul left Ephesus, and the second from Macedonia while he was on his way from Ephesus to Corinth.

2. THE SPECIAL SITUATION IN THE CHURCH
   (a) All was not well in the church.
   (b) There were instances of most unworthy conduct.
       i. Neither rebuke nor judgment had been passed on a case of serious immorality.
       ii. Some brethren had been guilty of charging one another in the public law courts.
       iii. Some gatherings and services were being conducted in a disorderly manner.
   (c) The church was not united.
       i. It was divided by party spirit - some naming themselves followers of Paul; others as being of Apollos; or of Peter; or of Christ.
       ii. There was not true fellowship at the common meal - the more wealthy tending to separate themselves from the poorer folk.
       iii. There was doctrinal division on such subjects as the gifts of the Spirit; the Resurrection; whether or not Christians should abstain from eating meat which came from animals which had been offered in the worship of heathen temples.
   (d) Most serious was a threat to the foundation doctrine of the church by attack on the authority and credentials of Paul, its father in God.
       i. This was largely an imported factor.
       ii. Jewish teachers, arrogant and demanding in manner, had arrived in Corinth, carrying letters to support a claim that they were Christian teachers and the true representatives of the apostolic church in Jerusalem.
       iii. These were of a type similar to those who had attempted to upset the church at Antioch (Acts 15:1), and also the Galatian churches (dealt with in a later lesson).
       iv. These, being most bitter opponents of Paul, proceeded to undermine his work and defame his character by every argument they could use, accusing him of being an impostor in his claim to be an apostle; unworthy in character - seeking only his own ends; a promise-breaker and a coward who could talk big only when he was away from them; a contemptible person in any case; of wretched appearance; a sick man and a pauper; a poor speaker, limited in his teaching and pathetic in his delivery.

3. SOME SINGULAR INFORMATION GIVEN BY THESE WRITINGS ALONE
   (a) There was an epistle to the Corinthians of which we have no copy.
       i. This is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:9, where we are told that it dealt with the subject of excluding immoral persons from church fellowship.
       ii. There is reason to believe that the passage in 2 Corinthians 6:14 to 7:1, out of place in that part of Paul’s writing (see other translations or commentaries), may have been part of this lost letter.
       iii. In this or some other communication Paul had informed the Corinthians that he would travel from Ephesus to them before going to Macedonia, and then pay a second visit before going on to Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 1:15-16), a plan he later abandoned.
   (b) There was a visit to Corinth of which we have no other record.
       i. In 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1 he says he is coming for the third time.
       ii. In 2 Corinthians 13:2; 2:1 he speaks of this second visit as being a ‘painful’ one, when he had come with rebuke and warning.
1. THE PARTICULAR REASONS WHY THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN

(a) It is a continuation of previous correspondence with this church (see par. 3(a) of the introduction), and sets down answers to questions submitted by the Corinthians.
   i. These probably were brought by the three delegates mentioned in Ch. 16:17.
   ii. The questions raised are dealt with in the chapters following Ch. 7:1 (details in the next paragraph).

(b) To give information about Paul’s plans and to support the mission of his ‘lieutenants’ Timothy (Ch. 16:10) who was already on his way, and Titus who probably was the bearer of both epistles.

(c) Above all, to call the church to reform immediately the grievous faults outlined in par. 2 of the introduction.
   i. Detail of this situation had been reported by other visitors (the household of Chloe - Ch. 1:11).
   ii. Paul sent Timothy without delay (Ch. 4:17), and wrote these words with urgency, dealing with this matter before proceeding to the discussion of any other subjects.
   iii. This letter deals more particularly with the items mentioned in par. 2(a-c) of the introduction.
   iv. He does give some space to defending his own character and conduct, but this became the main subject of the second letter.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS


Ch. 1:10 to 6:20. The grievous disorders which needed correcting.

(a) The evil divisions in the church (Chs. 1:10 to 4:21; also Ch. 11:18-34).
   i. Note Chs. 1:12; 3:3-6, 21-23.
   ii. Throughout this section Paul is also defending himself against those who would discredit him as a teacher, saying that they wanted someone more profound (note the recurrence of the word ‘wisdom’).
   iii. Paul answers:
      (a) He spoke simply, so that faith would be in the message and not in the messenger (Chs. 1:23-24; 2:1-5).
      (b) He was capable of teaching the most profound wisdom (Ch. 2:6-10,13) which transcended the futile wisdom of this world (Ch. 1:19-21).
      (c) He could not so teach them because they had not the spiritual mind to receive it (Chs. 2:14; 3:1-3).
      (d) The foundation he had laid was the true and abiding one (Chs. 3:9-11; 4:14-16) and all subsequent teaching must agree with it or perish (Ch. 3:12-13).
   iv. The disorderly proceedings at the common meal (Ch. 11:18,21-22, 33-34).
   v. Paul would go further into these matters when he came (Chs. 4:18-21; 11:34).

(b) The immoral person to be disciplined (Ch. 5).
   i. The wrongdoer must be put out of the church (verses 1, 2, 13).
   ii. All unrepentant evildoers must be likewise dealt with (this was the meaning of his instruction given previously – verses 9-11).
   iii. All manner of perverted conduct (in which some of them had previously indulged) was completely anti-Christian, and must be put away completely (Ch. 6:9-11, 15-20).

(c) In no case must Christians take disputes before heathen courts (Ch. 6:1-7).

Chs. 7 to 11. Questions from Corinth answered.

(a) Is it right to marry, and should a Christian separate from an unbelieving husband or wife? (Ch. 7:2, 10-16).

(b) Should Christians eat meat that has been offered to idols? (Chs. 8 to 10).
   i. This is governed by principles which apply equally to many other matters, i.e. that Christians should always abstain from practices which might cause a fellow Christian to stumble (Chs. 8:9-13;10:24,33); that Christians should abstain from everything which cannot be done to the Glory of God (Ch. 10:31); that Christians should abstain from everything which might hinder respect for the Gospel message (Ch. 10:32).
i. Governed by such principles Paul had denied himself the legitimate right of taking payment for his evangelistic labours (Ch. 9:14-15) and in all his ministry had put himself in his hearers’ place (Ch. 9:19-23).

Chs. 12 to 14. Concerning spiritual gifts.

(a) The fact that the Spirit does not give the same gifts to all does not make for disunity, because - the Spirit is one (Ch. 12: 4-6,11); He makes us one body (Ch. 12:13-14); we need one another’s help (Ch. 12:7-10, 27-30, 25).

(b) The great gift open to all and vital for all is Christian love (Ch. 13).

(c) The gift of being able to speak God’s message simply and clearly is more to be desired than to be able to speak with tongues (Ch. 14:2-4, 9, 18-19).

(d) Any form of disorder in Christian worship is discreditable to the nature of the Spirit who inspires it (Ch. 14:23-25, 33, 40).

Ch. 15. Concerning the Resurrection.

(a) The fact of the resurrection of Christ is established (Ch.15:4-8).

(b) To deny that the dead are to be raised (as some Corinthians did) is to deny the resurrection of Jesus (verses 12-13) and the basis of the Christian faith (verses 14-19).

(c) Christ’s resurrection is the guarantee, and type, of our resurrection.
   i. His resurrection conquered death for us as for Him (verses 20-22, 25, 26).
   ii. His resurrection gives the pattern of our resurrection, inasmuch as the body will be likewise transformed (verses 42-44, 50-54).

Ch. 16. Paul ended with mention of personal matters and briefly referred to the church collection for the Jerusalem poor.

Note: The comment in the English Authorised Version concerning the writing of this epistle at Philippi is not part of the original letter. It is an incorrect statement included by the compilers of this version.

THE SECOND EPISTLE

1. ITS DIVISIONS
   This epistle can be divided clearly into three parts.
   (a) Chs. 1 to 7. Paul’s message to the Corinthians after Titus had brought a report of their reaction to his previous letter.
   (b) Chs. 8 and 9. Paul gives directions and exhortation concerning the collection for the poor.
   (c) Chs. 10 to 13. Paul vindicates his apostleship and refutes other charges made against him.
   (Reference has already been made to the portion Chs. 6:14 to 7:1, which refers to the demand for believers to be separate from the ungodly in moral conduct.)

2. THE BACKGROUND OF CHAPTERS 1 to 9
   (a) Paul had changed his mind about going straight from Ephesus to Corinth, and on leaving Ephesus he went northward toward Macedonia.
   (b) It was the unsatisfactory state of affairs in Corinth which caused him to do so.
      i. In his love for them he wished to avoid making another painful visit (Chs. 1:23; 2:1, 4).
      ii. He hoped the reproving letter he had sent would effect a reform which would prove their obedience to his rule, and their power to control their own affairs (Ch. 2:9; 1 Corinthians 4:21).
   (c) He left Ephesus in great distress on account of persecution (1 Corinthians 15:32); a most serious illness (2 Corinthians 1:8-9); and anxiety over Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:4, 12-13).
   (d) Upon arrival in Macedonia he was comforted.
      i. His health improved.
      ii. The Macedonian churches gave him great delight (Ch. 8:1-4) and, above all,
      iii. The overdue Titus arrived, giving news of a reformed condition in Corinth (Ch. 7:6-11, 13, 15-16).
So the apostle wrote again - to give commendation for the repentance; to answer charges made against him; and to give detailed instruction concerning the collection for the poor of Jerusalem.

3. AN OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS 1 to 7. Paul answers his critics.
   (a) His calling was to give comfort - a qualification he has earned by suffering (Ch. 1:4-6).
   (b) His change of purpose had reason and love behind it, not a fickle mind (Ch. 1:15-17; see also par. 2(b) above).
   (c) Comparing himself with the Judaizing teachers who were his great opponents (see par. 2(d) page 86) he pointed out:
      i. The church at Corinth itself was his letter of recommendation (Ch. 3:1-3).
      ii. He did not deny that the covenant of the law was glorious and to be honoured; but the glory of the covenant of grace surpassed the former in every point (Ch. 3:6-8, and subsequent verses down to Ch. 4:6).
      iii. It was true that Paul was frail, and despised in the eyes of men:
         (a) This gave greater glory to the grace that sustained him (Ch. 4:7-11).
         (b) His disabilities would be all done away with at the Resurrection (Ch. 4:14, 16-18, and beginning of Ch. 5).
   (d) Paul was accountable to Christ as indeed are all. He lived in the light of this fact (Ch. 5:9-10).
   (e) He received the ministry of reconciliation from God (Ch. 5:18-20):
      i. which taught him not to judge by external appearances (Ch. 5:12,16);
      ii. which ministry he recommended not only by word but by his manner of life (Ch. 6:4-10).
   (f) The rest of Ch. 6 and Ch. 7 have been dealt with already.

4. THE COLLECTION FOR THE JERUSALEM CHRISTIANS (Chs. 8 and 9)
   In his appeal for the poverty-stricken Jerusalem Christians, he:
   (a) Referred to the liberality of the Macedonian churches (Ch. 8:1-4) and to the example of Jesus (Ch. 8:9).
   (b) Added other exhortations to generosity (Chs. 8:12; 9:2-4, 6-8,12).
   (c) Recommended his messengers (Ch 8:6, 18, 23).
   (d) Showed that all was being honestly handled (Ch. 8:19-21).

5. THE MESSAGE OF CHAPTERS 10 to 13
   (a) This portion of the letter is addressed to that section of the church who still opposed Paul, or else it is probably part of a previous letter sent at a time when the anti-Paul spirit affected the whole Church.
   (b) It deals exclusively with refuting charges made against Paul’s person, and his right to be counted an apostle.
   (c) He set forward these points:
      i. He could act strongly as well as write strongly (Ch. 10:1, 4, 10-11).
      ii. His opponents were seducers of the flock, and messengers of Satan (Ch. 1:3-4,13-15).
      iii. He could claim the full dignity of apostleship (Chs. 11:5; 12:11):
         (a) His reason for not taking payment for his ministry (as did other apostles) was not because he was not entitled to it, but because he thus silenced any who would accuse him of making money his purpose (Chs. 11:7-10; 12:13).
         (b) He could claim to surpass others (if boasting was a proper thing to do - Ch. 11:17) in sufferings for the Gospel (Ch. 11:23-33), and in the glory of the revelations he had received (Ch. 12:1-4).
         (c) His ministry had been blessed by God (Ch.12:12).
      iv. It was true he had infirmities and limitations, but this was not a cause for shame, but for glory (Ch. 12:5-10).
   (d) He warned them that if he found them unrepentant and unreformed he would act with severity (Chs. 12:20-21; 13:2), although this was not his desire (Chs. 13:10; 12:15).
   (d) He concludes with exhortations to self-examination and reform (Ch. 13:5, 9, 11), and with the well-known benediction (Ch. 13:14).

CONCLUSION. These letters, written to deal with a special situation, help to establish for all time Paul’s integrity, but also announce truths which are valid for all time and for all people.
LESSON 44

The Epistle to the Galatians

Analysis of the Epistle

Chs. 1 and 2. Paul claims that God made him an apostle and gave him the Gospel he preached.
Chs. 3 and 4. He sets out the doctrine of Justification by faith, and contrasts it with the doctrine of
Justification by the works of the law.
Chs. 5 and 6. He gives practical exhortations based on this doctrine.

INTRODUCTION. This is a doctrinal epistle, written to meet a particular situation. The question it discusses
is whether anything additional to faith in Christ is necessary for obtaining and maintaining salvation. Acts
13: 38-39, provides a key statement to the discussion, which is dealt with more fully still in the Epistle to the
Romans.

1. THE GALATIAN CHURCHES
   (a) Galatia was a large district in the centre of Asia Minor (see map).
   (b) As no names are given, we cannot be certain as to which group of churches is being
       addressed, but many take them to be those founded in the first missionary journey, i.e.
       Antioch to Derbe, which were largely Gentile (Ch. 4:8).

2. THE REASON WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN (Chs. 1:6-7; 5:1)
   (a) Trouble had come to these churches from activity of Jewish teachers who brought a
       message identical with that mentioned in Acts 15:1, 5.
   (b) The Galatians knew this was contrary to Paul’s doctrine, so these teachers to gain their end
       spoke against Paul, denying his apostleship, and claimed that his teaching was contrary
       both to the Scriptures and to accepted Christian doctrine.
   (c) A number of the Gentile converts were unable to withstand the arguments put forth, and
       agreed to follow Jewish ways and to become full proselytes.
   (d) Paul was terribly distressed when he received this news, not just because of the attack on
       him, but because he saw these converts departing from saving faith.
       Thus he wrote these burning words to awaken them to see the full implications of the step
       they were taking, and to bring them back to a simple faith which relies on Christ alone for
       salvation.
       (Concerning the comment added to this epistle in the Authorised Version, which states that
       this letter was written from Rome, the same remark applies as in the case of the letter to 1
       Corinthians. We cannot say with any certainty as to when and where this letter was written,
       but this does not in any way reduce the force of what is said in it. Some scholars believe it
       was written before the events of the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15.)

3. PAUL DEFENDS HIS APOSTLESHIP AND HIS DOCTRINE (Chs. 1 and 2)
   (a) His apostleship - he was appointed to this office by God the Father, and by Christ (Ch. 1:1).
   (b) His Gospel.
       i. Not a human conception or one designed to please men (Ch. 1:10-11).
       ii. It is the only Gospel - any teacher who distorts or displaces it is accursed (Ch. 1:7-9).
       iii. Paul, once its most bitter opponent, had received it by direct revelation of the Lord
           (Ch. 1:12-14).
       iv. When he did confer with James, Peter and John fourteen years after he had begun
           his ministry (Ch. 2:1-2), there was no point of Gospel truth in which he was not as
           equally instructed as they (Ch. 2:6); and they fully recognised him as the God-
           appointed apostle to the Gentiles (Ch. 2:7-9).
       v. Paul had defended his doctrine (of freedom from Jewish bonds for Gentile
           believers) – in Jerusalem itself (Ch. 2:1, 4-5); and in Antioch, when he publicly
           rebuked Peter for not standing by convictions on this matter (Ch. 2:11-14), and
           clearly declared the truth which applied equally to Jews as to Gentiles, that ‘a man
           is not justified by observing the law, but by faith of Jesus Christ’ (Ch. 2:16).
       vi. Paul proved the power of this Gospel in his own life (Chs. 2:19-20; 6:14).
4. THE WAY OF SALVATION BY FAITH, CONTRASTED WITH THE WAY OF SALVATION BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW (Chs. 3 and 4).

Key verse Ch. 3:11
(a) Spiritual life comes and is maintained by faith in Christ.
   i. How had the Galatians received the Spirit in the first place?
      By believing the gospel of grace to sinners, or by agreeing to become proselytes?
      (Ch. 3:2).
   ii. It was by believing. They must continue this way (Ch. 3:3),
   iii. This was also true in the case of Abraham (who meant so much to Paul’s
       opponents). He was counted righteous by God because he believed God (Ch. 3:6;
       Genesis 15:6).
   iv. Gentiles can claim to be true spiritual descendants of Abraham if they have a like
       faith as he had, and on this basis are entitled to claim their share in all the spiritual
       promises made to his seed, which are released to his seed by Christ (Ch. 3:7-9, 14,
       28-29; also Ch. 5:6).

(b) There is no salvation for anyone who trusts because he keeps the Law.
   i. No one fully meets the demands of the law, and thus all are condemned by it
      (Ch. 3:10).
   ii. Why then did God give the law?
      (a) To reveal to men their sinful condition, and thus prepare them to seek for
          pardon and salvation from Christ (Chs. 3:19, 23-24; 4:1-5).
      (b) It was certainly not given as a new basis upon which Abraham’s blessing
          was to be received. The eternal promise to Abraham remained unaffected
          by the covenant of the law which was effected (at Sinai) 430 years later on,
          when Abraham had been long dead (Ch. 3:17-18).
   (c) Those, therefore, who use the law for the purpose for which it was given, i.e. to produce
       repentance and a turning to Christ, find themselves accepted by God, not only as sons and
       heirs of Abraham, but of Christ Himself (Ch. 4:6-7).
   (d) For what earthly reason should such honoured ones turn to the law? What do they think it
       has to offer them now? (Ch. 4:9-10),
   (e) Let them heed an illustration provided by Ishmael and Isaac, two sons of Abraham.
      i. Ishmael is typical of those who are under the bondage of law.
      ii. Isaac is typical of those who are inheritors of the promise.
      iii. To which would they seek to be identified? Ishmael who did not inherit the promise,
          or Isaac who did? (Ch. 4:21-31).

5. PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS (Chs. 5 and 6)
(a) A clear choice must be made – it is Christ or the law. It must be one or the other
    (Chs. 5:1-4; 2:21).
(b) Being ‘free from the law’ does not mean that its moral demands cease to be fulfilled
    (Chs. 5:13; 6:15).
   i. All who would do so (giving unrestrained indulgence to fleshly desires) are outside
      of the Kingdom (Chs. 5:19-21; 6:7-8).
   ii. Those who are ‘of faith’ receive the adopting Spirit of God (see Ch. 3:14) who is the
       Guarantor of the holy life.
       (a) He wars against all forms of sinful indulgence (Ch.5:16-17).
       (b) He produces in the regenerate nature the Christian graces, which are the
           foundation motives of all true morality (Ch. 5:22-23, 14).
   (c) The true way is:
      i. Receive the Spirit by faith;
      ii. Submit the life fully to His control (Chs. 5:25,16; 6:8).
   (d) For the rest Paul gave instruction regarding mutual helpfulness and diligence (Ch. 6:1-2, 6,
       9-10), and gave warning again concerning the false teachers who were moved by unworthy
       motives (Ch. 6:12-13).

6. THE SPECIAL VALUE OF THIS EPISTLE
(a) It provides a helpful introduction to the Epistle to the Romans.
(b) The doctrinal situation it discusses is one that is recurrent in Church history.
i. There can always be found those who, although bearing Christ’s name, put their hope of salvation in the keeping of rituals and ceremonies, which they consider to be indispensable observances to one who would please God.

ii. At times such ideas have been predominant in the Church and thus in his day Luther (changed as was Paul) lifted up again the doctrine of faith in Christ as the way of salvation, as in turn did Wesley.

iii. To maintain this truth is a special obligation upon The Salvation Army.
LESSON 45

The Epistle to the Romans (I)

Analysis of the First Five Chapters

Ch. 1:1-17. His greeting and theme.
Ch. 1:18 to 3:20. All men need salvation.
Ch. 3:21 to 4:25. The Gospel of grace.
Ch. 5. Encouragement to faith.

INTRODUCTION. This letter was written to the church at Rome by Paul during his three months’ stay in Corinth, toward the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:2-3). He was staying at the house of Gaius. Tertius acted as his scribe, and Phoebe, a deaconess of Cenchrea, carried the epistle to Rome (Romans 16:23,22,1).

1. THE CHURCH AT ROME
   (a) We do not know when or by whom the church was founded.
       i. Certainly not by Paul.
       ii. Some of the ‘visitors from Rome’ who witnessed Pentecost (Acts 2:10), may have carried back the faith to the Imperial city.
   (b) At the time when this epistle was written many notable Christians whom Paul had met in other places (including Priscilla and Aquila) had travelled to Rome and become members of this church (Ch. 16:3-15). There can be little doubt that Paul would be in personal correspondence with some of these.
   (c) From the epistle it is easy to see that the church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles.

2. PAUL’S PURPOSE IN WRITING (Ch. 15:15-33)
   (a) To inform them that he intended to come to Rome with the idea of making it his headquarters for new missionary ventures.
       i. He had covered all untouched territory in the eastern Mediterranean (Ch. 15:19); and
       ii. now looked to places in the west where no Christian witness had yet been given, even as far afield as Spain (Ch. 15:20, 22-24).
   (b) To secure their support in this enterprise.
       i. He hopes to minister in Rome and gain the hearty support of the church there.
       ii. He was aware of the danger that some of his many enemies might turn the Christians in Rome against him by repeating the false and perverted statements that had been made elsewhere (Chs. 3:8; 16:17-18).
       iii. Thus he set down this long careful statement concerning the Gospel of salvation as he taught it, and so provided in advance an answer against any false accusation that might be made against him or his teaching.

3. HIS MANNER OF WRITING
   (a) Not being the founder of the Church at Rome, Paul could not address them with the same directing authority he used when writing to his ‘own’ churches.
   (b) Nevertheless, he wrote with full authority as an apostle (Ch. 1:1,5), and in particular as the apostle to the Gentiles (Ch. 15:15-17).
   (c) This writing is admittedly more complicated in its nature than much in other letters. This is because:
       i. Of the profundity of the subject it discusses.
       ii. It gives the harvest of some twenty years of study, teaching and dispute.
       iii. He deals with his subject both as it affects the Jewish and the Gentile mind.
   (d) He was affected by recent experiences, and thus refers to matters he had dealt with in the epistles to the Galatians and to the Corinthians, so that what is learned there, helps here.

4. HIS SUBJECT
   Is ‘God's way of saving men’ and the key text expounded is found in Ch. 1:16-17.
THE CONTENTS OF THE FIRST FIVE CHAPTERS

Ch. I:1-15. Paul, the apostle, sends greetings and speaks of his earnest desire to visit Rome.

Ch. 1:16-17. The great theme introduced.

Ch. 1:18 to 3:20. ALL men are sinners in need of salvation.

(a) The Gentile world is guilty before God, having rejected the light of natural revelation (Ch. 1:19-20), and sunk into depravity (Ch. 1:28,32).

(b) God’s righteous judgment will come one day impartially upon all:
   i. condemning the guilty, and approving the just (Ch. 2:5-11);
   ii. judging each according to the light he has been given (Ch. 2:12-16).

(c) The Jews are guilty before God.
   i. Their knowledge of God’s law (which their consciences approve and accept) imposes the greater obligation on them (Ch. 2:17-18).
   ii. This privilege (Ch. 3:1, 2) has not saved them from being sinners (Ch. 2:21-24), nor will it save them from being judged (Ch.2:3).
   iii. True circumcision is a spiritual matter (of the heart) and only those who have this experience belong to the true Israel of God (Chs. 2:25-29; also 9:6).

(d) All persons (Gentile and Jew) are guilty before God (Ch.3:9,19,23).

(e) The law has served to show men and women their sins not to save them from it (Ch.3:20).

Ch. 3:21 to 4:25. How God has provided salvation for guilty men, and how it is received.

(a) It comes by Christ, by grace, to all who believe (Ch. 3:22,24).

(b) ’All’ includes Gentile and Jew, both are blessed as they believe (Ch. 3:28-30).

(c) Does not this emphasis on faith instead of on the keeping of the law do violence to Old Testament teaching? (Chs. 3:31 to 4:25).
   i. No! The Old Testament plainly glories in such experience (Ch. 4:6-8; Psalm 32:1-2);
   ii. and Abraham provides an outstanding example of a ‘believer’ being blessed:
      (a) He was blessed because he believed, at a time when he was in a ‘Gentile’ condition (Ch. 4:3,10).
      (b) He continued to believe after circumcision, and thus becomes the true spiritual father of both Gentile and Jewish believers (Ch. 4:11-13).
   iii. He also provides the strongest encouragement for us to believe as he did:
      (a) Convinced of God’s power, and by knowledge of God’s purpose he trusted for the fulfilling of a promise (which apparently defied reason), and was not disappointed (Ch. 4:17-21).
      (b) We, with our knowledge of God’s purpose and promise, and with the evidence of the Cross (where our sins were carried), and of the Resurrection (whereby this offering was shown to be accepted), should believe also (Ch. 4:22-25).

Ch. 5. Some of the blessed effects of accepting this salvation.

(a) Peace with God (verse 1).

(b) Joy:
   i. In the consciousness of this admission to gracious favour;
   ii. for the bliss yet to come (verse 2).

(c) Tribulations (from which there is not exemption) now contribute to the development of Christian character (verses 3-4).

(d) The sense of the Love of God is implanted by the Holy Spirit (verse 5).

(e) The marvel of this love revealed in Christ is that it reached us in our worst condition (‘when enemies’). How much more will it embrace us now we are reconciled! (verse 10).

(f) The atoning act of God in Christ more than covers all the effects of the Fall (verses 15, 18-21) - releasing to person a Grace which abounds above sin, even that revealed by God’s holiest light (verse 20).
LESSON 46

The Epistle to the Romans (2)

Analysis of Chapters 6 to 11

Ch. 6. The new life manifests itself in righteous conduct.

Ch. 7. It cannot be produced by observance of the law, but through the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

Chs. 9 to 11. The problem of resistance to the Gospel message by the Jews.

INTRODUCTION. Having dealt with the question of the changed relationship (justification), we now come to the question of the changed nature and conduct (regeneration, consecration and sanctification).

Ch. 6. The new life manifests itself in righteous conduct.

(a) Verse 1 of this chapter links with the end of Chapter 5:20, ‘But where sin ...’ and the question arises, ‘If grace is always available to cover sin, why not be content to live continuously in sin, looking always to grace to put things right?’ Verse 15 asks a similar question, ‘Does grace make no demand for righteous living?’

(b) The answer is - Association with Christ separates us from sin. We should ‘walk in newness of life’ because:

i. We come into the benefit of the realm of grace by counting ourselves to be one with the Risen Christ who on the Cross made Himself one with us to deliver us from the power of evil. Both His nature and His Cross deny that He can have fellowship with evil (verses 2-6).

ii. Our seeking for salvation has been marked all through by a desire to depart from evil and to become good (verses 17, 21).

iii. To give oneself to evil is to be on the wrong track altogether, with no prospect but spiritual death (verse 23).

(c) Thus our union with Christ calls us to a further expression of faith, which involves:

i. Claiming, through His victorious risen life, power over evil and power to live righteously (verses 10-12, 14).

ii. Maintaining a practical consecration whereby we refuse to devote our powers to evil, by devoting them to the expression of the holy life He gives us (verses 13, 19, 22).

Ch. 7. The law - function and its weakness.

(a) This section was written especially to help the Jewish mind, and deals with relationship to the law, which has had frequent mention, but is now discussed more fully.

(b) Always the question arises, ‘Why did God give the Jews the law and encourage them to respect it?’

(c) Constantly the answer is given: By measuring themselves with God’s reasonable requirements (verses 12, 22) they discover their sinful condition (Chs. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20; 7:7; last phrase of Ch. 7:13), and acknowledge their need of grace.

Verses 1 to 6.

This section presents, with illustration of the remarriage of a widow, that the cross of Jesus freed the Jews and all men from the demand to find favour with God by merely keeping the law, and offers them the grace of a new relationship which could give them acceptance with God, and power to live a new and righteous life by the Spirit.

Verses 7 to 25.

This section presents how the law discovers to all men their need for inner deliverance.

i. The law is approved but is responded to in intention only (verses 22, 16, 18).

ii. Good intention is betrayed by the stronger power of inbred sin which prevents right-doing and produces wrong-doing (verses 23, 17, 15).

iii. From such a woeful condition of defeat (verses 19-21, 24) Christ is the only means of deliverance (verse 25; and Ch. 8).

Ch. 8. The abounding blessing brought by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

(a) This great chapter concludes the first portion of the epistle and sums up what has been said so far.

(b) It is also the great chapter of the Spirit of God, who has had little mention up to now.
We become Christian and a child of God only when we receive the Spirit (who makes actual in our hearts the purposes of the atonement Christ wrought for us (verse 9)) – and have a life in which we follow His guidance (verse 14).

Those thus possessed and guided by the Spirit enjoy (in sharp contrast to those who live according to unregenerate nature – verses 5-8, 12-13):

i. Freedom from condemnation (verse 1).
ii. Power to do right (verses 3-4).
iii. Assurance that they are God’s children (verses 15-16), which gives the sure hope of sharing His glory in a transformed world, where death and all consequences of sin have been abolished (verses 17, 21-23), and thus patience in tribulation (verses 18, 25); above all of being like Christ (verse 29).
iv. Aid in prayer (verses 26-27).
v. Assurance that they are in God’s plan because they have responded and are responding to His call (verses 28, 30).
vi. His control of events for an end that is good (verse 28).

The problem of the resistance to the Gospel message by the Jews.

The subject of these chapters is the problem aroused by the rejection by a large part of the Jewish people of Jesus and His gospel.

The problem, as a Jewish opponent of Paul might present it, is – ‘If Christianity is the true Kingdom of God, it appears that most of the Jews will be outside of it. In such a case God’s promises to Israel will be broken. This Jesus, seeking followers among the Gentiles, and condemned as an impostor by our national leaders, cannot be the true Messiah.’

In answering such a challenge, Paul knows he is venturing into some discussion concerning the mind and purposes of God, a subject upon which no creature can speak with finality, nor beyond the facts God has chosen to reveal.

Paul declares this truth (Ch. 11:33-34), and our obligation to recognise our limitations (Ch. 9:20).

Nevertheless, there are some things which can be said:

i. All affairs are in the hands of God (Ch. 11:36), and although there have been in His dealings things inexplicable to men, yet we know the foundation truths, that He is – righteous (Ch. 9:14); universally gracious (Ch.10:11-13); and faithfull to His promises (Ch. 11:29).

ii. This rejecting of Christ by Israel caused Paul the greatest personal distress (Ch. 9:1-5).

iii. The fact that blessing was not coming upon the whole seed was no new thing in their history (Ch. 9:6-7,27).

iv. In relation to the Gospel, those who were missing the blessing, were personally to blame:

(a) It had been plainly offered to them (Ch. 10:18).
(b) They were guilty of unbelief (Chs. 9:32; 11:20).
(c) They were guilty of pride - desiring only blessing they deserved and earned, and one exclusive to Israel (Chs. 9:32; 10:2-3).

v. This attitude of resistance to grace was characteristic of many of the nation, as the prophets had noted (Ch. 10:21).

vi. There were many Jews who did believe, probably more than was thought (Ch. 11:5).

vii. It was still true (as his opponents claimed) that salvation came only through association with Israel, with this difference:

(a) Paul’s opponents said the Gentiles could not be blessed unless they accepted the law observed by the Jews.

(b) The Gospel says the Gentiles cannot be blessed unless they share the faith in God, shown by the patriarchs and the faithful remnant.

(c) Using an illustration of original branches (Israel) being broken off from an olive tree and wild branches (Gentiles) being grafted into the tree, Paul shows that it all had to do with faith, the Gentile branches being grafted in
because they believe, and the Israel branches being removed because they do not believe (Ch. 11:17-21; see also Ch. 10:8-10).

Note: Any exposition which takes isolated verses in these chapters as teaching that God had elected some to be saved, and others to be damned, is a misreading of this Scripture. These fundamental statements are most clearly set down:

i. That salvation is freely and equally offered to all (Chs. 10:12-13; 11:32).

ii. That the Jews were rejected because of unbelief, a situation which it is within their power to rectify (Ch. 11:20, 23).

iii. That the chosen and accepted Gentiles were free to fall away, if they failed in faith as had the unbelieving Jews (Ch. 11:20-22)
LESSON 47

The Epistle to the Romans (3)

‘CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PRACTICE’

Analysis of Chapters 12 to 15:13.

Ch. 12. The Christian life - consecrated to God, and lived in service for others.

Ch. 13. Right conduct toward the state; to all men; and in personal discipline.

Chs. 14 to 15:13. The duty to respect another Christian’s conscientious convictions.

INTRODUCTION. Chapter 12 marks a distinct division in this letter. The chapters which precede it have been chiefly doctrinal, but now the apostle gives his attention to the way this doctrine will affect the daily living of those who accept it. There is a likeness between this teaching and that of Jesus, as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount.

Ch. 12. The Christian life consecrated to God, and lived in service for others.

(a) The call to consecration.
   i. All the mercies of God to us (spoken of in the previous part of the epistle) move us to make a complete, maintained and worthy consecration of all our powers to do His will.
   ii. This involves abandoning all practice of thinking as ‘the world’ thinks, or doing as ‘the world’ does (verses 1-2).

(b) The call to give humbly our contribution of service in the Church.
   i. Each Christian, as a member of a body, is to give the contribution he can give, with humility and whole-heartedness (verses 3-8).
   ii. In the spirit of love, generosity and sympathy (verses 9-10,13,15).

(c) The call to display the virtues of goodness (verse 9); diligence (verse 11); hope, patience and prayerfulness (verse 12); honesty (verse 17); and peaceableness (verse 18).

(d) In relation to persecution from the world, do not retaliate (verses 17, 19); commit your case to God (verse 19); do any good thing you can for your enemy (verses 20-21).


(a) The Christian must be a law-abiding citizen, recognising that God is on the side of righteous law and discipline.

   (At such times as when the emperor dictated that Christians should worship him as a god, they quite properly refused, as this was a law contrary to God's law.)

(b) The Christian’s duty as a neighbour.

(a) To consider himself under the obligation of governing all his conduct exclusively by Christian love (verses 8-9).

   (b) Such a life is the true law-abiding life in every respect (verse 10).

Ch. 13:11-14. The duty of personal discipline.

To be Christlike, walking in the light, separate from all impurity, or any form of fleshly indulgence (verses 11-14).

Chs. 14 to 15:7. The duty to respect another Christian’s conscientious convictions. A special application of the law of love.

In this section Paul recognises and caters for the fact that although there are points of doctrine and habits of Christian practice about which all must be of one mind, yet there are some lines of conduct where essential principles are not so clearly involved, the example used here being that of a difference of opinion about meat-eating and the honouring of holy days – questions for which there were reasonable arguments on both sides. Concerning the rightness and wrongness of such practices, it is to be expected that there will be differences of opinion and judgment.

(a) Although diverse in race and in judgment in some things, Christians must not allow these differences to cause division or worse in the Church.

(b) There must be respect for one another’s opinions.
   i. No Christian must regulate all his conduct entirely according to his own opinions (Ch. 14:7).
ii. Especially must he refrain from saying everyone is wrong who does not think exactly as he does (Ch. 14:3).

iii. Both must answer to God according to the light given by Christ’s standards (Ch. 14:10-11).

(c) There must be consideration for one another’s welfare.

i. A Christian offends if he practises something he does not feel to be wrong, if he knows that by so doing he will cause a brother to stumble (Ch. 14:13, 21).

ii. His concern should be to promote that which makes for harmony and the growth, not the hindrance, of his comrades (Ch. 14:19).

(d) To do something others do not regard as wrong will, however, be sin to the man whose own conscience condemns him for so doing (Ch. 14:14, 22-23).

(e) The basic rules which will give sure guidance in these matters are:

i. Put first things first. The Kingdom is marked by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Avoid all things which offend these principles, and practise such things as will serve them (Ch. 14:17-18).

ii. Consider and follow the example of Jesus. He sacrificed self-pleasing for the sake of others (Ch. 15:3). Treat others as He has treated you (Ch. 15:7).

(f) We can see how such principles apply equally to matters of dispute in present-day experience, although the subjects involved may be different from those which troubled the Church in Paul’s day.

Ch. 15:8-12. The relationships of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

(a) The Gentiles must remember that Jesus was a Jew, sent to the Jews to fulfil God’s promises to them (Ch. 15:8).

(b) The Jews must remember that Jesus was, according to multiple Old Testament prophecies, sent also to the Gentiles (Ch. 15:9-12).

Ch. 15:13.

Paul closes this section with a benediction, before proceeding to the mention of the personal matters, which have been dealt with already.
The Epistle to the Philippians

INTRODUCTION. The letters to the Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and to Philemon were all written during a period when Paul was a prisoner. The last three have a special connection with one another, so we will look at the Epistle to the Philippians first.

1. THE STORY BEHIND THIS LETTER (Chs. 2:19-30; 4:10,14-18)
   (a) The Church at Philippi, which had always been generous to Paul (Ch. 4:15-16), had sent another gift at the hand of one of their chief members, Epaphroditus (Ch. 4:10, 14, 18).
   (b) Epaphroditus, after reaching Paul and serving him at some risk, had been taken so seriously ill that he had been near to death. Being restored to health, he became the bearer of this letter (Ch. 2:25-30).
   (c) Paul was still a prisoner, and although lying under the shadow of death, had strong expectation that he shortly would be released, and be able to visit Philippi again (Chs. 1:25-26; 2:24).
   (d) He, however, planned to send Timothy to see them as soon as he had more definite knowledge concerning developments (Ch. 2:19-23).
   (e) It is commonly accepted that this letter was written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome.

2. PAUL’S PURPOSE IN WRITING
   (a) To thank them for their gift.
   (b) To inform them of his hopes and feelings.
   (c) To encourage them in spiritual matters, with special emphasis on the need for progress, unity, and for that attitude of mind which rejoices and reposes in Christ, whatever outward circumstances may be.
   (d) To warn against the enemies of the faith.
   (e) Paul achieved more than his purpose.
      i. He gave revelation of his own calmness of mind amid all his adversities.
      ii. He enriched the whole church with Scriptures of supreme value, e.g. Chs. 2:5-11; 3:4-11; 4:6-8, 13, 19.

3. REFERENCES TO THE SPECIAL SUBJECTS
   (b) The need for Christian unity.
      i. This message was all the more strongly urged because Paul had heard of an estrangement between two of the valued women members of the church - Euodias and Syntyche (Ch. 4:2).
      ii. Other references, see Chs. 1:27; 2:1-5.
   (c) The need to rejoice and repose in Christ in all circumstances (Chs. 1:28-29; 3:1; 4:4, 6-7, 9, 13, 19).
   (d) Warning against false teachers.
      i. The ‘circumcision’ teachers (Ch. 3:2-3).
      ii. The disregarders of the moral law (Ch. 3:18-19).

4. OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS OF THE LETTER
Ch. 1:1-11. Salutation and prayer for the Philippians.
   (a) His imprisonment has proved a help, not a hindrance, to his work.
      i. He has had constant opportunity to witness - even in the ‘palace’ (taken to refer to the soldiers of the guard, one of whom was always present with Paul) (verse 13).
      ii. His example and success had encouraged others to witness also (verse 14).
      iii. Even his opponents (although moved by wrong motives) were serving to draw attention to the name of Jesus (verses 16,18).
   (b) The possibility that he may soon meet death causes him no distress (Ch. 2:17).
His one desire is that he will prove faithful (Ch. 1:20). For some reasons he would welcome death (Ch. 1:21,23), but he believes he will live, for the sake of the service he yet can give (Ch. 1:24-26).

Ch. 1:27 to 2:16. His desires for the Philippians.

(a) That they will be united in their stand against persecution, and in their public witness of the Gospel (Ch. 1:27).
Persecution should be thought of as a sure evidence that they were truly Christians, and also as a privilege (Ch. 1:28-29)).

(b) That they will be of one mind in their relationship with one another (Ch. 2:1-2).

i. This will involve considering and serving one another in love (Ch. 2:3-4).

ii. The inspiration and power to do this will be found in submitting themselves to the control of the ‘mind of Christ’, which is:

(a) entirely against all ideas of self-aggrandisement;

(b) prepared to go all lengths in doing God’s will, and in serving others (Ch. 2:5-8).

(c) That their whole lives might become expressions of the indwelling Spirit of God (Ch. 2:5-8)

(d) All these things will ensure that they will be effective witnesses in a wicked world (Ch. 2: 15)

Ch. 2:19–30 Details of Paul’s plans.
Dealt with in Paragraph 1.

Ch. 3:2–11. The case against the ‘circumcision’ teachers

(a) Their teaching is to be rejected (verse 2)

(b) True circumcision is a spiritual matter (verse 3)

(c) Paul had said his strongest word against this teaching by his own example (verses 4–11)

i. What he was exhorting others to do he had done himself.

ii. To a degree beyond most of his fellow Jews, Paul had fulfilled with complete devotion the full demands of the Jewish law.

iii. He had thus been in a position to claim every benefit the Jewish law could bestow.

iv. This he had found to be worthless when compared with the free Gospel blessing offered by Christ.

v. He had thus renounced for ever all trust in the benefits unto Justification he might claim through his own works.

Ch. 3:12-16. Such a renunciation does not complete, but begins true Christian experience.
There is always a yet unrealised objective at which to aim.

Illus.: The runner in the games.

Ch. 3:18-21. They must act as citizens of Heaven.
As the town of Philippi was rightly proud of being a Roman Colony with privileges and honours above those of neighbouring towns, so Christians were to regard themselves as citizens of the Colony of Heaven.
This will:

i. Keep them from living like the depraved (verses 18-19).

ii. Encourage their progress by the expectation of the glory they will eventually inherit (verses 20-21).

Ch. 4:

Verses 2-3. The estranged members should be united again.

Verse 4. Exhortation to rejoice.

Verses 6-7. Exhortation to commit all to God.

Verse 8. Exhortation to seek exclusively for the highest and purest.

Verses 10, 14-16. Reference to the gift (dealt with in par. 1).

Verses 11-13. Paul’s own experience of being content in circumstances of comfort or adversity.

Verses 18-19. The Lord, who delights in their generous deeds, will supply every need they have.
Verse 22. This reference confirms the apostle’s word that his imprisonment had not imprisoned the working of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION. This is one of Paul’s happiest letters. It is practically free from rebuke, and is full of his rejoicing in the Lord.
INTRODUCTION. Tychicus, a notable Christian from this part of the world (Acts 20:4) accompanied by a converted slave, Onesimus, came as a messenger from the imprisoned Paul to the province of Asia. He carried two letters, those we call Ephesians and Colossians (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-9). Onesimus carried the personal letter to Philemon.

1. THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS IS MOST PROBABLY A CIRCULAR LETTER
   (a) There is nothing ‘Ephesian’ in it – no reference at all to the church in Ephesus, or to any member of it.
   (b) For this, and other reasons, it is generally accepted that Tychicus brought this letter to be circulated among all the Asian churches, the copy we have being the one preserved at Ephesus, and hence bears that name.
   (c) In keeping with this idea, the Epistle to the Laodiceans mentioned in Colossians 4:16 could be another copy of this same letter.

2. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE LETTER
   (a) Paul writes in a way he has not done before of THE SURPASSING GLORY THE CHURCH INHERITS BECAUSE OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, who is not only Head of the Church but is also the destined Unifier of all creation.
   (b) He speaks of the Church as:
      i. the Body of Christ (Chs. 1:22-23; 4:4, 16);
      ii. the Bride of Christ (Ch. 5:25-27, 32); and also
      iii. a Building or Temple (Ch. 2:19-22).
   (c) As he is dealing with heavenly, eternal and infinite things, he uses such terms as:
      i. ‘incomparably great power’ (Ch. 1:19);
      ii. ‘incomparable riches of his grace’ (Ch. 2:7);
      iii. ‘unsearchable riches’ (Ch. 3:8);
      iv. ‘love that surpasses knowledge’ (Ch. 3:19); and
      v. purpose and power beyond imagination (Ch. 3:20).
   (d) He also speaks of ‘mysteries’ by which he means secret things once hidden, but now revealed (Ch. 3:5; Colossians 1:26).
   (e) It is a Gentile letter, showing that grace extends to the Gentile world, far beyond the bounds of Jewry.
   (f) It divides naturally into two parts:
      i. The first three chapters are chiefly doctrinal; and
      ii. the last three almost wholly practical.

3. AN OUTLINE OF THE SUBJECT MATTER (Chs. 1 to 3. Doctrinal)
   Ch. 1. The surpassing glory bestowed upon the Church.
      (a) The Church exists in fulfilment of an eternal purpose of God (verse 4).
      (b) It exists in the virtue of the Redemption effected by the Eternal Son of God, through whom, as supreme Lord, every purpose of God will be fulfilled.
         i. His control transcends the bounds of time – ‘in Him before the creation of the world’ (verse 4); to ‘when the times will have reached their fulfilment’ (verse 10).
         ii. His control embraces all things - in heaven and in earth (verses 10, 21).
      (c) This gives certainty regarding the Church’s foundation and holy character (verse 4); endowment (verse 3); and glorious inheritance (verse 11).
      (d) The full manifestation of this glory belongs to the future.
         i. Acceptance through the adopting Spirit now enjoyed, is a pledge of what is yet to come (verses 13-14).
         ii. The faithful will live in expectation of it, and in prayer for illumination concerning it (verses 17-18).

Ch. 1:19 to 2:6. The surpassing power bestowed upon the Church.
   (a) It is the full resurrection power which brought Christ from death to the supreme throne (Ch. 1:20-22).
THE EPISTLES - EPHESIANS

(b) It has operated in believers to bring them from the death and bondage of sin (Ch. 2:1-3):
   i. to membership of the Body of which Christ is the Head, and the Life (Ch. 1:23);
   ii. to heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ch. 2:6).

Ch. 2:7-22. The surpassing grace which inspires all this blessing.
   (a) This transforming work is a manifestation of grace as well as of power (verses 8-9).
   (b) The glory of this grace is enhanced when it is seen to extend to the Gentiles:
      i. who were formerly regarded as being outside of the promises, and without hope (verses 11-12);
      ii. but are now brought into the new spiritual Israel of God, all excluding and separating factors being cancelled in Christ (verses 13-15, 19). *(Note: ‘the barrier’ in verse 14 signifies the division between Jew and Gentile, not between man and God.)*
      iii. Thus Gentiles are not only admitted to the new Holy Sanctuary, but are essential parts of it, with an equal share in all its glory.*
         llius.*: The Church as the Temple of God (verses 20-22).

Ch. 3:1-13. This extension of grace to the Gentiles accounts for Paul’s appointment as an apostle.
   (a) To him had been revealed the hidden secret that it was an eternal purpose of God to include the Gentiles in all the blessings brought by the Christ (verses 3-6).
   (b) To him had been given the responsibility to proclaim this truth, and to suffer for the truth (verses 7-9, 13).

Ch. 3:14-21. The effect of all he has written on Paul himself – he is moved to adoring prayer.
   (a) He addresses God as the Father of a family that embraces both heaven and earth (verses 14-15).
   (b) He prays that through the Spirit his readers (as part of Christ’s body, and of God’s Sanctuary) may have the full presence of the indwelling Christ, with all that this indwelling means (verses 16-21).

Chs. 4 to 6. Practical.

These chapters are concerned with the effect these teachings should have upon his hearers, and a key to this second half can well be found in the words - ‘Live a life worthy of the calling you have received’ (Ch. 4:1).

The varied exhortations concerning Christian conduct may be summarised thus:

Ch. 4:1-16. Christian practice in relationship to the Church.
   (a) The Father, the Son and the Spirit work to make the Church a spiritual unity (verses 4-6).
   (b) Christians must do all in their power to promote this unity and refrain from all that would disrupt it (verses 2-3).
   (c) Unity is seen to be particularly necessary for the well-being of the Church as the Body of Christ, inasmuch as the different members need one another, and need Him.
      i. Mutual dependence should draw the members together - each has something to give; each needs to receive (verses 7, 11-12, 16).
      ii. His life and likeness is their shared and unifying quest (verses 13, 15).

Chs. 4:17 to 5:21. Christian practice contrasted with the conduct of the ungodly.
   (a) Do not walk as do the ungodly (Ch. 4:17).
      i. All evil practice (mentioned in detail throughout the section) are to be ‘put off’ (Ch. 4:22).
      ii. All graces and characteristics of godliness (also mentioned in detail) are to be ‘put on’ (Ch. 4:24).
   (b) Walk in love (Ch. 5:2).
   (c) Walk as children of light (Ch. 5:8).
   (d) Walk circumspectly (Ch. 5:15).
   (e) Be filled with the Spirit (Ch. 5:18).

(a) Wives to husbands Ch. 5:22-24. Here appears the great word concerning the Church as the Bride of Christ (verses 25-27, 32).
(b) Husbands to wives Ch. 5:25-33.
(c) Children to parents and parents to children (Ch. 6:1-4).
(d) Servants or slaves to masters (Ch. 6:5-8).
(e) Masters to servants (Ch. 6:9).

Ch. 6:10-18. Christian practice in relationship to conflict with the evil one.

(a) Christians must recognise who is their true enemy (verses 11-12).
(b) They must know the only means by which he may be resisted and confounded. Illus.: Armed conflict.
   i. Dependence upon God and His strength in faith, prayer and knowledge of His word (verses 10-11, 13-18).
   ii. Strict allegiance to integrity of life (verse 14).

Ch. 6:19-22. Conclusion.

Paul appeals for prayer on his behalf, and refers to Tychicus.
1. THE STORY BEHIND THE LETTER TO COLOSSE

(a) Colosse was one of three cities (Hierapolis and Laodicea - Ch. 4:13), situated about ten miles from each other, and about one hundred miles from Ephesus (see map).

(b) The Church at this place had not been founded by Paul, but by Epaphras (Ch. 1:7), who at the time of writing was visiting the imprisoned Paul.

(c) This letter was written specially to this Church, because the faith of its members was being threatened by false doctrines.

(d) Its subject matter is similar to that of the Ephesian letter, and it likewise was to be shared (Ch. 4:16).

(e) Tychicus brought the letter because Epaphras himself had been imprisoned (Philemon 23; Colossians 4:7).

2. THE ERRORS WHICH WERE THREATENING THE COLOSSIANS

(These are directly referred to in Chs. 1:23; 2:4, 8, 16-23.)

The suggestions are:

(a) To put trust in forms and observances, as in the case of the Galatians, such as circumcision, abstaining from certain foods, and the keeping of holy days (Ch. 2:16).

(b) That holiness of life is to be secured only by acts of rigorous self-denial, i.e. by imposing upon oneself fastings and other physical austerities (Ch. 2:20-21).

(c) That God’s approach to us and our approach to Him is effected only through the medium of many mediating spirits, whose aid we must seek (Ch. 2:18). See 1Timothy 4:1-3.

(d) All of these errors fall under the common condemnation that they do discredit to the person and work of Christ, and that those who accept any of these ideas are not holding to the Head (Ch. 2:19).

(e) Thus the cure for this situation is to establish that Christ is the complete and only Saviour, which is the truth Paul presents as the chief theme of this letter.

Key verses - Ch. 2:9-10.

3. AN OUTLINE OF THE MAIN SUBJECT MATTER OF THE LETTER

Ch. 1:1-9. Paul gives his greetings, commendation, and assurance of his constant interest and prayers.

He declares his great theme:

Ch. 1:12-20. The absolute supremacy of Christ as Lord, and His all-sufficiency as Saviour.

(a) In relation to the Trinity, He is the ‘the Son he loves’ (verse 13); the ‘image of the invisible God’ (verse 15); and possessing all the fullness of the Godhead (verse 19; Ch. 2:9).

(b) In relation to the created universe, He is its Lord:

i. He existed before it (verse 17).

ii. All things, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, find their origin and purpose in Him as their Creator (verse 16).

iii. All this creation is dependent upon Him as its Maintainer (verse 17).

(c) In relation to the Church – it is the Body of which He is the Head, born of, and maintained by, His redeeming risen life (verse 18).

(d) Thus, in every way, He is supreme (verse 18).

(e) With reference to the particular error concerning mediating spirits:

i. His Kingdom of Light is triumphant over the Kingdom of darkness (verses 12-13; Ch. 2:15).

ii. Whatever beings there may be in the unseen world, they are included in His creation, and are subject to His Lordship (verse 16; Ch. 2:10).
Chs. 1:21 to 2:23. **Paul seeks to strengthen and help these young believers (who to him personally are strangers).**

He says:

(a) They will be secure and established in holiness if they maintain, without wavering, their first confidence, which trusted all to Christ (Chs. 1:21-23; 2:6-7, 10).

(b) The great secret of Christian life and security is ‘Christ in you’ (Ch. 1:27).

(c) If they need to probe into the secrets of unseen things, they can find all they need to know in Christ (Ch. 2:3).

(d) Were they troubled about circumcision?
   i. In Christ they enjoy the reality of which any material thing is but a type.
   ii. He gives that circumcision of the heart, which delivers the life from sin (Ch. 2:11-13).

(e) Were they troubled about their neglect to keep the Jewish law? Union with Christ frees the Gentiles from this obligation (Ch. 2:14).

(f) Concerning the special errors mentioned (Ch.2:16-23):
   i. Those who adopt these are deceived.
   ii. They thereby display their ignorance and pride.
   iii. Their substitute ways of salvation are ineffective: they deny the all-sufficiency of Christ, and exalt the virtue of their own self-effort (Ch. 2:19,23).

Ch. 3:1-17. **His words of general practical advice.**

(a) Look to Christ alone, in whom is the power which means death to evil and life unto God (Ch. 3:1-4).

(b) By virtue of union with Him:
   i. Put off every form of evil (verses 8-9).
   ii. Put on every expression of godliness (verses 10, 12-14), relating every activity to Christ (verses 17,23)
   iii. and follow those practices by which such virtues are encouraged (verse 16; Ch. 4:2).

Chs. 3:18 to 4:6. **Particular words are given (as in the Epistle to the Ephesians) to wives, husbands, children, parents, servants and masters, and to the matter of conduct in the outside world (Ch. 4:5-6).**

Ch. 4:7-18. **Conclusion.**

This introduces Tychicus and Onesimus, refers again to Epaphras, and mentions many other well-known names.

---

**THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON**

1. **THE PEOPLE IN THIS STORY**
   (a) **Philemon** was a noted Christian of Colossae, known personally to Paul as one of his converts (verses 1, 19).

   (b) **Apphia** was his wife, and **Archippus** was probably the son, who during the absence of Epaphras seems to have had responsibility for the leadership of the Colossian Church (verse 2; Colossians 4:17).

   (c) **Onesimus**
   i. Was Philemon’s slave, but he had run away from his master, thereby merit ing death.
   ii. By some means Onesimus had come into contact with the imprisoned Paul, and had become a Christian.
   iii. Both Paul and Onesimus knew the act of restitution must be made, so Onesimus returned to Colosse in the company of Tychicus, and with this interceding letter from Paul.

2. **THE LETTER**

   Paul says:
   (a) *I refrain from my right to instruct you, and confine myself to pleading that you will pardon Onesimus* (verses 8-10).
i. He is changed.
   (a) He is now true to his name which means ‘profitable’ although we know he certainly did not deserve such a name before (verse 11).
   (b) He now returns, not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ (verse 16).
   (c) His future service will be governed by Christian motives (verse 15).

ii. If he is liable for any fine, or has restitution to make for any theft, I will meet this payment myself (verse 18).

iii. I know your treatment of him will pass my expectations (verse 21).

(b) Please prepare a guest room for me; I expect to be coming soon myself (verse 22).

N.B. Refer to the instructions to masters and slaves in Colossians 3:22 to 4:1, which Philemon would read also.
THE EPISTLES - TIMOTHY AND TITUS

LESSON 51

The Epistles to Timothy and Titus

INTRODUCTION. These writings are known as the Pastoral epistles, because they have to do with the work of the Christian minister, as the Shepherd of his people.

In the last lesson on The Acts of the Apostles, we said there is a lack of direct information concerning the later acts of Paul’s life. It is thought that these letters contain fragments which belong to the last period – a time when Paul had been released from Rome, and had been able to revisit the scenes of his former labours.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

1. THE SITUATION (Chs. 1:3; 3:14-15)
   (a) Timothy was in Ephesus, having been given the duty of correcting some who were teaching unsound doctrine (Ch. 1:3; see also Acts 20:29-30).
   (b) Paul hoped to come himself, but in case he was delayed, set down in written form for Timothy’s benefit, some specific directions on the subject of the duties of the Christian minister (Ch. 3:14-15).
   (c) These responsibilities fall under three main heads, and relate to:
      i. Teaching - to preserve and protect sound doctrine.
      ii. Organisation - covering especially:
         (a) discipline, and the
         (b) appointment of leaders.
      iii. Himself - to keep his own experience right, and be a good example to the flock.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE MAIN TEACHING OF THIS LETTER
   Ch. 1, and elsewhere. Responsibility for preserving sound teaching.
   (a) The marks of sound teaching.
      i. It is such that persuades men to turn from evil, and stimulates them to genuine faith and love (Ch. 1:5).
      ii. It accords with the words of Jesus, and with godliness (Ch. 6:3).
      iii. A digest of the sound teaching concerning Christ is given in Chs. 3:16; 6:15-16.
   (b) The marks of false teachers:
      i. They work from the wrong motive – to bring credit or gain to themselves (Chs. 1:7; 6:5).
      ii. They choose subjects about which there can be nothing but speculation and argument, and which, in any case, make no contribution to spiritual life (Chs. 1:4,6; 6:4-5), e.g. such a subject as arguments concerning the law, is outside of Christian interest (Ch. 1:8-9; see Titus 3: 9).
   (c) Paul’s message was of Christ as the Saviour from sin (Chs. 1:15; 4:10). His own testimony gave abundant evidence of the truth of this message (Ch. 1:12-15); and thus was a strong encouragement to bring others to believe it too (Ch. 1:16).
   (d) This defending of the faith would involve Timothy in a measure of conflict. From this he must not shrink (Ch. 1:18-19).

Ch.2. Concerning public worship.
   (a) Prayer was to be offered for all men, for they are all within the scope of God’s redeeming purpose (verses 3-6); for kings and all in authority, especially for the preservation of law and order (verse 2).
   (b) Women believers were to be discouraged from being given to outward adornment (verses 9-10; were not in those days) to be given positions of authority (verses 11-12).

Ch.3. The appointing of Bishops and Deacons.
   (a) In those days a leading minister was called a ‘Bishop’, ‘Elder’, or ‘Presbyter’ and an assistant minister was called a ‘Deacon’.
   (b) The qualifications required of candidates for these offices are similar. They were to be:
      i. Of good character (Ch. 3:2-3,8-9).
      ii. Good husbands and fathers (Ch. 3:2,4-5,12).
iii. Of good reputation in the outside world (Ch. 3:7).

Ch. 4:1-10.

(a) Special guard was to be taken against teachers who taught that holiness of life can be realised only by a life of abnormal abstinence (as mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians) (Ch. 4:1-3).
(The idea behind this is that matter and many natural things were evil of themselves. This Paul strongly denies) (Ch. 4:4-5.)

(b) Paul also adds that while physical discipline has its benefits, we are saved if we believe in Christ as Saviour, and regulate our lives according to that Gospel (Ch. 4:8-10).

Chs. 5:3-18; 6:6-11, 17, 19. Matters connected with money.

(a) The Church was to give support to widows who fulfil the requirements for such assistance (Ch. 5:3, 9-10).
From this list are to be excluded those liable to remarry (Ch. 5:11); those whose own relatives can support them (Ch. 5:8, 16).

(b) Worthy and dutiful Elders were to receive pay (Ch. 5:17-18).

(c) The love of money is a snare to all (Ch. 6:9-10).

(d) The wealthy were to be warned about this danger (Ch. 6:17-19).


(a) Be an example to your flock of what you teach (Ch. 4:12).

(b) Give special attention to your teaching and preaching (Ch. 4:13-16).

(c) Conduct yourself with discretion in your dealings with both sexes, and with all ages (Ch. 5:1-2).

(d) Be discreet, yet faithful, in administering discipline (Ch. 5:19-21).

(e) Take care of your health (Ch. 5:23).

(f) Keep your commission faithfully, following the example of your Lord, to whom you will be accountable (Ch. 6:11-14, 20-21).

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

1. THE STORY BEHIND THE LETTER

(a) Titus, a Gentile, and one of Paul’s most trusted and faithful lieutenants, had been left by Paul in Crete with instructions to attend to various duties of Church organisation, while Paul returned to the mainland, (Chs. :5; 3:12).

(b) The letter contains directions concerning pastoral duties of the same character as those given in 1 Timothy.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

Ch. 1:5-9. The type of person to choose for an Elder.
Instructions as given in 1 Timothy 3 (Titus 1:6-9).

Ch. 1:10-16. Warning against Jewish teachers.


(a) Detail given for various conditions (Ch. 2:1-10).

(b) Christian conduct in the world (Ch.3: 1-2).

(c) The need for discipline (Ch. 3:10-11).

Chs. 2:11-14; 3:3-9. The basic Christian doctrine which will encourage believers in how to behave appropriately.
THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

1. THE STORY BEHIND THIS LETTER (Chs. 1:17; 4:6, 9, 11, 13, 21)
   (a) This is Paul’s last letter, written from prison in Rome, at a time when he knew death was near (Chs. 1:17; 4:6).
   (b) The letter urges Timothy to come quickly (Ch. 4:9, 21), bringing Mark (Ch. 4:11), and some of Paul’s goods (Ch. 4:13).
   (c) Paul included a last solemn charge, for Timothy might not arrive in time to speak with him face to face.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE LETTER
   Chs. 1 and 2. An exhortation to a faithful and courageous ministry.
   (Timothy seems to have been neither robust in health (1 Timothy 5:23); nor naturally bold in character (1 Corinthians 16:10)).
   (a) Be not dismayed, but be courageous (Ch. 1:8).
       When he had lost Paul, he would still have the assets of:
       i. his early training (Ch. 1:5);
       ii. his ordination (Ch. 1:6);
       iii. the strengthening and equipping of the indwelling Spirit (Ch. 1:7);
       iv. and the example of Paul’s triumphant testimony (Ch. 1:12).
   (b) Guard the sacred trust of the Gospel teaching (Ch. 1:13-14), and secure its permanence by handing it on to faithful followers (Ch. 2:2).
   (c) The faithful discharge of duty will call for the best qualities of a soldier (Ch. 2:3-4); an athlete (Ch. 2:5); and a farmer (Ch. 2:6).
   (d) He will need to deal faithfully and responsibly with the truth (Ch. 2:15); to challenge error (Ch. 2:14); to be pure (Ch. 2:19-21).

   Chs. 3 to 4:5. Warning concerning difficult days to come.
   (a) Days when people’s religion will be formal and their conduct abominable (Ch. 3:1-5).
   (b) When there will be no appetite for Gospel truths (Ch. 4:3-4).
   (c) Days of persecution (Ch. 3:12), but remember then how God had delivered Paul (Ch. 3:10-11).
   (d) Faithfulness to scriptural teaching will be the adequate safeguard and equipment (Ch. 3:14-17).
   (e) Therefore, preach the word at all times, and meet all the demands of a faithful ministry (Ch. 4:1-2, 5).

   Ch. 4:6-22. Paul’s words concerning himself.
   (a) My time is come (Ch. 4:6).
   (b) I go to my reward as:
       i. a good soldier;
       ii. an untiring runner; and
       iii. a faithful farmer/husbandman (Ch. 4:7-8).
   (c) I have every confidence for myself (Ch. 4:18), and likewise for every other faithful Christian (Ch. 4:8).

CONCLUSION. This is the end of the study of Paul’s word. He was used by his Master to give a mighty message to the world, not only by means of the words he uttered, but by the manner of his living and dying.
LESSON 52

The Epistle to the Hebrews

INTRODUCTION. It is not possible to say precisely where or when this epistle was written, nor indeed the name of the writer, but the important matters of the reason for its being written, and of the nature of the message it presents, are readily perceived.

1. THE WRITER
   The name of Paul given in the title in the Authorised Version does not appear in the earliest manuscripts, and is nowhere mentioned in the letter itself.

2. THE REASON WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN
   It is addressed to Jewish Christians who were subject to strong temptation to go back to their Jewish faith and abandon faith in Jesus.

3. WHAT MORE IS KNOWN ABOUT THEM?
   (a) Their location can only be guessed at, but such passages as Chs. 5:11-12; 6:10; 10:32-34; 12:4; 13:3, 18-19, 23) throw further light on their condition.
   (b) From these references we learn among other things that:
      i. They had been Christians for some time, but had not made satisfactory progress in the Christian life.
      ii. As believers they had been generous to fellow Christians in need, and when converts had suffered persecution which they had nobly endured.
      iii. Other Christians were suffering persecution when this letter was written.
      iv. They knew the writer and Timothy well.

4. THE NATURE OF THE MESSAGE GIVEN
   The writer, addressing these people who had such respect for Old Testament ways, and who were under such temptation to return to them:
   (a) Sets forth his great theme that Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, who fulfils all the promises of the Old Testament dispensation, and that this fulfilment is in every way better than that which preceded it, being the substance of which the old is the shadow.
   (b) Adds to this teaching the gravest warnings concerning the penalty involved by turning back, and the most fervent encouragements to go forward at any cost.

5. CHARACTERISTICS WHICH MARK THIS OBJECTIVE
   (a) The frequent use of such words as ‘better’, ‘once for all’, ‘sat down’ or ‘seated’ - to show the perfection and finality of Christ’s Person and Work.
   (b) Great prominence given to the discussion of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme High Priest.
      It was through the system of worship associated with the Levitical Priesthood that the Jews felt they enjoyed the singular and supreme blessings of their relationship to God, and it was with being debarred from such means of grace that the Jewish Christians were being threatened and taunted by their ‘orthodox’ opponents. Thus, the most powerful answer to such a position is to show that Jesus is a greater High Priest, ministering greater blessings which can be received through Him alone.
   (c) The use of a system of constant application.
      From halfway in Ch. 10 to the end, the epistle is almost exclusively devoted to practical exhortation, but in addition to this the writer interrupts the orderly and progressive development of his theme at appropriate places to apply the message to his readers with passages of earnest exhortation, e.g. Chs. 2:1-4; 3:6-19; 4; 5:11 to 6:12; 10:19-39; 12.

THE CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE

Ch. 1:
Verses 1-3. The Son’s relationship to prophecy, the prophets, the Trinity, the work of creation and redemption is shown.
Verses 4-14. He is shown by Old Testament witness to be greater than the angels.
Ch. 2. Verses 1-4. The first word of exhortation. - The supreme importance of heeding the word given by the Son. The Jews claimed that the Law was given at Sinai by the mediation of angels. Thus the writer says:

(a) Those who were disobedient to this word were punished.
(b) How much greater will be the penalty for not heeding this greatest word spoken by the Son, and confirmed by Father and Spirit.

Verses 5-18. The question of the Incarnation.

By becoming man the Son lost no dignity, for only by that means was He able to fulfil His work as Redeemer. By it:

(a) He made it possible for the as yet unrealised prediction of Psalm 8 concerning man to be fulfilled (verses 8-9).
(b) He is our ‘brother’ and thus able to:
   i. effect redemption, breaking the power of death and sin and bring us to where He is;
   ii. become a High Priest for all of humankind’s spiritual need (verses 9-18).

Ch. 3: Verses 1-6. Christ as Apostle and High Priest is greater than Moses; Moses was a faithful servant, Christ is the Son.

Ch. 3:6 and Ch. 4. The second exhortation. - To possess the promised rest. This is illustrated by the judgment passed on the unbelieving rebels who resisted Moses at Kadesh Barnea.

(a) These in their day perished in the wilderness, and did not enter the promised rest (Ch. 3:9-11, 17-19).
(b) Under this greater leader (who is also greater than Joshua and who offers the true ‘rest’ of which Canaan is but an imperfect type), unbelief and drawing back will mean suffering a worse fate than did their fathers (Chs. 3:7-8, 12-14; 4:1-2, 11).
(c) The searching nature of God’s word and of Him who brings it (Ch. 4:12-13).
(d) The gracious nature of the High Priest toward those who ‘hold fast’ and ‘draw near’ (Ch. 4:14-16).

Ch. 5. Verses 1-10. The two essential qualifications for the office of High Priest are fulfilled by Christ - fellow sympathy with man (verses 2, 7-9), and appointment by God (verses 4, 6, 10).

Ch. 5:11-14 and Ch. 6. The third exhortation. - Their unsatisfactory record of progress.

(a) Blame for lack of progress (Chs. 5:11 - 6:2).
(b) Warning that if Christ is rejected as Saviour there is no other hope of salvation (Ch. 6:3-8).
(c) Encouragement to perseverance - from past experience, and from the certainty of the future hope - guaranteed by God’s oath, and by the Resurrection of Jesus (Ch. 6:9-20).

Ch. 7. Christ as the perfect High Priest is greater than Aaron.

(a) This is foreshadowed in the Old Testament when a priest after the order of Melchisedec is mentioned (Psalm 110:4; verses 11, 15).
(b) Melchizedek was a king and priest of the most high God who received honour from Abraham. There is no record of Melchizedek having a predecessor or successor (Genesis 14:18-20; verses 1-3).
(c) Thus he becomes the only type the Old Testament can supply of a Priesthood greater than that of Israel:
   i. in that Abraham treated him as a superior, paying him tithes, and receiving his blessing (verses 4-7);
   ii. inasmuch as he represents an uninterrupted priesthood;
   iii. as an example of one who was both priest and king.
(d) Discussing this second point, it is pointed out that the Aaronic priesthood was not able to produce one unchanging priest – it being carried on only by allowing a succession of mortal men to make their temporary contribution, in contrast to the priesthood of Christ which is of supreme excellency and of unceasing duration (verses 23-24, 26-28).
Ch. 10:

Verses 1-4. Further words about the imperfection of the Levitical sacrifices.

Verses 5-20. The virtue of the life Christ gave (verses 7, 12) secures for believers the full blessing of the new covenant which includes:

(a) forgiveness of sins (verse 17);
(b) regenerating and sanctifying power (verses 10, 16);
(c) the right to enter and live in the holy place (verses 19, 20).

Verses 19-39. The fourth exhortation. - To enter the Holiest.

(a) To respond to these great privileges (verses 19-24).
(b) To recognize the fearful nature of neglecting or rejecting such an invitation (verses 25-31).
(c) To make the hearty and maintained response which will come from a steadfast faith (verses 32-39).

Chs. 11 and 12. The call to be men of persevering faith is reinforced by the example of the heroes gone before (see Ch. 6:11).

(a) Ch. 11 shows that all Old Testament worthies from Abel to those who suffered in Maccabean times were men and women of faith, who gave up the seen for the unseen, the temporal for the eternal, maintaining this committal against all manner of testing and opposition.

(b) The greatest example of testing hopeful endurance and triumph is Jesus Himself (Ch. 12:2-4).

(c) With such examples of faithfulness and fortitude, and with such assurance of a triumphant issue, who will not unswervingly press forward with singleness of heart and simplicity of trust? (Ch. 12:1).

(d) Under the control of the loving Father’s hand adversity is a holiness producing discipline (Ch. 12:5-13).

(e) Avoid all that would make for strife or uncleanness and all influence that would foster the directly opposite attitude to that of Ch. 11, e.g. such as that of Esau who gave up the eternal for the temporal (Ch. 12:14-17).

(f) The encouragement given by the glory and grace of the new covenant contrasted with the forbidding severity of the old (Ch. 12:18-24).

(g) The joy inspired by this grace must still be accompanied by the deepest sense of responsibility and reverence (Ch. 12:25-29).

Ch. 13. This chapter gives the writer’s great benediction (verses 20-21), together with some final words about brotherly love, chastity, contentment, respect for leaders, and these two additional references to his main theme:

i. Jesus is set forth as unchanging and eternal (verse 8), as is the covenant He inaugurates (verse 20) in contrast to the change and uncertainty in all else (verse 9).

ii. This new covenant gives privileges which the old fore-shadowed but did not provide. Believers should, therefore, experimentally enjoy these blessings and be prepared to suffer for the benefits so enjoyed (verses 10-16).
CLOSING REMARK. The great historical word said on the theme of this letter was when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple, Priesthood and forms of sacrificial observance came to an end. Then, more than ever, the Jewish Christians realised that their hope was ‘sure and steadfast’ being anchored to ‘those things which cannot be shaken’.
LESSON 53

The First Epistle of John

1. SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLE
   (a) This Epistle cannot be studied adequately unless something is known about the conflict the
   Early Church had with teachers of false doctrine.
   (b) This subject of false teaching has prominent mention in a number of Epistles, those chiefly
   affected being the Pastoral Epistles of Paul, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistles
   of John, Jude and 2 Peter.
   (c) For the study of the First Epistle of John we need to know something about Gnosticism, the
   most widespread and long-lasting of these heresies.

   Gnostism (from the Greek word ‘gnosis’ meaning knowledge (see 1 Timothy 6:20)
   ‘oppositions of science’ (‘gnosis’) falsely so called) was a false teaching which
   attacked the very roots of the Christian faith.

2. GNOSTICISM – ITS PROMINENT TEACHINGS
   Under this title a wide range and even diversity of teachings were given. From these we can gather
   the following characteristic items:
   (a) Its adherents claimed to have a special knowledge which was hard to obtain, and hence
       which could be grasped by a select and instructed circle only.
   (b) They claimed that to be possessed of this knowledge was the mark of spiritual excellence,
       so that it was more to be desired than anything else – more than virtue for instance.
   (c) They had special doctrines about the nature and origin of evil, and said that the created
       material world was the product of an evil power, and that all matter was evil and impure of
       itself. They therefore repudiated all idea that the Supreme God had Himself directly created
       it.

3. THE WAY THESE DOCTRINES AFFECTED THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL
   (a) In addition to this denial of God as sole creator, this regarding of matter as evil led to a
       denial of the Incarnation and the Resurrection.
   (b) They said that the Divine Being could not have had union with what they regarded as an
       impure body.
   (c) They said that if God had come to men in the person of Jesus Christ, then Jesus was really
       a phantom; that He only appeared to be a man, and did not have a human body as we do.
       Some were prepared to accept that Jesus was a man, but said that the Divine Being had
       only temporary association with this body, or denied His Deity altogether.
       They thus denied that ‘He was truly and properly God, and truly and properly man’.
   (d) The Resurrection was denied, for according to them it was the greatest blessing to be
       completely freed from having a body at all.

4. THE WAY THESE DOCTRINES AFFECTED CONDUCT
   There were two opposite reactions in the lives of those who held these doctrines:
   (a) Some followed the way of asceticism, attempting to beat down and crush the body, having
       no belief that our bodily members can and should be sanctified.
   (b) More commonly, others followed the way of indulgence, giving full licence to bodily
       appetites, judging that it was ‘knowledge’ alone that mattered. They thus completely
       repudiated the Christian doctrine that true spiritual experience affects every detail of life and
       conduct (see 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE EPISTLE

1. THE RELATION OF THIS EPISTLE TO JOHN’S GOSPEL
   (a) There is marked similarity of language ideas, and of characteristic words, i.e. love, life, light,
       truth, ‘believe’ and the ‘world’.
   (b) Both writings present the same predominant theme – the life that comes through faith in
       Jesus as the Son of God (John 20:31; 1 John 5:13).
   (c) The Epistle is complementary to the Gospel.
THE GOSPEL presents the Divine Life as shown in the person of Jesus, setting forth the truth which produces faith in Him as the Son of God.

THE EPISTLE presents the Divine Life as it is exhibited in the Individual Christian setting forth the marks by which the believer’s faith is proved to be genuine.

Both Gospel and Epistle set forth the truths which refute false teaching (especially in relation to the Deity and Humanity of Jesus, the sinfulness of sin, and God’s purpose to save us from it), but in the Epistle false teaching (such as that described in Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of the Special Introduction) is more directly exposed and denounced.

As in the Gospel the writer particularly emphasises that he writes as a companion of Jesus, a major point when he is dealing with testimony concerning the Incarnation (see 1 John 1:1-4:14).

Note also the prominence of the words ‘know’, ‘recognise’, etc.

THE MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE is indicated in key verses and worked out in detail in their context.

It presents the way to fellowship with God and with His people (Ch. 1:3,4), which involves separation from sin (Ch. 2:1), and the world (Ch. 2:15), the repudiation of false teaching (Ch. 2:26), and the receiving of the life which comes only through the Son (Ch. 5:13).

The outstanding themes are that God is Light; that God is Righteous; and that God is Love. He also is the source of Eternal Life. Thus the message concerning fellowship with Him is that, when we share this Life, the three characteristics mentioned above must be displayed in us also.

The three great themes, God as Light, Righteousness and Love, dominate the Epistle, being brought into prominence in turn and in this order. They are not dealt with in isolation, however, because John has all these truths about God in his mind all the time.

CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE

CHS. 1 to 2:27. Fellowship with God who is Light.

Ch. 1:1-4. Testimony from a companion of Jesus to the Incarnation (to the humanity, deity and abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ), and to the possibility that all can have fellowship with God through Him.

Verse 5. Introduces the subject of the conditions upon which this fellowship can be realised, set side by side with indications as to how the falseness of heretical claims to fellowship are revealed. As God is Light, Righteousness and Love, those in fellowship with Him must display these same characteristics. Thus in detail the necessary accompaniments to true fellowship are:

Chs. 1:7 to 2:2. i. sin in deed and principle is dealt with
   (a) by frank acknowledgment of, and turning from, all the Light condemns (Ch. 1:9);
   (b) by trusting in the Saviour who has made the atonement for sin (Ch. 2:1-2);
   (c) by maintaining these attitudes (Ch. 1:7), i.e. walking in the light.

Ch. 2:3-6. ii. Loving obedience to God as was shown by Jesus.

Verse 10. iii. Love to man.

Verses 15-16. iv. No fellowship with the world.
The ‘world’ here means the system man has organised apart from God’s law and Spirit. It is a way of life which is an expression of, and an indulgence for, the depraved nature of man.

Verses 18-27. v. The guiding spirit of Truth is heeded and teachings contrary to His light are repudiated. (Here, in particular, the doctrine of the Incarnation is mentioned - Ch. 2:22-23.)

Note. In contrast to these marks of true fellowship, the marks of heretical teaching are noted. Those whose lives are devoid of Light, Righteousness, Obedience, Love
and Truth are thereby shown to be making false claims (Chs. 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 9, 11, 15, 23).

Verses 12-14. The Apostle gives a personal word to true believers, showing that all such have their own inner experience of God. Apart from all other testimony, they know Him as Righteous and Gracious, demanding resistance to evil and granting pardon for sin and power unto righteousness.

Chs. 2:28 to 3:13. Fellowship With God who is Righteous.
In this section emphasis is given to the teaching that there can be no fellowship with God where there is not practical consecration to Righteous living.

Ch. 3:1-3. Sonship is the Christian’s greatest privilege. It is also the Christian’s strongest motive to, and power toward righteous living.

Verses 4-12. In relation to the question of Righteousness, Christ is its champion, Satan its enemy, and the world the expression of the anti-Christ spirit (Cain, in his hatred of goodness, is an example of this spirit).

The mission of Christ was to:
   i. remove sin (verse 5);
   ii. combat and overthrow Satan (verse 8);
   iii. reveal the true nature of the world.

To live habitually in sin is to be:
   i. against God, disobeying His law (verse 4);
   ii. indifferent to the purposes of the Incarnation;
   iii. subservient to Satan (verse 8).

Hence God’s children are marked by their consecration to Righteousness, which is one aspect of Christlikeness (verses 3, 7, 9).

Chs. 3:14 to 4:21. Fellowship with God who is Love.
In this section emphasis is given to the teaching that there can be no fellowship with God where His command to be Loving is ignored, being linked with the previous subject in verses 10-11 of Ch. 3.

The greatest command that God has given is:
   i. that we should believe on His Son;
   ii. that we should obey the Son’s commandment to be loving (Ch. 3:23).

The evidences that this command is properly honoured are that:
   i. His Spirit is received (Ch. 3:24);
   ii. His Spirit of Love is demonstrated in all human relationships (Ch. 3:14-18);
   iii. there is an attitude of confidence in the soul’s dealings with God, shown particularly in a childlike trustfulness in prayer (Ch. 3:19-22).

Ch. 4:1-6. Practical words about the detection of false teaching and the spirit which inspires it.
Those who deny the Incarnation thereby disclose that they are moved by a spirit which is foreign and antagonistic to the Spirit of God.

Ch. 4:7-21. Further words about the Spirit of Love.
   God is Love (verse 8),
   i. This love is demonstrated in the gift of the Son (verses 9-10).
   ii. Love of this nature shows itself in true believers who are in union with God:
      (a) In their attitude of concern for, and helpfulness to, others (verses 7, 11-12, 20-21).
      (b) In their faith in His gift of Love (verses 14-15).
      (c) In their attitude of confidence toward God Himself (verses 16-19).

Ch. 5. Fellowship with God through His Son.
In this chapter emphasis is given to the doctrine of the Incarnation; to the testimony concerning it, and to the fruits of believing it.

Testimony to the truth of the Incarnation is given:
   i. By the changed life of those who believe it.
      (a) They have the new nature (verses 1, 12).
      (b) They have victory over the world (verses 4-5).
      (c) They love Father and Son as one, and His children for His sake

117
(verses 1-2).

ii. By the witness to the Son given by Father and Spirit:
   (a) In the life of Jesus, especially in connection with (verse 6):
       His Baptism (where Jesus accepted His mission);
       His Cross (where Jesus completed His mission).
   (b) In the heart of the believer (verse 10).

Hence, to disbelieve the Incarnation is to disbelieve the testimony of God (verses 9-10).

Ch. 5:13-21. Concluding words.

Verse 13. The reason for writing the Epistle – God as the Giver of Life to those who believe on His Son.

Verses 14-17. God as Love and Righteousness answering our prayers,
   i. For ourselves - if offered according to His will (verses 14-15).
   ii. For the restoration and salvation of others - if they do not frustrate His grace by a wilful and persistent repudiation of it.

Verses 18-19, 21. The need to keep separate from sin and the world.
Verse 20. The Light and Life which come through the Son.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION. The similarity in language between this letter and 1 John will be readily perceived as will also its likeness to 3 John. In both 2 and 3 John the prominence of the word ‘truth’ will be noted.

This Epistle is addressed to a church, or to a certain Christian lady some take ‘chosen lady’ (verse 1) to be a poetic expression for a church – others say it should be understood as it stands, giving commendation, exhortation to love and obedience, and warning against false teachers - thus:

Verses 1-3. Salutation which includes an affirmation that Jesus is the Son of the Father.
Verses 4-6. Exhortation to love and obedience.
Verses 7-9. Warning against false teachers particularly such as deny the Incarnation.
Verses 10-11. Instruction to refuse them any support or assistance in their evil work.

THE THIRD EPISTLE JOHN

INTRODUCTION. This is a personal letter to one Gaius, a worthy Christian, whose service of hospitality to travelling Christian teachers had been reported to John. Apart from commendation for this service the letter also recommends Demetrius (who may have been the bearer) and condemns Diotrephes - thus:

Verses 1-2. Greeting to Gaius.
Verses 3-8. Gaius commended for his general conduct and for his hospitality.
Verses 9-10. Diotrephes condemned for his hostility.
Verse 12. Demetrius recommended.

Note: The three men mentioned here bore names in common use. It is not possible to say with certainty any more about any of them.
LES3ON 54

The Epistle of James

1. AUTHORSHIP AND CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE
   (a) We cannot say with certainty who this ‘James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ was, nor when this epistle was issued, but these facts do not vitally affect the force of the message the epistle presents.

   (b) The letter uses considerable Old Testament reference, and also words and phrases like those used by Peter and Paul.

   (c) Above all, it echoes the teaching of Jesus, particularly as given in the Sermon on the Mount, sometimes using similar words - sometimes stating the principle in other words.

   (d) The epistle is general - addressed to the ‘twelve tribes scattered among the nations’ but while it is strongly Jewish in character, the matters it deals with are applicable to all men at all times.

   (e) Church tradition has long named the writer as being ‘the brother of the Lord’ who presided over affairs in Jerusalem, as recorded in The Acts of the Apostles, predominantly in Ch. 15:13-21.

2. SUBJECT MATTER
   (a) This is related to the condition of the recipients, who while apparently undergoing persecution and hardship, were generally not in a state of spiritual well-being. In their communities were to be found exceedingly poor people and some of considerable wealth.

   (b) The lack of Christian virtues stirred James the most. He presents the main subject as a contrast between the character and conduct of the true Christian (‘the doer of the Word’) and the spirit and conduct of the one who merely professes the faith.

   (c) Special condemnation is given to such sins as worldliness (with the instability that accompanies such divided loyalty), profession without practice, and evil-speaking.

   (d) The great emphasis is on practice.

   (e) It is not easy to make an analysis of the matter in the order of the epistle, but this is followed as far as possible.

3. THE CONTENTS OF THE EPISTLE
   (a) External trials should be met not with dismay, but with welcome.

      Ch. 1:2-3,12. They provide a necessary condition for the development of a strong faith, a mature character, and eventually a crown of life (see also Matthew 5:10; Romans 5:3-5; 1 Peter 1:7).

      Chs. 1:4; 5: 7-8, 10-11. We must believe this, and patiently accept this discipline (see also Matthew 5:12).

      Ch. 1:5. Any lack of wisdom (by which to regulate conduct) will be supplied by God for the asking (see also Matthew 7:7).

      Ch. 1:6-8. In these matters there must be on our part a maintained and whole-hearted faith. A wavering attitude will nullify all.

   (b) The Christian is not bound to fall under temptation.

      Internal trials:

      In this section ‘temptation’, in some translations, means ‘enticement to do evil’.

      Ch. 1:13. Any idea that God is behind a temptation to sin, and therefore that it is irresistible, is quite wrong. No evil in us comes from, or is, stimulated by God.

      Ch. 1:14. The source of suggestion to evil comes from the lusts and appetites of the heart (see also 4:1-3, 5).

      Ch. 1:15. This is the seed whose fruit is sin and death.

      Ch. 1:17. All that comes from God is of His nature of light - holy, consistent and for our good.

      Ch.1:18. From Him comes the word of truth by which we are regenerated. The seed (‘word’) that God implants brings forth life. Thus we are to yield:

      Ch. 1:19. not to temper, evil speaking, or to any hurtful or impure impulse,

      Ch. 1:21. but to the working out of the disposition of righteousness God implants within us.
(c) The mirror of the ‘perfect law that gives freedom’. Its power to show Christian practice in its true light.

i. It distinguishes between true and false religion by setting the true standard (see 2 Corinthians 10:12, 18).

ii. The characteristics of true religion are noted. It shows itself in:
   (a) Practical love and sympathy to those in deep need - helpfulness (Ch. 1:27).
   (b) Separation from evil – holiness.
   (c) A maintained care to correct and direct life by God’s standards (Ch. 1:25).

(d) Particular sins condemned.
James applies this standard to church life and draws attention to certain features which thus merit special condemnation, namely:

i. Having a worldly standard of values in judging men’s worth.
   Ch. 2:2-3. In particular being servile to the rich solely because they are rich and being ungracious to the poor.
   Chs. 2:5; 1:9-11. This is totally foreign to God’s attitude, to the viewing of this matter in a Christian light, indeed to the Spirit of Christ (see also Ch. 4:6).
   Ch. 2:1, 8-9. It offends the royal law of love.
   Ch. 2:6-7. The wealthy are associated with the group who are the Church’s biggest oppressors.
   Ch. 2:10-11. This wrong spirit will not be overlooked because a claim is put forth that other commands are being kept.
   Ch. 2:12-13. Be merciful (in this case to the poor) as you hope for mercy (see also Matthew 5:7; 25:45).

ii. Being satisfied with a faith that is not accompanied by works.
   Ch. 1:22-24. This is failing to use the mirror for its designed purpose.
   Ch. 2:14. A belief which does not issue in corresponding conduct has no value or virtue (cf. Matthew 7:21, 24, 26).
   Ch. 2:15-16. It is as ineffective as would be the giving of nothing more than sympathetic words to a man needing clothing and food.
   Ch. 2:17,26. Indeed as dead as a body without a spirit.
   Ch. 2:19. There is no comfort in claiming to be a strong contender for the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead. By itself that does not make one any better than the devils.
   Ch. 2:21-25. We need an acting faith such as was shown by Abraham and Rahab (see Note at end of lesson). ‘Be quick to listen’ (Ch. 1:19).

iii. The revelation of heart condition which is made known by the tongue.
   Ch. 3:2. The control of the tongue is one of the highest and hardest forms of self-discipline. ‘Be slow to speak’ (Ch. 1:19).
   Ch. 3:3-8. Small as it is, the harm done by the tongue is incalculable, even as that of fire and poison.
   Chs. 3:10; 1:26. All manner of sins of speech are therefore most sternly condemned.
   Ch. 3:9-10. That lips which are used to curse others are sometimes used to utter praises to God does not mitigate, but rather magnifies, the wrong.
   Ch. 3:14-16. More fundamentally it is the spirit which inspires such speaking, which matters most. Such evil utterance is the outward evidence of a heart which is allowing itself to be inflamed by hell (Matthew 12:33-35).
   Ch. 3:17. On the contrary the regenerate heart is begotten from above, and all that comes from that source is characterised by such qualities as purity, peaceableness, kindness, forbearance, and sincere simplicity. Note the correspondence of this teaching with Matthew 5:4-9, and with 1 Corinthians 13.

iv. Disputes and strife. ‘…slow to become angry’ (Ch. 1:19).
   Ch. 3:1. A desire by many to be teachers of others is not a welcome sign. Such duties are not to be assumed lightly.
   Ch. 4:1-2. Ungratified passions of lust, envy and covetousness cause discontent in the soul and strife with others.
   Ch. 4:3. Prayer from such hearts, being unworthy in matter and motive, is fruitless.

v. Friendship with the world.
   Ch. 4:4-5. Is a constant offence to the demand of the Holy Spirit for separation, even meriting the charge of adultery.
vi. **Having a worldly mind in relation to time.**


(e) **Practical exhortations.**

i. Ch. 4:6-10. All who are guilty of any fault were called to a repentance which makes a clean cut from wrong, and turns whole-heartedly to God.

Note: ‘Hands’ and ‘hearts’ denote the whole life.

ii. Chs. 4:11-12; 5:12. To refrain from judging others and from using oaths (see also Matthew 7:1-2; 5:33-37).

iii. Ch. 5:1-5. James, as a New Testament Amos, announces a woe on rich men guilty of indulgence and oppression.

(f) **Encouragements.**

i. Ch. 5:14-18. To prayer -- for healing and for pardon.

ii. Ch. 5:19, 20. To care for the souls of others.

4. **NOTE ON JAMES. Ch. 2:21-24**

James's statement that "Abraham was considered righteous for what he did" (Ch. 2:21) is not in conflict with Paul’s teaching in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 that Abraham was justified by his faith in God.

Both are commenting on the word ‘believed’ in the text ‘Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness’ and when their statements are read in their context it is seen that Paul is condemning the trust men put in their ‘works’ to be the ground of their salvation (i.e. trust in works instead of trust in Christ), whereas James is commending the works by which it is proved they have faith, i.e. the works that prove a soul has trust in Christ.

Paul emphasises that faith in Christ is the only means, James that this faith must be of a special quality (Ch. 2:22); see also Salvation Story Ch. 8.

Illus.: Abraham believed God.

That is what made him leave his land and act all through his subsequent life as if he expected God to fulfil His promises. It was by these very actions that he proved he believed. If he had not acted so, that would have been clear evidence that he did not really believe at all, i.e. that his faith was ‘dead’.

In so many of Paul’s epistles, the practical sections which normally follow the doctrinal portion, is Paul saying, ‘I have told you what to believe, now believe, and show your belief by the way you act.’ He speaks in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 of the ‘work produced by faith’.
INTRODUCTION. This epistle is addressed to the churches in five districts of Asia Minor, and the apostle writes as from ‘Babylon’. This title is generally taken to mean Rome, which the apostle could well have looked upon as the centre of godless power antagonistic to the people of God. ‘Babylon’ is used in this way as a title for Rome in the Book of Revelation.

1. THE SITUATION
(a) The special situation that called forth this epistle was that these Christians were undergoing persecution for their faith (Ch. 1:6), a persecution Peter expected soon to increase in severity (Ch. 4:12).
(b) For some, the present persecution involved being called before arresting authorities on a charge of being an evildoer (Ch. 3:15-16), and for others, such domestic persecution as was the lot of wives from unbelieving husbands (Ch. 3:1), or of Christian slaves from oppressive masters (Ch. 2:18), or of converts from former godless associates (Ch. 4:3-4).
(c) Thus a prominent word in the epistle is ‘suffering’ but it should be understood that this refers to that undeserved suffering which is an expression of the opposition the world gives to Christ and His way, and does no refer to other forms of suffering, certainly not to that which is brought upon a person by his own wrongdoing (Chs. 2:20; 4:15).

2. THE MESSAGE
(a) In this situation the apostle impresses on his hearers the supreme importance of maintaining Christian hope and Christian holiness.
(b) Their persecution must not injure either of these.
(c) On the contrary, these two great factors are to conquer their suffering, teaching them to think of it with a Christlike mind, and endure it with a Christlike spirit. In short, the impact of the Church on the world is to be more telling than the impact of the world on the Church.
(d) So the dominant ideas with key verses are:
   i. Why Christians should have a living hope and a rejoicing experience at all times (Ch. 1:13).
   ii. How persecution should be faced in a Christlike way (Ch. 4:14,13).
   iii. Why and how holy living should be maintained (Ch. 1:15).
(e) The following paragraphs of this lesson (Paragraphs 3-5) present the contents of the letter under these three heads, following the natural order as far as possible.

3. THE CHRISTIAN HOPE – ITS SURE FOUNDATION (see Paragraph 2(d), i)
(a) The Church as the new ‘Spiritual Israel’ enjoys all the distinctions and privileges of the former Israel and that in a higher and most glorious degree.
   i. It too is ‘chosen’ (‘elect’) – called out (Ch. 1:2).
   ii. It bears the same titles (Ch. 2:9; see Exodus 19:5-6).
   iii. Its members are but sojourners (strangers) in this world (Chs. 1:17; 2:11; cf. Hebrews 11:13).
   iv. They have a Promised Land – holy, certain and eternal (Ch. 1:4).
   v. They have had a mighty deliverance from bondage (Ch. 1:18-19).
   vi. They not only have, but are the Temple of God, and Priests unto Him (Ch. 2:5).
   vii. The covenant has been ratified to them more gloriously than to Israel at Sinai (Ch. 1:2; cf. Exodus 24:7-8).
(b) The Church has also the obligations of Israel. They are ‘chosen’, to be obedient, to be holy, and thus to be witnesses for God to men (Chs. 1:2; 2:9). (This also serves Paragraph 5.)
(c) The salvation blessings secured to the Church are of unassailable virtue – no act of opposition or persecution can touch them.
   i. They issue from the gracious working of the Trinity (Ch. 1:2).
   ii. Are confirmed by the Resurrection (Ch. 1:3).
   iii. Include being kept by the power of God for a glorious inheritance (Ch. 1:5,4).
   iv. Were testified to by Holy Spirit inspired prophets of the old and new dispensation (Ch. 1:10-12), who spoke an imperishable word (Ch. 1:23, 25).
For all the above reasons nothing should shake such a well-founded hope which should stimulate not only perseverance but constant rejoicing (Ch. 1:13, 6, 8).

4. SUFFERING FOR CHRIST’S SAKE - THE CHRISTIAN’S TRIUMPH OVER IT, AND IN IT (see Paragraph 2(d), ii)

(a) Hope overcomes the hurt felt by persecution (Ch. 1:6).

(b) Persecution serves to strengthen faith (Chs. 1:7; 5:10).

(c) The example of Jesus shows that glory follows suffering.
   i. He did not ‘think it strange’ to meet persecution and suffering. This was foretold.
   ii. So also was the glory that followed (Ch. 1:11).
   iii. He truly was a rejected One, but is now chosen and exalted (Chs. 2:4; 3:22).
   This triumph is shared by those who are united to Him (Chs. 2:6; 5:10).

(d) Persecutors are themselves in the hands of God and will be called to account (Chs. 2:8; 4:5, 17-18). Note ‘if it is God’s will’ (Ch. 3:17).

(e) Undeserved suffering is to be taken patiently in a Christlike spirit, committing one’s cause to God (Chs. 2:18-23; 3:8-9; 4:19; 5:6-7).

(f) Such Christian demeanour will be a means to win an unbelieving husband (Ch. 3:1-6).

(g) The Christian attitude, as Jesus taught, is that it finds reason to rejoice when thus persecuted (Chs. 3:14; 4:13-14,16; cf. Matthew 5:11-12; Acts 5:41-42).

5. HOLY LIVING - THE NEED FOR IT - ITS SOURCE AND MANIFESTATION (see Paragraphs 2(d), iii)

(a) The greatest thing about being God’s child is that it involves being like Him in holiness (Ch. 1:14-16).

(b) This is a solemn responsibility (Ch.1:17).

(c) It is a great purpose and fruit of redemption (Chs. 1:18-19; 2:24). Redemption both demands and produces it.

(d) One expression of this holiness will be love and service to the brethren (Chs. 1:22; 4:8-11).

(e) It involves:
   i. putting away all evil of heart and act (Chs. 2:1; 4:2);
   ii. abstaining from things which ‘war against the soul’ (Ch. 2:11);
   iii. doing God’s will (Ch. 4:2), and feeding on his word (Ch. 2:2). 

(f) It involves being dutiful and respectful citizens in relation to all legitimate laws of the state (Ch. 2:13-14, 16-17).

(g) Holy living is the best answer to false accusations, and an effective means to convert persecutors (Chs. 2:12, 15; 3:16).

(h) Particular directions.
   i. Elders – to give responsible service (Ch. 5:1-4).
   ii. The younger – to be submissive (Ch. 5:5).
   iii. All – to serve one another in the spirit of Jesus (Ch. 5:5-6).

(j) Concerning the greatest foe, to be watchful and resistant (Ch. 5:8-9).

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

(a) The Bible student will have little difficulty in finding support in the Gospels and other Epistles for the doctrine taught in this Epistle, although such references have not been fully provided in the notes.

(b) Queries associated with verses 18-21 of Chapter 3 especially with reference to the ‘spirits in prison’:
   i. The ‘spirits in prison’ are those who, not heeding the warning given by Noah over a long period of grace, await the final judgment.
   ii. It is not inappropriate for the apostle, who has already said that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets (Ch. 1:11), to say that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah when he spoke a word of warning and offered salvation to the iniquitous generation of his day.
   iii. The apostle as part of his exhortation to be ‘eager to do good’ and ‘to abstain from evil-doing’ is saying that God has consistently worked to turn men from evil, and uses this Old Testament illustration to support this point.
iv. Also note in his reference to baptism (verse 21) that the apostle says that the demand of this ceremony is only satisfied when there is a ‘good conscience’, i.e. a turning from wrong to righteousness on the seeker’s part. Then only can resurrection power work saving grace within him.
The Second Epistle of Peter, 
And The Epistle of Jude

1. THE WRITER
   (a) Most commentaries will give some account about the discussion in Church history concerning the authorship of this letter.
   (b) However, it is clear that the writer claims to:
      i. be Peter (Ch.1:1);
      ii. be aware that he is soon to die (Ch. 1:14);
      iii. be an eye witness of the transfiguration (Ch. 1:17-18);
      iv. have proclaimed the message concerning Jesus as one of His disciples (Ch. 1:16);
      v. have written a previous epistle (Ch. 3:1).

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER
   This is well presented in the two closing verses.
   (a) Ch. 3:17. Warning against being led into error (dealt with in Chs. 2 and 3).
   Ch. 3:18. Exhortation to grow in Christian grace (dealt with in Ch. 1).
   (b) A prominent word is ‘knowledge’ – that is ‘the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ which saves from error, and produces godliness.
   (c) A notable feature of this epistle is that Chapter 2 has a marked similarity to the Epistle of Jude.

AN OUTLINE OF ITS CONTENTS

Ch. 1.
Verses 1-11. Subject - Righteous conduct and progress are the true marks of a genuine faith.
   (a) The letter is addressed to all sharers in the true faith (verses 1-2).
   (b) There should be development in Christian grace because of:
      i. The resources of grace Christ has provided (verse 3).
      ii. The example of glory and goodness He has given (verse 3).
      iii. The nature of the promises (verse 4).
      iv. The gift of the divine nature (verse 4) which acts
         (a) negatively, in freeing from pollution (verse 4);
         (b) positively, in being the source from which all Christian graces can be developed (verses 5-7).
   (c) Such progress is the condition by which the true knowledge is obtained (verse 8), and a triumphant finish assured (verses 10-11).
   (d) Where it is not made, there is spiritual blindness and proneness to backsliding (verse 9).

Verses 15-21. Subject - The ground for a sure faith.
   This is provided by the testimony concerning Jesus, given by:
   (a) Apostolic witness (verses 15-18).
   (b) The prophets.
   (c) The Spirit (verses 19-21).

Ch. 2. Subject - The enemies of the Faith.
   (a) Their corrupt and corrupting doctrines.
      i. Denying the Lord Jesus.
      ii. Following harmful and destructive ways.
      iii. Corrupting others (verses 1-3).
   (b) The dread judgment that will come upon them (verses 1, 3).
   (c) Examples of judgment on such sinners and of salvation for the righteous (verse 9).
      i. Judgment on angels who sinned (verse 4).
      ii. Judgment on sinful mankind, yet salvation for Noah (verse 5).
      iii. Judgment on the cities of the plain, yet salvation for Lot (verses 6-8).
   (d) Further words about the nature of their sin, and the judgment they will incur (verses 10-19).
An outstanding feature of these condemned professors, who claim some place in the Church (verse 13), was their repudiation of the moral law – they claimed to be free but were in fact the bond slaves of passion (verses 14-19). 

Their condemnation is all the greater because they have backslidden from an enlightened condition and have sinned against the light (verses 20-22) (see Matthew 12:45).

Ch. 3.
Verses 1-14. Subject – The day of the Lord – God’s ultimate act of judgment on the wicked, and deliverance for the righteous.

(a) As taught by prophets and apostles (verse 2), God will yet break in upon men in the final establishment of His kingdom, with all that involves.

(b) Those who mock at this warning wilfully ignore the fact that God has come in such crisis ways before (verses 3-6).

(c) The event still to come will surpass all such previous acts in its completeness and finality (verses 7, 10).

(d) The reason for apparent delay:
   i. Time, with God, is measured by His acts, not by the passing of seasons or years (verse 8).
   ii. Any delay is to be interpreted as an evidence of mercy (verse 9).

(e) This event, which will certainly come, will mean:
   i. ‘the punishment of eternal fire’ (verse 7);
   ii. the inauguration of the reign of righteousness (verse 13).

(f) These revelations should provoke:
   i. sinners to repent and flee from their sins (verse 9);
   ii. saints to live in all godliness, faith and hope (verses 11-12, 14).

Verses 15-16. Reference to the writings of Paul and warning against distorting their meaning.

Verses 17-18 These two verses sum up the message of the whole letter.
THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE

1. THE WRITER
He describes himself as the ‘brother of James’, and has commonly been regarded as the Judas referred to in Matthew 13:55 as being one of the brothers of Jesus.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE IS:
(a) To warn the Church to resist teachers of corrupt doctrine who were thoroughly wrong both in their teaching and in their conduct (verses 3-4).
(b) To encourage development in true Christian faith and practice (verses 20-21).
(c) To indicate how false teachers can be detected (verses 8, 16-19).

3. AN OUTLINE OF ITS CONTENTS
Verses 1-2. The letter is addressed to all God’s people.
Verse 3. The call to ‘contend for the faith’.
Verse 4. The false teachers. Their error in life (‘a license for immorality’) and in doctrine (denying the Lord Jesus Christ).
Verses 5-7. Warning that no privileges exempt men from falling, or from the judgment which inevitably follows, taught by the example of:
i. The disbelieving Israelites who perished in the wilderness (verse 5).
ii. The fallen angels (verse 6).
iii. Sodom and Gomorrah (for immorality) (verse 7).
Their sins are abominable, being as those of Cain (the murderer and hater of good), Balaam (the covetous and instigator of depraved conduct, Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14), and Korah (the defier of the authority of God-appointed leaders, Numbers 16).
Verses 13-15. The certain judgment that would overtake them.
Verses 20-25. The exhortation to right conduct.
i. ‘Build yourselves up in your most holy faith’ – ‘Pray in the Holy Spirit’ – ‘Keep yourselves in God’s love’ – ‘Wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (verses 20-21).
ii. Bring others out of bondage to depraved living, taking care to keep yourselves clean (verses 22-23).
iii. Trustfully commit all to Him who is able:
(a) ‘to keep you from falling’;
(b) to perfect you (verse 24).

Note on verse 9. This dispute over the body of Moses is not recorded in any other part of the scripture, but is taken from a Jewish apocryphal book. Jude is condemning an attitude which treats spiritual beings with disrespect or even with mockery (verse 8). He indicates that it is out of place to mock at evil spirits let alone at those who are worthy. In 2 Peter 2:11, a reference probably to Zechariah 3:1-2 is used to teach this same lesson.
INTRODUCTION. The Epistle to the Hebrews, Ch. 1:1, provides a good introductory text to Old Testament study.

These Scriptures of the Old Testament tell of the preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ, and especially record the account of God’s revelation of Himself to His chosen people the Hebrews, and of this nation’s response to this revelation.

The father of the chosen race, Abraham, provides for us an important study, not only because he is the first great figure of Hebrew national history, but also because he is an outstanding example of one who both received, and responded to, progressive revelation from God.

For this latter reason he is more than a great Hebrew, he is ‘the father of all who believe’ (Romans 4:11).

(He is also claimed by the Arabs as their great ancestor.)

Our study considers his story in its relation to the great covenant God made with him (two lessons).

1. THE COVENANT MADE (Genesis 11:27-32; 12:1-5)

(a) Abram (then so named) was of the Semitic race (i.e. descended from Noah, through Shem – Genesis 11:10), and was one of the sons of Terah (Genesis 11:27), married to Sarai, his half-sister (Genesis 20:12). For this and subsequent references to this family, see the table in Lesson 60.

(b) He lived in Ur in Chaldea (the modern Iraq, see Map), an important city with an advanced civilisation (see, if possible, recent books on Biblical archaeology).

(c) Ur was a centre of heathen worship in which the family of Abram participated (Joshua 24:2).

(d) Revelation from God came to him (how we do not know), but he was fully persuaded concerning the existence and supremacy of God, and never again served other gods.

(e) God made a covenant with him.

i. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties.

ii. In this covenant God made with Abram, God made solemn promises as to what He would do, and asked Abram to believe Him, and prove he did so by keeping certain commands and conditions for his part.

iii. God’s fivefold promise was that Abram should become a great nation; be blessed by God; have a great name; be divinely protected; and be the means whereby blessing would come to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:2, 3), also that his seed should inherit a given land (verse 7).

iv. God’s demand from him was that he should separate himself from his home and relatives, settle in this new but unknown land, and trust all his future to God’s guidance (Genesis 12:1).

v. The covenant is therefore concerned with the blessing, the land, and the offspring.

(f) Abram’s response.

He showed his acceptance of this covenant, and proved his faith by going forth to an unknown destination (Genesis 12:4; Hebrews 11:8).

(g) The promise that he would be the founder of a great nation would come with special force to Abram as he was at that time childless (Genesis 11:30), with little prospect that this situation would be altered.

2. THE STAY IN HARAN (Genesis 11:31-32; 12:4-5)

(a) Abram left Ur with his father and with other members of the family clan, and made a long journey up the course of the Euphrates River to Haran (verse 31). (This verse does not reveal the fact, made clear by later references, that the family of Abram’s brother Nahor was included in this migration.)
(b) Terah died here and then Abram (seventy-five years old) went forward to seek the new land, taking with him his household servants and his fatherless nephew, Lot, who apparently was Abram’s prospective heir (Chs. 11:32; 12:4-5).

3. THE COVENANT RENEWED IN CANAAN (Genesis 12:6-7; 13)
   (a) Abram pursued a southward journey until at Shechem, midway in Canaan, he received a revelation that this was his promised land (Genesis 12:6-7).
   (b) His offering to God signified that he accepted this land as a gift from God, and pledged himself to be God’s servant as he dwelt there (Genesis 12:7).
   (c) After a temporary stay in Egypt, strife between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot resulted in a final separation between the two. They did not part in anger, and the whole incident reveals Abram’s generosity and peaceableness (Ch. 13:1-2, 5-11).
   (d) Immediately this separation was effected, Abram received from God a confirmation of the covenant with the added detail that:
      i. his offspring would be ‘like the dust of the earth’;
      ii. the land would be theirs for ever; and
      iii. its extent would be wide (including the portion Lot had chosen for himself) (Genesis 13:14-18).

4. THE COVENANT RENEWED WITH A SIGN (Genesis 15)
   (The following chapters of the story are concerned with the development of the revelation concerning the covenant heir.)
   (a) The childless and aged Abram had no prospective heir to his property other than his chief servant, Eliezer (verse 2).
   (b) He now received a clear revelation that even yet he would have a son to succeed him, through whom all the promises would be fulfilled (verses 4, 5).
   (c) ‘Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness’ (verse 6). This important verse has much attention drawn to it in the New Testament, e.g. Romans 4:2, 3.
   (d) He also received more precise detail of the extent of the land (verse 18), and prediction of the sojourn in, and deliverance from, Egypt (verses 13-14).
   (e) All this was confirmed by a sign such as men of those days used. Men making a solemn covenant would pledge one another their word as they stood between the divided sections of an animal (verses 8-12, 17-18).

5. THE PROMISED HEIR - SARAI’S SUGGESTION (Genesis 16)
   (a) Being convinced that she would not bear a child, Sarai suggested that Abram should take her maid, Hagar, as a secondary wife (verses 2-3).
   (b) When Hagar conceived, Sarai, resenting the maid’s changed attitude to her, treated Hagar so harshly that she fled (verses 5-6).
   (c) Hagar returned by direction of the angel of the Lord, and in due course gave birth to Ishmael (verses 7-10, 15-16).

129
ABRAHAM, THE MAN OF FAITH

LESSON 58

Abraham - The Man of Faith (2)

Gen. 17, 18, 21 to 25

6. FURTHER REVELATION CONCERNING THE COVENANT HEIR (Genesis 17; 18:1-2, 8-15)
   (a) The revelation of God as the Almighty God (Ch. 17:1).
      i. God revealed Himself to Abram by this name, some twenty-four years after his arrival in Canaan.
      ii. This carried with it the challenge to Abram to regulate his faith and life in the light of this revelation, i.e. to believe that God must be able to fulfil all His purposes whatever their nature, and that His purposes will be in accord with His almightiness (of a scope which surpasses both human expectation and normal human experience).
      iii. The words in Ch. 18:14, ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ concur with this revelation.
   (b) The particular addition to revelation concerning the covenant was that Sarai was to be the mother of the promised heir (Chs. 17:16; 18:10).
   (c) This announcement was received with incredulous amazement by both Abram and Sarai, because she had reached an age when all expectation of motherhood had ceased (Chs. 17:17; 18:11-13).
   (d) As special signs to mark this crisis revelation:
      i. They were to adopt new names. Abraham - meaning ‘Father of many nations’ (Ch. 17:5); Sarah – meaning ‘Princess’ (Ch. 17:15).
      ii. They were to call the child Isaac, meaning ‘laughter’ (Ch.17:19).
      iii. Abraham and his covenant offspring were to adopt the sign of circumcision. This practice was not singular to this race, but for them it had a sacred meaning, signifying their separation from others, and their dedication to God in this covenant relationship (Ch. 17:10).

   (a) Abraham, for the sake of his descendants and the testimony it was their duty to bear to the world, must know God not only as Almighty and Faithful, but as the God of Righteousness (Ch. 18:17-19).
   (b) Thus, Abraham was made aware of God’s disgust with, and intended judgment upon, the people of Sodom for their abominable immoral practices.
   (c) Abraham thought this would inevitably mean that the righteous would suffer with the guilty (Ch. 18:25), and thus pleaded on their behalf (Ch. 18:23-32).
   (d) The wicked cities were destroyed, but Lot, proving himself worthy, was delivered (Ch. 19:24-29; see 2 Peter 2:6-9).
   (e) This judgment became an outstanding example in Old Testament teaching, being frequently used as a ‘text’ by the prophets, and makes clear to us that men in these days realised the evil of moral perversion, and of its corrupting influence upon others, and saw the appropriateness of judgment upon it.

8. ISAAC BORN, AND ISHMAEL SENT AWAY (Genesis 21)
   (a) Isaac was born of Sarah, according to God's word (verses 1-5).
   (b) This immediately cancelled all idea that Ishmael would be heir, so Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, as there were indications that they resented the changed situation, and might possibly harm the new heir (verses 9-14).

   (a) The supreme trial of Abraham's faith (Ch 22:1-10).
      i. The offering of Isaac involved not only the sacrifice of an only, longed for, and dearly loved son, and certainly devastation to Sarah, but also the apparent sacrifice of the fulfilment of the whole covenant promise.
      ii. It involved also an apparently blatant contradiction.
God had said that the covenant would be fulfilled through Isaac (Ch. 21:12); but now he is to be slain in his youth, before he has any child of his own.

iii. Hebrews Ch. 11:17-19 explains that Abraham was satisfied that both words would be honoured, inasmuch as that he expected God to restore Isaac to life. This thought is indicated in Genesis 22:5. ‘I and the boy go over there ... and we will come back to you.’

(b) The sacrifice of Isaac was not required (Ch. 22:11-14).

(c) This event established for Abraham and his descendants:
   i. That God did not require human sacrifices (a practice not uncommon among their heathen neighbours);
   ii. but that He did require faith and obedience from human hearts and wills.

(d) The memorial words ‘The Lord will provide’ which Abraham chose to mark this occasion (Ch. 22:14), must therefore be read in their context, i.e. ‘The Lord provides the means to do His will, in His way and time’.

(e) The covenant promises were again confirmed to Abraham (Ch. 22:15-18; note verse 16, and Hebrews 6:13 17-18).

10. THE QUESTION OF A WIFE FOR ISAAC (Genesis 24:1-4, 10-14, 17-19, 61, 67)
   (a) She must be of Abraham’s kindred, and not from the surrounding heathen (verses 2-4).
   (b) Eliezer was, therefore, sent to Haran where Abraham’s father had died, and where other descendants of his still lived.
   (c) Eliezer himself sought guidance from God in this responsibility (verses 10-14).
   (d) Rebekah, grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (verse 15), fulfilled the requested sign (verses 17-19), and eventually returned with Eliezer to become Isaac’s wife (verses 61, 67).

CONCLUSION. The deaths of Sarah (Ch. 23:1-2), and of Abraham (Ch. 25:7-8), are recorded. He died in faith, having seen the fulfilment of some of God’s promises, but realising that the full glory belonged to the future (Hebrews 11:13).

At the time of his death all he actually possessed of the land was a burial cave (Ch. 23:19-20), but by faith he directed that his body should be interred in the land which he believed his offspring would afterwards inherit.
INTRODUCTION. This lesson is concerned with a father and his two sons, who were strongly contrasted characters, Isaac being passive, Esau vigorous and forthright, Jacob ambitious and scheming. Jacob became the second great name in the history of the chosen race, and to this day their name Israeli (from his other name, Israel) marks the fact.

ISAAC

1. *Isaac has no notable place among Bible saints and heroes.*
   The important stories where his name appears are those in which he was associated with the deeds of his father, or of his sons.

2. *It is recorded:*
   (a) That the covenant was twice renewed to him by God, who revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, always faithful to His word (Ch. 26:2-5, 24)
   (b) and also that he was prosperous (Ch. 26:12-14).

3. *His desire that the covenant line should descend through Esau, contrary to God’s revealed will, contributed to the strife and sorrow which developed in his family circle.*

JACOB

1. **THE QUESTION OF THE BIRTHRIGHT (Genesis 25:20-28)**
   (a) To Isaac and Rebekah, twenty years after their marriage) there were born twin sons, the first named Esau (hairy) or Edom (red); the second Jacob (one who catches by the heel), from an incident connected with his birth (verses 20, 24-26).
   (b) The passive Isaac was strongly attracted to the vigorous Esau, while Rebekah made a favourite of Jacob (verses 27-28).
   (c) Normally the birthright (the elder son’s portion) would have gone to Esau (as Jacob acknowledged - verse 31), but a divine revelation before the boys’ birth instructed that this honour should go to the younger son (verse 23).
   (d) The sorrow that subsequently transpired in this family was due to lack of obedience or faith in all concerned.

2. **THE VALUE OF THE BIRTHRIGHT (Genesis 25:29-34)**
   (a) It gave material benefits.
      i. The elder took twice as much as any other son -- in the case of two sons, this would be two-thirds (Deuteronomy 21:17).
      ii. The headship of the tribe with its benefits and responsibilities.
   (b) In the case of Abraham’s offspring, it included the great spiritual benefit of the covenant blessing.
   (c) As these boys were fifteen years of age when Abraham died, it is to be expected that from him they would learn something of his story and great hopes.
   (d) The story recorded in Genesis 25:29-34 shows that Esau set little value on these spiritual promises, a fact to which the New Testament draws notice (Hebrews 12:16-17).

3. **HOW JACOB SOUGHT TO SECURE THE COVENANT BLESSING FROM ISAAC BY DECEIT (Genesis 27: 28:1-4)**
   (a) Long before the time of his actual death, Isaac, now blind, thought that his end was near, and proposed to hand on the birthright inheritance to Esau (Ch. 27:1-4).
   (b) At the suggestion of Rebekah, and with her connivance, Jacob impersonated his brother, and secured the blessing; (Ch. 27:15-19, 24-28), thus showing himself true to his name (Ch. 27:35-36).
Esau, his anger roused, determined to kill Jacob when Isaac died (Ch. 27:41), and thus Jacob fled from home at his mother’s suggestion, she explaining his departure to Isaac as being for the purpose of seeking a wife among their own relatives (Ch. 27:42-46).

On his departure, his father voluntarily blessed Jacob as the covenant heir, with ‘the blessing of Abraham’ (Ch. 28:1-4).

4. HOW JACOB RECEIVED THE COVENANT BLESSING FROM GOD, BY GRACE (Genesis 28:10-22)
(a) On the first night of his journey Jacob received, as he slept, a revelation from God (verses 10-12), in which there was confirmed to him the covenant of Abraham concerning the land, the seed, and the blessing, with the promise of personal protection in his journeys (verses 13-15).
(b) Filled with awe at this, possibly his first conscious encounter with God, Jacob called the place Bethel (the house of God), and responded by making a vow (verses 16-22).
(c) This place became notable in after years both for him and for his descendants.
(d) The deficiency in his spiritual apprehension is shown by his attitude of venturing to deal with God in a bargaining manner (verses 20-22), not comprehending that God can act in free grace.

5. JACOB AT HARAN (Genesis 29,31)
(a) Here Jacob stayed for twenty years, finding in his uncle Laban one whose character of astute cunning closely resembled his own, these years being one long record of each trying to beat the other to his own gain and advantage (Ch. 31:7).
(b) Leah and Rachel, Laban’s daughters, became Jacob’s wives – Rachel by Jacob’s desire, and Leah by Laban’s subterfuge (Ch. 29:16-28).
(c) During this period eleven sons were born to Jacob; six being children of Leah; two the children of Leah’s maid, Zilpah; two the children of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid; and one (a favourite son called Joseph) being the child of Rachel herself.
(a) Jacob left Haran, therefore, at the head of a considerable company and with many flocks.
(b) This he did in response to guidance (Ch. 31:11,13), but without Laban’s knowledge (Ch. 31:30)

5. JACOB’S RETURN TO CANAAN (Genesis 31 to 33, and 35)
(a) At Mizpah, Jacob made a covenant of peace with the pursuing Laban (Ch. 31:22-23, 45-53), in the name of the God of Abraham and Nahor.
(b) He now had to face Esau (Ch. 32:3-6), and in his fear he divided up his family and possessions (Ch. 32:7-8), and sought to placate Esau with gifts (Ch. 32:13,20).
(c) He sought help from God in a moving prayer, in which he pleaded God’s promises and acknowledged his own unworthiness (Ch. 32:9-12), and was answered in a remarkable way.
(d) At Peniel, Jacob wrestled with a man all night. Whatever physical struggle there may have been, there was certainly a spiritual one, in which Jacob realised that blessings can come from God by undeserved grace, apart from the grounds of merit or bargain (Ch. 32:24-30).
(e) This crisis in his relationship with God was marked by a change of name. Jacob, the cunning, now became Israel, a prince – who had learned a new way to prevail.
(f) The brothers met the next day, Jacob humbling himself (Ch. 33:3), and bestowing gifts on Esau (Ch. 33:10-11)
(g) Thus the breach between them was closed. They met again peaceably at the burial of their father (Ch. 35:28-29).
(h) Jacob claimed his new name by worshipping God, as the God of Israel (Ch. 33:20).

CONCLUSION. It is questionable whether Jacob ever inherited the material benefit of the birthright he had coveted (i.e. the two-thirds portion of his father’s estate). The indications are that he did not. He certainly inherited the spiritual birthright, but this was gained through the grace and purpose of God and not by means of the deceitful strategies he so long practised and suffered for.

Our interest in the covenant promise is most concisely stated by Paul in Galatians 3:29.
INTRODUCTION. The story of Joseph should be contrasted with that of his father. We have seen Jacob scheming and bargaining to gain his selfish ends, but in Joseph we see one who steadily put his confidence in God even in the most adverse circumstances.

In the national history, this lesson explains how the tribe of Israel came to be resident in Egypt.

1. JACOB’S FAVOURITE SON (Genesis 37)
   (a) Joseph was the youngest son born to Jacob while he was at Haran, yet he gave signs that he intended to give him the birthright portion (verses 3-4).
   (b) This was because he was the firstborn of his dearly loved wife Rachel; the one Jacob would have married first had he not been tricked by Laban.
   (c) The boy became the dearer to Jacob because Rachel died in giving birth to a second son, Benjamin. (She was buried in a memorial tomb at Bethlehem) (Ch. 35:16-20).
   (d) This favouritism angered the brothers born of other mothers, which anger was increased by Joseph’s reporting of their wrongdoing (verse 2), and by his dreams of personal prominence (verses 5-11).
   (e) The brothers reached the point where they were prepared to kill Joseph (verses 17-18, 20), but they were prevailed upon to spare his life so that he was disposed of to travelling traders, who brought Joseph to Egypt and sold him as a slave to one Potiphar, a captain of the guard or prison, in the service of the reigning Pharaoh (verses 23-24, 28, 36).
   (f) The brothers did not just report to their father that they knew nothing of Joseph’s whereabouts, but most cruelly produced his blood-stained garment to substantiate the suggestion that he had been killed by wild beasts (verses 31-33).
   (g) Jacob, believing Joseph to be dead, was heart-broken (verses 34-35), and from then directed his special affection to the young Benjamin, Rachel’s other child.

He who had deceived his own father was now most heartlessly deceived by his sons.

2. JOSEPH THE SLAVE – BUT NOT OF PASSION (Genesis 39:1-20)
   (a) Joseph, possibly still in his teens, was of handsome appearance (verse 6).
   (b) He showed himself such a diligent worker that his master in time promoted him to the position of chief of his servants (verses 3-6).
   (c) This promotion brought him to the notice of Potiphar’s wife who set herself to seduce Joseph (verses 7, 10).
   (d) He resisted her, not primarily for fear of being discovered and punished, but on religious grounds (verses 8, 9).
   (e) Her passion turned to bitter anger so that she contrived to bring false accusations and evidence against Joseph (verses 11-18).
   (f) He was thus thrown into the prison over which Potiphar had control (verse 20).

3. JOSEPH THE PRISONER – PROMOTED, HELPFUL, BUT FORGOTTEN (Genesis 39:21 to 40:23)
   (a) In prison his diligence and reliability again earned him favour, so that the gaoler delegated all his oversight duties to Joseph (Ch.39:21-23).
   (b) Two notable prisoners, Pharaoh’s chief butler and baker, were put under Joseph’s care (Ch. 40:1-4). (It would appear that some attempt at poisoning Pharaoh had been made, and that both of these men were under suspicion, it later being decided that the baker was the guilty party.)
   (c) Joseph’s accuracy in reporting their dreams (a power which he acknowledged to be of God - Ch. 40:8) greatly impressed the butler (Ch. 40:5-13, 16-22), but he forgot to do the service Joseph asked of him (Ch. 40:14-15, 23).
4. JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH (Genesis 41)

(a) Two years later Pharaoh had a dream which obviously had a bearing on Egypt’s pastoral and agricultural affairs (verses 1-7).

(b) When none of his wise men could give a satisfactory explanation, the butler remembering Joseph recommended him to Pharaoh (verses 8-13).

(c) Testifying again to his dependence on God (verses 16, 25), Joseph gave the message of the impending famine years, adding a suggestion as to how the situation could be met (verses 29-36).

(d) Pharaoh, acclamationg Joseph as one in whom was the Spirit of God (verse 38), appointed him to carry through the plan he had outlined (verses 37-40), and advanced him to the highest dignity. He who had been faithful in the humbler duties was given responsibility for the greatest (verses 41-44).

(e) Joseph, now thirty years of age, was given an Egyptian name and a high-born Egyptian bride (verses 45-46).

(f) He eventually became the father of two sons, named by him Manasseh (forgetting), and Ephraim (fruitful) (verses 50-52).

5. JOSEPH’S DEALINGS WITH HIS BROTHERS (Genesis 42)

(a) As the famine conditions reached also to Canaan, Jacob’s ten sons (Benjamin excluded) came to Egypt to buy corn and were recognized by Joseph, although he, being Egyptian in appearance and speech and having been parted from them for some twenty years, remained unknown to them. He remembered his early dreams as they bowed before him (verses 1-9, 23).

(b) He extracted from them information that Jacob and Benjamin were living (verses 10-13), and made a plan whereby they would be forced to bring Benjamin on a second visit (verses 15, 19, 20).

(c) For three days he gave them a taste of the prison experience he had himself endured for some years (verse 17), but, explaining that he ‘feared God’ (verse 18), he allowed them to return home with the needed food (for which he did not charge – verse 25), keeping one brother Simeon as a hostage (verse 24).

(d) Verses 21-22 are notable verses which provide a striking illustration of the working of the human conscience.

6. JOSEPH’S RECONCILIATION WITH HIS BROTHERS (Genesis 42 to 45)

(a) For a long time the sorrowing and fearful Jacob refused to agree that Benjamin should go with the others on a second journey to Egypt (Ch. 42:38), but in the end sheer necessity forced him to give in (Ch. 43:2, 4, 11-14).

(b) On arrival in Egypt they were taken to Joseph’s house (Ch. 43:16-17). Their fears about the returned money were calmed, and Simeon was restored to them (Ch. 43:19-23).

(c) Joseph now put them to a test to see if they were changed men.

i. He knew that Benjamin was now a preferred son as he himself had been, and wondered if his brothers would treat this new favourite as they had treated him.

ii. He, therefore, being deeply moved at the sight of Benjamin (Ch. 43:29-30), gave the lad preferential treatment before them all (Ch. 43:34), and so contrived events that Benjamin was made out to appear a thief (Ch. 44:1-2, 4-12).

iii. The elder brothers were thus placed in a position when they must choose either to abandon Benjamin to his fate (Ch. 44:10), or voluntarily to stand by him in his trouble.

iv. They did the latter (Ch. 44:13), and so for the third time they bowed themselves humbly before Joseph (Ch. 44:14). Judah made a most moving plea for Benjamin, offering to suffer in his stead (Ch. 44:18-34).

(d) Joseph was completely overcome and could hold his secret no longer (Ch. 45:1).

(e) Their immediate reaction of fear abated when Joseph made it clear he had no purpose of revenge, but regarded all events as being used for good by the overruling hand of God (Ch. 45:3, 5-8).
JOSEPH

(f) He then told them of his plan to bring all the tribe of Jacob to Egypt and to provide for them there (Ch. 45:9-11).

7 ISRAEL IN EGYPT (Genesis 46 to 50)

(a) With confirming guidance from God (Ch. 46:1-4), Jacob came with his entire household into Egypt (Ch. 46:7), and all were comfortably settled in the fertile district of Goshen (Ch. 47:5-6).

(b) Before Jacob died, seventeen years later (Ch. 47:28), he accepted Joseph’s two sons into the covenant community, but here again the younger was preferred to the elder (Ch. 48:1, 9-10, 14, 17, 19).

(c) He also gave Joseph the double portion (Ch. 48:22), and so Joseph henceforth was represented by two tribes in Israel - Ephraim and Manasseh.

(d) Ch. 49 records the detail of the blessing Jacob gave to each of his sons, and his insistence that he must be buried in the covenant land (Ch. 49:29), a command which was faithfully obeyed (Ch. 50:12-13).

(e) The fear of Joseph’s brothers that he would be avenged on them after their father’s death was allayed as he granted them full pardon, saying ‘You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good’ (Ch. 50:15, 17-21).

(f) When Joseph died he left a constant reminder of his trust that God’s purpose and promise would be fulfilled, by ordering that his body should remain unburied until the day when the Israelites, leaving Egypt to return to their promised land, would carry his bones with them (Ch. 50:24-26).

TERAH

HAGAR m. ABRAHAM m. SARAH  NAHOR  HARAN

ISHMAEL  BETHUEL  LOT

ISAAC m. REBEKAH  LABAN  THE MOABITES

And
AMMONITES

ESAU  JACOB m. (Edom)  LEAH  RACHEL  (Israel)  (Zilpah)  (Bilhah)

(6 sons)  (2 sons)  (2 Sons)

Reuben  Gad  Joseph
Simeon  Asher  Benjamin
Levi  Judah  Issachar
Zebulun  Dan  Manasseh  Ephraim  Naphtali

NOTES:

As Joseph received a double portion he is represented by Ephraim and Manasseh, thus making thirteen tribes in all.

The notable tribes were:

i. Levi – from which came Moses, Aaron and the priesthood.

ii. Judah – from which came the Davidic line of kings, and Jesus Christ.

iii. Ephraim – which became the great opponent of Judah and, eventually, the Northern kingdom.
JOSEPH

Abraham is the father of the Arab races through Ishmael and Esau, but also through the sons of Keturah, a wife he took after the death of Sarah.
THE ISRAELITES IN BONDAGE

LESSON 61

The Israelites in Bondage in Egypt
THE TRAINING AND CALL OF THEIR DELIVERER, MOSES
(Hebrews 11:23-26; Exodus 1 to 6)

INTRODUCTION. The next great name in the history of the chosen people is Moses. He is the prominent figure in the story of their deliverance from Egypt, of their journey to the land promised to Abraham, and of their national consecration to God in the covenant made at Sinai.

In this lesson we deal with his call and the years of preparation which preceded it.

1. THE CHANGE IN THE ISRAELITE CONDITION (Exodus 1)
   
   (a) Some hundreds of years intervened between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses, a period which saw a great change in the condition of the Israelites.
   
   (b) They had greatly increased in numbers (verse 7).
   
   (c) From being in favour with the reigning Pharaoh, they had become the object of royal suspicion and oppression (verses 8-11).
   
   (d) Just preceding the birth of Moses this oppression had increased to the point where the Pharaoh purposed to end their existence as a separate people (verses 12-14, 22).

   Note: Regarding this change in royal regard:
   
   Egyptian monuments and records provide much information concerning the names of the Pharaohs and their deeds, and whereas it cannot be said with certainty which of these was the one who oppressed Israel, yet it is accepted that the Israelites were in Egypt at a time when a revolution swept away one line of rulers and inaugurated a new dynasty. This helps to explain Ch. I: 8.

2. MOSES AS A BABE AND AS A PRINCE (Exodus 2)
   
   (a) Moses was born to two God-fearing Israelites of the tribe of Levi (Amram and Jochebed), who already had two children, Miriam a girl, and Aaron a three-year-old boy (Chs. 2:1; 7:7; Numbers 26:59).
   
   (b) At the age of three months (when he could no longer be hidden), having been committed to the Nile in a little waterproofed reed cradle, he (no doubt in fulfillment of Jochebed’s expectation) was rescued and adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter (verses 3-10).
   
   (c) Under the protection of this princess he received his name (verse 10) and full training as a royal prince (Acts 7:22).
   
   (d) He was however not withdrawn from his own mother’s influence in his earliest years (verses 9-10), and by this, or other means, learned he was a true Hebrew, and became acquainted with the traditions and hopes of the covenant offspring of Abraham.
   
   (e) Thus at forty years of age he made his great decision and renunciation (Hebrews 11:24-26).

3. MOSES AS A SHEPHERD IN MIDIAN (Exodus 2 and 3)
   
   (a) His first attempt at championing the cause of his oppressed brethren was a complete failure (Ch. 2:11-15).

   i. He was not well received by them (Ch. 2:14; Acts 7:25).

   ii. His act (being regarded as an encouragement to slave rebellion) called down upon him the wrath of Pharaoh, so that he had to flee and hide himself in the desert land of Midian, outside the borders of Egypt.

   (b) In Midian he became for forty years the shepherd of the flocks of the priest of Midian, whose daughter he married (Ch. 2:21; 3:1).

   (c) These apparently futile years did not fail to give essential preparation to Moses for the great work he was yet to do.

   i. He became thoroughly acquainted with this territory.

   ii. He came into contact with other minds and culture than he had known in Egypt.
iii. He learned to discipline his own spirit, and
iv. in such a long period had numerous educating experiences of which we have no record,
   but of which we see the fruit.

4. HIS CALL AND RESPONSE (Exodus 2 to 4)
   (a) In Egypt the Pharaoh who sought his life had died, and the cry of the oppressed slaves was
       heard by God (Ch. 2:23-25).
   (b) In Midian God spoke to Moses by sign and word.
   (c) The marvel of the burning bush which drew attention was that, although burning, it remained
       unconsumed.
       i. This could be a visible manifestation of God’s glory, and also
       ii. a typical sign of Israel who were being preserved, although enduring the ‘iron furnace’
           of Egypt (Ch. 3:2-3; Deuteronomy 4:20).
   (d) To Moses it was revealed that he was chosen to play an important part in the fulfillment of
       God’s declared purpose with Israel (Ch. 3:6-10).
   (e) Moses, previously impetuous and ready, was now hesitant and reluctant, for at least two
       reasons:
       i. his own deficiencies (Ch. 3:11), and especially that of being a poor speaker (Ch. 4:10),
          and consequent sense of helplessness either to convince a certainly unwilling Pharaoh,
          or to save himself from the effects of the royal wrath.
       ii. His conviction that the Israelites who had once rejected his leadership would be still less
           likely to accept him now (Ch. 4:1).
   (f) God met each of these excuses.
       i. To convince the Israelites
          (a) He was to assure them that the God of their fathers was still watching over
              them, and that He was about to give new manifestations of His nature and
              power according to the new name ‘Jehovah’ (Yahweh) by which He would
              thereafter be known (Ch. 3:13-15).
          (b) As confirming evidence of this, Moses was granted the power to display
              miraculous signs (Ch. 4:2-9). (This is the first mention in Scripture of this power
              being given to man.)
       ii. To convince Pharaoh.
          He was to warn this king of Egypt of the dire consequences that would follow if he failed
          to release this people whom God regarded as His firstborn among the nations (Ch. 4:22-23).
       iii. For his own weaknesses.
          (a) God would be with him (Ch. 3:12).
          (b) Aaron would serve as His spokesman (Ch. 4:14).
          (c) He was given assurance that his foes were dead (Ch. 4:19), and that his
              mission would succeed (Ch. 3:12,20).

5. MOSES AGAIN IN EGYPT (Exodus 4 to 6)
   (a) According to God’s word he was met by Aaron and accepted by the tribal leaders of Israel (Ch.
       4:27-31).
   (b) Pharaoh was approached with a religious demand which presented that this people had an
       obligation to their God which came before their obligation to him.
   (c) They were to travel three days’ journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to Jehovah (Yahweh)
       (Ch. 5:1,3).
       (Their sacrifices would involve the killing of animals held sacred by the Egyptians, and thus must
       be offered beyond the frontiers of the country (Ch. 8:26-27.).
   (d) Pharaoh refused:
       i. Claiming he had no knowledge of Jehovah (Yahweh), and hence no respect for any
          claims He might make (Ch. 5:2),
       ii. and reacted by increasing the burden of the Israelites to breaking point (Ch.5:6-9).
(e) The distraught Israelites reproached Moses (Ch. 5:20-21) who, seeking the Lord, received reassurance from Him (Chs. 5:22-23; 6:1, 6-7).

6. NOTE ON THE REVELATION OF GOD UNDER VARIOUS NAMES (Exodus 3:13-15; 6:3)

(a) Exodus 6:3 says that God was known to the Hebrews under more than one name.

(b) In the Scripture the words ‘name’ and ‘nature’ are closely allied, so that a name was accepted as the indication of the nature of the one who bore it (as we have seen in the case of Jacob).

(c) Thus the various ‘names’ of God are revelations of various aspects of His nature, e.g.

i. El Elyon = God the Most High One (Genesis 14:22).

ii. El Shaddai = God the Almighty (Genesis 17:1).

(d) At the burning bush, Moses was granted the revelation of God under a new name, which we write as ‘Jehovah’ (Yahweh) (Ch 3:14). The most common interpretations of this difficult to translate word are, ‘I am that I am’ or ‘I will be what I will be’.

(e) By such a name we can say that God thereby presented Himself as the Living One, always true to whatever He had shown Himself to be, and adequate for every situation which could arise. In later years the Jews so revered this name, that they refrained from uttering it, using in its place the phrase ‘The Name’.

(g) It is the name of God which is part of the word ‘Jesus’.
INTRODUCTION. These chapters tell the story as to how God fulfilled His purpose of bringing His people out of Egypt, by means of mighty acts, whereby He humbled the power of Pharaoh, and discredited his gods (Ch. 7:5).

1. THE PLAGUES (Exodus 8 to 12)
   (a) There were ten successive plagues or strokes, so increasing in severity and in manifestation that they came from the hand of Jehovah, that Pharaoh finally released all the Israelites with all their possessions.
   (b) The ten plagues were - water turned to blood (i.e. red, and deadly to living creatures in it), frogs, lice, flies, cattle plague, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and the death of the firstborn.

2. HOW THEIR MIRACULOUS NATURE WAS DEMONSTRATED
   (a) In Egyptian experience calamities of this nature were not now being undergone for the first time, Egypt being a land subject to such natural afflictions.
   (b) The miraculous nature of these happenings was made clear to them, however, by the following evidences:
      i. Moses predicted the coming of each, and it was only at his word that many of them ceased.
      ii. Orderliness – they were marked by increasing severity.
      iii. Discrimination – after the first three plagues, the Israelites were completely protected from the suffering involved, e.g. Chs. 8:22; 9:7; 10:23; 11:7.

3. HOW THEY EXPOSED THE FUTILITY OF THE EGYPTIAN GODS
   (a) Beside bringing intense suffering and loss to the people, they also discredited before the nation the claims the Egyptian priesthood made concerning the nature and power of their gods (Ch. 12:12).
   (b) The Egyptian gods were many, chief gods having a retinue of lesser deities. Ra, the Sun (helpless in the plague of darkness), and the Nile (whose waters were defiled), were chief gods.
   (c) Each deity had his or her sacred animal, and among these the bull, ram, frog, serpent and beetle were specially revered. All of these were afflicted by these plagues in one way or the other.
   (d) It is important to note that the victory of Jehovah over all the gods of Egypt and over the magicians was a demonstration of their futility, not only to the Egyptians, but to the Israelites as well (Chs. 18:1; 20:4).

4. PHARAOH’S RESISTANCE TO THESE SIGNS (Exodus 8 to 10)
Pharaoh showed himself continually resistant to God’s messenger and message.
   (a) He continually gave promises upon which he went back when the plague was lifted, e.g. Chs. 8:15, 28, 31-32; 9:27-28, 34-35.
   (b) He refused to bow to Jehovah in face of signs which convinced his own people (Chs. 9:20; 10:7).
   (c) The Bible says that he hardened his heart, and also that God hardened it.
      i. The point is, that he was the type of man who sets his heart against conviction, and interprets any act of God’s mercy as a sign that God either will not or cannot enforce His predicted judgments.
      ii. Thus, the signs which served to convince the unprejudiced served only to harden him (see Ecclesiastes 8:11; 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-9).
   (d) The Scripture uses the history of this man as an example of such an attitude of mind and of its results.

140
5. **THE LAST STROKE AND ITS RESULT (Exodus 11 and 12)**

(a) The point was reached when, all other plagues failing to achieve their end, the judgment first announced to Pharaoh was to be executed. He who was withholding God’s firstborn would forfeit his own (Chs. 4:22-23; 11:1, 5-6).

(b) The Israelites, however, were not in this case to be exempt because they were Israelites, but only if they individually showed faith in God by giving obedience to His direction (Hebrews 11:28).

(c) The conditions they were to observe were:

i. Each family was to take an unblemished lamb, kill it on the fourteenth day of the month, prepare the flesh for eating by roasting it whole, and use the blood to mark the side and upper posts of the house doorway (Ch. 12:3-10).

ii. A meal of this roast flesh for eating, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, was to be eaten that evening (Ch. 12:8).

iii. All were to be ready to leave Egypt, and hence must have all goods packed, be dressed for the journey, and eat standing (Ch. 12:11).

(d) That evening the stroke fell on Egypt (Ch. 12:29-30), but the blood-sprinkled houses were ‘passed over’ (Ch. 12:12-13).

(e) Pharaoh and his people under the shock of this midnight blow commanded and hastened the departure of the Israelites, pressing such gifts upon them as they asked (Ch. 12:31-36).

(f) With the departing Hebrews went ‘many other people’, no doubt fellow slaves who considered this a good opportunity to regain their own freedom (Ch. 12:38).

(g) Moses did not fail to see that Joseph’s embalmed body was carried away from Egypt (Ch. 13:19).

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PASSOVER (Exodus 12)**

(a) This great event was to be remembered for ever by:

i. Making this month the beginning of the religious year (verse 2).

ii. Holding an annual festival of eight days’ duration, on the first evening of which a special meal was to be eaten, its chief items being roast lamb and unleavened bread (verses 14, 17-18).

(b) In later years the whole festival was sometimes referred to as the ‘Passover’, and sometimes as ‘The Feast of Unleavened Bread’.

(c) This festival is kept by the Jews to this day, which (seeing that the Crucifixion and Resurrection occurred at Passover time) coincides with our Easter celebration.

(d) The New Testament makes it clear that this great event in Egypt speaks of the greater Passover and deliverance wrought by Jesus at Calvary (1 Peter 1:18-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

7. **THE PURSUIT BY PHARAOH AND HIS ARMY (Exodus 13 to 15)**

(a) The road the Israelites took was according to the leading of ‘a pillar of cloud’ (Ch. 13:21-22).

(b) This did not lead them by the shortest way to Canaan.

i. If this had been taken they would have encountered opposition before they were ready to meet it (Ch. 13:17).

ii. Their first business was to meet with God at Sinai.

(c) Pharaoh, smarting under his son’s death, and his humiliation before a company of slaves, relented of his act in releasing them, and determined on their destruction (Ch. 14:5-9).

(d) Their situation seemed ideal for his purpose and hopeless for them. In front of them lay an arm of the Red Sea and marshy ground. There appeared to be no escape for this slow-moving company from the pursuing contingent of his finest horse-drawn chariots.

(e) Moses, in contrast to his fearful company (Ch. 14:10-12), had faith (Ch. 14:13), and by God’s direction ordered advance (Ch. 14:15), while the pillar of cloud interposed between the Israelites and their pursuers (Ch. 14:19-20).

(f) The water, driven by a violent wind all night (Ch. 14:21), parted, so that the multitude reached the far side dry-shod.

(g) When it became light enough for the Egyptians to see, they charged forward in pursuit, but their chariot wheels sunk in the sodden ground so that they were hopelessly trapped by the returning water (Ch. 14:23-30).
DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

(h) This second mighty and dramatic deliverance made a great impression upon the people (Ch. 14:31) who, now being free from any further fear of pursuit, joined in a great song of triumph and praise (Ch. 15:1, 9-11).

8. THE JOURNEY TO SINAI (Exodus 15 to 17, and 19)

(a) Whereas this land is called wilderness (desert), it is not entirely destitute of the means of life.

(b) However, after thirty days’ journey (Ch. 16:1), food supplies were exhausted, and the people complained (Ch. 16:2-3).

(c) God’s provision.

i. The manna.

(a) A word meaning ‘What is it?’ described a food strange to the Israelites, which from this time was supplied continuously for forty years (Ch. 16:14, 31, 35).

(b) This is the ‘bread of Heaven’ of which Jesus and His hearers spoke after the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:31-32).

ii. Quails.

On occasion these migratory, low-flying birds provided flesh food (Ch. 16:13).

iii. Water.

Was found in places such as Marah (Ch. 15:23,25), and Elim (Ch. 15:27), but at Rephidim, when there was no apparent supply, water came when Moses struck the rock (Ch. 17:1, 5-6).

iv. Protection from enemies (Ch. 17:8-16).

Also at Rephidim they were delivered from the hands of the Amalekites, a force of desert raiders, by a victory which was clearly due to Divine intervention.

(d) In the third month after leaving Egypt the company came to the place of Moses’ call, the ‘Mountain of God’ (Ch. 19:1).
Israel Enter into Covenant with God at Sinai by their Acceptance of his Law

(Various references from Exodus 20 to 34)

INTRODUCTION. Previously God’s covenant had been made with an individual, but now it was to be made with a nation. To enjoy God’s covenant blessings and to fulfil God’s covenant purpose they must decide that henceforth they would regard themselves as His people and regulate their lives before Him and before the world accordingly (Exodus 19:3-6). To this end He gave them His Law.

1. THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF THE LAW (Exodus 20 to 23; 25 to 31)
   
   (a) Its purpose was to produce a people who would give the world a testimony concerning God, by doctrine and by conduct.
   (b) Thus the Law gave instruction which covered all aspects of life.
   (c) Its great objective was to produce righteous character.
      i. It could not be satisfactorily honoured by a mere outward observance of rules (certain states of heart are looked for), e.g. Ch. 20:6, 17.
      ii. To this point the New Testament draws particular attention. Jesus, and Paul in echo of Jesus, maintain that God’s law is truly honoured only when love is the mainspring of conduct (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10).
   (d) The main matters which come within the scope of this Law (The ‘Torah’ of the Hebrews) are:
      i. The Ten Commandments (Ch. 20:3-17).
      ii. The ‘judgments’ (showing the working out in daily life of the principles behind the commandments chiefly to do with man’s duty to his neighbour) (Chs. 21 to 23:19).
      iii. A prescribed manner of worship (the Tabernacle with its Priesthood and sacrifices) (Chs. 25 to 31).
         (Note: Further accounts of the contents of the Law are given with other details in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.)

2. THE GIVING OF THE LAW (Exodus 19)
   
   (a) The importance of the occasion was emphasized by the special preparation the people were called to make (verses 10-11); the restrictions which kept them from touching the mountain (verses 12-13); and the awesome sights and sounds accompanying this event (verses 16, 18-19).
   (b) Moses, as God’s chosen mediator between Him and the people (Ch. 19:24), ascended the mountain, and brought back the commandments of God.

3. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Exodus 20:3-17)
   
   (a) The Ten Commandments present the basic statements of the Law, the other many and various commandments being detailed applications of the principles they present.
   (b) The first four are concerned with the demands God made concerning the people’s relationship to Him.
      They must:
      i. Recognize Him alone as their God (verse 3)-
      ii. Recognize His spiritual nature.
      It is a great evil to think that anything man can make, or even anything God Himself has made, can be taken to represent His likeness (verse 4).
      iii. ‘Hallow His name’ (NIV: ‘You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God’) and reverence the sanctity of His nature (verse 7).
      iv. Keep the Sabbath in His honour, acknowledging Him as Creator and Provider (verses 8-11).
   (c) The fifth command ‘Honour your father and your mother’, deals with the family relationship (verse 12).
4. **THE COVENANT SOLEMNLY ACCEPTED AND RATIFIED** (Exodus 24).
   
   (a) An altar for sacrifice to God, and twelve pillars to represent the tribes were erected (verse 4).
   
   (b) The commands of God were solemnly declared to the people, who unitedly declared they would obey (verse 7).
   
   (c) The covenant was completed by sprinkling with blood the altar and the people (possibly the pillars as representing the people) (verses 6, 8). Hebrews 9:18-20 claim that the scroll (book) also was sprinkled.
   
   (d) The significance of the blood was that now the people were one with God, sharing one life.
   
   (e) Jesus spoke of His blood as sealing the new covenant (Testament = Covenant) (Luke 22:20).

5. **THE PEOPLE BREAK GOD’S COMMAND AND ARE PUNISHED** (Exodus 24, 32)
   
   (a) Moses at God’s command ascended the mount to receive the tables of the Law and other directions, and was absent some weeks (Ch. 24:12-14, 18).
   
   (b) The people, thinking he had gone for ever (and with him the importance of what he taught), clamoured for a visible image of God to which they could make their sacrifices, a demand to which Aaron weakly yielded (Ch. 32:1-4).
   
   (c) Many of the people could not have been joining in such worship for the first time.
      
      i. They knew the ritual of such worship (Ch. 32:6).
      
      ii. Joshua 24:14 claims that other gods had been served in Egypt, and earlier.
      
      iii. Jacob had reproved his family for having images (Genesis 35:2, 4).
   
   (d) The gentlest thing that can be said about such conduct is that it appears to be an attempt to combine the worship of Jehovah with the idol system of worship, inasmuch as they attempted to give their worship to Jehovah, using the image as representing Him (Aaron called it a festival to the Lord – Ch. 32: 5).
   
   (e) Nevertheless, the guilt was great.
      
      i. It was an indefensible and flagrant breach of the second commandment. Not only had they made an image, but had designed it in the form of an animal (Ch. 20:4-5; Psalm 106:19-20).
      
      ii. The “calf” (or better the ‘bullock’) could be taken as representing some good quality such as the *strength* of God, but it certainly could represent no moral virtue, and in practice, as the context and later history confirm, the thoughts stimulated in the worshippers’ minds were debasing and not elevating (Ch. 32:25).
   
   (f) Moses, descending in time to witness this sight, was filled with wrath, and executed judgment without delay (Ch. 32:7, 19).
      
      i. He ground the image to a powder which he scattered on the water supply so that the people had to drink it (Ch. 32:20).
      
      ii. He called for volunteers from those who had not indulged in these proceedings, who executed the chief participants (Ch. 32:26-28).

6. **THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP RESTORED** (Exodus 32 to 34)
   
   (a) Moses’ disciplinary measures did not suffice to put right the nation’s broken covenant relationship with God (Ch. 32:30).
   
   (b) He thus sought God’s pardon, in a manner which reveals him as one of the great intercessors of all time (Ch. 32:31-32; Cf. Paul (Romans 9:3)).
   
   (c) His plea on the grounds of God’s faithfulness, and the honour of His name won for the people pardon (Ch. 32:12-14; Cf. Deuteronomy 9:25-27). Nevertheless, they were afflicted with plague (Ch. 32:35), and the withdrawal of God’s presence in grace (Ch. 33:3).
   
   (d) The people’s repentance (Ch. 33:4, 6, R.V.), and the renewed plea of Moses brought the promise that God would be with them again (Ch. 33:14).
   
   (e) To Moses as a confirming sign of restored fellowship was given a new revelation of God, as being merciful, gracious and willing to forgive iniquity (Ch. 34:5-7).
   
   (f) For a people so prone to unbelief and disobedience such a revelation provided the only basis upon which their subsequent fellowship with God could be continued (Ch. 34:8-9).
INTRODUCTION. Up to this point of Hebrew history, a simple altar had been the only constructed item in a ‘place of worship’. Now something far more elaborate was produced, a Tabernacle made with intricate detail, and of costly material. To suit the people’s condition it was made so that it could be taken apart, transported and re-erected elsewhere with some degree of ease. In later years the Temple, which copied in permanent form the Tabernacle pattern, was built in Jerusalem. The Epistle to the Hebrews (Chs. 8-10) shows how all to do with this new feature in the worship of God was designed to teach spiritual lessons.

1. ITS STRUCTURE (Exodus 26)
   (a) The Hebrew word ‘Tabernacle’, meaning ‘a Tent’, and strictly speaking the Tabernacle proper was a beautifully woven and embroidered curtain, which was held up by gold-covered wooden boards which served as walls, and was protected from the weather by coverings of other large curtains.
   (b) The boards, resting on a silver base, provided three walls of a chamber 30 x 10 x 10 cubits. Note: The cubit in common use was about 18 inches (or 46 centimetres) long (a man’s elbow to finger tip), so that this chamber was of no great size.
   (c) This chamber was divided one-third down its length by a curtain or ‘veil’ thus making a smaller chamber 10 x 10 x 10 cubits, which was called the Holy of Holies, or Holiest of all. The other portion, exactly twice this size, was called the Holy Place, which also had a ‘veil’ to cover its entrance.
   Note: Information concerning (a), (b), (c) with much more detail is given in Exodus 26.
   (d) This erection was placed in a large courtyard of 100 x 50 cubits, which was bordered by linen curtains supported on pillars, leaving an entrance on the side which faced east (Ch. 27:9-10, 18).

2. THE TABERNACLE FURNISHINGS (Exodus 25, 27, 30)
   (a) In the Holy of Holies.
      i. This was a wooden chest (2.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 cubits), overlaid with gold (Ch. 25:10-11).
      ii. In it were placed the two stone tablets which bore the Ten Commandments (Ch. 25:16).
      iii. The lid to this chest was a separate feature. It was of solid gold and bore on it two figures of cherubs looking toward each other, and having outstretched wings (Ch. 25:17-21).
      iv. This lid was called the Mercy Seat.
   (b) In the Holy Place there were three items.
      i. The Altar of Incense.
         (a) This was a small altar made of a gold-covered wooden frame, which was placed immediately in front of the veil which shut off the Holy of Holies (Ch. 30:1-3, 6).
         (b) Incense alone was burned on it, morning and evening (Ch. 30:7-8).
      ii. The Table of Shewbread (or bread of the Presence).
         (a) This again was made of wood and overlaid with gold, and was placed on the north side of the Holy Place.
         (b) Twelve loaves of unleavened bread (for the twelve tribes) were placed upon it each Sabbath, the discarded loaves being given to the priests to eat (Ch. 25:23-24, 30).
      iii. The Seven-branched Candlestick.
         (a) Was made of gold and carried, not candles, but oil-burning lamps.
MANNER OF WORSHIP

(b) This was placed on the south side of the Holy Place, and provided its sole means of illumination (Ch. 25:31, 37).

(c) In the Outer Court there were two items.
   i. The Brazen Altar.
      This, the large altar where sacrifices were burned, was placed near to the entrance of the courtyard (Ch. 27:1-2).
   ii. The Laver.
      (a) This was made of brass, and was a large circular receptacle for water used by the priests for cleansing themselves before officiating at the altar, or before entering the Holy Place.
      (b) It was placed between the Brazen Altar and the Holy Place (Ch. 30:18, 21).
   (d) It was the duty of the selected priests to carry these sacred objects on their shoulders when the people moved from place to place. Thus each article was fitted with rings through which carrying staves could be passed.

3. THE MAIN PROCEDURE OF WORSHIP
   (a) All worshippers brought their offerings as far as the Brazen Altar.
   (b) Beyond that point, the ministry of the Sanctuary was carried out by the priests.
   (c) No one but the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, and this he could do on one day of the year only – the Day of Atonement (dealt with in the next lesson).

4. THE MAKING OF THE TABERNACLE AND ITS DEDICATION (Exodus 35, 36, 39, 40)
   (a) Chapters 25 and 31 of Exodus record the detail of the planned Tabernacle, and the things that related to it, while Chapters 35 to the end of the book tell how the work was carried out.
   (b) The main points to do with the making of the Tabernacle are:
      i. All material was supplied by a freewill offering (Chs. 35:4-5, 21; 36:5-7).
      ii. Many skilful people gave their craftsmanship, both women (Ch. 35:25), and men (Ch. 36:1).
      iii. All was made according to pattern given to Moses (Ch. 39:43).
   (c) The Tabernacle was erected eleven and a half months after leaving Egypt (Ch. 40:17), and was dedicated to the service of God, who sealed this offering by filling the Tabernacle with His glory, thus giving evidence of His acceptance of this gift and of His presence with His people (Ch. 40:34-35).

5. THE SACRIFICES OF THE TABERNACLE
   (a) The Book of Leviticus gives a great deal of detail concerning the manner of worship which was connected with the Tabernacle, and out of this, in connection with the sacrifices, we note two main divisions.
      i. Some sacrifices were called ‘Sweet Savour’ offerings. In these the worshipper came giving praise, thanksgiving, and consecration, in the spirit of happy worship, not being burdened with some unpardoned sin.
      ii. In other cases, the worshipper came with a Sin and Trespass offering, as a guilty sinner seeking pardon and restoration.
   (b) There are, therefore, many instances of the worshipper presenting both types of sacrifices and, as we will know from personal experience, it was the Sin offering that preceded the Praise or Consecration offering.
   (c) The detail of the proper offering for each purpose was given, but always allowance was made for the poor, from whom a much simpler and less costly offering was accepted than that expected from the well-to-do.
   (d) The Sin offerings, in particular, involved the shedding of blood, although here again the very poor had exception made for them (Leviticus 5:11-13).
   (e) An important text concerning the blood is Leviticus 17:II.. Here the Israelites were taught to think of the blood as the ‘life’ given to God for them.
   (f) Moses, and the prophets who followed him, were always insistent that no sacrifice could avail if the worshipper was not meaning in his heart what his sacrificial act typified, and later we have such statements as 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17; and Mark 12:32-34.
6. SOME OF THE SPIRITUAL LESSONS TAUGHT BY THE TABERNACLE AND THE MANNER OF WORSHIP CONNECTED WITH IT

(a) The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the Tabernacle as ‘an illustration for the present time’ (Ch. 9:9), and as ‘a copy and shadow of what is in heaven’ (Ch. 8:5), and explains that it taught, in a prophetic and of necessity in an imperfect way, spiritual lessons which have their true demonstration and fulfilment alone in Jesus, and in His mediating work for men.

(b) Among many lessons thus taught we can note:
   i. More detailed matters, such as the Incense representing acceptable prayer; the Shewbread as acknowledging Him who gives us our daily bread; and the Laver as demonstrating the need for purity.
   ii. The greater lessons, such as:
      (a) The ‘awe’fulness of the Holy of Holies, teaching the Majesty of God, and of His law, and the hopelessness of seeking to approach Him save by the way He has appointed.
      (b) That, nevertheless, God has made a way whereby a sinning and covenant-breaking people can, through confession and atonement, find peace, fellowship and joy in His presence.
INTRODUCTION. In the previous lessons we noted that the greater part of the Tabernacle ministry was carried out by the priests. In this lesson we say something about their office and, in particular, something about the chief features of the Day of Atonement.

1. THE PRIESTLY OFFICE
   (a) The priests were separated men. They were separated from other tasks and dedicated to the Tabernacle service (Exodus 28:1); and were all drawn from the family of Aaron, and from their descendants (Numbers 16:40).
   (b) Their chief duties were:
      i. to carry out all the Tabernacle services according to an allotted rota of duties;
      ii. to minister other details of the Law which, being wide in its application, included such responsibilities as the oversight of sanitary and health matters (hence the command to a cleansed leper – ‘Show yourself to the priest’ (Luke 5:14) – Leviticus 13:2).
   (c) The greatest spiritual lessons taught by this institution are to be learned from the singular honours and responsibilities borne by the High Priest:
      i. By itself his office provided a fruitful illustration of the office and work of the Saviour (the subject of Hebrews 5 to 7).
      ii. He was attired in special garments, which differed from those of the other priests, and were full of symbolical meaning.
      iii. He acted as Mediator for the people:
         (a) by offering, in their name, gifts and sacrifices for sins (Hebrews 5:1);
         (b) by acting as an intercessor, offering prayer on their behalf: in his ministry he constantly brought the names of the tribes before God, for these were inscribed on jewels which he wore on his shoulders and on his breastplate (Exodus 28:9-10, 12, 21, 29);
         (c) by blessing them in the name of God (Numbers 6:22-27);
         (d) by instructing them in God’s law (Leviticus 10:11) and, on occasion, making God’s will known to them.
      iv. It was his duty and privilege to carry out the greatest of all Tabernacle ceremonies – the mediation on the Day of Atonement.

2. THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS (Leviticus 8 and 9 record the carrying out of the instructions set down in Exodus 29)
   (a) This ceremony was performed by Moses, and lasted for seven days (Ch. 8:33).
   (b) Notable features of the proceedings were:
      i. The washing (Ch. 8:6).
      ii. The robing with priestly garments (Ch. 8:7-9,13).
      iii. The anointing with precious oil (Ch. 8:12; see also verse 30).
      iv. A sin offering was made for Aaron and his sons (Ch. 8:14) It was recognized that they themselves were sinners (see Hebrews 5:2-3).
      v. A consecration offering was made, with the blood of which ear, hand and foot were anointed, to signify that the priest would hear, serve and walk in consecrated service (Ch. 8:22-24).
      vi. On the eighth day Aaron and his sons commenced their priestly work (Ch. 9:1,7,22).
      vii. To all who participated, God granted a sign that He accepted and blessed all that had been done (Ch. 9:23-24).

3. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (Leviticus 16)
   (a) This solemn observance was kept every year on the tenth day of the seventh month (verse 29).
   (b) Its purpose is declared in verses 30, 33-34.
MANNER OF WORSHIP

(c) Notable features of the proceedings were:
   i. The High Priest wore pure white linen garments instead of his usual attire (verse 4).
   ii. He offered first a Sin offering for himself and for his family (verse 6), and
   iii. on this one day of the year he entered the Holy of Holies, which he filled with a cloud of
       incense (verse 13), and then, with blood taken from his sacrifice, sprinkled the Mercy
       Seat and the most Holy Place (verse 14).
   iv. For the atonement of the people two goats were used:
       (a) The first was treated as a Sin offering sacrifice, its blood being also sprinkled in
           the Holy of Holies by the High Priest (verses 15-16).
       (b) The second, called the Scape Goat – or the goat of Azazel -- was driven away
           into the wilderness, after the sins of the people had been confessed over it
           (verses 21-22).
   v. The blood of both Sin offerings was also used to make atonement in connection with the
      whole of the Tabernacle and its furnishings (verses 18-20).
   vi. Having changed his garments, and put on his normal vestments, the High Priest then
       offered burnt offerings (speaking of consecration) for himself and for the people (verse
       24).

4. THE GREATEST DAY OF ATONEMENT
   (a) The religion of Judaism found in the Day of Atonement its culminating point, as Christianity does
       in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, the Law, and the
       Day of Atonement all contained the shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1), and are
       ‘like in pattern to the true’ (Hebrews 9:24, R.V.).
   (b) Christ is the eternal High Priest – Himself both Priest and Sacrifice – who entered no earthly
       Sanctuary, but Heaven itself to be the perfect Mediator and Intercessor, who blesses, not only
       Israel, but all who come to Him, with the virtue of His perfect Atonement (see Hebrews 9:6-8,
       11-12, 24-28; 7:23-27).
INTRODUCTION. This lesson covers the last period of the life of Moses, and records how he led Israel from Sinai to the banks of the Jordan.

1. THE JOURNEY FROM SINAI, AND THE GREAT REBELLION AT KADESH BARNEA (Numbers 9, 10, 13, 14)
   (a) Before leaving Sinai the Israelites held their first anniversary celebration of the Passover (Ch. 9:1-5).
   (b) They left one month later (Ch. 10:11-13).
   (c) The fiery, cloudy pillar was now identified with the Tabernacle, and continued as a guide until Israel entered Canaan (Ch. 9:15-18).
   (d) Before long they reached a place called Kadesh Barnea which was on the border of the southern part of Canaan, and the thought of entering the land became the chief matter in the mind of all.
   (e) As a preparation to invasion, twelve spies (one from each tribe, excluding Levi) were sent out to report on conditions and the possibilities of conquest (Ch. 13:1-2).
   (f) On their return these men gave a completely conflicting report on the likelihood of a successful invasion.
      i. Two men, Joshua of Ephraim, and Caleb of Judah, urged that in the confidence that God was with them they could overcome all adversaries (Chs. 13:30; 14:6-9).
      ii. The ten other spies declared that any attack on such strongly held cities and on their formidable inhabitants would be sure to end in failure – that such a venture would be like grasshoppers attacking giants (Ch. 13:28, 33).
   (g) The Israelites, influenced by the majority report:
      i. Bewailed their situation, and being determined to return to Egypt proceeded to choose another leader in place of Moses (Ch. 14:1-4).
      ii. Threatened Joshua and Caleb with stoning (Ch. 14:10).

2. THE JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL (Numbers 14)
   (a) Moses, with great grace, interceded for the people and pleaded God’s covenant (verses 11-13, 17-20).
   (b) The judgment passed was that those who had doubted the power of God to fulfil His promise should never enter the Promised Land, but that God would fulfil His word to Abraham by giving the land to their children (verses 22-23, 31).
   (c) This judgment involved the sentence of a wandering stay in the desert for forty years until the older generation had died, and a new generation, bred in wilderness conditions, had grown up (verses 32-33; Psalm 95:10-11).
   (d) Upon hearing this judgment the people decided, in defiance of the direction of Moses, to make an advance. This venture ended disastrously (verses 40-45).

3. THREE OF THE NOTABLE EVENTS IN THIS FORTY-YEAR PERIOD (Numbers 20, 21, 27)
   (a) As the Israelites came to the end of this period the new generation, when faced with shortages and difficulties, showed themselves little different from their fathers.
   (b) They complained of lack of water (Ch. 20: 1-4).
      i. Moses, greatly provoked by the people’s grumbling, spoke in anger, calling them ‘rebels’ as he twice struck the rock from which the water to meet their need appeared (Ch. 20:7-11).
      ii. For this action Moses himself was accounted guilty of the sin of rebellion, and through his failure in this instance to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of Israel was barred from entering the Promised Land (Chs. 20:12; 27:14).
   (c) They complained of the hardness of the way when making a long detour around the land of Edom, and of their food (Ch. 2 1: 4-5).
      i. For this they were punished by a plague of fiery serpents (fiery in appearance, or in the poisonous virulence of their bite).
ii. The people’s plea that the serpents should be removed was not granted, but the effect of their presence was nullified by means of the brass serpent which provided a means of healing (Ch. 21:6-9; see John 3:14-15).
(iii. Many years later, when this serpent became an object of worship, King Hezekiah rightly destroyed it (2 Kings 18:4).)

(c) The death of Aaron at Mount Hor.
His garments were placed on his son Eleazer who succeeded him in this office (Ch. 20:23-28).

4. THE CONQUEST OF EASTERN CANAAN (Numbers 21, 22, 24, 25 32)
(a) The approach to Canaan was made on the east side of the Jordan.
(b) Two kings were conquered, and their territories occupied:
   i. A southern area from Sihon, king of the Amorites (Ch. 21:23-25), and
   ii. a northern area from Og, king of Bashan (Ch. 21:33-35).
(c) This territory was allotted to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh, at their request (Ch. 32:1, 5, 33).
(d) The Moabites (being a kindred people, descended from Lot) were not attacked.
   i. Their king, fearing Israel, sent for a prophet named Balaam, to curse them (Ch. 22:1-6).
   ii. Instead, he blessed them (Ch. 24:8-9).
   iii. The Israelites however got great hurt from the Moabites by being influenced to join in their heathen festivals and worship (Ch. 25:1-5).

5. THE LAST DAYS OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 31:1-13, 23-26; 34:1-12)
(a) In addresses recorded in Deuteronomy, Moses gave the new generation of Israelites, who had not received his instructions at Sinai, a new charge and directions.
(b) Joshua was appointed as his successor, and given an assurance from the Lord (Ch. 31:23).
(c) Moses arranged for the safe keeping of the Law and for its regular reading in public every seven years (Ch. 31:24-26, 10-11).
(d) At the border of the Promised Land he was afforded a distant view of the land he had for so long yearned after but was not to enter; this was from Pisgah, the top peak of Mount Nebo (Ch. 34:1-4).
(e) There he died and was buried, ‘but to this day no one knows where his grave is’ (Ch. 34:5-6, see also verses 7 and 10).
The Israelites Enter, and Begin to Possess, the Promised Land

INTRODUCTION. This lesson is concerned with that part of the Old Testament history when the Israelites were under the leadership of Joshua. We say something about the land and the man, and then give some detail of the events recorded in the book which bears his name.

1. THE LAND
   (a) **Its names.**
      i. *Israelite names* are the Promised Land; the Land of Israel; and the Holy Land (Zechariah 2:12).
      ii. *Other names* are Canaan (from its one-time inhabitants); Palestine (from the Philistines, whose territory, however, was confined to the southern part of the sea coast).
   (b) **Its importance.**
      Although comparatively small in size, it had great importance because of its position.
      i. With the sea to the west, and a considerable area of desert land to the east and southeast, it formed part of the only highway between Africa and Asia.
      ii. Being in a central position between the great empires and peoples of the ancient world, through it passed the commercial and military movements of these nations.
      iii. Thus, although the mountainous districts provided some seclusion and security, the people of Israel could not help but be affected by (and often afflicted by) other peoples and, in their turn, have an influence on life far beyond their borders.
   (c) **Its condition at the time of Joshua.**
      There were many small kingdoms whose ‘king’ controlled only so much territory as he could command from his stronghold. This was because the features of mountain, plain and river, which served to divide the land geographically also served to divide it politically, and because at that time no strong foreign power had dominion over the whole territory.

2. JOSHUA
   (a) Was the son of Nun, and a chief man in the tribe of Ephraim.
   (b) His name was changed by Moses from Oshea or Hoshea to Je-hoshua, meaning Jehovah is Salvation (Numbers 13:16).
   (c) He was born in Egypt, and thus witnessed the first Passover and all subsequent events in the story we have studied.
   (d) Very soon after the departure from Egypt he was chosen for special service, and became notable as being:
      i. the first military leader (Exodus 17:9-10, 13);
      ii. the attendant of Moses on Sinai (Exodus 24:12-13);
      iii. one of the two faithful spies (Numbers 14:6-8).

3. ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA
   Chs.1 to 12. The crossing of the Jordan, and some detail of conquests in Canaan.
   Chs.13 to 22. The distribution of the land among the tribes.
   Chs.23 and 24. Joshua’s final charge to Israel, and his death.

4. THE PREPARATION TO ENTER THE LAND (Joshua 1:2)
   (a) Joshua received from God:
      i. Command to make immediate advance (Ch. 1:1-2).
      ii. Assurance of success (Ch. 1:3-5).
      iii. Earnest exhortation to face his task with courage (Ch. 1:6,9); and
      iv. to give all honour to God’s law (Ch. 1:7-8).
   (b) He responded by ordering the people to prepare to march (Ch. 1:10-11); and by sending two men to cross the Jordan, and report on the state of affairs in Jericho, the town which dominated the plain on the west side of the river (Ch. 2:1).
   (c) In Jericho these men were sheltered by Rahab, a woman who told of the fear the citizens had of the Israelites. In return for her service to them, she was promised that the lives of all her household would be spared (Ch. 2:9-18).
ISRAELITES ENTER THE PROMISED LAND

(d) The report from the spies encouraged Joshua to advance (Ch. 2:23-24).

Note: Rahab is commended in the New Testament:

i. Not in approval of her former manner of life, or for the deceit she practised, but for her faith in Jehovah as being supreme (see end of verse 11; Hebrews 11:31).

ii. Later, she married Salmon of the tribe of Judah, and thereby became an ancestress of David, and of Jesus Himself (Matthew 1:5).

5. THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN (Joshua 3 to 5)

(a) The place where Israel crossed was a recognized fording place, but in the early springtime (Ch. 4:19) the river, which at times was quite narrow, was in full flood, and besides being possibly a mile wide was also deep. The people of Jericho would not expect that any crossing would be attempted at that time (Ch. 3:15).

(b) At Joshua’s command, after a period of spiritual preparation (Ch. 3:5), the people formed in their usual marching order with the Ark of the Covenant (carried on the shoulders of priests) leading the way (Ch. 3:14).

(c) As the feet of the priests touched the water the stream narrowed -- no more water came from upstream -- while the rest, flowing away to the south, provided a means for all to cross (Ch. 3:16).

(d) The priests bearing the Ark stood still midway while the host passed over, and it was not until these priests, bringing up the rear, left the river bank that the waters flowed again (Chs. 3.17; 4:10-11, 18).

(e) This event:

i. Confirmed that God was with Joshua (Ch. 4:14).

ii. Confirmed that God who had brought their fathers through the Red Sea was with this new generation in power and faithfulness (Ch. 4:23).

iii. Caused the utmost dismay among the peoples of southern Canaan (Ch. 5:1).

Note on this event.

It has been known in later history for the river to dry up in this way when the water was temporarily dammed by a landslide across the river gorge some miles up stream. Such a happening could have occurred at this time. The miraculous nature of the event was shown in that it came to pass as Joshua had said, and at the very hour when Israel moved forward.

6. THE ENCAMPMENT AT GILGAL (Joshua 4 and 5)

(a) At this place, not far from the river bank, an encampment was made (Ch. 4:19).

(b) For the sake of national history, stones taken from the bed of the Jordan were erected as a cairn of remembrance (Ch. 4:8, 20-22, 24).

(c) The rite of circumcision was renewed (Ch. 5:7), and then the first Passover Festival in the land was celebrated (Ch. 5:10).

(d) From this time the manna ceased (Ch. 5:11-12).

7. THE CONQUEST OF JERICHO AND AI (Joshua 5 to 8)

(a) Joshua received instructions concerning the taking of Jericho from the ‘commander of the army of the Lord’ (Ch. 5:13-14).

(b) In their first encounter with the inhabitants on the west of Jordan, it was to be clear to the Israelites that the victory was of God and not of their own might.

(c) In faith (Hebrews 11:30) they marched around the city each day, and on the seventh day, on their seventh circuit, as the trumpets blew and the people shouted, the walls fell before them (Ch. 6:12-16, 20).

(d) Special instructions were given that, in this case, no spoil was to be taken for the people’s own possession (Ch. 6:17-19).

(e) The sin of Achan who ignored this command brought defeat at Ai, which city was not taken until the offender had been discovered and judged (Chs. 7:1, 3-6, 10-12, 16-21, 24-26; 8:26).

8. THE EVENTS AT SHECHEM (Joshua 8, 24)

(a) A most solemn ceremony was held in which the Covenant was sealed in the land of the Covenant, near to the spot where Abraham’s first recorded act of worship in the land had been made (Genesis 12:6-7).
ISRAELITES ENTER THE PROMISED LAND

i. With the tribes drawn up in two companies on the lower slopes of the twin hills, Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, the Law was publicly read, and its blessings and penalties were fully emphasized by the audible responses made by the people (Ch. 8:33-34).

ii. A permanent memorial was set up to commemorate this event (Ch. 8:30-32; see Deuteronomy 27:4, 8, 11-13).

(b) The long delayed funeral of Joseph was completed (Ch. 24:32).

9. THE SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN CAMPAIGNS (Joshua 9, 10, 11, 13)

(a) The inhabitants of the land, fearing that they would be completely destroyed one by one if they made no united stand, decided to make a joint effort against the invaders (Ch. 9:1-2).

(b) A confederacy of southern kings was soundly defeated at Beth-horon (Ch. 10:5-11).

(c) A confederacy of northern kings was likewise routed at the Waters of Merom (Ch. 11:1-8).

(d) These victories did not mean that the whole land was completely subdued. In many places the original inhabitants held out in their own cities, and used all means to strengthen themselves against Israelite attack (Ch. 13:1).

10. THE LAND DIVIDED

(a) The tribes of Reuben, Gad and part of Manasseh had already received their portions.

(b) The other tribes now received their portion by lot, of which detail is given in Chs. 14 to 19 (details need not be learned).

(c) In every one of these portions were strongholds held by former inhabitants. It was the duty of the tribe to ‘possess their possessions’, which to a greater or lesser degree all failed to do, e.g. see Judges 1:21, 27, 29-31, 33.

(d) The tribe of Levi being the priestly tribe had no separate district of their own, but was allotted certain Levitical cities throughout the whole land (Ch. 21:1-3).

(e) Shiloh, a town in a central position, was chosen as the place where the Tabernacle was to be pitched. This became a national religious centre for centuries (Ch. 18:1).

11. JOSHUA’S FAREWELL (Joshua 23 and 24)

(a) Joshua’s final service for his people was to call them and their leaders together (Ch. 23:1-2), giving them:

i. Words of encouragement (Ch. 23:6, 14).

ii. Words of entreaty to separate themselves from the worship of other gods (Ch. 24:14-17), confirming their response with a final solemn dedication (Ch. 24:24-27).

(b) His death at the age of 110 years, and burial, are recorded in Ch. 24:29-30.
1. THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES  
   (a) This period was one of breakdown in national unity.  
      i. No one was found to succeed Joshua as the national leader, so the tribes tended to drift  
         still further apart.  
      ii. Such leaders as arose (called Judges) had little more than a tribal following and were  
          never successful in uniting the whole nation.  
      iii. Arguments and strife between the tribes frequently occurred, sometimes leading to  
           armed fighting.  
      iv. It thus became easy for desert tribes to overrun the land from time to time.  
      v. Key verses illustrating the situation are:  
         (a) overcome by foes - Judges 6:1-4;  
         (b) lack of co-operation - Judges 5:16-17, 23;  
         (e) lack of central authority - Judges 21:25.  

   (b) It was also a time of religious backsliding.  
      i. The people mixed with the Canaanites, socially and religiously.  
      ii. Jehovah - worship became intermingled with that of the local baals or gods (Judges  
          2:11-12, 16-17).  
      iii. This encouraged immorality, intermarriage with the heathen, and general disregard for  
           God’s law.  
      iv. There were those who remained true to God. These acted as a conscience to the rest  
           and helped to stimulate movements of national repentance from time to time.  

   (c) The Book of Ruth, which is set in this period, suggests that it was not a time of constant strife  
      and disorder. There may have been communities which followed their domestic pursuits in  
      peace and order.  

   (d) The period closed with the emergence of Samuel. He was the last and greatest of the judges,  
      but was also the first of the regular line of prophets in Israel. He saw that Jehovah-worship and  
      national unity stood or fell together, and acted on this conviction.  

2. ISRAEL DURING SAMUEL’S EARLY YEARS (I Samuel 1 to 4, and 6)  
   (a) The chief foes at this time (especially of the southern tribes) were the Philistines. They overran  
       the land and kept the Israelites in subjection by leaving Philistine garrisons in strategic places.  

   (b) The worship of Jehovah, which should have been the great uniting factor in Israel, was  
       discredited.  
      i. Eli, the aged High Priest, served the Tabernacle at Shiloh, but Hophni and Phineas, his  
         sons and assistant priests, were ungodly, breaking both God’s ceremonial and moral  
         laws.  
      ii. Eli rebuked his sons, but did not put a stop to their ill deeds (1 Samuel 2:12, 15, 17, 22-  
          24; 3:13).  

   (c) Eli was confronted by a ‘man of God’ who warned him that on this account both sons would die  
       and that the priesthood would be taken away from his descendants (1 Samuel 2:27, 31, 34-36).  
       (The latter word was fulfilled in the time of Solomon - 1 Kings 2:27, 35.)  

   (d) Samuel was born of Levitical parents (1 Chronicles 6:33-34) in answer to prayer, and according  
       to Hannah’s vow was given to the Lord’s service (1 Samuel 1:1-2, 11, 24-28).  

   (e) His call to the prophetic office took place when he was a child (1 Samuel 3:7-10).  
      i. The first message he spoke for God was a painful one. It concerned God’s judgment on  
         Eli for his weakness, and on Eli’s sons for their sins (1 Samuel 3:11-18).  
      ii. As he grew he began to speak to the nation, who recognized in his word that which  
          convinced them that a new prophet had arisen in Israel (1 Samuel 3:19 to 4:1 (‘And  
          Samuel’s word came to all Israel’).
He witnessed sad days for his nation – an attempt by the Israelites to break the Philistines’ power ended in disaster.

i. After a first defeat, the Israelites, putting their trust in a symbol of God’s presence, sent for the Ark of the Covenant, that its presence might give them victory (1 Samuel 4:1, 3).

ii. The Philistines, fighting again with desperation, completely routed the Israelites, captured the Ark, and killed Hophni and Phineas.

iii. When this news reached Eli he collapsed and died (1 Samuel 4:15-18).

The Ark of the Covenant was voluntarily returned seven months later by the Philistines, because of the severe plagues they suffered while they retained it (1 Samuel 6:1-3), but it was not until the time of David that the Ark had a permanent resting place in Israel.

3. SAMUEL AS JUDGE AND PROPHET (1 Samuel 7, 8, 12, 25)

On the death of Eli and his sons, Samuel became the recognized leader of the people, and some twenty years later, at Mizpah, he led them in a religious revival when they put away their idols (1 Samuel 7:2-6).

Victory over the Philistines followed immediately (1 Samuel 7:10-13).

For many years Samuel judged Israel from his home at Ramah (1 Samuel 7:15-17).

i. This area of his active control seems to have been small (1 Samuel 7:16), but

ii. his sons served further afield (1 Samuel 8:2).

When Samuel grew old, his sons showed themselves unworthy to succeed him, so the people asked for a king (1 Samuel 8:1-5) to be their unifying leader in government and war.

Samuel installed Saul as King (see next lesson) and resigned his office in a public farewell, when he:

i. extracted from the people a testimony to his own integrity (1 Samuel 12:1-5);

ii. solemnly warned them concerning the duty of king and nation to honour God’s law (1 Samuel 12:24-25);

iii. undertook to maintain his intercession for them (1 Samuel 12:23).

His death was the signal for a national mourning (1 Samuel 25:1).

He had brought the separated tribes into a national unity, and had quickened the national conscience in his lifelong witness for righteousness and the fear of God.

4. THE POSITION AND WORK OF PROPHETS

The three most important positions in Israel were those of Prophet, Priest and King.

It was in the days of Samuel that the three were seen together for the first time.

Three Hebrew words are translated ‘prophet’, and convey the ideas of:

i. A ‘Seer’-a man who has insight into eternal things.

ii. One who ‘bubbles over’ – who had an inner compulsion to utter the message given to him (Jeremiah 20:9).

iii. One who ‘tells forth’ God’s truth to people (Exodus 7:1).

The prophets came from all walks of life.

i. A man became a prophet not by any human appointment, but by an inner conviction which he recognised as a call from God.

ii. In the time of Samuel, and for many years afterward, a system known as the ‘Schools of the Prophets’ recruited men for this work, but all the prophets were not drawn from this source.

iii. God called people of all classes.

(a) Jeremiah and Ezekiel were priests, and

(b) David, who was king, has also a claim to be numbered among the prophets.

(c) Amos came from humble circumstances (Amos 7:14).

(d) There is record also of prophetesses, such as Deborah and Huldah.

(e) There were false prophets, who made claims they had no right to make, and gave messages of their own invention, e.g. Jeremiah 23:16, 21, and also faithless prophets, who failed in their duty to condemn unrighteousness.
Generally speaking, the prophets’ messages were unpopular, so much so that some were ill-treated, and at times some were killed (2 Chronicles 36:15-16; Matthew 5:12; Acts 7:52).

The functions the prophets served as they spoke for God to the people, were:

i. To interpret His nature and will.

ii. To interpret the meaning of current events, showing their relationship to God’s purposes.

iii. To recall forgotten truths; to make known new aspects of truth and duty; or to enlarge the content of the truth already declared.

iv. To reprove false prophets.

v. To reprove or inspire kings, priests and people, as necessity arose.

5. A COMPARISON BETWEEN PROPHETS AND PRIESTS

(a) In addition to what has been said in Lesson 66 concerning the priests, we can say:

i. In the earliest days, the chief of the clan or family acted as priest.

ii. At Sinai, the House of Aaron was set apart for the priesthood, with the tribe of Levi to assist them.

iii. These priests were supported by portions of the sacrifices, tithes and freewill offerings of the people.

iv. The priesthood served to preserve and organize religious thought and practice, holding the mass of the people to outward and formal worship of Jehovah.

v. After the return from the exile when the kingship had ceased, the High Priests became, in the main, the leaders of the nation.

(b) The function of the prophet in relation to the work of the priest was to insist on the truth that the outward forms of worship were of no avail if there was an absence of heart-worship and of a habit of life that agreed with its meaning, e.g. Isaiah 1:11, 15-17.
SAUL, KING OF ISRAEL

LESSON 70

Saul, The First King of Israel

1. THE SITUATION WHICH STIMULATED THE REQUEST FOR A KING Toward the end of Samuel’s life the national life of Israel was threatened with disintegration:
   (a) From conquest by enemy peoples.
      i. West of the Jordan, the Philistines, with overwhelming superiority in iron weapons, did much as they willed (1 Samuel 13:19-22).
      ii. East of Jordan the Ammonites were in control.
      iii. Parts of the land were liable to suffer raids by marauding bands from the desert.
   (b) By division and jealousy between the tribes which prevented their making a united front against their foes and even led them to fight one another.
   (c) Through lack of a leader who could command the respect and obedience of the nation.
      i. The High Priest’s position faded in dignity in the period following the death of Eli.
      ii. The sons of Samuel were nationally rejected because of their lack of integrity (1 Samuel 8:3).

2. THE NATURE OF THE KING SELECTED
   (a) His function was therefore to unify and command the nation, being its leader and commander in war, and its supreme judge.
   (b) Although the people asked for a king ‘such as all the other nations have’, there are important points in which the king they received was different from these others.
   (c) He was not to be an absolute despot (Deuteronomy 17:14-15, 18-20).
      i. He was a covenanted king, in that he had to promise to rule according to law (1 Samuel 10:25; 1 Chronicles 11:3).
      ii. He was an anointed king, recognizing his responsibility to God, by whose authority he held this office.
   (d) The privileges of kingship.
      i. The king had authority to command every man in keeping with the Law.
      ii. His life had special sanctity – any act of violence against the king’s life was regarded as a most grievous sin, e.g. 1 Samuel 26:9; 2 Samuel 1:15-16.
      iii. He was maintained by the produce of royal estates and other income privileges (1 Samuel 8:1-17).
      iv. The kingship was normally inherited by a son, although not inevitably by the eldest.
   (e) Israel continued for some five hundred years under the rule of such kings.

3. SAUL’S PREPARATION FOR KINGSHIP (1 Samuel 9, 10)
   (a) Failing to find some lost asses, Saul, a stalwart Benjamite, went to consult Samuel (Ch. 9:2-3, 5, 6).
   (b) who, being prepared for such a visitor, told him the asses were found (Ch. 9:15-17, 19-21) and on the following day privately anointed him as the new king (Ch. 9:26 to 10:1).
   (c) Following further instructions given by the prophet, Saul received a special anointing of God’s spirit, and a change of heart (Ch. 10:2-6, 9).

4. SAUL PUBLICLY PRESENTED AS KING (1 Samuel 10)
   (a) In a national assembly at Mizpah, Samuel by a process of selection made it clear that Saul the son of Kish was the chosen one (verses 17, 20-21)
   (b) When he was presented to the people they acclaimed him as their king (verses 22-24).
   (c) A written testimony of the Law relating to kingship was prepared (verse 25).
   (d) A section of the people would not accept him (verse 27), but the fact that he was of the tribe of Benjamin meant that the jealousy the larger tribes had against one another was not excited.
SAUL, KING OF ISRAEL

5. SAUL’S PROMISING BEGINNING (1 Samuel 11)
   (a) The town of Jabesh-Gilead (east of Jordan), unable to maintain resistance against besieging Ammonites, could save itself from total slaughter only by submitting to shameful conditions (verses 1-3).
   (b) Saul by vigorous action mustered within a week a force from every tribe, and falling on the unsuspecting Ammonites scattered them in complete defeat (verses 6-8, 11).
   (c) This forceful leadership and victory roused such national enthusiasm that Saul was confirmed as King at Gilgal with great rejoicing (verses 12-15).

6. THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE PHILISTINES, AND SAMUEL’S REBUKE TO SAUL FOR DISOBEEDIENCE (1 Samuel 13 and 14)
   (a) The prospects of defeating the Philistines were not nearly so bright.
      i. Saul and his gallant son Jonathan could gather and arm only a small company as a fighting force (Ch. 13:2).
      ii. The Philistines, who held many strong points in the land, came out in strength to crush any attempt at revolt (Ch. 13:3-5).
      iii. The Israelites, having no heart to face such a foe, dwindled away (Ch. 13:6-7, 15).
      iv. It was certainly a time to look to God for help, and Saul anxiously awaited the promised coming of Samuel.
   (b) Saul, driven by the emergency, disobeyed a direction from Samuel.
      i. He proceeded without Samuel and offered sacrifice (Ch. 13:8-10).
      ii. The fault connected with this action was serious enough for Samuel to declare that, on this account, the kingship would not remain in Saul’s family (Ch. 13:11-14).
   (c) A daring venture by Jonathan, carried through in the strength of faith, caused the overthrow of a Philistine garrison, and a panic retreat among the Philistines (Ch. 14:6, 13-16).
   (d) Saul’s men joined in the chase and wrought some havoc on the retreating foe (Ch. 14:22-23).
   (e) Saul himself did not do so well.
   (f) He gave evidence of having an unreasonable and passionate nature by giving an unnecessarily harsh command (Ch. 14:24, 28-30); and by being prepared to kill his son who quite innocently broke the command (Ch. 14:27, 43-44)
   (g) This called forth a stubborn protest from his men, and stopped further pursuit of the enemy (Ch. 14:45-46).

7. SAUL REJECTED AS KING (1 Samuel 14 and 15)
   (a) Saul proved himself a great warrior, defeating many enemies, and carrying on a constant conflict with the Philistines (Ch. 14:47, 52).
   (b) Samuel instructed Saul to destroy the Amalekites against whom the Israelites had a long-standing enmity (Ch. 15:1-3; Deuteronomy 25:17-19).
   (c) Saul utterly defeated them but spared their king, Agag, and the best of the sheep and cattle, explaining later to Samuel that he had kept these animals to be used as sacrifices (Ch. 15:7-11, 13-15).
   (d) Samuel said ‘To obey is better than sacrifice’, and that on account of this disobedience the kingdom would be taken from him (Ch. 15:22-23, 27-28).
   (e) The two did not meet again (Ch. 15:34-35).

8. SAUL’S MADNESS AND JEALOUS HATRED OF DAVID (1 Samuel 16, 18, 22)
   (a) Saul fell into fits of depression from which he found relief when David, recommended to him as a skilful musician, played before him (Ch. 16:15, 17-18, 23).
   (b) The public acclaim however that David received after the slaying of Goliath stung Saul into such passionate jealousy that he determined to kill David (Ch. 18:6-11).
   (c) This purpose Saul followed so relentlessly that David had finally to seek refuge among the Philistine enemies (Ch. 27:1).
   (d) One dreadful story tells how, because the High Priest had quite innocently given David some help, Nob, the city of the priests, was put to the sword, a slaughter in which eighty-five priests including the High Priest himself perished (Ch. 22:16-19).
9. **SAUL’S DEATH (1 Samuel 28, 31; 2 Samuel 1)**

(a) Coming to the end of his days with fear and completely out of touch with God (1 Samuel 28:4-6), Saul met his death at Mount Gilboa in a battle with the Philistines.

(b) With him fell Jonathan and two other of his sons (1 Samuel 31:1-6).

(c) The men of Jabesh-Gilead (see Paragraph 5) bravely recaptured his beheaded body from the Philistine hands, and gave it a decent burial (1 Samuel 31:8-9, 11-13).

(d) David’s elegy mourns the close of this tragic story in noble and tender words (2 Samuel 1:17, 23-27).
DAVID, KING OF JUDAH

LESSON 71

David, the First King of Judah, and the Second King of Israel

1. DAVID’S EARLY AND PRIVATE ANOINTING AS KING, AND HIS CONTACT WITH THE ROYAL COURT (1 Samuel 16, 18 to 20; 2 Samuel 9)
   (a) David was the eighth son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah, who lived at Bethlehem.
   (b) He kept his father’s sheep, but also won more than local fame for his musical ability.
   (c) Following Samuel’s announcement to Saul that he had been rejected as king, the prophet was directed by God to seek the new king among Jesse’s sons (1 Samuel 16:1).
   (d) 1 Samuel 16:2-7, 10-13, tells how this was done.
   (e) Although the family was aware of this anointing, they were not enlightened as to its meaning. They may well have considered that David was chosen to be a prophet.
   (f) The last lesson mentioned how David was called to court to play before Saul (1 Samuel 16:23).
   (g) Following the slaying of Goliath, David became a notable leader in the army, winning increased fame by further exploits, and the respect and affection of all (1 Samuel 18:5, 14-16, 30).
   (h) He formed the closest personal and loving friendship with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:3; 20:17; 2 Samuel 9:3, 6-7), and married one of Saul’s daughters.
   (i) Nevertheless, he had to flee from court and home because of the repeated attempts Saul made to kill him.
   (j) His experience at court and the functions he fulfilled there served as invaluable training for his later responsibilities.

2. DAVID AS A FUGITIVE (1 Samuel 22, 23, 26, 27)
   (a) David first found refuge in the highlands of Judah, in the Cave of Adullam, where his relatives and eventually a force of some six hundred men gathered round him (1 Samuel 22:1-2; 23:13).
   (b) Saul at the head of a large company hunted David through the Judean hills, and David had some close escapes.
   (c) Twice, however, Saul could have been slain himself, but David spared him, and although Saul in response gave promises of peace, David did not trust him, and took refuge with the Philistines (1 Samuel 26:21; 27:1).
   (d) David carefully avoided conflict with his own countrymen, and took no part in the battle at Mount Gilboa where Saul perished.

3. THE KINGDOM DIVIDED (2 Samuel 2 to 4)
   Following the death of Saul there was divided allegiance in Israel.
   (a) The tribe of Judah made David their king, with his residence at Hebron the place of Abraham’s tomb (see map) (Ch. 2:4).
   (b) Abner, Saul’s chief general, made Ishbosheth (the only son of Saul remaining alive) king over the northern and eastern tribes, with his capital at Mahanaim east of Jordan (see map) (Ch. 2:8-10).
   (c) This state of affairs continued for seven and a half years, with David’s cause growing stronger as that of Ishbosheth’s weakened (2 Samuel 2:11; 3:1).
   (d) Finally Ishbosheth was murdered, for which deed his murderers were executed by David (2 Samuel 4:5, 7-8, 12).

4. THE KINGDOM UNITED UNDER DAVID (2 Samuel 5 to 7)
   (a) David was now accepted as the God-appointed and covenant king over all Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-3; 1 Chronicles 11:3); a position he held until his death thirty-three years later (2 Samuel 5:4, 5).
   (b) His first great purpose was to strengthen the unity of the nation.
   (c) To this end he established a new capital. Hebron was not ideal for this purpose; it was too far south, and would have given undue prominence to Judah.
   (d) Jebus (Jerusalem), although in the district of Benjamin, had never been possessed by any tribe.
   (e) David succeeded in capturing this strong fortress, which lay between the two strong tribes of Judah and Ephraim, and made it the city of David (2 Samuel 5:6-7).
DAVID, KING OF JUDAH

(f) He also sought to make it the permanent religious centre of the nation by:
   i. bringing the Ark of the Covenant, and placing it in a special tent (not The Tabernacle) (2 Samuel 6:17-18);
   ii. planning to build a Temple to replace the Tabernacle, which at that time was in Gibeon (1 Chronicles 21:29).

(g) David’s purpose to build this Temple was associated with a most important announcement from the prophet Nathan, who declared that God’s message on this matter was:
   i. The Temple was to be built, not by David, but by the son who would succeed him on the throne (2 Samuel 7:12-13).
   ii. God would build a ‘house’ for David (2 Samuel 7:11), i.e. the line of David would continue for ever in an unbroken royal succession (2 Samuel 7:16).

(h) The fulfillment of this word is partially seen in the unbroken line of Davidic kings up to the time of the Captivity; but fully seen in the establishment of the everlasting throne of Jesus, David’s greater Son (Luke 1:30-33).

5. THE EXTENSION OF DAVID’S DOMINIONS

(a) At the head of a united Israel, David faced the national enemies one by one.
(b) He drove out and subdued the Philistines, and made his neighbours east of Jordan as far north as Damascus subject peoples (2 Samuel 8:1-2, 6, 14).
(c) He also made friends with Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1).
(d) These victories made David the overlord of the territory promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18).

6. DAVID’S SIN (2 Samuel 11, 12)

(a) David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, who at the time was away from Jerusalem fighting in David’s army (2 Samuel II:1, 5).
(b) To hide their sin, David successfully plotted to bring about Uriah’s death in battle (2 Samuel 11:14-17), and later he married Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:26-27).
(c) For his double crime David was straightly denounced by the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-9).
(d) After a contrite repentance David found forgiveness, but he had to bear the bitter consequences of his sin.
(e) From that day forth he had death, bloodshed and strife in his own family circle, according to the prophet’s words (2 Samuel 12:10, 14).
(f) Later, Bathsheba bore David another son, Solomon, who succeeded him on the throne.

7. HIS LATER YEARS AND DEATH

(a) Toward the end of his eventful life (many details of which have not been mentioned), David, to stay a national plague, bought the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, upon which to raise an altar (2 Samuel 24:18, 24-25). Later the Temple was built on this site.
(b) David named Solomon as his successor, and gave him direction and instruction, particularly concerning the Temple (1 Chronicles 28:1, 5, 9-10).
(c) He left a farewell psalm for which he acknowledged Divine inspiration, and in which he spoke of the principles of righteous government, and of his own trust in God’s covenant (2 Samuel 23:1-5).
(d) He appears to have been about seventy years of age when he died (2 Samuel 5:4-5).

8. HIS WORKS

(a) The Bible is not silent over David’s sins, but he was a great man and became Israel’s ideal king.
(b) By his own worth and wise government he brought a broken and conflicting people to a degree of national unity and order that came to be regarded by succeeding generations as the nation’s ideal period.
(c) He also served them by organizing their religious worship, and by his psalms, which in turn have served the whole world.

163
THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

LESSON 72

The Reign of Solomon, and the Division of the Kingdom after his Death
(1 Kings 1 to 6; 8 to 14)

1. THE CONFLICT OVER DAVID’S SUCCESSOR (1 Kings 1 and 2)
   (a) David had many sons, and when it became apparent that he was dying, two rival claimants for the crown appeared – Adonijah and Solomon.
   (b) The sick king nominated Solomon, who was proclaimed and announced before his father died (1 Kings 1:24, 27, 32-35).
   (c) Immediately after David’s death, when it appeared that civil war might develop, Solomon had Adonijah and his supporter Joab put to death, and removed Abiathar (who also had stood for Adonijah) from his post as High Priest (1 Kings 2:23-27).

2. SOLOMON’S WISDOM (1 Kings 3 and 4)
   (a) Very early in his reign, while visiting Gibeon (where the Tabernacle then stood) for purposes of making sacrifice, God asked him what gift he chiefly desired (1 Kings 3:4-5).
   (b) He asked for wisdom to rule wisely (1 Kings 3:9).
   (c) He was promised not only wisdom, but also riches and honour (1 Kings 3:10-13).
   (d) His wisdom astonished the people of his day (1 Kings 4:29-34).

3. HIS WEALTH AND HIS WORKS (1 Kings 3, 5, 9 and 10)
   (a) Solomon inherited a condition of prosperity and peace from the conquests and administration of his father.
   (b) He made alliances with neighbouring peoples, notably with:
      i. Egypt, marrying Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 3:1).
      ii. Hiram, king of Tyre, with whom Solomon made very considerable trading agreements (1 Kings 5:1).
   (c) In association with Hiram he carried out commercial enterprises by sea (1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:22).
   (d) He also engaged in profitable trading ventures by the caravan routes which passed through his territory, e.g. 1 Kings 10:28-29.
   (e) In his day the nation reached its zenith in power and pomp.
   (f) By virtue of all these circumstances of prosperity, he was able to erect buildings of a magnificence that was new to Israel. Of these the most notable was the Temple.

4. SOLOMON’S TEMPLE (1 Kings 5, 6, and 8)
   (a) With the help of the treasure David had collected for this purpose, and of Hiram, who supplied much timber and skilled labour, a magnificent Temple, twice the size of the Tabernacle, and with attendant buildings, was completed in seven years (1 Kings 5:2, 6, 17-18; 6:37-38).
   (b) The Ark of the Covenant was placed in it with the other furnishings, and when the whole was dedicated, ‘the glory of the Lord filled his temple’ (1 Kings 8:6, 10-11).
   (c) A notable dedicatory prayer is recorded (1 Kings 8:22-23, 27, 30, 41-43, 46, 49, 50).
   (d) Solomon greatly enlarged and strengthened the city of Jerusalem itself which was now not only the centre of government but of religious worship as well, destined to become ‘the Holy City’.
   (e) God confirmed to him the Davidic covenant (1 Kings 9:5).

5. SOLOMON, A FAILURE (1 Kings 4, 5, 9, and 11)
   (a) We can say that Solomon became too much like the kings of the nations about him, and unlike the ideal covenant king spoken of by Samuel and in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 17:15-20).
   (b) Following the pattern of other courts and to confirm his alliances, Solomon married many foreign princesses.
      i. These were allowed to follow their heathen worship.
      ii. Images and other items necessary to such worship were erected with the king’s consent.

164
iii. To some extent he participated in this worship himself (1 Kings 11:1, 7-8, 4-5) as did his people (Ch. 11:33).

(c) Naturally, the number of courtiers and royal servants grew to an extravagant size.

(d) To maintain this costly establishment involved not only heavy taxation, but also the institution of a system of forced labour, e.g. 1 Kings 4:7, 22-23; 5:13-15; 9:15, 20-21.

(e) Thus all the display of wealth did not benefit but rather impoverished and distressed the large peasant section of the population.

6. THE REBELLION OF THE NORTHERN TRIBES (1 Kings 11 and 12)

(a) A prophet, Ahijah, privately told Jeroboam (the royal overseer for Ephraim) that on account of Solomon’s idolatrous practices God would grant to Solomon’s son the rule over two tribes only, and that he, Jeroboam, was to be king over the remaining ten tribes (1 Kings 11:26, 28-31, 33, 37-38).

(b) Jeroboam took refuge in Egypt until Solomon died (1 Kings 11:40)

(c) When Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, went to Shechem, he was told he would be accepted as king if he would undertake to reduce the burden of taxation.

(d) This he refused to do, whereupon the northern tribes rebelled and, making Jeroboam their king, split the nation into two kingdoms (1 Kings 12:1-5, 12-14, 16, 19-20).

(e) The ten northern and eastern tribes formed the Kingdom of Israel, which with its capital first at Shechem, later at Tirzah, and finally at Samaria, continued for some two hundred years.

(f) The tribes of Judah and Benjamin with the majority of the Levites and sundry refugees from the northern tribes (2 Chronicles 12:13-14, 16-17) formed the Kingdom of Judah with its capital at Jerusalem.

This Kingdom continued for about three hundred and fifty years, but was never during this time reunited.

7. HOW JEROBOAM EFFECTED A RELIGIOUS BREAK BETWEEN THE KINGDOMS (1 Kings 12 to 14)

(a) Jeroboam had no temple in his dominion, and feared that if all Israel continued to make the ordained yearly pilgrimages to the Temple at Jerusalem the national division would be healed, and he would lose his throne (1 Kings 12:26-27); so

(b) he set up a golden calf as an object of worship — at each of Dan in the north, and at Bethel in the south of his territory (1 Kings 12:28-29).

(c) He made a new order of priests (1 Kings 12:31).

(d) He altered the date of the Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 12:32-33) (holding it in the eighth instead of the seventh month).

(e) Jeroboam’s plan succeeded only too well.

i. The majority of the people adopted this new system, and throughout the whole history of the northern kingdom there never came a time when this practice was abandoned.

ii. Thus every subsequent mention of this man is of ‘Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin’ (2 Kings 15:28; 17:21-23).

(f) It may well be that he would claim that it was Jehovah who was being worshipped under this form, but the condemnation recorded concerning the worship of the calf at Sinai was all the more deserved here (see Lesson 64, par. 5).

(g) Condemnation from God was not long in coming.

i. At Bethel, Jeroboam was publicly condemned and a curse on the system was pronounced by an unnamed prophet (1 Kings 13:1-5).

ii. Ahijah, the prophet who had told Jeroboam he would be king, now uttered a fearful judgment on his offspring and on the nation (1 Kings 14:1-2, 5, 12-16).
INTRODUCTION. Elijah is an outstanding figure among the prophets as is Elisha, who succeeded him. Both witnessed chiefly in the Kingdom of Israel.

1. THE RISE OF BAAL WORSHIP IN ISRAEL (1 Kings 16, 18, 19)
   (a) In the fifty-year period following the death of Jeroboam the kingship of Israel changed hands three times through treason and bloodshed, the last of these usurpers being an army commander, named Omri.
   (b) He built Samaria and made it his capital, and married his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre.
   (c) When Jezebel became queen, she, being devoted to the Phoenician Baal worship:
      i. prevailed on Ahab to erect a temple to this deity in Samaria (1 Kings 16:32);
      ii. imported or created many heathen priests (1 Kings 18:19);
      iii. began an active persecution of the prophets of Jehovah (1 Kings 18:13);
      iv. persuaded the majority of the Israelites to become Baal worshippers (1 Kings 18:13).

2. NOTE CONCERNING BAAL (1 Kings 18)
   (a) The word Baal means ‘master’ or ‘lord’.
   (b) There were many Baals (Baalim), and the Phoenician Baal was known as Melkart.
   (c) Baal, as a god, was a deification of the powers of nature, and the worship given to him was denounced by the Prophets as a ‘shameful thing’, both because:
      i. of the affront it gave to the first two commandments, and
      ii. because of the evil practices with which it was associated, such as self-mutilation (1 Kings 18:28), unclean rites, and child sacrifice (Jeremiah 19:5).

3. THE DROUGHT ANNOUNCED BY ELIJAH (1 Kings 17)
   (a) Elijah, a prophet from north-east Israel, announced to Ahab that for its sin the nation would suffer drought (verse 1).
   (b) For a period of three years Elijah disappeared.
   (c) He was hidden for a short while at the brook Cherith (verses 3-7), but for most of the time in Jezebel’s own land, where a widow woman who sheltered him was maintained, and had her dead son restored to her (verses 9, 16, 17, 21-24; see Luke 4:24-26).
   (d) When Israel had suffered for three years from lack of rain (for which no relief was secured by prayers to Baal – the ‘god of nature’), Elijah appeared to Ahab with a challenge to confront him with the people and priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (Ch. 18:1, 2, 17-20).

4. THE EVENTS OF CARMEL (1 Kings 18)
   (a) Here Elijah put before the people the need to choose between Jehovah and Baal (verse 21), and prevailed on the priests of Baal to attempt to obtain a sign from their god, while Elijah would make his appeal to Jehovah (verses 22-24).
   (b) The priests of Baal and their god were publicly humiliated (verses 26-29).
   (c) Elijah’s sacrifice was honoured by God. The fire fell (verses 36-38).
   (d) The people were convinced (verse 39), and Baal’s priests were slain (verse 40).
   (e) God answered not only by fire, but by sending the longed-for rain (verses 41-45; see James 5:16-18).

5. ELIJAH AT HOREB (1 Kings 19)
   (a) When Jezebel heard the report from Carmel, she swore to take Elijah’s life (verses 1, 2).
   (b) He (having probably expected to see a national revival which would have swept Baal and all to do with this worship out of Israel) went for his life, and made for the other great Mount of God where Moses had received the Law and Israel had first entered into covenant with Jehovah (verse 8).
   (c) Here he received from God revelation and comfort by learning that:
ELIJAH AND ELISHA

i. God’s cause was not lost;
ii. He had many other faithful witnesses;
iii. God’s control was upon events in the present and in the future, controlling kings and calling prophets (verses 9, 11-18).

Note: Some years later, the king named Jehu made a purge whereby he put an end to the official worship of Baal in Israel (2 Kings 10:26-28), at least for a time.

6. ELIJAH DENOUNCES THE MURDERER OF NABOTH (1 Kings 21, 22; 2 Kings 9)
   (a) The king desired Naboth’s vineyard for a kitchen garden, and made a fair offer for it which Naboth refused, regarding it as his duty to preserve this vineyard as a family possession (cf. Numbers 36:7, 8).
   (b) Ahab was annoyed, but helpless in the circumstances (1 Kings 21:1-3).
   (c) Jezebel had no scruples about the matter, her attitude being, what is the use of being a king if you cannot have what you want?
   (d) She knew the Law of Moses and directed that Naboth should be accused of blasphemy and judicially executed (Leviticus 24:16).
   (e) This was done (1 Kings 21: 4-11, 14).

Note: This incident illustrates the restraint exercised by the Law in Israel as compared with other kingdoms at that time. Jehovah’s law was still powerful in Israel, as a standard at any rate.

(f) When Ahab went to take possession, Elijah faced him for the third time, and reproved the king. He predicted the utter ruin of the royal house, and violent deaths for Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:17-20, 23, 24).

(g) The king repented of his wrong, and God showed His mercy by postponing the destruction of his family till after Ahab’s death, which took place in a battle with the Syrians three years later (1 Kings 22:37, 38).

(h) A period of fourteen years passed before the predicted judgment came on Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37).

7. ELIJAH’S TRANSLATION (1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 2)
   (a) According to the word received at Horeb, Elijah called Elisha a farmer’s son to be his successor (1 Kings 19:19-21).
   (b) Some years later, Elijah, knowing his end was approaching, made a farewell tour of the schools of the prophets, visiting Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. Elisha accompanied him (1 Kings 2:1-5).
   (c) They crossed the Jordan at the place of Joshua’s crossing, and after Elisha had asked for the firstborn’s inheritance (double portion) of Elijah’s spirit, the older prophet disappeared in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:9-11).

8. ELISHA’S MINISTRY (2 Kings 2, 9)
   (a) Elisha was accepted as Elijah’s successor (2 Kings 2:15), and for some fifty years continued his work as prophet.
   (b) The stories of his activities are found chiefly in 2 Kings 2: 2 - 9.
   (c) There are some deeds of woe and judgment attributed to him, but his story reveals most plainly that prophets were not concerned with a ministry of condemnation only but also with one of helpfulness and encouragement.
   (d) We read of his activities in the schools of the prophets, of his dealings with kings, and of his ministry among the people, both rich and poor, and thereby gain much valuable information concerning the manner of living at that time.
   (e) The most notable of these stories concern:
      i. Relief given to a poor widow (2 Kings 4:1-7).
      ii. The Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6).
      iii. The healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5).
      iv. The events at Dothan (2 Kings 6:8-23).
      v. The siege of Samaria (7 Kings 6:24 - 7).
      vi. The account of his death (2 Kings 13:14-21).
AMOS

LESSON 74

Prophecy in Israel - Amos

THE PROPHETS - HOW THEY MAY BE CLASSIFIED

(a) As oral and writing prophets.
   i. All prophets spoke for God, but
   ii. in many cases the word spoken was also set down in written form, either by the prophet himself or by another person.
   iii. The last seventeen books of the Old Testament are all written records of prophets’ messages.

(b) Some of the more prominent oral prophets were:
   i. Moses, Samuel, Nathan and Gad – to all Israel.
   ii. Elijah, Micaiah and Elisha – to northern Israel.
   iii. Shemaiah, Hanani and Jehu his son, and Huldah (a prophetess) – to the Kingdom of Judah.

(c) The date and situation of all the writing prophets cannot be stated with certainty, but we can classify:
   i. Before the exile:
      (a) Amos and Hosea – to northern Israel
      (b) Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk – to the Kingdom of Judah
   ii. During the exile – Ezekiel and Obadiah
   iii. After the exile – Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.
   iv. The books of Jonah, Ruth and Daniel were written long after the events which they record to bring particular messages to the post-exilic Jews.

(d) The books Isaiah to Daniel are known as the Major prophets.

(e) The books Hosea to Malachi are known as the Minor prophets.

(f) Every time a prophet is read it is necessary to study the circumstances and the times in which he witnessed.

(Note 1: ‘Minor’ prophets does not mean that they were less important men, but only that the books concerned are of smaller size.
Note 2: The arrangement of these books in the Bible is by no means chronological.)

AMOS – HIS TIMES AND MESSAGE

1. AMOS
   (a) He was a shepherd, a native of Tekoa, a village five miles south of Bethlehem (Ch. 1:1), who maintained himself by selling wool from his sheep and fruit from his sycamore trees (Ch. 7:14).
   (b) He was called to the prophetic office directly by God (Ch. 7:15), and gave his message to Israel at Bethel (Ch. 7:13).
   (c) Much of what he said, however, had application to Judah as well (Chs. 2:4; 3:1; 6:1).

2. HIS TIMES – THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL
   (a) Amos spoke at a time when Jeroboam II (great grandson of the Jehu who had destroyed the house of Ahab) was king – about seventy years after Ahab.
   (b) This king had been able by conquest to recover a deal of territory which had been lost to Israel, and his dominion outwardly equalled that of David and Solomon (other than Judah) (2 Kings 14:23-25, 28).
   (c) The situation was not as good as it looked (references later in the lesson).
      i. The Israelites were now divided into two classes – the rich and the poor.
      ii. There had been a series of national adversities – drought, locusts, pestilence and war.
      iii. These distresses had not fallen equally on all. It was the poor who suffered most of all.
      iv. Generally speaking, the wealthy were greedy and heartless, increasing their estates at the expense of the poor, and using their wealth for varied forms of luxurious self-indulgence.
v. The forms of religion were being observed, but the great fault was committed of thinking that Jehovah cared nothing for these crimes against the poor so long as the religious festivals were kept and due sacrifices made.

(d) Thus Amos, in the name of the Lord, denounced these wrongs, and announced the stern judgments that would follow.

3. **AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF HIS MESSAGES**

(Note: As with the other prophets, it is to be understood that this book records a number of discourses. All the message contained here was not given on any one occasion.)

(a) Jehovah is God of the whole earth, and the Defender of the oppressed everywhere.
   - Stated in Ch. 9:7, and also in the portion Chs. 1:3 to 2:6.
   - Here the prophet condemns in turn Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and Israel for varied forms of heartless cruelty shown by men to their fellows.
   - In the case of Judah and Israel the condemnation is all the greater because they had been taught the law of love and mercy by God’s prophets, and because they had received great mercies from God themselves (Ch. 3:1-2).

(b) Some detail of particular sins.
   - No respect for human dignity (Ch. 2:6, 8).
     - Poor and slaves treated as chattels (possessions).
     - Garments taken in pledge retained (see Exodus 22:26-27).
   - Cheating:
     - In the market – in quantity, price and quality (Ch. 8:5-6).
     - In the Law Court – using bribes (Ch. 5:12).
   - Luxurious self-indulgence, while others were in bitter need (Chs. 4:1; 6:1, 4-6).
   - No respect for truth – prophets and righteous men silenced (Ch.2:12; 5:10).
   - This last point was verified in the case of Amos himself, who was told to leave Israel and prophesy no more (Ch. 7:10-13).

(c) Offences in worship.
   - The perverted worship introduced by Jeroboam 1 with his golden calves was still being followed (Ch. 8:14).
   - The idea concerning Jehovah as a God of Righteousness was, in practice, abandoned.
     - They spoke of a ‘Day of the Lord’ when God would, in some special way, manifest Himself among them – considering that this would mean still further material blessing and exaltation (Ch. 5:18).
   - Thus all their diligent observances of the forms of worship were totally unacceptable to God (Ch. 5:21-23).

4. **THE JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED**

(a) God had appeared to the prophet in a vision, and with His ‘plumbline’ had shown him the nation’s tottering condition (Ch. 7:7-9).
(b) He who had given signs of His increasing displeasure would come among them with still sterner judgments (Ch. 4: 6-12).
(c) The ‘Day of the Lord’ would be one of terror, and not of prosperity (Ch. 5:18, 20).
(d) The judgments pronounced would be inescapable and prolonged (Chs. 5:19; 9:2-4).
(e) The holy places would be rendered desolate (Chs. 3:14; 7:9).
(f) They who had rejected God’s word would not have it when they did desire it (Ch. 8:11-12).
(g) They, who by God’s hand had been brought into the land, would by His judgment be driven from it (Chs. 2:10; 5:27; 9:9).

5. **JUDGMENT WAS TEMPERED WITH MERCY AND HOPE**

(a) The people could repent and amend their ways (Ch. 5:4, 14-15, 24).
(b) God’s mercy and purpose of grace would not depart completely from Israel (Ch. 9:8-9).
(c) The book closes with a picture of a restored land, and of a blessing that would extend to all nations (Ch. 9:11-15); (see Acts 15:16-18).
CONCLUSION. Although Amos’s voice appears to have been silenced, there were those who recognised his words to be truth from God, and thus they preserved this written copy of his messages for the benefit of all who would heed them. Nor was Israel denied another warning, for later the prophet Hosea gave his messages and told of the pain the unfaithfulness of Israel brought to the heart of God.
INTRODUCTION. As said in the previous lesson, Hosea succeeded Amos as a prophet to Israel. He differed from Amos in that he was a native of the northern kingdom and prophesied during a longer period. In his days the decline of the kingdom, so unexpected by many when Amos spoke, began to be generally apparent. Hosea can be called the prophet of the decline and fall of Israel, as Jeremiah can be so named in the case of Judah.

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (referred to also in Lesson 76, Par. 5)
   (a) The dynasty of Jehu passed away with the assassination of the son of Jeroboam II.
   (b) Then followed five kings in fairly quick succession, only one of these being succeeded by a son, and three of them dying violent deaths.
   (c) Assyria, after holding Israel in subjugation for a period, finally brought the kingdom to an end, thus fulfilling the word of both prophets.
   (d) It was in these days, when men’s hearts were quaking with fear from the foe without, and smitten with distress by the misrule within, that Hosea spoke to their condition with a word from God.

2. HOSEA’S DISTINCTIVE STORY
   The narrative part of the book, Chs.1 to 3, has to do with Hosea’s own domestic story.
   (a) He married a woman called Gomer who became the mother of three children, two boys and a girl (Ch. 1:3).
   (b) Gomer proved unfaithful and deserted husband and children for her lovers (Ch. 2:5).
   (c) She herself being discarded came to such destitution that she was being offered for sale as a slave.
   (d) Hosea, seeking for her and finding her in this condition, paid the purchase price and restored her to his home in the hope that she would reform (Ch. 3:1-3).

3. HOSEA’S DISTINCTIVE MESSAGE
   (a) Hosea saw a striking parallel between Gomer’s relationships with him, and the nation’s relationships with God. Both ideas are closely woven together in Ch. 2.
   i. As Gomer had deserted him, so Israel had deserted God for Baal (Ch. 2:13).
   ii. As Gomer had come to complete wretchedness and bondage, so would the nation (Ch. 2:10-13).
   (b) Then came Hosea’s greatest word. As Hosea’s love moved him to seek Gomer in her sin with restoring grace, so God in His eternal loving kindness would seek to restore the faithless nation (Ch. 3:1).
   (c) He completed the message by showing that, as with Gomer, the nation’s restoration would depend:
      i. On the grace of this great love which would not let them go (Ch. 2:14).
      ii. On their coming to repentance and reform, which would be stimulated:
         (a) by their enduring the bitter but enlightening judgment their sin would inevitably bring upon them (Ch. 2:6-7):
         (b) by the revelation of the infinite grace that offered restoration to favour and fellowship for such unworthy souls (Ch. 2:19-20).
   (d) Thus the picture we have in this Scripture is of Jehovah as a tender and faithful husband, and of Israel as a faithless wife.
   (e) This presentation of Jehovah does not mean that He does not act in judgment, so the four main ideas in the prophecy are - backsliding, judgment, love and restoration.
   All of these are illustrated in the first three chapters, and in greater detail in those which follow.

4. HOSEA’S CHILDREN
   (a) The children of the prophet are also part of his message, inasmuch as they were given symbolic names.
   i. Jezreel – ‘God will scatter’ (Ch. 1:4).
   ii. Lo-ruhamah - ‘no mercy’ (uncompassionate) (Ch. 1:6).
iii. Lo-ammi -- ‘not my people’ (Ch. 1:9).

(b) These names are used in an application to Hosea’s message of judgment (as above), and also in an application to his message of restoration (Chs. 10-11; 2:23).

5. THE SINS BY WHICH ISRAEL’S UNFAITHFULNESS TO JEHOVAH WAS SHOWN

In contrast with Amos who was chiefly concerned with the sins of men against their fellows, Hosea is concerned with their sins against God Himself.

(a) Baal worship.
   i. The word Baal meaning ‘master’ or ‘lord’, and while being used by the Canaanites as a title of their nature deity, was also (not improperly) used by the Israelites when referring to Jehovah (Ch. 2:16).
   ii. The trouble came when they identified the two, and attempted, as with Jeroboam’s golden calves, to worship Jehovah with practices which belonged to the heathen Baal.
   iii. These practices were both debased and debasing, having in them features of gross immorality and depravity (Chs. 4:12-14; 13:2).

(b) General moral decay – other offences against the Ten Commandments, such as profanity, untruthfulness, banditry and drunkenness are mentioned (Chs. 4:1-2; 7:1).

(c) Seeking alliances with heathen nations (Chs. 7:11; 8:9; 12:1). This was not only an act of distrust in the protecting care of Jehovah, it was a practice which often involved the Israelites in becoming entangled with heathen worship.

(d) All sections of the nation were affected.
   The royal court (Chs. 7:3, 5; 8:4) and the priesthood (Chs. 4:6; 6:9), as well as the people (Chs. 4:9, 12).

(e) Any signs of repentance were transient and shallow (Ch. 6:4, 6).

6. THE JUDGMENT THAT WOULD BE REAPED

(a) On the land (Ch. 2:5, 8-9, 12) as a revelation of the nothingness of the Baals, who were supposed to bless the land with fertility.

(b) On the places of worship (Ch. 10:8).

(c) By being deprived of all things other than God Himself in which they had trusted (Ch. 3:4).

(d) Expulsion from the land itself (Chs. 8:7-8; 9:17).

7. THE MESSAGE CONCERNING RESTORATION

(a) The grace that sought them (Ch. 2:14, 16-17, 19).
   i. It was not a new thing in their history (Ch. 11:1, 4).
   ii. It was their only hope (Ch. 13:4, 9-10).

(b) The response they should make (Chs. 10:12; 12:6; 14:1-3).

(c) The blessings restoration would bring:
   i. Restoration of the land and of fellowship (Chs. 2:21-23; 14:4-8).
   ii. Hosea, who made but passing reference to Judah, foretells a day when there will be a reuniting of the two kingdoms under a Davidic King (Chs. 1:7, 10-11; 3:5).

8. NOTABLE NEW TESTAMENT TREATMENT OF HOSEA’S MESSAGE

(a) More than once Jesus used Hosea Ch. 6:6 when confronting the Pharisees in their fight for observance of the ‘Tradition’ (see Matthew 9:13; 12:7).

(b) Peter and Paul see that this promise of restoring grace extends to the world, and that it was being fulfilled in the Church where the alien Gentile was enjoying its benefits (see Hosea 1:10; 2:23; 1 Peter 2:9-10; cf. Ephesians 2:12-13; Romans 9:25-26).

(c) See also Hosea 13:14, and 1 Corinthians 15:54-55.
A Survey of the History of Israel and Judah, after the Division of the Kingdom

INTRODUCTION. The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel were small, and existed at a time when small nations did not retain their full independence for any length of time. Their history is so much affected by that of the nations who surrounded them that their story cannot be understood unless there is some knowledge of events in this world beyond their borders.

Note: This lesson cannot be studied without reference to the map.

1. THE SMALLER NATIONS WHOSE TERRITORIES ADJOINED THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH
   (a) We have made mention of the Philistines, Phoenicians, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites and noted some of the effects these peoples had on Israelitish history.
   (b) Following the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Syria with its capital at Damascus grew in importance, and while it never became a large military power, yet at times it grew strong enough to subdue the Northern Kingdom almost to the point of extinction (2 Kings 13:4, 7).

2. THE LARGER NATIONS WHICH DOMINATED THE HISTORY OF THAT TIME
   (a) The Egyptians.
      Adjoining Judah on the south-west was Egypt, which owing to its own internal troubles had lost much of its former greatness, but was still a force to be feared. Above all, it was not far away.
   (b) The Assyrians.
      Travelling in reverse the road which Abraham had first come into Canaan (and passing both Damascus, and Haran where Laban had lived) on the banks of the Tigris stood the city of Nineveh. This was the capital city of an aggressive and ferocious people called the Assyrians named from their reputed founder and god ‘Asshur’, and not to be confused with the Syrians.
   (c) The Babylonians.
      On the way by the Euphrates to Ur, Abraham’s native place, was Babylon, a very ancient city and the centre of the Babylonian or Chaldean Kingdom.

3. THE ASSYRIANS THE DOMINANT POWER
   (a) At the period of Israelitish history with which we are dealing, Assyria was the greatest of these powers, and was on the way to become greater still.
   (b) When the Assyrians were engaged in subduing the Babylonians, the Palestinian peoples enjoyed some relief,
   (c) but when Assyria made any move against Egypt, or Egypt against Assyria, then all these smaller nations were liable to suffer from the campaigns, conflicts and threats of invading armies.
   (d) At such times it became a burning question as to the means by which these smaller nations could save themselves – by submission? by resistance? by alliances? or in the case of Israel and Judah, by a well-founded trust in God? (See Hosea 7:11; Isaiah 8:11-13).

4. THE CONDUCT OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND
   (a) Their respective conditions.
      Compared with Israel:
      i. Judah was the smaller in extent and population, but was compact, manageable, and more easily defended.
      ii. It was less fertile, but had a well-trained army, and (for that age) a competent civil service, both of which were at first lacking in Israel.
      iii. Judah also had the strongly fortified city of Jerusalem, the glory of the Temple, and an unbroken line of kings descended from David.
   (b) Their relationship to one another.
      i. In the first half-century, after the division of the Kingdom, they were in conflict.
AFTER DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

ii. In this period Israel was glad for Egypt to attack Judah (1 Kings 14:25-26), while later Asa, the grandson of Rehoboam, encouraged the king of Syria by a substantial gift to attack Israel (1 Kings 15:16-22).

iii. Then for about a century they were mostly at peace or even in alliance, with Israel as the leading partner, as in the campaigns against Syria (1 Kings 22:1, 3-4), and against Moab (2 Kings 3:6-7).
   (a) This alliance was first cemented by the marriage of the prince of Judah (Jehoram) to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 22:44; 2 Kings 8:16, 18).
   (b) Athaliah, who eventually died as violent a death as did her mother, was responsible before she died for causing probably more bloodshed and spreading of idolatry in Judah than Jezebel had done in Israel.
   (c) This period closed with the death of Jeroboam II, the prosperous king spoken of in the lesson on Amos.

iv. A closing period of some fifty years saw Israel in rapid decline.
   (a) About the time of Jeroboam II the Assyrian threat was hanging like a black cloud over all northern Palestine.
   (b) For mutual self-preservation, Israel allied itself with Syria, and turned against the kings of Judah, who were unwilling to join this confederacy.
   (c) When an invasion of Judah was made, Ahaz, king of Judah, against the word of Isaiah (Isaiah 7:2-4, 7), appealed to the Assyrian king, who ravaged Syria and northern Israel.
   (d) Ahaz paid for this help by making his act of submission both to the king of Assyria and to his gods (2 Kings 16:5, 7-10).

5. THE END OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AT THE HAND OF THE ASSYRIANS
   (a) Of the last six kings of Israel, only one (Menahem) came to the end of his days in peace, but even he held his throne only as a subject king to Assyria.
   (b) After his death, three kings followed in the next seven years, but when the last of these, Hoshea, was discovered by his Assyrian overlord to be seeking help from Egypt, Assyria descended upon Samaria.
   (c) After a three-year siege, the city was completely overthrown, and the Kingdom of Israel came to a complete end (2 Kings 17:1, 3-6).
   (d) To prevent any restoration of national resistance, the Assyrian king (Sargon) took away (according to his monument) 27,290 Israelites, scattering them in Mesopotamia and Media, and replacing them with colonists from other parts of his dominion (2 Kings 17:22-24).
   (e) The banished Israelites were composed of the influential leaders and the wealthy class of the nation, thus fulfilling the words of Amos (Amos 4:1-2; 6:7-8).
   (f) The imported people married in with the poor Israelites left in the land, and became ancestors of the Samaritans of the New Testament (2 Kings 17:29-41).

   (a) The dissolution of the Northern Kingdom happened in 721 BC, at a time when Hezekiah was king of Judah, and Isaiah and Micah were active prophets of the Lord.
   (b) Judah itself came very near to destruction by the Assyrian power, and for years was oppressed by, or subject to, it.
   (c) Nevertheless after a century of great power under four mighty monarchs, Assyria became weaker, and its many foes eagerly advanced to hasten its end.
   (d) A pious Judean king named Josiah unwisely opposed an Egyptian army marching northward and was killed in battle at Megiddo, 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23: 28-30).
   (e) Judah was thus rendered subject to Egypt for a time (2 Kings 23:31, 33-35).
   (f) Nineveh finally fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC, and with it the whole Assyrian empire which had existed for one thousand years came to an end.
   (g) The Babylonians who became the next world power put an end to the sway of Egypt at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, so that Judah then fell increasingly under the domination of
AFTER DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Babylon. It was only because the land of these new conquerors was far away that Judah was saved from immediate subjugation.

7. THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH AT THE HANDS OF THE BABYLONIANS

(a) Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon:
   i. put king Jehoiakim, a son of Josiah (appointed by Egypt), under tribute (2 Kings 24:1);
   ii. in 597 BC.
      (a) carried Jehoiachin, Jehoiakim’s successor, into captivity with his court officers and ten thousand of the most distinguished people of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:8, 10, 13-16).
      (b) put Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, on the throne as a puppet king (2 Kings 24:17).
   iii. In 586-585 BC, because Zedekiah had given signs of rebellion, besieged Jerusalem for eighteen months and, upon taking it, gave it over to complete destruction and removed almost all the remaining population as captives to Babylonia (2 Kings 25:1-2, 8-12).
   iv. The few who remained later fled to Egypt, and thus Jerusalem and Judah suffered a more complete devastation than had Samaria and the Kingdom of Israel in their day (2 Kings 25:22, 25-26).

(b) The great prophet Jeremiah witnessed all these events from the time of Josiah, and Ezekiel was among those taken captive with Jehoiachin, 597 BC.

(c) The messages of both these prophets are therefore most clearly connected with the stirring and tragic events of their day.
   i. Jeremiah gave his message from the stricken city of Jerusalem, while
   ii. Ezekiel gave his entire message while he was a captive in Chaldea.

(Note: Various books may show some slight variation from the dates quoted, but those given may be taken as a safe guide.)
INTRODUCTION. The Book of Isaiah consists of a collection of writings which are not found in time order, and thus is not read to the best advantage unless this is kept in mind. For instance, in the first five chapters we have records of Isaiah’s prophetic utterances which were given after his call, which is not recorded until Chapter 6.

The Book contains historical records and a great deal of prophetic messages, some of which are in the form of songs and most of which is cast in a poetic strain.

The study of this book is most rewarding. It contains some of the most impressive and beautiful words to be found in Scripture, has considerable mention in the New Testament, and has provided a great contribution to Christian worship, song and poetry. There are few chapters in which some sublime and memorable statement cannot be found. These should be known to the Bible student by personal study.

1. ISAIAH - THE MAN
   (a) Isaiah, the son of Amoz, lived in Jerusalem, and was a prophet to the Kingdom of Judah for some forty years, which extended from the time of Uzziah to that of Manasseh, Hezekiah’s son (Ch. 1:1).
   (b) Some of his messages were addressed to Israel, and some to other nations.
   (c) He was often at court as Counsellor of kings, and is recorded as having written accounts of the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:32).
   (d) He was a married man with at least two sons.

2. HIS TIMES
   (a) Isaiah was called to the prophetic office ‘in the year that king Uzziah died’ (Ch.6:1).
   (b) This king had left Judah in a prosperous and peaceful condition, and his son Jotham worthily nourished the kingdom for a few years by religious example and good administration.
   (c) Under the next king, Ahaz, a series of disasters fell upon Judah, not the least of which was the ungodly example and unkingly qualities of Ahaz himself (2 Chronicles 28:19).
   (d) At this time also came the upsurge of Assyrian power, which overwhelmed in turn Syria, Israel and the Philistines, and flowing into Egypt threatened with extinction the poor remnant of Judah, which stood like a small island in the path of an engulfing tide.
   (e) This threat remained over Judah throughout the rest of Isaiah’s life.
   (f) These external woes were not Judah’s only trouble. Isaiah saw in Judah all the iniquities for which Israel had been denounced by the prophet Amos.
   (g) Isaiah’s message has reference therefore to all these matters – to the threats from without, and to the evils within.

3. HIS MESSAGE AS IT AFFECTED POLITICAL AFFAIRS
   (a) Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts (Ch. 1:24), was in command of the situation.
      i. The Assyrians were being used by God for His purposes (Ch. 10:5-6, 15).
      ii. They would go no further than He willed.
      iii. Their idea that their victories proved the superiority of their gods to the gods of their victims would receive a stern check and there would be a final judgment upon them (Ch. 10:7-12).
   (b) In keeping with this revelation concerning Jehovah, Isaiah constantly spoke against foreign alliances:
      i. rebuking Ahaz for his appeal to Assyria to be his saviour (Ch. 7:1-9; Cf. 2 Chronicles 28:16, 20-21);
      ii. in Hezekiah’s day, denouncing the policy of looking to Egypt for salvation (Chs. 30:1; 2; 31:1 3);
      iii. and also to Babylon (Ch. 39:3-6).
   (c) He showed that the events of all nations were in the hands of God, who pronounced words of judgment on many of them (Chs. 13 to 23).
4. HIS MESSAGE AS IT AFFECTED THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL SITUATION
   (a) He spoke constantly of God as ‘the Holy One of Israel’, meaning that He is not only ‘high and exalted’, but that He is of a burning righteousness which will not tolerate evil.
   (b) In the light of this holiness Isaiah saw the iniquities of Judah.
   (c) Some of the social evils he denounced were:
      i. Rich land holders who betrayed the poor (Chs. 3:14-15; 5:8).
      iii. Luxury and sinful indulgence (Chs. 2:7; 3:16; 5:11-12, 22).
      iv. Weakness and wickedness among national leaders (Ch. 3:12).
   (d) Some of the religious evils he denounced were:
      i. The land full of idols (Ch. 2:8, 20).
      ii. A turning to superstition and magic (Chs. 2:6; 8:19).
      iii. The worship of Jehovah a mere formality (Ch. 1:13-17).
      iv. Disgusting conduct among religious leaders (Ch. 28:7-8).
   (e) Generally there was a rejection by the people of righteous and faithful men (Ch. 30:9-11).
   (f) The judgment for these evils would be terrible (Ch. 2:19).
      i. It was of God’s mercy the blow had not fallen sooner - Judah had Sodom’s sin, without Sodom’s fate (Ch. 1:9-10).
      ii. Judgment would involve exile for both Israel and Judah.
      iii. In the case of Judah, however, it would not be an Assyrian, but a Babylonian, captivity (Ch. 39:3-6).
      (Note: This was said at a time when Babylon was itself subject to Assyria and friendly to Judah.)
   (g) There was a message of hope.
      i. He could not offer this to the entire nation:
         (a) the majority were rejecters of the light and hardened in this condition;
         (b) the hope must, therefore, be given to a righteous remnant, who although sharing the judgments could trust for a blessed restoration (Chs. 4:3;10:20-23; 11:16).
      ii. Even narrower than the remnant, the hope for the future lay in an individual, a king who would reign in righteousness and peace, and inaugurate a golden age (Chs. 9:6-7; 11:1-5).
      iii. The blessings that would ensue would belong to the realm of the eternal covenant of God, and bring blessing to all nations (Ch. 11:9-10).

5. ISAIAH USED SOME UNUSUAL METHODS TO DRIVE HOME HIS MESSAGE
   (a) He said that he and his children were for signs in Israel (Ch. 8:18), and called his two sons by strange names:
      i. Shear-Jashub (Ch. 7:3), which meant ‘a remnant shall return’.
      ii. Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Ch. 8:3), which meant ‘quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil’, i.e. that judgment was coming quickly, especially on Samaria and Damascus (Ch. 8:1-4).
      iii. His own name ‘Isaiah’ meant ‘Salvation of Jehovah’, ‘the Lord saves’.
   (b) He walked for a period in captive’s garb, to give force to his message concerning Egypt, although it appears that he had been wearing sackcloth before this time (Ch. 20:2-3).
   (c) He used figures of speech of great beauty and power, e.g.:
      i. ‘The mountain of the Lord’s temple’ (Ch. 2:2-4). (This was also used by Micah 4:1-4.)
      ii. ‘The New Jerusalem’ (Ch. 4:2-6).
      iii. ‘The unfruitful vineyard’ (Ch 5:1-7).

6. TWO OF THE MOST NOTABLE INCIDENTS IN HIS LIFE
   (a) His call recorded in Ch. 6:1-8.
   (b) The great deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib recorded in Chs. 36 and 37.
      i. In Hezekiah’s reign this mighty Assyrian king, then engaged in invasion of Egypt, having ravaged Judah, threatened Jerusalem (Ch. 36:1-2, 13-17).
Hezekiah in dismay sent to the prophet who asserted that no attack would be made, that the Assyrians would completely withdraw, and that the king would be killed (Ch. 37:1, 6-7, 33-35).

This word was fulfilled (Ch. 37:36-38).

The prophet Micah gave his witness at the same time as Isaiah was speaking although he spoke chiefly in the country area outside of Jerusalem. His words throw additional light on the sufferings of the poor at this time.
INTRODUCTION. In the next two lessons we attempt to give some idea of the contents of the whole book.

1. THE THREE MAIN DIVISIONS
   (a) Part 1. Chapters 1 to 35 – mainly a collection of prophecies not arranged in order of time.
   (b) Part 2. Chapters 36 to 39 – an historical portion practically the same as 2 Kings 18:13 to 20:19.,
       telling of some of Isaiah’s momentous dealings with king Hezekiah.
   (c) Part 3. Chapters 40 to 66 – another collection of prophetic utterances.
   (d) There is a difference between the prophecies of Part 1 and Part 3.
      i. Those in Part 1 are mainly concerned with the condition of Judah and Israel when in
         their own land, and deal chiefly with the judgments which will come upon them for their
         sins.
      ii. Those in Part 3 (at least Chs. 40 to 57) are concerned with the condition of the nation
         when in a state of captivity, and deal with the matter of restoration to their own land, and
         with other fruits of God’s blessing and grace in salvation.
   (e) Thus the outstanding idea in Part 1 is judgment, and the outstanding idea in Part 3 is comfort.
       (This does not mean that there is no comfort in Part 1, and no judgment in Part 3.)
   (f) Chapters 1 and 40 are each remarkable representations of the group of prophecies they
       introduce (see Chs. 1:4, 7, 19, 20; 40:1, 2).

2. A MORE DETAILED ANALYSIS OF PART 1
   CHS. 1 - 12. Prophecies concerning Judah and Israel.
   The most notable Scriptures in this portion, additional to those indicated in the previous lesson, are:
   Ch.1. This great chapter (belonging probably to the period of the Assyrian invasion – verses 7-8),
        declares:
           (a) The sad condition of the nation, and its cause (verses 2 to 6);
           (b) Not more attention to formal worship, but repentance will save them (verses 11 to 17);
           (c) God’s pleadings, grief and grace (verses 18 to 27).
   Ch.3:16-23. A description of the vanities of the women of Jerusalem.
   Ch.7:10-16. The sign given to Ahaz.
      ‘The sign of the baby’
      (a) Isaiah, who used his own sons as ‘signs’, said that the birth of a certain baby, which would soon
          take place, would in some way give Ahaz confirmation that Isaiah’s words were God-inspired,
          and that God was indeed acting in the affairs of men.
      (b) Matthew points out how the coming of Jesus is the greatest sign God has given to all men to
          confirm the truth of His word, and of His presence with them (Matthew 1:22-23).
      (c) The setting in Isaiah reminds us that God can manifest Himself (Immanuel - ‘God with us’) in
          judgment as well as in grace (cf. Matthew 1:21; 3:7, 10, 12).
   Ch.10:28-32. The vivid description of an invading army.
   Ch.12. The song of tender comfort and glorious triumph.
   CHS. 13 to 23. Woes pronounced against various nations hostile to God and His people:
      (a) Jerusalem itself is included among them (Ch. 22).
      (b) Note the woe on Babylon (Chs.13:19-22; 14:12-15, 22, 23).
   CHS. 24 to 27. God victorious over His foes.
      Note:
      Ch. 24:5-6, 20-21, 23 – the whole world judged.
      Ch.25:8, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54; Revelation 21:4.
      Ch.26:1-4 – the city of salvation.
   CHS. 28 to 34. Denunciations of the sins of Israel and Judah.
      See:
      Ch. 28:14-17. True and false security, cf. 1 Peter 2:6; Romans 9:31-33.
Ch. 30:15, 17 19, 21. The way of trust in God.
Ch. 32:1-2, 15-18. Righteousness and peace the fruit of the Spirit.
Ch. 34: 8-11. A picture of judgment.

CH. 35. The triumphant song of restoration and the returning exiles.

3. PART 2
CHS. 36 to 39. The historical portion.
Chs. 36, 37. The great deliverance from Sennacherib.
Ch. 38. Hezekiah healed of a deadly sickness, and his song of thanksgiving (verses 9-20); not recorded elsewhere.
Ch. 39. The Babylonian visitors and Isaiah’s word concerning them.
Note: From the time references supplied by the Bible itself it is established that the events of Chs. 38 and 39 occurred before those of Chs. 36 and 37.
INTRODUCTION. In the previous lesson we said that this portion is concerned with the condition of the nation when in its state of captivity. It contains great announcements concerning the majesty of God, and of the certainty that His purposes will be fulfilled in His way – purposes that will include restoration for Israel, but much more than this – a salvation for all mankind.

1. CHAPTER 40 HAS IN IT MOST OF THE THEMES WHICH ARE DEALT WITH IN THE SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS, thus:
   Verses 1-2. The message of pardon and hope.
   Verses 3-5. The herald announcing the coming of a great revelation from God (cf. Matthew 3:3).
   Verses 9-11. God manifesting Himself in great might, and in tender grace.
   Verses 13-18. God, the ruler of the whole world,
   Verses 25-26. indeed of the universe.
   Verses 27-31. All this power and grace made available to the humblest and weakest who seeks it.

2. THE MAJESTY OF GOD’S BEING AND POWER
   (a) He alone is God (Chs. 43:10-11; 44:6, 8).
   (b) He is the Creator and supreme Ruler of all (Chs. 40:12, 15, 26; 45:12).
   (c) His word stands for ever (Ch. 40:8).
   (d) Therefore, all His purposes will be fulfilled (Ch. 46:10).
      i. By overcoming all that appears to obstruct or oppose His purpose (Ch. 43:13,16,19).
      ii. By giving all necessary aid to those who serve it (Ch. 42:16; 43:1-2).
      iii. His purposes include the restoration (Ch. 43:5-6).
   (e) In contrast to His power, the claims of heathen gods are absurd.
      i. These gods have no power; they even have to be carried about themselves (Ch. 46:1-2).
      ii. Their worshippers are without sense:
         from the same tree a man provides himself with a god to be worshipped, and with fuel to cook his dinner (Ch. 44:9-10, 13-17).

3. THE GRACE OF THIS ALMIGHTY GOD
   (a) It will avail for Israel in spite of their sins (Chs. 40:2, 11, 27; 41:8, 10, 14).
   (b) It avails for the individual whose weakness and apparent insignificance do not disqualify him, but rather are his recommendation (Chs. 40:29; 42:3; 57:15).
   (c) It is wide enough to embrace all men (Chs. 42:6; 45:22; 60:3).

4. THE AGENTS THAT HE USES
   (a) Some of these are used unconsciously.
      As Assyria was a tool in God’s hands to bring judgment on Israel, so Cyrus the Persian (who overthrew the oppressing Babylon) would be His agent to effect their restoration (Ch. 45:1-2, 4).
   (b) Israel was called to do consciously God’s service in the world (Chs. 43:21; 44:21).
   (c) In this calling the nation as a whole had failed (Ch. 43:22).
   (d) Nevertheless, true servants of God were to be found, and above all, a Supreme Servant.

5. THE IDEAL SERVANT OF GOD
   (a) There is in this section what are known as the Servant Songs, i.e.
      i. Ch. 42:1-9;
      ii. Ch. 49:1-6;
      iii. Ch. 50:4-9;
      iv. Ch. 52:13-15;
      v. Ch. 53.
These speak of this Supreme Servant of God who will truly fulfil the work of God’s Kingdom and Redemption in the world.

Among His characteristics are:

i. Absolute fidelity to righteousness (Chs. 42:4; 50:7),

ii. for which fidelity, extreme and undeserved suffering is endured (Chs. 50:5-6; 52:14; 53:2-3);

iii. but yet he will triumph and bring unbounded blessing both for Israel and for all nations (Chs. 49:4-6; 42:6; 53:11).

iv. Combined with the unflinching stand for righteousness are the characteristics of gentleness (Ch. 42:3), and patient endurance (Ch. 53:7).

In those days men could do little better than to look for some righteous section (remnant) of the nation, or to some supreme leader who would, in some degree, fulfil these tremendous requirements and bestow these transcendent blessings, but Christians rightly see that the only satisfactory interpretation of the meaning of these songs is to be found in the life of Jesus Christ, and in His sacrifice on the Cross. (Matthew 12:15-21; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Peter 2:24-25.)

God brought about a more glorious fulfilment of these prophecies than any of which the prophet could have dreamed. Note Ch. 61; and Luke 4:17-22.

CONCLUSION. Pressure of time denies us the opportunity to examine many other noble passages. Please understand that they are there, and mark in your Bible such other majestic and gracious words which are to be found in Chs. 54 and 55; and in every chapter from 58 to 66, and which have notable mention in the New Testament.
INTRODUCTION. Jeremiah is probably the greatest of the Hebrew prophets. His book contains not only words of prophecy and records of events with which he was associated, but also information concerning the working of his mind, so that much can be learned as to what sort of man he was. Through a long and faithful ministry in which he was subjected to bitter opposition and persecution, his greatest anguish was to see his nation come blindly to inevitable disaster, deaf to the words of warning and guidance that he gave. He suffered with them in their darkest hour, but in that day of desolation was able to announce the coming of a time of restoration and fulfilment which he knew he would not live to see.

1. HIS TIMES

(a) It is necessary to know the background history of this prophet of the decline and fall of the Judean monarchy.

(b) His ministry extended for forty years, from the thirteenth year of King Josiah, to the end of the Kingdom’s final chapter (Ch. 1:1-3).

(c) This means that he began his work as a prophet practically one hundred years after Samaria and the northern Kingdom had fallen.

(d) During these hundred years, Judah had been subject to the threat or power of Assyria, but as Josiah came to the throne this power was weakening, so that the people of Jerusalem now breathed more freely and increasingly comforted themselves with the assurance that Samaria’s fate would not be theirs.

(e) The history of the succeeding years can best be covered by giving essential detail of the last monarchs to reign in Judah, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1) JEHOAHAZ (3 months)</th>
<th>2) JEHOIAKIM (11 years)</th>
<th>4) ZEDEKIAH (11 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deposed and imprisoned by Pharaoh Necho.</td>
<td>Appointed by Pharaoh Necho</td>
<td>Appointed by Nebuchadnezzar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) in his eighteenth year stimulated a religious revival, followed by the discovery of the Book of the Law;</td>
<td>(a) Later became subject to Nebuchadnezzar who had crushed the Egyptian power</td>
<td>(a) Looked to Egypt for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) died of wounds received in the battle of Megiddo, where he unwisely opposed Pharaoh Necho.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Captured and blinded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(These events recorded in 2 Kings 22, 23.)

(3) JEHOIACHIN (3 months)
| (a) Called also Jeconiah or Coniah |
| (b) Taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, together with many royal and notable citizens (Ezekiel one of them). |

(These events recorded in 2 Kings 23 - 25.)

(f) Reference to each of these kings is found in the book of Jeremiah, but chiefly:

i. Jehoiakim, who was Jeremiah’s outstanding opponent.
ii. Zedekiah, who although making some attempt to relieve the prophet’s sufferings, was too unbelieving to accept his message (Ch. 37:2), and too weak to save him from imprisonment (Ch. 38:5).

2. JEREMIAH HIMSELF
   (a) Was born of a priestly family in the priest town of Anathoth, 2½ miles north-east of Jerusalem (Ch. 1:1).
   (b) Was called by God in his youth to be a prophet.
   (c) Thus he spoke with the dignity of both prophet and priest in a day when each of these orders had sunk to its lowest level of degradation (Ch. 23:11, 14).
   (d) He was naturally of a sensitive and retiring nature, and thus shrank from the heart-wounding experiences the discharge of his mission involved (Chs. 1:6; 9:1-2; 20:7).
   (e) Nevertheless, God gave him courage to stand, and an overmastering passion to speak, for Him (Chs. 1:18-19; 20:9, 11).
       Hence, God was able to speak two powerful messages to that generation:
       i. One through the prophet’s words, and
       ii. the other through the prophet’s character.

3. THE OUTSTANDING SINS HE DENOUNCED
These were idolatries, social and political sins.
   (a) Idolatries.
       Generally, the nation had turned from God and turned to heathen deities (Chs. 2:11-13; 3:20; 5:23-24).
       i. Worship of wooden poles and stones on the hill tops.
          These represented female and male nature deities in whose worship immoral rites were involved (Chs. 12:27; 3:9; 17:2). (See the prophet Hosea.)
       ii. Child sacrifices in the valley of Hinnom, just outside Jerusalem (Chs. 7:31; 19:4-6).
       iii. Multiple altars to Baal.
          For every street in Jerusalem (Ch. 11:13); also worship on the house tops (Ch. 32:29).
       iv. Worship of the ‘Queen of Heaven’ (either the moon or the planet Venus) (Ch. 7:17-18).
       v. Even heathen worship in the courts of the Temple (Ch. 32:34).
          Note.—Ezekiel has much to say about this.
   (b) Social sins (see Chs. 2:34; 5:1, 26-28).
   (c) Foreign alliances which discredited Jehovah’s power (Ch. 2:17-18).

4. THE FALSE HOPES WHICH RENDERED HIS HEARERS DEAF TO HIS WORDS
   (a) The security given because Jerusalem was regarded as God’s Holy City. Such events as the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, when God had defended the city for His holy name’s sake (Isaiah 37:35), convinced the Judeans that under no circumstances would God allow heathen hands to ravage His city and His Temple.
   (b) Fluctuations in world affairs.
       Egypt constantly offered help, while on a number of occasions invading armies withdrew for one reason or another.
   (c) A body of priests and false prophets insistently told the people that Jerusalem was secure (Paragraph 6).
   (d) Some were persuaded that their heathen deities would save them (Ch. 44:16-18).
   (e) The warning of the judgments they did receive did not serve or check these false hopes.
       Even after captivity had commenced, and Jehoiachin and so many others were already taken away, false prophets declared that those deported would be back within two years (Chs. 28:1-4; 27:16).

5. JEREMIAH’S MOST UNPOPULAR MESSAGES
   (a) That the Temple would not save them, only thorough repentance from the heart (Ch. 7:4-8).
i. He said that no greater offence could happen to the Temple than that which they were offering it themselves – in using it as a shield to hide them from the judgment due for their abominations (Ch. 7:9-10).

ii. As Shiloh, the ancient holy place, had been destroyed and abandoned in the days of their sinning forefathers, so it would be with the Temple in their day (Ch. 7:12-15).

(b) That they should submit to Babylon.

i. Jeremiah was no friend or supporter of Babylon – he pronounced the awful judgment that would one day come upon it, but

ii. being convinced that Babylon was being used as God’s instrument to humble Judah (Ch. 37:10), and that in any case the true enemy of the state was the godless condition of its faith and conduct,

iii. unswervingly said that resistance would not save Jerusalem, but only bring upon it unnecessary bloodshed, suffering and destruction (Chs. 21:8-10; 27:17; 37:9-10)

iv. For such advice he was regarded as an enemy to his nation, and as a betrayer of those who were fighting for its life and land (Ch. 8:1-2, 4).

6. JEREMIAH’S ENemies

(a) Of the kings, chiefly Jehoiakim:

i. whose sins Jeremiah denounced (Ch. 22:1-2, 13, 17-19)

ii. and who burned the roll of Jeremiah’s words and sought to silence him completely (Ch. 36:1-2, 21-26).

(b) The priests and prophets:

i. whose general conduct he condemned (Chs. 5:30-31; 6:13);

ii. whose words of false comfort he denounced (Chs. 6:14; 8:8,11; 14:13-15; 23 are devoted to this topic).

(c) Priestly relatives in Anathoth (Ch. 11:21-23).

(d) Counsellors of the kings who objected to his advice to surrender to Babylon, and to separate from alliance with Egypt. These would have killed Jeremiah and were responsible for his imprisonment.

7. JEREMIAH’S PERSECUTIONS

(a) Early in Jehoiakim’s reign he was arrested in the Temple Courts for making a public declaration that the city and Temple would be destroyed (Ch. 26:1-2, 4, 6, 8-9).

(b) He was tried on this account, but was discharged because certain elders presented the plea that the prophet Micah had said the same thing many years before, and had been treated with respect by Hezekiah (Ch. 26:10-12, 14-19; see Micah 3:11-12).

((c) Another prophet Urijah was, however, put to death at this time for repeating this same message (Ch. 26:20-24).)

(d) He was put in the public stocks (Ch. 20:1-2).

(e) During the last siege of Jerusalem the princes of the court arrested him as a traitor and imprisoned him under conditions which nearly caused his death.

i. He was saved from this fate by the intervention of the king (Ch. 37:13-16, 20-21).

ii. He was saved from a vile dungeon by a friendly Ethiopian (Ch. 38:4-13).

iii. He was still in prison when Jerusalem fell (Ch. 38:28).

8. HIS MESSAGES WERE BOTH SPOKEN AND WRITTEN

(a) Many of his messages were delivered in the Temple courts (Chs. 7:2; 17:19; 19:14; 28:5).

(b) When Jeremiah was prevented from speaking himself, he dictated a full message to Baruch, his scribe and supporter, so that Baruch could read it publicly on behalf of the prophet (Ch. 36:2, 4-6, 8).

(c) When the king destroyed this writing it was rewritten with additional matter (Ch. 36:32).

(d) He sent written messages to those already captive in Babylon, telling them to settle there peacefully as their exile would be prolonged (Ch. 29:1, 5, 10), declaring an eventual judgment on Babylon (Ch. 51:60-61).
9. HIS GREAT SPIRITUAL MESSAGES
   (a) That in God’s sight the moral law takes precedence to the ceremonial law, saying that no sacred ceremonies and symbols count when God’s holiness is not honoured in heart and life, e.g. in the case of:
      i. Circumcision (Chs. 6:10; 9:25-26).
      ii. Sacrifices (Chs. 16:20; 7:21-23; 14:12).
      iii. The Temple itself (Chs. 11:15; 26:6).
   (b) Even the covenant of Sinai itself would be superseded, giving place to something better. God’s remedy for the nation’s greatest need was a New Covenant which would provide for an individual change of heart (Ch. 31:31-33).
   (c) That God was everlastingly loving, gracious and faithful; ready not only to restore His people to their land, but to make them righteous (Chs. 31:3, 20, 28; 32:39-41; 33:16).
   (d) That the restored Israel would never lack a righteous king and an availing priest (Chs. 33:15, 17-18; 23:5-6; 30:21-22).

10. JEREMIAH’S USE OF OBJECT LESSONS
    These cannot be examined in detail, but are noted for later study.
    (a) The linen girdle (Ch. 13).
    (b) The message from the potter’s house (Ch. 18).
    (c) The smashed vessel (Ch. 19).
    (d) The baskets of good and bad figs (Ch. 24).
    (e) The prophet wears a yoke (Chs. 27:2; 28:10).
    (f) Captured land purchased in faith (Ch. 32:6-15).
    (g) A lesson from the Rechabites (Ch. 35).
    (h) The stones in Egypt (Ch. 43:9-10).

11. THE END OF THE STORY
    Chapters 39 to 44 record:
    (a) How Jerusalem was destroyed and how practically all the Judeans were taken captive to Babylon.
    (b) How Jeremiah remained behind with a fragment of the nation.
    (c) How that after the appointed governor had been murdered, this small company fled to Egypt taking Jeremiah with them.
    (d) Jewish tradition (not in the Bible) reports that Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by his fellow countrymen because they resented the nature of his continued witness for God.

12. THE DISARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOK
    (a) The book is far from being in any regular chronological order, but many of the chapters can be located by the reference to the king’s name given in them.
    (b) One arranged group is the collection of judgments on the nations, found in Chapters 46 to 51.

CONCLUSION. Some aspects of Jeremiah’s experience are parallel to those of Jesus. He suffered for and at the hands of his nation and its leaders, in misunderstandings and by expressions of great hatred against himself as he set forth the paramount claims of spiritual religion and righteousness. He suffered from perplexity of mind in addition to all his other burdens (see Chs. 11:19; 15:15-18; 20:7-8), but to him it was given to announce in definite terms a New Testament (‘Testament’ meaning ‘Covenant’ which has provided all that the prophet hoped for, and more (Matthew 16:14; 26:27-28).
INTRODUCTION. For a period of more than twenty years Ezekiel spoke for God outside of his own land. He, himself a captive, was one of God’s great witnesses to his fellow exiles, and his book is concerned with the condition and needs of those whose plight he shared.

1. CONDITIONS IN EXILE
   (a) The captive Jews were not held in prisons, but were given freedom to settle down as colonists.
   (b) Some of their number attained high positions as is recorded in the Book of Daniel.
   (c) It was a time of testing, for some of the exiles forsook the faith of their fathers, but such as remained true carefully preserved their old traditions, learned to set more store by such Scripture as they possessed, and cherished the hope of restoration to their own land.
   (d) Ezekiel complained bitterly of the nature of the response given to his message (Ch. 33:31-33), but as time progressed the exiles became more prepared than their fathers had been to heed the word of a prophet.

2. EZEKIEL
   (a) Ezekiel was born in Judea, of the priestly line.
   (b) It is highly probable that he knew Jeremiah, and may well have been one of his disciples.
   (c) He was carried captive with Jehoiachin about eleven years before Jerusalem finally fell.
   (d) All his prophetic ministry was given outside of Palestine, in a district known as Tel-abib (not in Babylon itself).
   (e) He was called to be a prophet after he had been in captivity for five years, and continued as such for at least twenty-two years (Chs. 1:2; 29:17).
   (f) Two great questions were in the minds of the Jews among whom he lived.
      i. What would happen to Jerusalem where Zedekiah was still reigning?
         (a) False prophets both in Jerusalem and in exile said it would stand;
         (b) Jeremiah and Ezekiel said it would not.
      ii. After Jerusalem had fallen, the big question became ‘What will be the future fate of Israel?’
   (g) The Book of Ezekiel is orderly in its arrangement.
      i. The first twenty-four chapters deal with the first question.
      ii. The last sixteen chapters deal with the second question (Chs. 33 to 48).
      iii. The other eight chapters (Chs. 25 to 32) are concerned with the affairs of seven other nations.

3. HIS MISSION
   (a) Was to justify Jehovah’s past dealings with the nation by reminding them of their idolatry, and of the sins which had been the cause of their captivity (Ch. 14:23).
   (b) To lead them to faith by foretelling:
      i. their restoration to their own land, e.g. Chs. 11:17; 36:24;
      ii. the judgments which would overtake their oppressors;
      iii. the glory of the future Kingdom of the Messiah (Ch. 37:24, 26-28).
   (c) He had also to counteract the false consolations and directions given by self-appointed prophets (Ch. 13:2-3).
   (d) His mission was thus directed to keeping the exiled Israelites together as a separate and as a righteous people, so that they would bring honour to God’s name among the Gentiles, and be prepared for the promised restoration.
EZEKIEL

4. **HIS METHODS**
   He used:
   (a) Symbolic acts.
   (b) Allegories such as Samaria and Jerusalem as the two unfaithful wives; the useless vine; the good shepherd; and the dead bones.
   *Note:* Some detail given later.

5. **HIS VISIONS**
   Whole chapters of the book are given to describing in detail outstanding visions he saw.

   (a) The vision of God’s glory, which brought home to Ezekiel an overpowering sense of God’s omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience and glorious majesty (Ch. 1:1, 3-5, 26-28).
   (b) His call and commission to be a watchman (Chs. 2:2-3; 3:17).
   (c) Concerning the siege of Jerusalem – a message given symbolically by:
      i. using objects to represent the scene (Ch. 4:1-3);
      ii. lying on his side for many days (Ch. 4:4,6), and
      iii. eating a famine ration of food (Ch. 4:9-11, 16);
      iv. dividing his hair (Ch. 5:1-4).
   (d) Concerning the iniquity and fate of Jerusalem.
      In a vision he saw:
      i. Evidences of the iniquities and idolatries being practised in Jerusalem (Ch. 8:1-3, 9-10, 14, 16).
      ii. The judgment that would come (Ch. 9:4-5).
      iii. The glory of God departing from the sacred place (Chs. 10:18; 11:23).
   (e) Samaria and Jerusalem portrayed as unfaithful wives (Ch. 23:4-5, 11). This is a figure also used by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:20), and outstandingly by Hosea.
   (f) The day the siege of Jerusalem began.
      i. The sign of the boiling, and later the burned cooking pot (Ch. 24:1-4, 10-11).
      ii. Ezekiel’s restraint from all outward mourning for his wife’s sudden death, in keeping with the great company of unmourned sufferers there would be in Jerusalem (Ch. 24:15-18, 22-24).

7. **AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK’S CHIEF MESSAGES - PART 2** (Chs. 33 to 48. Events after Jerusalem fell)
   *Note:* A constantly repeated phrase in the book is, ‘Then you will know that I am the Lord.’ In Part 1 this phrase is used in relation to acts of judgment; in Part 2, in relation to acts of grace and salvation, e.g. Chs. 6:14; 36:11.
   (a) The duty of the watchman (Chs. 33:2-6; 3:17-19).
   (b) The news of Jerusalem’s fall reaches Chaldea (Ch. 33:21).
   (c) The faithless shepherds (Ch. 34:1-6); also
   (d) the good shepherd (Ch. 34:22-6).
   (e) The great proclamation concerning the changed heart (Ch. 36:23-28).
   (f) The restoration of Israel illustrated by the use of the figure of the dead bones made to live (Ch. 37:1-10, 12-14).
   (g) The reuniting of Israel and Judah, told by the binding of two sticks (Ch. 37:15-17, 19, 22, 24, 26-28).
   (h) Chapters 40 to 48 are one extensive vision of a restored land, and a restored Temple.
      Most notable in this section are:
      i. The Glory of God returns to His Temple (Chs. 43:2-4; 44:4)
      ii. The holy waters which flow from the Temple into the Dead Sea bring life and healing wherever they come (Ch. 47:1, 7-9, 12).
THE TEACHING OF EZEKIEL CONCERNING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

(a) Ezekiel was called upon to tear away one of his people’s false grounds of comfort.

(b) The chastening they were receiving was failing in its corrective purpose, inasmuch as the Jews generally were consoling themselves with the thought that they were an afflicted generation, called upon to suffer not on account of their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers.

(c) Ezekiel in Chaldea had to refute this idea as did Jeremiah in Jerusalem (Ch. 18:2-4; Jeremiah 31:29-30).

(d) He added:
   i. God does not delight in punishing anybody (Chs. 18:23, 32; 33:11).
   ii. Man’s eternal destiny is decided by his own conduct (Ch. 18:4, 8-9).
   iii. A man will not be doomed because his father has sinned (Ch. 18:20).
   iv. Even if he is a sinner he can repent (Ch. 18:21-22).
   v. He must, however, maintain the way of rectitude (Ch. 18:24).

CONCLUSION. In accord with his visions of God, Ezekiel presented Jehovah as Lord of all, manifesting Himself as such by His mighty acts, not only to Israel, but to the nations of the earth.

The duty of Israel to show themselves a separate people and thereby sanctify God’s great name occupied a large place in the prophet’s mind; thus he emphasized the external observances which marked this separation, but for his part made the strongest insistence that these must be accompanied by inward and spiritual religion.
INTRODUCTION. Nebuchadnezzar continued to reign in great power for some twenty-five years after Jerusalem had fallen.

In the following twenty-three years he was succeeded by three kings, the last of whom not only had to face the dislike of his subjects, but also a threat from the rising power of the Medo-Persian people under their ruler, Cyrus.

In 538 B.C. Cyrus took Babylon and the Chaldean empire came to a complete end, never to rise again. Cyrus, who had already subdued Asia Minor, now became the ruler of an immense empire composed of all varieties of peoples. He was by no means an oppressive monarch, and one settled aspect of his policy was to allow all his subject people to practice their own religious rites. This attitude of tolerance had a great effect on Jewish affairs and opened up the way for return to Judea.

1. THE FIRST PARTY RETURNING FROM EXILE (Ezra 1, 2, 5)
   (a) Cyrus issued a decree:
      i. which gave permission for the Jews to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem (Ch. 1:1-3);
      ii. to gather as much contribution as they could from their own communities (Ch. 1:4-6).
      iii. It also gave back into their hands the Temple vessels taken away by Nebuchadnezzar (Ch. 1:7-8).
      iv. This did not mean that they became an independent people. They remained subjects of the Persian Empire.

   (b) Sheshbazzar, a prince of Judah, who was entrusted with the Temple treasure, was made governor.

   Note: Sheshbazzar may be a Chaldean name for Zerubbabel, for both of these names are used for:
      i. The governor (Chs. 2:2; 5:14), and
      ii. the one responsible for commencing the rebuilding of the Temple (Ch. 5:2, 16; Zechariah 4:9).
      iii. The name Sheshbazzar is not mentioned again.

   (c) Zerubbabel was a grandson of Jehoiachin (1 Chronicles 3:17-19), and has mention in Matthew 1:13.

2. THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AND THE EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION OF THE SAMARITANS (Ezra 3 to 5)
   (a) The rebuilding of the Temple was begun in 537 B.C.
   (b) The altar for burnt offerings was set up immediately, and offerings were made ‘in accordance with what is written in the law of Moses’ (Ch. 3:2-3). Tears and shouts of joy were mingled according to the age of the observers (Ch. 3:10-13).
   (c) Two of the strong effects the captivity had upon Israel were a thorough purging from all association with any form of idolatry, and a marked increase in the spirit of exclusiveness.
   (d) Thus when northern Israelites of mixed race came forward with offers of help, this was refused because they were not of pure Israelite descent and because their form of worship mixed idolatry with the worship of Jehovah.
   (e) The reproved Samaritans (as they were later called) resented this attitude deeply, and were able to influence the Persian government to put a complete stop to the work (Ch. 4:1-5).
   (f) The Temple remained in this unfinished condition for some sixteen years, the inactivity being brought to an end by the efforts of Zerubbabel and the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah (Ch. 5:1-2).
3. THE MESSAGE OF HAGGAI (Haggai 1, 2)
   (a) The book of Haggai contains four brief addresses delivered in a period of two months in 520 B.C.
   (b) His purpose was to encourage the people to complete the building of the Temple.
   (c) He brushed aside their excuses by saying that:
       i. if they could build houses for themselves, they could build God’s House (Ch. 1:1-5);
       ii. the lean times they were experiencing were a mark of God’s displeasure for their inactivity in this direction (Ch. 1:9-11).
   (d) He encouraged them when they did respond, by saying that:
       i. God was with them in help and blessing (Chs. 1:13; 2:19; see Matthew 6:33).
       ii. The restored Temple would be honoured with a great glory (Ch. 2:7, 9).

4. THE MESSAGE OF ZECHARIAH
   (a) Zechariah began to prophesy two months after Haggai.
   (b) His book is much larger than that of Haggai, and can be divided into three sections.
       Chs.1 to 6. A series of visions to encourage building.
       Chs.7 and 8. A discourse on fasting.
       Chs.9 to 14. A colourful unveiling of the future of Israel, probably written later.
   (c) In the visions recorded in the first six chapters:
       i. There is prominent mention of Zerubbabel, and of the high priest, Joshua, e.g. Chs. 4:6 9; 3:6-7.
       ii. There are promises regarding the restored Temple and the restored land (Chs. 1:16-17; 2:12; 6:15); and
       iii. of judgments on the enemies of Israel (Ch. 1:15,21).

5. THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE COMPLETED (Ezra 5, 6)
   (a) In response to the prophets’ encouragement, the work was recommenced (Ch. 5:2).
   (b) The local Persian governor challenged the right of the Jews to do this, and reported the matter to King Darius who had recently come to the throne (Ch. 5:3,5).
   (c) The king supported the Jews by standing by the original decree given by Cyrus, and asked that prayers for his welfare should be offered in the new Temple (Ch. 6:1, 6-10).
   (d) Within four years the work was completed (Ch. 6:15).
   (e) The event was marked by special dedication services, and the holding of a Passover celebration (Ch. 6:16-17, 19, 22).
LESSON 84

The Restoration (2) Nehemiah, Ezra and Malachi

INTRODUCTION. The Book of Nehemiah tells how the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and how further reforms to keep the Jews a separate people were carried out. Although the references given date the beginning of these events as being thirteen years after Ezra’s return (Ezra 7:1,8; Nehemiah 2:1), a number of biblical scholars are of the opinion that Nehemiah preceded Ezra. Ezra 9:9 makes it clear that the walls had already been built by the time Ezra arrived in Jerusalem.

1. NEHEMIAH’S APPEAL TO KING ARTAXERXES (Nehemiah 1, 2)
   (a) Nehemiah was a cup-bearer to the Persian king.
   (b) A report from a visiting relative informed him of the sad state of Jerusalem (Ch. 1:1-4).
   (c) His distress was noticed by the king, who proved sympathetic and helpful, giving him leave of absence, authority and the material he needed to deal with this situation (Ch. 2:1-8).
   (d) He came to Jerusalem without any special announcement, and inspected the condition of the city by night (Ch. 2:11-14).
   (e) He was able to arouse the national leaders to immediate effort (Ch. 2:16-18).
   Nehemiah proved to be an outstanding leader, notable for courage, energy and integrity, and above all for his constant resort to prayer, e.g. Chs. 1:4; 2:4.

2. THE WALLS BUILT IN SPITE OF DIFFICULTIES AND RELENTLESS OPPOSITION (Nehemiah 2 to 4, 6)
   (a) Chapter 3 gives detail as to how the work was allocated and diligently carried out, for ‘the people worked with all their heart’ (Ch. 4:6), the only unwilling section being certain Tekoites (Ch. 3:5).
   (b) There was constant opposition, however, from Samaritan and other non-Jewish sections, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem being especially mentioned (Ch. 2:10, 19).
   (c) These faced Nehemiah with ridicule, and later with threat of attack (Chs. 2:19; 4:1-3, 7-8).
   (d) This compelled the builders to carry weapons, and to be constantly on the alert to resist an armed assault (Ch. 4:16-23).
   (e) When the city wall was completed, but before the gates were in position, three further attempts were made to hinder the work.
      i. To take, and possibly murder, Nehemiah (Ch. 6:1-4).
      ii. To scare the people by threat of report to the Persian king (Ch. 6:5-8).
      iii. To scare Nehemiah into retreat into the Temple, which act would have discredited him with the priests and Jewish people (Ch. 6:10-13).
   (f) Nehemiah’s task was made all the harder because some of his own people were in league with his opponents (Ch. 6:12, 17-19).
   (g) Nehemiah resisted all the purposes of his enemies, and the people completed the work in fifty-two days, to the glory of God, and to the discomfiture of their enemies (Ch. 6:15-16).
   (h) During his first stay in Jerusalem Nehemiah undertook a measure of social reform, particularly in the realm of poverty resulting from usury on the part of the wealthier Jews (Ch. 5).

3. NEHEMIAH’S LATER REFORMS (Nehemiah 13)
   (a) For some time or times, Nehemiah returned to the Persian court.
   (b) Chapter 13 tells of the abuses he found and dealt with when he had further leave of absence to visit Jerusalem (verse 6).
   (c) The chief of these abuses were:
i. Nehemiah’s enemy, Tobiah, a half-Jewish Ammonite (Ch. 6:18), had been given lodging in the Temple. Nehemiah had him and his goods cleared out quickly (verses 7-8).

ii. Tithes had not been paid, so Levites had forsaken the Temple and gone to work in the fields for a living. This was righted immediately (verses 10-12).

iii. The Sabbath was being ignored (verses 15-16). Nehemiah commanded that the city gates were to be shut on the Sabbath, and threatened the foreign traders with corporal punishment if they dared to come again (verses 17-21).

iv. There were also Jews who had married foreign wives and whose children could not speak the Jewish language properly. A grandson of the High Priest was actually son-in-law to Sanballat. Nehemiah, as Ezra had done, made the strongest protest against this practice, and had some of the delinquents thrashed (verses 23-25, 28).

(d) He cleansed the priesthood and the Levites, and gave them each their duties (verse 30).

(e) The Samaritan schism resulted from this reform. Being barred from all acceptance in the religious life of Israel, the Samaritans erected a temple on Mount Gerizim, and observed their own form of worship, having their own copy of the Pentateuch.

4. A SECOND PARTY OF RETURNING EXILES WAS LED BACK BY EZRA (Ezra 7)

(a) Ezra, with full support from King Artaxerxes, brought back a contingent of some 1,500 men (not counting women and children) (verses 12-13).

(b) They brought considerable gifts from Jews who remained behind, and a considerable grant from the king (verses 14-16, 20).

(c) Ezra was both a priest and a ‘teacher well versed in the Law of Moses’ whose great interest was to know God’s law and to teach it to Israel (verses 1, 5-6).

(d) Because of the special need in Judea, he included in his party a number of Levites (verse 7).

(e) Some detail of the journey which took three and a half months (verses 8-9) is given in Ch. 8:21-23, 31-32).

5. THE PUBLIC READING OF THE LAW (Nehemiah 8 to 10)

(a) Ezra read aloud the book of the Law, ‘making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read’ (Ch. 8:8).

(b) A public holiday was proclaimed and the people made great rejoicing (Ch. 8:10-12, 15-17).

(c) On the eighth day, a solemn assembly was held when all the people entered into a covenant to keep God’s law, having made confession of their sin (Ch. 9:1-3, 38).

(d) The aspects of the Law which received particular mention in this covenant were to abstain from marriage with aliens; to observe the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year; to contribute to the needs of the Temple and its ministers (Ch. 10:28-32).

6. EZRA’S REFORMING WORK (Ezra 9, 10)

(a) To Ezra’s intense dismay, he found disregard for the Law in the matter of intermarriage with heathen wives (Ch. 9:1-3; see Deuteronomy 7:1-3).

(b) Among those guilty were leaders, priests and Levites (Chs. 9:2; 10:18).

(c) Ezra confessed the people’s sin to God (Ch. 9:5-6), and induced them to take the matter so much to heart that effective measures were taken to stop the practice and to cancel the marriages already effected. Upon examination it was found that there were one hundred and thirteen such cases (Ch. 10:1, 3, 12, 17).

(d) Ezra’s anxiety in this connection was twofold:

i. Such marriages had been for Israel in the past one of the chief means of introducing idolatry into the national life.
ii. If not checked, such practices would cause the comparatively small community in Jerusalem and its suburbs to disappear as a distinctive people. It would be with them as it had become with the ‘Samaritans’

7. SOME EFFECTS OF THE EXILE EXPERIENCE ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF ISRAEL

(a) The practice of making sacrifices could not be observed while in Chaldea, so greater emphasis was put upon the study of the Scriptures, the strict observance of distinctive Jewish practices, and particularly upon fasting and prayer.

(b) This situation stimulated the development of synagogues.

(c) Synagogues were used for public worship, which involved:
   i. the reading of Scriptures with special emphasis on the Law;
   ii. teaching being given by one competent to do so – needed all the more when the Hebrew language dropped out of use;
   iii. prayer.

(d) Apart from being places of worship, synagogues served as schools for the children, and as centres of social life and community administration.

(e) As mentioned in Paragraph 2(c) and (d), the separatist spirit was also stimulated during these times.
   i. Those who believed in a future for their nation in accord with the covenant to Abraham and at Sinai, religiously held to all the teachings and observances which marked them out as God’s separated and covenant people.
   ii. In later years the Pharisees exhibited this spirit in a marked degree.

8. THE PROPHECY OF MALACHI

(a) This book appears to have been written to meet the evils prevalent during Nehemiah’s absence from Jerusalem.

(b) In it we find condemnation of:
   i. social injustice (Chs. 2:10; 3:5);
   ii. marital infidelity (Ch. 2:14-15)
   iii. non-payment of tithes (Ch. 3: 8-10), and
   iv. a general casual attitude to the worship of God (Chs. 1:7; 2:17; 3:13-14).

(c) There is also a proclamation of the coming day of the Lord, for which the nation could be prepared only by attending to the word of Moses, and to the herald prophet who was to come (Chs. 3:1-2, 5, 16-17; 4:1-6).

CONCLUSION. From the period of restoration closing with Nehemiah, influences developed of the utmost importance for the future of the nation.

Within that century the teaching of Moses was re-established as the basis of the national life, and steps were taken toward the formation of a standard (or canon) of Scripture.

Practices then adopted fixed the aloof attitude of the Jews to the Gentiles, gave birth to the separation from the Samaritans, and put the priesthood in the place of supreme authority, features which marked Jewish life in the day when Jesus came.

It must be remembered that all the exiled Jews did not return to Judea. Many preferred to remain where they were, keeping themselves separate from their heathen neighbours, but being united to the Jerusalem community by visits and contributions.
INTRODUCTION. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are the last 'history' as books of the Old Testament. Between the events recorded in them and the birth of Jesus there is a gap of four centuries. There are Jewish writings outside of the Bible which tell some of the story of these days. One readily available to us is called The First Book of the Maccabees, and is found in the Apocrypha. This, however, tells the story from 175 BC to 135 BC only, so we have to look to other books and to general world history to find the record of the other years.

1. THE MAIN DIVISIONS OF THESE FOUR HUNDRED YEARS IN JEWISH HISTORY
   (a) Under Persian rule – for about one hundred years, after Nehemiah's time.
   (b) Under Greek rule – for about one hundred and ninety years.
   (c) Nationally independent -- for about eighty years (under Maccabean leaders).
   (d) Under Roman rule – from 63 BC.

2. THE RISE OF GREEK POWER IN CONQUEST AND CULTURE
   (a) Little is known of what happened in Palestine in the last years of the Persian Empire. The Judean community, with the High Priest as their chief authority, lived in and about Jerusalem (a ten-to-fifteen mile radius).
   (b) In the years around 330 BC Alexander the Great, ruler of Greece, invaded Asia and by successive victories put a complete end to Persian power, to become master of the civilised world west of India.
   (c) Judea came under his power without resistance or resentment.
   (d) He settled Greek colonies in all parts of this great empire, and caused the Greek language and Greek modes of thought to have a marked and lasting effect on the whole of this ancient world.
   (e) This Hellenising leaven did not leave the Jews unaffected.
      i. Alexander treated the Jews considerately and encouraged a number (which exceeded the population of Jerusalem) to settle in Alexandria, his new city in Egypt.
      ii. Many of the Jews, in Judea as well as elsewhere, adopted Greek names and Greek ways.
      iii. Some protested against this Gentile conformity, and in times of crisis resisted and condemned it with all their power.
      iv. From this Greek-resistant section, this body of 'separated ones', there developed in time the Pharisees.

3. JUDEA UNDER THE GREEK RULERS OF EGYPT (THE PTOLEMIIES)
   (a) Alexander died young (thirty-three years) in 323 BC, leaving no successor.
   (b) His generals quarrelled, fought and divided his dominions.
   (c) Palestine became debatable territory between two of these – Ptolemy, who held Egypt, and Seleucus, who held Asia.
   (d) For over one hundred years, Palestine came under the power of the Ptolemies, who did not interfere with the Jewish religion.

4. JUDEA UNDER THE SELEUCID KINGS
   (a) In 198 BC Judea passed, by conquest, from the power of the Ptolemies to that of the Seleucid monarch.
   (b) This king's capital was Antioch (later the Christian centre in The Acts of the Apostles), hence these rulers are called Syrians – though in fact they were Greek.
   (c) The Jews first two Syrian overlords were tolerant, so that some of the Jews became more Hellenized than ever. (2 Maccabees 4:12-15 complains of priests who during the next king's reign rushed neglectfully from the temple duties because of the attraction of the discus throwing in the newly built stadium).
   (d) This next ruler, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) became the Jews' most bitter persecutor.
5. JUDEA UNDER ANTIOCHUS IV
(a) To crush a spirit of rebellion in Jerusalem, Antiochus IV decided to stamp out the Jewish religion once for all.
(b) He desecrated the Temple and the Holy of Holies, sacrificed swine’s flesh and put in the Temple image of Zeus, 168 BC
(c) He proclaimed the death penalty on all who continued to follow Jewish customs, e.g. Sabbath observance, circumcision, use of and respect for the Scriptures,
(d) and ordered that all should publicly offer sacrifices to Greek gods.
(e) Scores of Jews resisted to the death, and many fled to the mountains (see Hebrews 11:37-38).
(f) Accounts of this terror are recorded in The First Book of the Maccabees.

6. THE MACCABEAN REVOLT
(a) In the village of Modin an aged priest, called Mattathias, not only refused to sacrifice to the heathen image, he struck down another Jew who was willing to do so, and also killed the Syrian officer who was attempting to enforce the king’s command.
(b) Mattathias with his five sons fled to the hills, and was joined by a crowd of desperate men.
(c) Mattathias died, but his son Judas proved to be a brilliant leader and had such amazing victories that he was able to enter Jerusalem, cleanse the Temple, and restore the customs of Jehovah-worship 165 BC.
(d) This event has since been annually celebrated by a Jewish ‘Feast of Dedication’ (John 10:22).
(e) Judas fell in battle, and was succeeded as leader, first by a brother Jonathan, and then by another brother, Simon.
(f) The family name of these men was Hasmonaeus, but because of his military prowess, Judas was named ‘Maccabeus’ – ‘the Hammerer’.
(g) Simon was able to throw off the Syrian yoke completely (142 BC), and was awarded by the Jews the triple dignities of Civil Governor, Military Chief and High Priest (1 Maccabees 14:47).
(h) He made friends with Rome, whose power was growing as the Greek power declined.

7. THE PRIEST KINGS
(a) A son and two grandsons of Simon succeeded him in these offices, but in addition the grandsons bore the title of King as well as that of High Priest, although they were neither of royal line nor in the true High Priest succession.
(b) In their time the Jewish power became predominant in Palestine as districts were subdued and added to the kingdom.
(c) But the zeal of these kings was being directed to material and not to spiritual ends, and thus they lost the favour and support of that worthy section of the people who were prepared to contend for religious freedom but for nothing beyond that.
(d) The glory of the Hasmonian line declined and came to a lamentable end when two brothers quarrelled over the succession and turned for help to the Roman power, each party seeking to gain support by presents and promises.

8. JUDEA COMES UNDER THE POWER OF ROME
(a) During these years Rome was advancing from being a city state to become the conquerors of all Italy, North Africa and Greece, and in 63 BC a Roman general called Pompey had advanced as far as Damascus.
(b) Being advised of this dispute in Jerusalem, Pompey descended upon the city, took one brother away to Rome and left the other, Hyrcanus, as High Priest, but at the same time annexed the whole Jewish Kingdom as part of the Roman empire.
(c) An Idumean leader, called Antipater, now became the power in Jerusalem, and later was confirmed as the Roman procurator by Julius Caesar.
(d) His power was inherited by a son called Herod, who after some conflict became established by the Roman Emperor Augustus as the king of the whole Jewish province.
(e) Herod married a Maccabean princess, and tried to win favour with the Jews by rebuilding the Temple on a magnificent scale.
(f) He ruled with a strong hand, suppressing bandits and founding cities, but his hands were stained with much innocent blood, among his victims being his wife Mariamne and her two sons.
(g) It was ‘in the days of Herod the king’ that Jesus was born.
9. **JEWS LITERATURE IN THIS PERIOD AND THE SEPTUAGINT**

(a) In the days between Nehemiah and Jesus, the Jews paid great attention to their Scriptures. Some of the Old Testament books are thought to have been written or arranged during this period.

(b) To this period belong also books of the Apocrypha.

(c) The outstanding production was the Septuagint.

(d) This is a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek.

(e) The work was done in Alexandria between the years 250 BC to 132 BC.

(f) This translation was made primarily to meet the need of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, but it soon received a great welcome from all the Jews of the Dispersion, and thus, being so widely scattered, it became the means by which the Gentiles first heard the word which God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets.

---

**THE MACCABEES**

- **MATTATHAIS** — Jewish priest of Modin
  - **JUDAS** — Defeated the Syrians; re-dedicated the Temple; killed in battle (161)
  - **JONATHAN** — Succeeded Judas (143)
  - **SIMON** — Drove Syrian garrison from Jerusalem; freed country from foreign control; Jewish coinage issued (141) Murdered (135)
  - **JOHN HYRCANUS I** — Extended dominion of Judea over Samaria; also subdued the Idumenans — enforcing the law and circumcision on them (105)
  - **ARISTOBULUS I** (104) — First to take the title of King; annexed Galilee
  - **ALEXANDER (76)** — m. ALEXANDRA (68) — Continued to rule after husband's death with son as High Priest
  - **HYRCANUS II** — High Priest only — (40) — Very much under the control of ANTIPATER OF IDUMEA — Not a Jew, but eventually made procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar (43)
  - **ARISTOBULUS II** — Deposed by POMPEY, 63 BC
  - **ALEXANDER**
    - **HEROD THE GREAT** — Married MARIAMNE

*Note 1:* This table does not give the whole of the tree - only essential details appear.

*Note 2:* The figures in parenthesis are the dates of death BC.
EARLY GENESIS

LESSON 86

Early Chapters of Genesis
(The Creation, Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, the Flood)

1. COMPARISONS OF GENESIS WITH OTHER ACCOUNTS OF CREATION AND WHAT THIS COMPARISON TEACHES
   (a) All the great nations of antiquity endeavoured to account for the origin of the world. Among such records there is a Babylonian account (both of the Creation and of the Flood), which has points of resemblance to that given in Genesis, but when the two accounts are compared the differences between them are even more striking than the resemblances.
   (b) Moreover, these differences are concerned with those features of the story which matter most, for whereas the Babylonians spoke of many gods, of their being born, and of their unworthy conflicts among themselves, the Bible account with great clarity and simplicity witnesses to one eternal God, who acts in power, purpose and righteousness.
   (c) This singular knowledge concerning God, possessed by no other people in such purity and exalted dignity, can only be accounted for by saying that it was given ‘by inspiration of God’: a statement which is abundantly reinforced when we see that the eternal truths presented in these early chapters of Genesis are confirmed by all subsequent scriptural revelation, and by all subsequent religious experience.

2. THE FUNCTION THESE CHAPTERS FULFIL
   (a) They meet humankind’s vital religious need. As spiritual beings in a material universe, we need knowledge of the Spiritual Reality which is behind the things which are seen, and it was to meet this need that the revelation contained here was given.
   (b) This revelation was not given to teach man history or science (information concerning which he slowly gathers from a variety of other sources), but to instruct him in essential spiritual truth.
   (c) These Scriptures are therefore to be used for the purpose for which they were designed, i.e. to teach us the Spiritual truths we need to know; and in that way we study them in this lesson.
      (As many of the truths are demonstrated by all the stories in this lesson, references for every point are not provided.)

3. REVELATION GIVEN CONCERNING GOD AND HIS CREATION
   (a) He is the Eternal God, a Person – not a blind force, not owing His existence to another (Ch.1:1).
   (b) He is all-wise and all-powerful.
   (c) He is separate from His creation, yet has great concern for it, and delight in it (Ch. 1:31).
   (d) He alone has creative power.
      The word translated ‘created’ (Ch. 1) means bringing something entirely new into existence. This word is never used of any of the acts of man.
   (e) He is far more important than anything He has made (Psalm 102:25-27), and in His creation the spiritual values are of supreme importance. To these all other interests are subordinated (Ch. 6:12-13)
      The Bible emphasises the superiority in value of the things which are not seen to those which are seen, a conviction concerning which truth is a vital factor in the experience of the man of faith (Hebrews 11:3; 2 Corinthians 4:18).
   (f) He is both righteous and merciful (revealed in His dealings with Adam, Cain, and in the story of the Flood).
   (g) The plurality of the Godhead is indicated.
      i. In Ch. 1:26, and in the way the Spirit of God is mentioned in verse 2.
      ii. The New Testament reveals the relation of God the Son to the Creation (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17).

4. REVELATION GIVEN CONCERNING MAN
   (a) He was not created out of nothing but, by the manner of his creation, has a sharing both with the material creation and with the nature of God (Chs. 1:26-28; 2:7).
   (b) His relationship to the world about him.
      i. His body is composed of earthly material.
      ii. He is dependent on the world about him, and is subject to its laws.
      iii. Yet he is the climax of creation, and has dominion in it (Ch. 1:28)
iv. He has a spiritual nature, which distinguishes him from all else in the world about him. In all of it he can find no ‘suitable helper’ (Ch. 2:20).

(c) **His relationship to God** (Chs. 1:26; 2:7).
i. His spiritual nature is a gift from God.
ii. Its greatest feature is the capacity it provides for him to be like God in spirit.
iii. It gives him the power to receive the revelation God gives of Himself.
iv. It marks him out as being a moral person, who has apprehension of right and wrong, and the power to choose between them.
v. He is dependent on God for all he has, and yet in the important matter of moral conduct has the power to give or withhold obedience to God's will.

5. **THE FALL OF MAN** (Ch. 3:1-6)

Chapter 3 presents that mankind has gone wrong, answering such searching spiritual questions as – 'What is sin?', 'Does God care about it?', 'Can a person be delivered from it?' These verses demonstrate:

(a) That as God’s representatives, humans have been given great authority over creation, but do not have final authority over ourselves, being accountable to God for the use we make of our powers.

(b) Our highest dignity is when without compulsion from another we choose to do right because it is right.

(c) We do have external persuasions in the moral realm; from God to choose right, and from Satan to assert the power to disobey God, but neither of these are compulsions.

(d) Satan can use the strong persuasion which we call temptation. That is the limit of his power but, in order to achieve his end, the evil one can come with a subtlety of approach which makes his suggestions appear to be righteous or even of divine origin (Ch. 3:1,4-5; Matthew 4:6; 2 Corinthians 11:14).

(e) Through being enticed by the desirability of an expected delight that some forbidden thing offers, mankind has reckoned the advantage to be gained to be of more weight than the penalty involved by being disobedient (Ch. 3:6). In all of history there is but One of whom this statement is not true – that is Jesus (Hebrews 4:15).

6. **SOME CONSEQUENCES OF SIN** (Ch. 3:7-19)

(a) Estrangement from God (Ch. 3:8). Accompanied when the soul is encountered by God, with a sense of guilt and fear because of the disobedience, and of shame because of the depravity of his choice.

(b) This separation from God is of the nature of spiritual death, with which is associated physical death and human suffering (Ch. 3:17-19).

(c) Disillusionment. The expectation of delight and gain is not fulfilled. (Instead of being like God – Adam was unlike Him.)

7. **THE REVELATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF RECLAMATION**

(a) God seeks the sinner (Ch. 3:9).

(b) He purposes and provides means of deliverance (Ch. 3:15; 1 John 3:8).

8. **FOUR LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL** (Ch. 4:1-14)

(a) That the factor in religious worship which makes such worship acceptable or unacceptable to God is the attitude of the heart of the worshipper (Ch. 4:3-5). The New Testament says Abel’s sacrifice was accepted because it was offered in faith (Hebrews 11:4).

(b) The cry of the oppressed and wronged is heard by God, who will call the offender to account (Ch. 4:10).

(c) That the most evil aspect of the sinful heart is when it hates not only its enemies, but good men, because they are good. This most evil principle was manifested most clearly in the case of those who hated and crucified Jesus (1 John 3:12).

(d) The self-centred question ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ is also a characteristic attitude of the ungodly heart, and a clear opposite to the attitude of Jesus (Matthew 25:45).

9. **LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE FLOOD** (Chs. 6:8-14; 7:6-12; 8:1,15-16, 20-22; 9:12-15)

This record provides an example not only of God's judgment on sin, but also of His mercy which provides prolonged warning concerning it, and provision to save from it.

(a) In a wicked world, God has His witnesses.

i. Enoch – who walked with God (Ch. 5:22), and witnessed for Him by life, word and by being taken by God (translation) (Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14).
ii. Noah – who also witnessed by his character (Ch. 6:8-9), and his work (Hebrews 11:7).

(b) In a day of judgment, those who believed God’s word were saved.

c) God is reluctant to act in judgment.

He has bound Himself by a covenant of permanent grace to provide for our physical needs (Ch. 8:21-22; cf. Matthew 5:45; Isaiah 54:8-10).

Note: The Rainbow (Ch. 9:13). This had always appeared, but now it was given a special significance. Appearing in front of the threatening storm clouds, it became a reminder of God’s mercy and pledge of forbearance.
APOLCALYPTIC WRITINGS

APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS

LESSON 87

Old Testament - The Book of Daniel

1. DANIEL – AN APOCALYPTIC BOOK
   (a) This book was placed by the Jews in the third main group of their Scriptures, i.e. the 'Writings' (see Lesson 1, par. 1 (a))
   (b) It is distinctive because it is the chief example in the Old Testament of an apocalyptic writing.
   (c) It is not the only example in the Old Testament. Apocalyptic chapters are to be found for instance in Ezekiel and Zechariah.

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF APOCALYPTIC WRITING
   (a) The term ‘Apocalyptic’ comes from a Greek word which means ‘revelation’, but in Bible study this word is used to describe one form of revelation only.
   (b) This special form is when matters concerning events of history and of God's dealings with mankind are presented in the forms of visions, in which everything is presented symbolically, and often with symbols which are exceedingly strange and unlike anything that exists in nature, e.g. Daniel 7:6-7.
   (c) The strangeness and at first sight incomprehensibility of a vision of this nature would make us wonder how it could be called a revelation, i.e. a making known of the unseen. It might well be looked upon as an obscuring rather than a revealing. However, the strangeness of the presentation makes it quite clear that there is a hidden meaning to be searched for, and in apocalyptic writings some manner of key or disclosure is given to help in the discovery of what the message is.

3. SPECIAL PURPOSES SERVED BY SUCH A FORM OF REVELATION
   (a) Such symbols and the strange events with which they are associated make a strong impact upon the mind of the reader, stimulating attention and inquiry.
   (b) Whatever the diversity of nature in these visions, they all present the one foundation truth that God’s purposes will be fulfilled and His name glorified in spite of all opposition to Him, wherever it is and whatever its nature. Thus there could be different situations in world history that these symbols would serve, showing that this truth stands in every age of man.
   (c) Most of these apocalyptic writings have had close association with situations when God’s people were enduring deadly persecution from powerful oppressors on account of religion and thus, apart from every other use, the publishing of these visions would give to the faithful a secret message that would strengthen their stand for God, while it would be meaningless to their oppressors if it were to fall into their hands (Daniel 12:10).

4. CONTENTS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND ITS OUTSTANDING MESSAGE
   (a) This book is not all in apocalyptic form.
   (b) The first six chapters record special happenings in the life of Daniel and his friends while captives in Babylon. These happenings are those which show their fidelity to God in difficult days, and how God was with them in their trials.
   (c) The rest of the book is concerned exclusively with the subject of Daniel's visions.
   (d) In the first section there is the account of two of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, and their interpretation, and these have an agreeing message with the visions of Daniel in the second part.
   (e) The book has clear unity inasmuch as the events in human experience in the first part, and the message given so unusually in the second part, serve equally to set forth two lessons.
      i. God is in control of thrones and events, and in the end it is His kingdom that will prevail and remain (Chs. 2:20-21, 44; 7:13-14).
      ii. God will deliver His faithful people from those who attack them for their faith, or will be glorified by the testimony they give in martyrdom, bringing them at last to His everlasting kingdom (Chs. 3:16-18; 12:2-3).

5. SOME FURTHER DETAIL AS TO HOW THESE LESSONS ARE TAUGHT
   Chapter 1. Daniel and his friends are rewarded for their refusal to defile themselves by eating food which was to them unclean and contaminated by idolatry (verses 3-8, 10-20).
Chapter 2. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream the image which illustrates the passing nature of world empires is finally completely destroyed, and the little stone of God’s kingdom grows until it alone remains and fills all. God gives to Daniel the power to interpret the dream He has sent (verses 1, 3 - 5, 9, 11-13, 17-22, 27-45).

Chapter 3. Daniel’s friends are preserved unharmed in the fiery furnace into which they were thrown for refusing to bow down before a heathen image, and the king is rebuked for his idolatry (verses 23 - 30).

Chapter 4. Judgment falls on King Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and he acknowledges the absolute supremacy of God (verses 20, 22, 24-25, 33-37).

Chapter 5. Judgment falls on King Belshazzar for his desecration of vessels consecrated to the service of Jehovah, and for his glorying in the supposed supreme power of the gods of Babylon. The Babylonian empire passes away (verses 1-4, 26-31).

Chapter 6. Daniel confronting an edict of the newly established Persian kingdom refuses to stop his practice of prayer, and is cast into the den of lions. His deliverance causes the Persian monarch to acknowledge the absolute and eternal supremacy of God (verses 25-28).

6. THE CHIEF MESSAGE OF CHAPTERS 7 to 12
(a) The visions in Chs. 7 and 8 accord with the vision of the image in Ch.2 save that in these chapters the succeeding nations are represented by animal figures, instead of by precious and baser metals.
(b) The distinctive feature of these later visions is that they concentrate on a great contest between the power of this world and the people of God.
(c) A mighty king seeking to bring everything into subjection to his will directs all his force to the stamping out of the religion of God’s people, who are by their faith acknowledging a throne other than, and greater than, that of the state (Chs. 8:23-24; 11:36).
(d) He puts an end to all Temple worship and horribly defiles the Holy Place (Chs. 8:11; 9:27).
(e) A faithful section of God’s people resist every attempt against their religion. They suffer terribly and some are slain (Ch. 11:32-33).
(f) Their faith is rewarded, for God has the last word. He overthrows the oppressor and delivers His people (Chs. 11:45; 12:1).
(g) He will deal not only with particular enemies. As the Judge of all men He will call on all to account before His eternal throne (Chs. 7:9-10; 12:2).

CONCLUSION. This book was a means of great encouragement to the Jews in the darkest days of the religious persecution they suffered at the hands of their Syrian overlords (see Lesson 85, par. 5), for all the lessons taught in this book fitted exactly their situation at that time.

These lessons, however, are true for all time, so we find them re-emphasised in the New Testament apocalypse (the book of Revelation) at a time when Christians were likewise suffering for their faith.
INTRODUCTION. We have noted in the previous lesson that this is a book of Apocalyptic writing and that it was published at a time of Christian persecution.

1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
   (a) Probably this was in the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) when a new challenge to the Christian faith appeared.
   (b) This Emperor’s design was to bring the empire, formed of so many diverse peoples and interests, into a strengthened unity by giving it an empire religion.
   (c) He was not concerned with interfering with the various religious beliefs and practices already followed by his subjects (so long as these were of a non-political nature), but wanted all to accept in addition a state religion which, recognising him as head of the state, would pay him divine honours calling him ‘Lord our God’.
   (d) In practice this demand would be fulfilled by attending special festivals during the year, and by throwing incense on an altar erected before an image of the Emperor.
   (e) The Jews as a body would not allow the erection of any such image, nor observe any form of Emperor worship, and were granted a special exemption.
   (f) The Christians acknowledging no divine Lord other than Christ likewise refused but no exemption was granted to them. Many officials already regarded them with disfavour, and their stand in this matter confirmed the idea that they were ‘enemies of the state’ so they were called to account accordingly.
   (g) This crisis was most intense in Asia Minor. Here, in provinces where the Christian Church was strong, temples and a special priesthood devoted to the new cult were instituted, and here the new commands were vigorously enforced by the civil authorities. Pergamum became a centre of this new state religion (Ch. 2:13).
   (h) For individual Christians this now became a time of crisis. They must either publicly deny their Lord, or suffer for their faith, which for some meant death (Chs. 13:15; 6:9).

2. THE WRITER
   (a) John was himself suffering exile on Patmos, an island some fifteen miles from Ephesus, ‘because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’ (Ch. 1:9).
   (b) He sent this message by the direction of God to the whole Church and, in particular, to the churches of Asia Minor.
   (c) He records that the message came to him in a series of visions. Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), and Paul (2 Corinthians 12:1-4), had such experiences also.

3. THE DIFFICULTY ASSOCIATED WITH INTERPRETING THIS BOOK
   (a) Being apocalyptic, everything is symbolic. Clearly the message lies beneath the surface, and in places some guidance is given as to what the symbols mean, e.g. Chs. 1:20; 5:8; 17:18.
   (b) Almost certainly, some of this symbolism would have had for those who first received it a significance that is missed by us.
   (c) Attempts to give precise and localised meaning to every detail have resulted in widely diverse – and often contradictory – interpretations. In some instances these interpretations have been used to support heretical teaching.
   (d) This may serve as a warning against loading any passage of Scripture with detailed interpretations it was never intended to bear – but this need cause no dismay. The basic messages presented by this book are readily discerned and abundantly corroborated in Scripture and experience. This is dealt with in Paragraph 6.

4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK
   No one can fail to notice the prominence of the figure 7 in this book. The Jews understood seven to be the number of perfection or completeness.
   Ch. 1:1-8. The introduction and John’s salutation to the seven churches.
   Ch. 1:9-20. The vision of the glorified Son of Man.
Chs. 2, 3. *The letters to the seven churches, concerning their relationship to their Lord, and the need to be faithful to Him.*

(a) These seven churches were all situated in Asia Minor (see map).
(b) Each church receives its own message, but all are to pay careful attention what is said to each.
(c) The letters are constructed in the same manner – each contains some warning or encouragement; a reference to the individual church’s condition; a promise, and an exhortation; and in each case symbolic language is used.
(d) The judgments differ.

Smyrna and Philadelphia receive unmixed praise.
Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira receive praise and blame.
Sardis is severely rebuked, and
Laodicea is utterly condemned.

(Before the Church’s conflict with the heathen world is dealt with, attention is given to the need for soundness and freedom from heresy within the Church itself.)

The message concerning the relation of the Church to the godless world – the antagonism it meets with, and the final triumph of Christ for which it can surely trust.

Chs. 4, 5. *The vision of God enthroned.*

The ‘Lamb’ alone is worthy to take and unseal the book which contains the revelation of God’s purposes (Chs. 4:2; 5:1-2, 4-5).

Chs. 6 to 8:1. *The progressive opening of the seven sealed books.*

(a) The opening of each roll marks the coming of judgments upon the earth.
(b) The four horsemen (Ch. 6:2, 4-5, 8) represent in order:
Militarism, the slaughter which accompanies war, famine and death, woes which come upon the world through man’s disobedience to God’s laws.
(c) The fifth seal introduces a vision of martyred saints (Ch. 6:9-11).

Ch. 8:2 to Ch. 11. *The seven trumpets.*

(a) Six successive trumpets announce further woes.
(b) In these is included judgment on Jerusalem (Ch. 11:8, 13).
(c) The seventh trumpet introduces a vision of the exalting of the Kingdom of God (Ch. 11:15-19).

Chs. 12 to 15:4. *The conflict between God and Satan symbolically presented.*

(a) Waged both in the unseen world (Ch. 12:7-11) and on earth (Ch. 12:13), where it takes the form of persecution of God’s people (Ch. 13:7, 15-17).
(b) There is comfort for those who suffer (Ch. 14:13).

Chs. 15:5 to 19. *The seven vials (or bowls).*

(a) The outpouring of these vessels signifies further judgments which are similar to the plagues which came on Egypt.
(b) These punishments do not bring the wicked to repentance, but provoke blasphemy, e.g. Ch. 16:21.
(c) They involve the destruction of Rome, i.e. not essentially the city itself, but all that it represented of antagonism to God (Ch. 17:5).
(d) The song of doom over the fallen city (Ch. 18).
(e) The song of triumph in heaven, and the battle which gives victory over anti-Christ (Ch. 19:11, 13-14, 16, 19-20).

Ch. 20:1-10. *The Millennium and the last conflict.*

(a) This passage has been a cause of much argument and division within the Church.
(b) As with the rest of this book, the statements in this chapter are symbolical and must be read as such.
(c) When questioned, the Army’s Founder refused to make any dogmatic utterance on a subject on which he knew there was, and is, so much difference of opinion. Our guiding line is set out in *Salvation Story,* Appendix 10.
(d) We can with confidence see in it the teaching for which we have ample confirmation elsewhere – that it is Christ alone who can subdue and conquer Satan, and that mankind will never be at peace until Satan is finally cast out (Luke 11:20-22; 1 John 3:8).
Ch. 20:11–15 The last judgment.

Chs. 21, 22 The New Jerusalem.
(a) All the pain, tragedy and evil will pass and all things be made new (Ch. 21:1–5)
(b) The city has no temple. God’s presence and possession make it one vast temple itself (Ch. 21:22–27).
(c) There is the river of life and the tree of life – barred to the ungodly (Ch. 22:15) – but readily granted and offered to those who trust in Jesus for salvation (Ch. 22:13-14, 17, 21).

5. NOTABLE PASSAGES

(a) In this book which deals with the ultimate in all human experience we have expressions of supreme terror and woe, and of supreme comfort and exultation.
(b) Among the notable words of comfort for God’s people there are seven Beatitudes and seven glorious songs.
(d) The seven Songs are concerned with:
   Ch. 4:10-11 Creation
   Ch. 5:8–14 Redemption
   Ch. 7:9–12 Salvation and worship
   Ch. 11:15–17 God’s kingdom supreme
   Ch. 14:3 The redeemed
   Ch. 15:2–4 Victory
   Ch. 19:1–6 The Hallelujah Chorus

6. THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THE BOOK
This is closely allied with that of Daniel and can be set forth in some such terms as:
(a) Events on earth in all periods of history are but one expression of the eternal conflict between good and evil, God and Satan.
(b) Men inspired by a Satanic spirit have at times great temporal power, and there come crises when some special person or institution uses this power in an attempt to deify material and earthly things regarding them as of such ultimate importance that all that contradicts this idea must be stamped out.
(c) The powers of evil are a force to be reckoned with. No human power can withstand them, only the power of God.
(d) Eventually the forces of evil will be completely overthrown, head and members, root and branch, but not before there have been dark days of suffering for God’s people and apparent triumphs for His enemies.
(e) All men are compelled to decide to which side they will give allegiance and are responsible for the choice they make.
(f) Those who bear the name of Christ will be secure only if they are true to Him in faith and conduct.
(g) Christ is the great contender for righteousness, and will give redemption and victory to those who accept Him. The victory he has already won will one day be universally demonstrated and acknowledged.
(h) Whatever constraint His people suffer they will never be denied the resource of prayer (Ch. 8:3-4).

7. CLOSING COMMENTS
(a) Some may ask why God, if He is Almighty, should allow evil such scope? This is a question which was asked and answered at the time of the Crucifixion.
(b) We can see the immediate value the message of this book had for the early-day Christians in their time of persecution which lasted for the best part of two centuries, and also see how important and needed this message will continue to be while the warfare between good and evil continues.
### ISRAEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prophet</th>
<th>King (New Dynasties shown in Capitals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahijah</td>
<td>JEROBOAM I (Golden Calves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>BAASHA, Elah (murdered by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaiah</td>
<td>ZIMRI (suicide after 1 week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>OMRI (built Samaria) Ahab (Carmel) - m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos, Hosea</td>
<td>Jezebel daughter of king of Tyre. Ahazaih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehoram (killed in battle by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JEHU (zealous for Jehovah against Baal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehoaah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jeroboam II – war with Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zechariah (slain by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SHALLUM (murdered by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MENAHEM – tributary to Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pekahiah (slain by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PEKAH (slain by)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISRAEL taken into captivity by ASSYRIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About 220 years**

### JUDAH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prophet</th>
<th>King (Dynasty of David)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahijah</td>
<td>Shemaiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>Hanani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micaiah</td>
<td>ABJAH -military success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha</td>
<td>ASA (reformer) – alliance with Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos, Hosea</td>
<td>JEHOSAPHAT – education, law – alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with Israel (Ahab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JEHORAM – married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AHAZIAH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athaliah – usurped throne after destroying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>royal children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JOASH (Regency –Jehoida) – murdered Zechariah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AMAZIAH -defeated by Jehoash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AZARIAH (Uzziah) – leprous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JOTHAM (Regent) – subdued Ammonities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AHAZ (Baal worship) – attacked by Syria and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Israel, appealed to Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEZEKIAH (revival) – threatened by Assyria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sennacherib). Destruction of Assyrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>army. Embassy from Babylon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MANASSEH (Baal worship) -taken captive to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Babylon, later released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AMON (assassinated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JOSIAH (book of the Law) – fell in battle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>against Egypt. (Necho )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehoahaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deposed by Necho and taken to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehoiakim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tributary to Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rebellled against Nebuchadnezzar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nebuchadnezzar (Blinded)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jehoiachin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar) Siege and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>destruction of Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JUDAH taken into captivity by BABYLON</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About 400 years**

### PROPHETS OF THE CAPTIVITY

- Jeremiah – Jerusalem
- Ezekiel – Chaldea
- Obadiah
- BABYLON conquered by PERSIA (Cyrus)
- Religious liberty given

### THE RESTORATION

- Shemaiah
- Hanani
- REHOBOAM (acted on young men's advice) attacked by Egypt (Shishak)

### Leaders

- Haggai
- Zerubbabel – Temple rebuilt
- Zechariah
- Nehemiah – Wall rebuilt
- Malachi
- Ezra – Reformation

### Accomplishment

- JEROBOAM I (Golden Calves)
- Nab (slain by)
- BAASHA, Elah (murdered by)
- ZIMRI (suicide after 1 week)
- OMRI (built Samaria) Ahab (Carmel) - m.
- Jezebel daughter of king of Tyre. Ahazaih Jehoram (killed in battle by)
- JEHU (zealous for Jehovah against Baal)
- Jehoaah
- Jeroboam II – war with Syria
- Zechariah (slain by)
- SHALLUM (murdered by)
- MENAHEM – tributary to Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser)
- Pekahiah (slain by)
- PEKAH (slain by)
- ISRAEL taken into captivity by ASSYRIA

- M I S C A A H
- Zephaniah
- Nahum and Jeremiah
- Habakkuk
- Urijah
- J E R E M I A H
- THE RESTORATION

### Egypt

- Shishak (Rehoboam)
- Zerah (Asa)
- So (Hoshea)
- Tirhakah (Manasseh)
- Necho II (Josiah)
- Hophra (Zedekiah)

### Syria

- Ben-hadad I. (Asa)
- Ben-hadad II. (Ahab)
- Hazael (Elisha)
- (Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoaahaz)
- Ben-hadad III. (Jehoahaz)

### Assyria

- Pul or Tiglath-Pileser (Menahem, Ahaz, Pekah)
- Shalmaneser (Hoshea)
- Sennacherib (Hezekiah)
- Esarhaddon (see 2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2; and 2 Chron. 23:11-13.) (Manasseh)

### Chaldea

- Nabopolasser (Carchemish)
- Nebuchadnezzar (Zedekiah)
- Daniel
SYLLABUS OF LESSONS

(N.B. By ‘Lesson’ is meant a block of teaching to be incorporated flexibly, both with regard to length of time and order of presentation, into the course).

LESSON
1. General Introduction. How the Bible came into its present form
2, 3. The Lord Jesus Christ – The condition in Palestine when He came
4. The Lord Jesus Christ – The condition of the world when He came
5. The Lord Jesus Christ – His birth and childhood
6. The Lord Jesus Christ – His forerunner and baptism
7. The Lord Jesus Christ – His temptations
8. The Lord Jesus Christ – His miracles
9. The Lord Jesus Christ – the twelve Apostles
10. The Lord Jesus Christ – Jesus as a teacher
11. The Lord Jesus Christ – His teaching concerning the Kingdom of God
12. The Lord Jesus Christ – His teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God
13. The Lord Jesus Christ – His teaching concerning love – The law of the Kingdom
14. The Lord Jesus Christ – His teaching concerning prayer – Communion with the Lord of the Kingdom
15. The Lord Jesus Christ – The impact of the law of the Kingdom on the social order
16. The Lord Jesus Christ – ‘The disciples learn the greatest truth about Jesus and about the Cross’ (The great confession and the Transfiguration)
17. The Lord Jesus Christ – The approach to Calvary
18, 19. The Lord Jesus Christ – His trial
20. The Lord Jesus Christ – The Crucifixion
21. The Lord Jesus Christ – His Resurrection
22. The making of the Gospels
23. The Gospel according to Mark
LESSON

24. The Gospel according to Matthew


27. The Gospel according to John


29. The growth and work of the Early Church (2) – The task announced, and the power received

30, 31. The growth and work of the Early Church (3) – The task fulfilled in Jerusalem, and the beginning of opposition

32. The growth and work of the Early Church (4) – The bonds of Judaism loosen. (The witness given by Stephen and the great persecution)

33. The growth and work of the Early Church (5) – Samaritans and Gentiles admitted to the Church

34. The growth and work of the Early Church (6) – The Apostle to the gentiles (Prepared, converted and commissioned)

35. The growth and work of the Early Church (7) – The First Missionary Journey

36. The growth and work of the Early Church (8) – The Important Council at Jerusalem, and the Second Missionary Journey (1)

37. The growth and work of the Early Church (9) – Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (2) (Athens, Corinth and Return to Antioch)

38. The growth and work of the Early Church (10) – Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

39. The growth and work of the Early Church (11) – Paul witnesses in high places

40. The growth and work of the Early Church (12) – The Journey to Rome

41. General Introduction to the Epistles and the Epistles to The Thessalonians

42, 43. The Epistles to the Corinthians

44. The Epistle to the Galatians

45. The Epistle to the Romans (1)

46. The Epistle to the Romans (2)
LESSON

47. The Epistle to the Romans (3) ‘Christian life in practice’
48. The Epistle to the Philippians
49. The Epistle to the Ephesians
50. The Epistle to the Colossians, and to Philemon
51. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus
52. The Epistle to the Hebrews
53. The First, Second and Third Epistles General of John
54. The Epistle of James
55. The First Epistle General of Peter
56. The Epistle general of Jude, and the Second Epistle General of Peter
57. Abraham – the man of faith (1)
58. Abraham – the man of faith (2)
59. Isaac and Jacob
60. Joseph
61. The Israelites in bondage in Egypt. The training and call of their deliverer, Moses
62, 63. The deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian bondage, and their journey to Sinai
64. Israel enter into covenant with God at Sinai by their acceptance of His law
65. The manner of worship (1). The tabernacle and the sacrifices
66. The manner of worship (2). The priesthood and the Day of Atonement
67. Sinai to Mount Nebo
68. The Israelites enter, and begin to possess, the Promised Land
69. Samuel, and the rise of the prophetic line
70. Saul, the first King of Israel
71. David, the first King of Judah, and the second King of Israel
72. The reign of Solomon, and the division of the Kingdom after his death
LESSON

73. Elijah and Elisha
74. Prophecy in Israel. Amos.
75. Prophecy in Israel. Hosea.
76. A survey of the history of Israel and Judah, after the division of the Kingdom
77. Prophecy in Judah. Isaiah (1)
78. Prophecy in Judah. Isaiah (2)
79. Prophecy in Judah. Isaiah (3)
80, 81. Jeremiah
82. Ezekiel. His situation and message
83. The Restoration (1) Zerubbabel and Joshua
84. The Restoration (2) Nehemiah, Ezra and Malachi
85. Between the Testaments (The Greeks, the Maccabees, the Romans)
86. Early Chapters of Genesis (The Creation, Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, and the Flood)