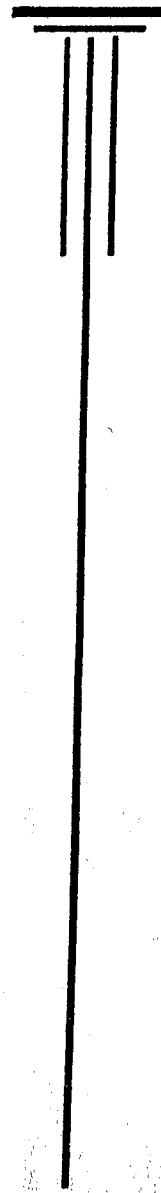


THE



**UNFOLDED PLAN
OF GOD**

By

Donald G. Hunt



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A TEXTBOOK ON IMPORTANT BIBLICAL THEMES

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THE UNFOLDED PLAN OF GOD

by Donald G. Hunt

The God Behind the Plan

Behind everything (except evil), including the plan of God to be discussed in this forthcoming series of messages, there is God. Without arguing the fact, without explaining Him, and without bothering to answer many questions in men's minds concerning God prior to the creation of the world, the Bible simply opens with these words:

"In the beginning God..." (Gen. 1:1).

Thus, behind creation, there was God, and behind the plan to redeem men, there is God.

Paul, in his I Corinthian letter, carries us forward until the plan of God has run its course, until the end of all earthly things has come. God will still be there in all His glorious power and authority that He possessed before anything of earth was created. Listen to I Cor. 15:24-28:

"Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he (God) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted (not subjected to Christ), which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto (Christ), then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

Thus, we see God before the plan, and we see Him after the plan has run its course and has brought about the finished product. There are many aspects of this great God that could be profitably considered; however, the three characteristics considered in the following lines all directly relate to the God who is behind the plan.

I. He Is A Merciful God.

A. *If He Weren't, There Would Have Been No Plan Devised.*

God had planned in the beginning that man would live right and be the caretaker of His creation. But, sin ruined that picture. God was still holy, but man was unholy, and

it was not righteously possible for God to continue on with man. God had every reason to wipe mankind out, but there was something in God that caused Him to devise another plan--the plan of salvation--and that was the mercy of God. It goes without arguing that if God had not been a merciful God, there would have been no plan of salvation devised. Only by means of a husband's mercy can an unfaithful wife hope for a restoration to him. He surely is not obligated to receive her back. Even so, man's only hope of restoration to God lay in the mercy of God that made the plan of salvation possible.

B. *God Has Not Dealt With Us According To Our Deservings.*

Listen to the Psalmist as he extols the mercy of God in which he emphasizes the above fact:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psa. 103:8-18).

C. *In Mercy, He Sent Jesus.*

There was no merit in man to call Jesus out of heaven to earth. In fact, He came because man had no merit of his own, and He came to give man a righteous standing with God. In this connection, I cite but two passages:

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:9, 10).

The other passage is II Cor. 8:9:

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

D. *In Mercy, God Grants Earthly Provision To Sinners In Hope That They Will Turn To Him For Salvation.*

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He pointed out the fact that God is providentially good to all men, sinners and godly people both. He said:

"He (God) maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

What other reason could God have for doing this than to give sinners those things that are essential to life in order that they might have an opportunity to repent, and that in thus being so good to them, they may also find their hearts turned to Him through His goodness to them?

E. In Mercy, He Allows Us To Be His Children And To Serve Him.

It is an exaltation to us to be called the children of God, but it is a merciful condescension to Him. The apostle John ascribes the credit for this to God's merciful love:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

A very well known passage of Scripture to many Christians is Rom. 12:1. There are so many great truths in that passage, and they are so well stated that I fear that sometimes a very important truth contained in it is overlooked. That truth is the fact that it is the mercy of God that permits us to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. Notice that truth in that passage cited below:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice...."

F. Finally, It Is God's Delight To Show Mercy To Penitent Mankind.

Here is a truth that should warm the heart of everyone who has turned to God for mercy. Some of the closing words in the book of Micah are:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because HE DELIGHTETH IN MERCY. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:18,19).

Isaiah also recognized in choice words the mercy of God. Isa. 55:7 says:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

John reminds us of the faithfulness of God to forgive in the following words in his first epistle:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

It is hard to find a verse of Scripture that more ably sets forth the feeling of God concerning the matter of showing mercy than Eze. 33:11:

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Yes, the God behind the plan is beyond question of a God of mercy. But, let us now turn our attention to another characteristic of God as relates to His plan.

II. He Is A Wise God.

A. The Bible Exalts Wisdom As A Cardinal Virtue.

Listen to these words found in Prov. 3:13-18:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her."

Another splendid passage exalting wisdom is Prov. 4:5-9, which reads as follows:

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

B. Whatever God Does Reflects Wisdom.

God is many-sided, and His works are many. But, one thing characterizes them all. That is wisdom. Prov. 3:19,20 says:

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

This passage beholds God's wisdom both in creation and in perpetual providence. The writing of the Bible, the natural laws of the universe, and whatever He does (including His plan of salvation) manifest His wisdom.

C. The Wisdom Of God's Ways Are Beyond Human Comprehension.

Admittedly, God's wisdom is supreme. One of the reasons is that God has all knowledge at His disposal. In the words of David, we find these words that show the completeness of God's knowledge:

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psa. 139:1-12).

If the wisdom of Solomon made the queen of Sheba exclaim that the half of his wisdom had never yet been told, it is no wonder that the apostle Paul marveled at the incomprehensibility of God's ways. He said:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

D. The Plan Of Salvation As Revealed To Man Highly Commends The Wisdom Of God.

God has not revealed everything that He could have revealed. He speaks of both revealed and unrevealed things in Deut. 29:29.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us."

However, He has revealed all things to us that are necessary. II Pet. 1:3 says so:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Now, in those things of the plan of God that He has revealed to us, we can surely see the wondrous wisdom of God. Man had made such a mess out of life that He needed someone to show him how to live to be pleasing to God. God sent Jesus to be our example. Man in his guilt needed a sacrifice that God would accept as an atonement for his sins. God accordingly sent Jesus, the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world. Man needed to know the conditions upon which he could be forgiven of his sins and come into possession of the salvation made possible by the atoning work of Jesus. Thus, Jesus was made the mediator of the new covenant, and He sent His apostles forth proclaiming the terms of pardon and the conditions of heavenly inheritance. Man needed a king to rule his life so that sin would no longer master him. God highly exalted Jesus at His own right hand, giving Him the headship over all things to those who comprise the church. Man needed the constant encouragement of that heavenly hope. God accordingly inspired the New Testament writers to emphasize the hope that is sure and steadfast for those who have fled to Jesus for refuge.

Yes, wisdom is definitely reflected in the God behind the plan. But, there is yet another trait of God relating to His plan that we would like to share with you.

III. He Is A Just God.

A. Mercy Must Not Disregard Justice, Or Mercy Itself Would Become Unrighteous.

If a law is righteous, it ought to be kept. If it is kept, those who have kept it should receive the blessing that that law affords. If that law is not kept, those who have not kept it must receive the punishment of breaking it, or the righteousness of that law has not been upheld. As we have seen, God has shown Himself to be a merciful God toward the fallen family of mankind, and how we praise Him for His mercy! But, has God Himself actually become unrighteous in showing mercy? Since all have sinned, should He not punish all instead of showing mercy to all?

B. The Justice Of God Was Upheld At Calvary.

The third chapter of Romans "grapples" with the very question, or problem, under consideration: "Was God just in bearing with sin and sinners throughout Old Testament times, and is He just in forgiving our sins at the present time?" Paul shows that the only way that God could have been and now is just in His merciful dealing with sinners in times past and at present is that Jesus personally bore the guilt of God's transgressed law when He died upon the cross. Speaking of Jesus, Rom. 3:25,26 says:

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Other passages which show that God actually laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all, and others that show that Jesus met every necessary qualification of an acceptable sin-offering abundantly prove that God did no injustice in being merciful and longsuffering with people in Old Testament times while He waited for the coming of the Savior, and that He is not violating justice today in justifying those who turn to Jesus for salvation.

C. A Withdrawal Of Further Mercy From The Impenitent At Judgment Will Be Necessary To Maintain The Justice Of God.

As we have seen from Rom. 3:26, God can be just in justifying those who believe in Jesus. But, the Bible fails to reveal that He would be just in justifying, or forgiving, those who do not turn to Jesus for salvation. God can forgive and bless those who turn to Jesus, but He cannot those who don't. In this connection, John 3:35-36 reads:

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

While God sent Christ into the world in order to save the world, John 3:17,18 shows that not all the world will be saved--only that part which believes in the Christ. Listen to that passage:

"For God sent not his Son into the world (the first time) to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

When Jesus comes, it will be necessary for Him to execute the vengeance of God upon all who have not obeyed the gospel plan of salvation. Otherwise, it would be of no particular profit to have obeyed it. Otherwise, it would be of no particular evil to have disobeyed it. But, Jesus will render vengeance upon all the disobedient:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

D. Finally, The Justice Of God Is Seen In His Having Done For All Alike.

This is a fact that we dare not overlook. All had sinned, but He did not pick out favorites and show mercy to them while abandoning the others without mercy. God loved the world--the whole world. He sent a Savior in the person of Jesus, who died upon the cross as the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. When Jesus arose from the dead and commissioned His apostles to go forth telling the gospel of salvation, He told them to preach it to every creature. With Jesus, no man is included in His mercy because of his money, education, character, or social standing, nor is anyone excluded from His mercy because he lacks these. And when on that great judgment morning, the dead are called before Him, all classes will be there (like the small and great), and they will each be given a judgment according to what they did while on earth, and there will be no respect of persons. Listen to Rev. 20:12:

"And I saw the dead, small, and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works."

Listen to Rom. 2:6, concerning the righteous judgment of God:

"Who will render to every man according to his deeds...For there is no respect of person with God."

How thankful we should be for the plan of God, for without it, we would have absolutely no hope for eternity. And how thankful we should be for the God behind the plan, for were He not a God like He is, there would have been no plan of salvation given!

In the Beginning, God Created

The entire Godhead was present at and took part in the creation. The gospel according to John shows that "the Word" (the second person of the Godhead who took upon Himself the form of man in the person of Jesus--see John 1:14) "was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1,2). Jesus Himself referred in John 17:5 to His presence with the Father before the world was, when He said:

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

He was not only back there with God in the beginning, but He also had an active part in the creation of all things. John 1:3 says of Him:

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Paul referred to the same truth when he said of Him:

"By him were all things created...All things were

created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16,17).

Jesus referred to Himself as "the beginning of the creation of God" in Rev. 3:14 when addressing the Laodicean church. The Greek word translated "beginning" carries the idea of "originator". Thus, He was there to labor in bringing about the creation.

But, so was the Spirit of God, commonly referred to in the New Testament as the Holy Spirit, the other member of the Godhead (see Matt. 28:19). In the very early part of the creation section of Genesis, we read these words:

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2).

The fact that all three comprising the Godhead helped in creation is further borne out in the Hebrew word translated "God" in Gen. 1:1; 1:26; and elsewhere throughout the creative sections. It is the word "Elohim". A common way to convey the idea of plurality in the English language is by adding an "s". Thus, "cow" is singular, denoting one cow, while "cows" is plural, denoting two or more. In the Hebrew language, plurality could be expressed by adding "im" to the word. Thus, "seraph" was singular, but "seraphim" was plural; "cherub" was singular, but "cherubim" was plural. Now, look again at that word translated "God" in Gen. 1:1. It is "Elohim", a word with the plural ending. Certainly, this plural indicates the presence of and the participation of all the Godhead in creation. In the light of this, the "us" and the "our" of Gen. 1:26 becomes perfectly clear:

"And God ('Elohim') said, Let us make man in our image."

With these background thoughts in mind, let us turn our attention directly to a study of the creation itself.

I. The Universe Came Into Existence By The Direct Creation Of God.

A. Three Possible Views Taken Concerning The Universe.

Where did the universe come from? One view says, "God outrightly created it." Another view says, "It came into existence by the evolutionary process, lower forms of life having emerged and developed into higher forms of life, all tracing their existence back to an original cell or two." Some not believing in God and not being able to swallow the evolutionary idea have concluded that maybe the universe has always existed as it now is.

B. The Bible View Is That Of Creation.

The Bible calls God "Creator" several times. Eccl. 12:1 says of Him:

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

Others could be cited, but we shall content ourselves on this point with I Pet. 4:19:

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

Surely, the Bible view is that of creation, for it opens

with a two-chapter account of creation (Gen. 1 and 2). Throughout those chapters, the word "create" in its various forms comes from the Hebrew word "bara", which means to bring into existence out of nothing. Surely, we can say that if all that came into existence did so by the evolutionary process, it was not God creating; things were just happening with nobody behind the scenes at all.

C. Where The Theory Of Evolution Fails.

It fails in a number of ways. We today look out upon an orderly universe, whether it be the well organized body of a tiny bug that has its wings with which to fly, its feet with which to walk, its mouth with which to bite, and its shell by which to receive its protection or the vast solar system with all of its uncountable millions of heavenly bodies all whirling in their respective orbits with a precision superior to that of any watch devised and made by the skill of man. Did all of this orderliness just happen? Was there no master-mind behind such wondrous happenings? But, the evolutionary theory also fails because it violates the time-honored and accepted principle that potatoes produce only potatoes, grapes produce only grapes, etc. Yet, the evolutionary theory has one kind of animal producing a totally different kind of animal, finally monkeys producing men. The theory also fails because the whole theory is purely hypothetical guess-work from beginning to end. And how wild and undisciplined some of the guesses are! There is no actual history to uphold the theory, and even fraud (like the "Piltdown man" recently exposed by the secular press, but one of evolution's more important "links") has at times entered in.

D. The Impossibility Of Reconciling Creation And Evolution.

Some with too great a reverence for the publishings of Science and possibly too little reverence (or maybe merely too little understanding) of the Bible have supposed that they can save the day for the Bible, which claims "God created"; by saying, "Why couldn't God have created by the evolutionary process?" But, this will not work. The Bible's account of creation and the evolutionary theory cannot be reconciled, if for no other reason this one: in the creation account, God said:

"Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind" (Gen. 1:11).

Throughout creation, everything was to bring forth after its own kind--something that did not happen if the evolutionary theory is correct. Frankly, it is the Bible vs. evolution, for there is no way that they can both be right.

II. Errors People Make Concerning The Creation Chapters.

A. Modernists Contend That One Man Wrote Gen. 1 And Another Man Wrote Gen. 2.

Any thoughtful reader of the first chapters of Genesis has noticed that after laying out creation by days, the writer then returns to discuss some things more in detail concerning the creation. The modernists, unwilling to accept the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, have spun a highly-

speculative theory of the entire first five books written by Moses to attempt to prove that there was not one author, but many authors involved in the material involved in those books. To people looking for earmarks of dual authorship (actually composite authorship with them), the fact that we have a chronological account of creation (chapter 1) and a discussion account (chapter 2) provides ground for their concluding that chapter 1 represents one man's views and chapter 2 another man's. Of course, their theory has some editor at a much later period than the original writing of these creation accounts assembling them together with all the other material in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy into one volume. But, if such were the case, if the two accounts of creation are actually contradictory, would said editor not be able to see that his work would be thrown out as no good by the time his readers had read merely his first two chapters? Such nonsense! Besides, there is not one single fact that it in any way points to either a dual or a composite authorship of the first five books of the Bible. These two accounts of creation (one chronological by days and the other explanatory of certain details) wonderfully supplement one another, do not contradict one another, and were both written by Moses.

B. Others Contend That Gen. 1:2-2:25 Describe The Second Time God Created Life Upon The Earth.

You would never conclude such by reading the first two chapters of Genesis, but here is what some prophetic teachers say. They show that in Gen. 1:1, God created the heaven and the earth, but the second verse opens by saying that the earth was without form and void, darkness being upon the face of the deep. Now, their contention is that after verse 1, the earth was a beautiful place where angels lived, but when they sinned, God cast them into chains of darkness to await the judgment day. And as one writer setting forth that position said, "It would seem that the chaos into which the world fell was in some way due to that entrance of sin."

The contention is based upon two passages of Scripture, which read as follows:

"For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18); "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

It is argued by some (though the weight of scholarship seems to be against them) that the words in vain" in the Isaiah passage could be translated "without form". Thus, they argue that when God got through creating the heaven and earth in Gen. 1:1, the earth was not without form as Gen. 1:2 indicates. Therefore, they argue that for some reason, between verses 1 and 2 of Gen. 1, something must have happened to make the earth without form as we find it in verse 2. But, of the above reasoning, I would reply in two ways: (1) There is nothing wrong with translating the Isaiah passage "in vain". God didn't create the earth in vain. He did create it to be inhabited. I personally see no reason to reject the accepted translation in favor of "without form". (2) Even if it could be translated "with-

out form", what would that prove in this case? To me, Gen. 1:1 is an appropriate heading for all that follows. First, God created a mass of material called heaven and earth, but as yet, life did not exist upon it nor was it in organized form when verse 2 opens. The Spirit of God appears from Gen. 1:2 to have been employed in the organization of life upon the earth as is recorded in the verses that follow. Let me say again that if the Isaiah passage could be translated "without form", that wouldn't prove the theory we are opposing. Here is why: after chapter 1 of Genesis ends, telling of the creation by days, the second chapter of Genesis opens with these words:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made."

When God had finished His creative work (spoken of in Gen. 2:1 as "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them"), there would be no disharmony with the Isaiah passage if it should have been translated as they argue ("He hath established it; he created it not without form").

The other argument that is made is on the word "replenish" in Gen. 1:28. The argument is made that the word "replenish" means to "fill again"; therefore, when God said in Gen. 1:28 to multiply and replenish the earth, it indicates that the earth had once been inhabited. But, there are two considerations that show that we are neither limited to that meaning nor forced to that conclusion. Here they are: (1) Every authority that I have consulted has given two meanings for the word "replenish"; namely, to fill again and to fill completely. As long as there is an obvious meaning of a word that does not demand a totally ungrounded theory for it to be true, we should accept the one that demands no high-spun theory. For God to say to Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth would indeed make the best of sense, especially in the light of that which follows, where He added, "and subdue it." (2) Regardless of the definition accepted for this place of "replenish", it is evident that the instructions in Gen. 1:28 to multiply and replenish the earth were given to the entire human race, for Adam and Eve alone could never have filled the whole earth nor refilled the whole earth. It is orthodox to say that in the beginning, God addressed Adam and Eve as humanity, and such instructions as given them as human beings are for the whole human family. If God is thus addressing the human family, He could have been telling them to multiply and keep the earth filled if the idea of "fill again" is insisted upon in the word "replenish". In other words, the earlier generations of the earth were to multiply, and we are to keep the earth populated from generation to generation. In other words, it is certainly not necessary to accept any wild and fanciful theory just because of Isa. 45:18 and Gen. 1:28.

C. Some Hold The Creative Days To Have Been Long Periods Of Time.

I realize the word "day" may sometimes denote a period of time (like in John 8:65, where Jesus said that Abraham had rejoiced to see His day). Yet, the natural meaning

understood by the word "day", especially when using the words "evening" and "morning" in connection with it, would convey the idea of "day" rather than a long period of time. I am sure that the Hebrews, to whom the Genesis account was originally given, would have gotten the idea of days as we conceive of days rather than the idea of long periods of time.

Although a person taking the position of long periods of time would not necessarily be taking the modernistic view of evolution rather than creation, it is my firm conviction that it is not necessary to believe that the creative days were long periods of time and to do so tends to concede too much to the evolutionists. In my understanding of creation, God spoke, and what He said was done. He said:

"Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3),

and that same verse says:

"And there was light."

Not merely to the creation of light, but to other parts of creation did the Psalmist refer when he elaborated on God creating by speaking. Listen to Psa. 33:6-9:

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

If God were going to speak things into existence, it would surely be far from necessary for Him to use long periods of time for days.

Furthermore, it was on the third day that He created grass and other forms of vegetable life. The fourth day, He created the sun, moon, and stars. If He was going to create sunshine the next day (a day such as we have), I can see why God might have created vegetable life before He did the sun. But, if these are long periods of time, how could vegetable life have existed a long period of time before the creation of the sun?

As far as I can determine, there seems to be only one sound argument against the word "day" meaning a day such as we have, and yet I believe it can be answered. That is: we mark days by sun, but there were three creative days past before God created the sun. But, let us remember this: we human beings need a sun to mark out a twenty-four hour day, but God, who called the first three days "days" before there was any sun is not so limited. Without the sun, He could have three days of the same length as our days, and it would have been no problem to Him!

It is evident that I personally prefer days of our length to those of long periods of time, and I have tried to give you the reasons why.

There are so many fine things and important things that could be said concerning the creation of God. But, in conclusion, we must limit ourselves to only a few matters. When one looks at what God created, we gain some idea of what God must be like. Less than a year ago, I drove

through a section of Ohio after a bad storm. Trees were uprooted and blocked streets. Electric and telephone wires were broken and dangling. Television antennae lay in crumpled masses on the roofs of houses. I did not see the storm hit, but by what all it did, I was able to conclude that it struck with a lot of force and had great destructive power in it. Thus, when I look at the creation of God, I see His great power. Rom. 1:20 says:

"The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

When I look at the creation of God, I also see His great wisdom. Psa. 104:24 says:

"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

Prov. 3:19 likewise comments:

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens,"

How well the Psalmist in Psa. 19:1,2 states our thoughts in this matter:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."

Finally, the way that God has thoughtfully cared for the various needs of man in His creation ably demonstrates the goodness of God. Psa. 33:5 says:

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

First, God planned His creation. Then, He spoke, and into existence came the various elements of that creation. Then, when everything was made, God looked it over, and inasmuch as God can do nothing wrong, He was well pleased with His work, for each time He looked,

"God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

Man As He Was in the Beginning

According to the most accepted chronology (Ussher's), man has been upon the earth almost six thousand years. The date of Adam's creation is placed about four thousand years before the birth of Jesus. We have no way of knowing definitely how long Adam and Eve had lived before they committed sin and were, as a result, cast out of the Garden of Eden. But, except for the first two chapters of the Bible, the Bible tells us of man as he became following the entrance of sin. Only two chapters (Gen. 1 and 2) give us a historical look at man as he was in the beginning, which is the subject of our present study.

I. Man Was Made In The Image Of God.

A. Only Man Is Said To Have Been Created In The Image of God.

God created many things, but the only thing said to have been created in His own image was man. When God was ready to create man, He said:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

And the very next verse says:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Gen. 1:27).

B. What Is Meant By "The Image Of God"?

The Bible has nowhere devoted a section to an actual discussion of this question. Our inquisitiveness, together with our desire to be accurate in our understanding of things, might cause us to say we wish it did. We are not left altogether in the dark, however.

Man is made in the image of God either bodily or spiritually. The Scripture says:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

God has not fully told us in the Bible what all He is like--whether He has an actual body or not--and no man has seen Him at any time so as to tell us what He is like. Jesus, who came from Him, "declared him", but in His declarations concerning Him, He didn't fully discuss this point. Yes, I know that Jesus said that God is a spirit, but that is not the only statement in the Bible to consider on the question. Many scholars think that when the Bible refers to the face of God, it is speaking of God anthropomorphically (that is, describing God in the language of man). That may be, or again it may not be. I do not know, and I do not believe anybody else knows for sure.

If God has an actual body, man's body could be made after God's body. But, not knowing whether God has an actual body, we cannot affirm that man's being made in the image of God involves his body. Most scholars take the position that God and man are both spiritual beings, and in this way man is like God when nothing else of God's creation is. God is righteous, and man has the capacity to be righteous also, but an animal is no sense a moral creature. Man can know God, for they are both spiritual beings, but no animal can know God. Death ends animals forever, for they are altogether of this mundane earth, but death does not end man. He was created for eternal habitation, for he is more than earthy. I believe, as I have tried to point out, that the image of God in man is that man is a spiritual being, for in this he is like God and different from all else of God's creation.

II. Man Was Given Dominion Over The Rest Of God's Creation.

A. Creation Was Incomplete Without Man.

The creation of man was the final act of God's creative

week. All else was awaiting the arrival of man. It was proper also that all else should be here before God created man. The sun was shining by day and the moon and stars by night. The animals were inhabiting the woods and the plains. The birds were flitting from tree to tree. The waters abounded with fish. The grass was growing as were the flowers and the trees, but there was one thing lacking:

"There was not a man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5).

Thus, it was that God created man.

B. Man Was Made Not Only The Worker, But The Earthly Sovereign Of God's Creation.

When God was ready to create man, He said:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

When man had come into being, here are the first words as far as the Bible record goes that God spoke to man:

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Therefore, God Himself allowed Adam to select the names of all the cattle, fowls, and other animals:

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field" (Gen. 2:19,20).

C. Mechanical, Medical, Educational, And Other Types Of Progress Are But A Part Of Man's Subduing The Earth.

A man gets hungry. What shall he do? He goes to the garden and gets vegetables for his table, or he butchers a beef or kills a rabbit for food. Does man have the right to take life merely to satisfy his hunger? Yes, that is a part of having dominion--he makes everything else serve his needs. He gets cold, so a sheep must die, and from the wool of the sheep's back are made warm and comfortable clothes for him. Is that right? Yes, man is to have dominion. All recognize man's right to feed and clothe himself from the lower forms of nature.

But, does man's subduing the earth end there? No. His dominion exists far beyond that. For instance, I know of nobody who believes that Thomas Edison committed a great sin when he invented the incandescent light bulb. I know of nobody who thinks our forefathers did wrong to burn candles at night after the sun had gone down. You say, "Well, what does that have to do with the question?" A lot. Gen. 1:14-18 says:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night:

he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

If I were to ask any of you what is God's light for the daytime, you would answer that the sun is. If I were to ask you what is God's light for the nighttime, you would answer the moon is. All right, now here is my question: "Is it wrong for man to make a light of his own to turn on when God turns His off?" That is the issue we are talking about. I believe that man has a right to do that--we see it happen numerous times in the Bible with God's full approval. That is not wrong--that is merely a part of man's subduing the earth. If man builds a house to protect himself and his family from the weather, there will be days when it will be too dark in the house to read comfortably or to do fine work (especially in the basement). God had equipped man with ingenuity and has given the elements of the natural world into his hand to invent so as to rule situations rather than be ruled by them.

The same type of reasoning might be applied to irrigation farming. There are vast sections of our country which could produce nothing were it not for irrigation. What would we conclude? Would we conclude that if God wanted the potato fields of Idaho watered, if He wanted the alfalfa fields of Utah watered, and if He wanted the great vegetable and fruit farms of California watered, He would cause it to rain upon them? In other words, since God does not distribute the amount of rain throughout the growing season for those sections, does that indicate that he doesn't want Idaho to grow potatoes, Utah alfalfa, and California fruit and vegetables? No. To drive through those rich valleys and plains luxuriant with green and prosperity, you can say, "This is man subduing the earth," and it is!

Time fails us to consider other equally important enterprises that have been a blessing to mankind, but it becomes greatly evident that there is a lot involved when God said to man:

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

III. Man Was Better Off Than He Realized.

We don't differ too much from Adam in this way. Though we are not as well off in some ways as he was, we don't actually realize that we are better off than we deserve being. And, yet, people murmur and complain, not realizing how good God is to them. But, I am sure that Adam didn't realize how well off he was in the beginning.

A. He Had A Wonderful Home In Eden.

Nobody can picture the Garden of Eden without seeing it as a most wonderful place. How beautiful a picture we get of man's original home, when we read Gen. 2:8,9:

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food."

B. He Was Usefully Employed.

We are living in almost too lazy an age--an age with a seat on everything and every labor-saving device imaginable--to appreciate this present consideration. But, work is not only honorable, but a blessing to mankind. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop" is a well known and very true saying. Two verses from Gen. 2 show that God gave work to Adam:

"There was not a man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5).

That was before the creation of man. Everything else was created, but a man was needed to tend the other things created. Consequently, after man was created, Gen. 2:15 says:

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."

C. He Was Given Great Freedom.

For his work, he was to receive the increase of what he grew. Before man became a sinner, God didn't give an endless number of things that man was not to do. But, after men have become besmirched with sin and sinful desires, God had to curb them in many ways. But, in the beginning, man was given the liberty to eat of any tree that he saw except one; that was the tree of knowledge of good and of evil (Gen. 2:16,17).

D. He Had Nothing To Fear But Disobedience To God's One Prohibition.

Actually, the only sorrowing words that God had said to Adam in the beginning were:

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

Aside from telling him that he would die if disobedient (and we might well wonder what thought came to Adam's mind by the word "die"), Adam and Eve had nothing to fear but the fulfillment of those awful words. With all the many fears with which humanity is now beset, we can surely say Adam and Eve didn't realize how good they had it.

E. He Was In Happy Fellowship With God.

Before sin entered, man and God were in perfect fellowship together. God had created man to have fellowship with, and in the beginning, that was realized. As I read Gen. 3:8 (a verse that tells of Adam and Eve after their sin), I conclude that it was customary for God to come down and talk to Adam, though it was not customary for Adam and Eve to hide as they did after their sin. Surely, they were better off than they realized!

In bringing this study to a close, I wish to call your attention to a fine New Testament passage that has bearing upon the present study. It is Heb. 2:6-8:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

Yes, God set man over the works of His hands, commit-

ting all things unto him (except the tree of knowledge of good and of evil). But, sin entered, and as a result, we see not everything actually subdued by man. This is but one of the many prices of sin. Had we continued further with the quotation from Heb. 2, we would find that Jesus came as the perfect man, and as a result of His perfection and atonement, He is able to bring man (those who will accept Him) once again to that great high place that God originally intended for him. God created man to exercise dominion, and through Christ, the redeemed are regaining a right of dominion. Rev. 1:5,6 shows that Christ has made us kings and priests unto God, having washed us from our sins in His own blood. Those who overcome will rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 2:26,27) and will be granted the right to sit down with Jesus in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

The First Sin

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He enjoined only one prohibition upon them. He said to Adam:

"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

Though they knew this prohibition, yet there seemed to be no particular temptation to eat of this particular tree until one day when the devil came along. That day must of necessity be marked down as probably earth's most tragic day, and Gen. 3:6 must be marked down as one of the most tragic verses that God ever had written, for it tells of that first sin.

I. The Devil Was Behind This First Sin.

A. This Is The Devil's First Appearance Upon The Pages Of The Bible.

The first two chapters of the Bible tell us of God, the Spirit of God, Adam, and Eve. But, the third chapter opens by introducing a new individual to us. He is the devil, introduced to us as "the serpent", and he is still referred to as a serpent when we get to the last book of the Bible (see Rev. 12:9).

Just where did the devil come from? Who made him? Is it consistent with the complete holiness of God for Him to have created a devil? Would it be in keeping with the wisdom of God to have created a being like the devil who would so turn God's creation against Him that in time God would repent Himself that He had ever made man (see Gen. 6:6)? Would it be in harmony with the exceeding love of God for man to create a being such as the devil who would bring such earthly miseries upon all men and eternal ruin to the majority of men?

Feeling it impossible to accept such conclusions, some have thought that the devil was once a beautiful angel, who in time became rebellious against God in an attempt to overthrow God and who, as a result, was banished from the

favor and the presence of God. Thus, some teach that the devil was once in heaven, but has been cast out of heaven because of his sin. Of course, all of this is supposed to have transpired before the creation of man, for when he came to the woman in the garden, he was already in his evil condition. The two principal proof-texts for the above-mentioned doctrine are Isa. 14:12-15 and Eze. 28:12-17. To conserve space, we shall not print the text of those passages. But, open your Bible to those passages as we point out a few things about them. First, let us consider the Isaiah passage. Before coming directly to the passage itself, it would be well for us to get a brief synopsis to the book of Isaiah that involves the given passage. Chapters 1-11 of Isaiah contain material concerning the sinful condition of Judah and Jerusalem. Chapters 12-23 foretell the destruction to come upon certain foreign nations--Babylon, Assyria, Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Arabia, and Tyre. The Isaiah passage under consideration is found in God's predictions concerning the foreign nations. Now to the passage itself. Notice in verse 4 (the actual beginning of the paragraph involving verses 12-15) that God instructed Isaiah to send a message of destruction to the king of Babylon. He said:

"Thou shalt take up this proverb ('taunting speech' in the margin) against the king of Babylon, and say...."

And with that beginning, he continued to address "the king of Babylon". Begin reading with verse 4 and continue reading throughout the section and see if God wasn't addressing the king of Babylon and not the devil. Don't forget that the great sin of pride brought up in verse 13 and 14 was always a chief sin of Babylonish rulers (see Dan. 4:4-37 and Dan. 5:17-23).

Not desiring to devote a major portion of the material of this study to the present point, let us leave the Isaiah passage and turn to the Ezekiel passage. Ezekiel also has a foreign nation section (chapters 25-32), and the passage under consideration is to be found in the foreign nation section. If you will notice verse 12 (chapter 28), where the passage begins, you will see that God said to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus (Tyre), and say unto him...."

If you will read that section, you will see that God was speaking to the king of Tyer and not the devil.

Other proof-texts offered by the advocates of that theory are of less importance and are as easily dealt with as the Isaiah and Ezekiel passages. Therefore, at this time, we shall not consider them.

I realize that some angels sinned and did not keep their first estate--Jude 6 and II Pet. 2:4 say so--but whether the devil was one of them, we do not know, for the Bible nowhere says. He may have been, but I am not going to warp passages like Isa. 14:12-15 and Eze. 28:12-17 (or any other passage) in order to believe it. You have a right to ask, "Well, where did the devil come from, then?" and I have a right to say, "Since the Bible doesn't say, we don't know. We may have our ideas about it, but that doesn't mean that we know." And that is my position. There are "secret things that belong unto the Lord" (Deut. 29:29), and there are many things concerning God in the beginning,

creation, and the opening events of Bible history that are not answered for us. I believe the background of the devil is one of those unrevealed things.

B. The Devil Began His Work Of Destruction In Eden.

I Pet. 5:8 gives us the following picture of the devil:

"Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

He began that destructive work upon the first people who lived upon the earth. He came to the Garden of Eden with no good purpose, and before he left, the work of destruction had gotten underway. While Adam's sin has not been passed onto us (for sin is an act, and his act could not have been passed onto us), yet both Biblical statements and Biblical history following man's dismissal from Eden show that all of humanity from Adam onward has suffered because of that first sin. (Note--the entire system of the "mourners' bench", the father of the present-day "altar call", was based upon the false assumption that all descendants of Adam have actually inherited his sin. The same is true of the beginning of baptizing and sprinkling babies.)

II. Eve Was Deceived When She Sinned; Adam Sinned With His Eyes Wide Open.

A. The Scriptures Point Out This Fact.

II Cor. 11:3 refers to this first sin when it says:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled (that means 'to take by guile', 'to deceive') Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

In I Tim. 2:14, Paul said:

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

All of this is in keeping with what we read in the actual account of the first sin, for it opens by saying:

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made" (Gen. 3:1).

He deceived Eve by lying to her. He started off by asking if God had prohibited them in their eating, to which Eve replied that they could eat of every tree except the one. With that as a background, the devil told her why God had forbidden them to eat of that tree. He said:

"God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

In other words, there would be profit in eating of it, for to do so, their eyes would be opened, and they would thus enjoy an advancement. Furthermore, the devil assured her that if they ate of it, they wouldn't die. On that day, he came to the woman and posed as a true friend with good advice and welcome news. And for his story, the woman fell. She went to the tree, and here is how it now looked to her:

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

She THOUGHT it was good for food; it SEEMED good to look upon; she THOUGHT it desirable in order to become wise. But, it was all a lie. There was no truth in it. It ended terribly instead of beautifully as she had supposed. In this account, we see the lying and the murderous nature of the devil, both of which are set forth in John 8:44:

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

Poor old Adam, what was he going to do? His wife had violated God's law, and she was urging him to eat. He had not heard the serpent's sermon, and though it was probably repeated to him by Eve, he didn't believe it. He was probably like a lot of people today who know what God says, but who do something else. So, with some motive in mind besides thinking that it was going to turn out gloriously, he ate, for Gen. 3:6 says that Eve

"gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

B. That Eve Was Deceived And Adam Wasn't In Sinning Is No Compliment To Either Of Them.

It certainly is no compliment to be deceived. It reflects, as it did in Eve's case, an unreliability concerning standing for that which is already known to be true. It also reflects a gullibility and at other times a lack of faith in that which is true. But, it certainly is no compliment to do as Adam did either. It is a sign of weakness. It is giving in to sin instead of trampling sin underfoot by a steadfast obedience to the known will of God.

III. Adam And Eve Both Tried To Shift Their Guilt.

A. Adam Blamed Eve For His Sin.

God had made Adam first and had given the prohibitory law to him (notice the singular "thou" in Gen. 2:16,17). Through all of these transpirings, God was looking on, fully conscious of all that was taking place. We might ask, "Why didn't God come down and straighten Eve out before she sinned and then kill the serpent?" Simply because God made man a being with the power of choice. Otherwise, there would have been no sense to give man laws and prohibitions. How terrible God must have felt when He saw Eve eating the fruit and giving it to Adam, and then Adam eating. When the act had been committed, there was nothing else for God to do than to come down and deal with them as transgressors. Consequently, when God came down, Gen. 3:8-11 says:

"They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?"

When Adam was brought face to face with his sin, he wasn't willing to take the full blame for it--not when it was handy to blame somebody else in part for it. In answer to God's question, he said:

"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12).

B. Eve Blamed The Serpent For Her Sin.

Leaving Adam, God went directly to Eve whom he had blamed. What was she to do? Was she going to accept full responsibility for what had happened? No. When God asked the woman what she had done, she said:

"The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13).

When God approached Adam, Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest me." When He approached Eve, she said, "The serpent." The first sinners sought to shift the blame and to offer the One dealing with their souls an excuse, and men and women have been doing the same ever since!

IV. A Consideration Of The Sin Itself.

A. It Was An Act Of Disobedience.

Man may sin by failing to do what God has said (we call this the sin of omission). Jas. 4:17 tells of it. But, man may also sin by doing what God forbids. I John 3:4 tells of it. Both are disobedience to the will of God. God had made His will clearly known to Adam and Eve. When the devil asked Eve what God had said, she knew. When Adam ate the fruit, he knew he was transgressing the will of God. It is no wonder, then, that God dealt so severely with both of them. Even though Eve was deceived at the time of eating, she was responsible for allowing herself to be deceived. She knew the truth, and she should not have forsaken it just because of the good words and fair speech of the serpent.

B. It Was A Turning From God's Word To False Doctrine.

Many people have the idea that sin must be some act of drunkenness, thievery, fighting, or immorality. They emphasize only the moral and social responsibilities of man. Many think that doctrine is a matter of little consequence. Many totally reject any preaching that insists that all things be done according to God's Word. While the incident of Adam and Eve's sin is well known, yet many have not stopped to realize that the first sin ever committed was not drunkenness, robbery, war, or immorality--as bad as those are. No, it was listening to false doctrine instead of the truth of God, believing false doctrine instead of what God had said, and a following of false doctrine instead of the Word of God. In Eden, the devil turned preacher. He posed as a possessor of the truth and as one who had the welfare of humanity at heart. He preached, actually violating what God had said. God had said that man would surely die if he ate of the fruit (Gen. 2:17), but the devil said to the woman something else. He said:

"Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

He was a false teacher in his first attack upon the human family, and no greater deception is he pulling upon men today than getting them to believe things contrary to the Bible, to obey the commandments of men instead of the Word of God, and to line up with religious institutions that do not preach the true Word of God and that have had their beginning much this side of Pentecost when God began His church. Indifference is the devil's tool to use upon

the irreligious, but false doctrine is his tool upon the religious.

In conclusion, we might contrast the outcome of the devil's contest with Adam and Eve with his contest with Jesus following His baptism. Adam and Eve fell before the devil upon the first approach that he made, but though he attacked Jesus most severely three consecutive times, He resisted him successfully each time, and though he left Him "for a season", yet each successive attempt to get the Son of man to fall was as unsuccessful for him as those three following His baptism. May we, like Jesus, be equipped with the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand all the attacks of the evil one.

The Consequences of the First Sin

Surely, we would be safe in saying that if Adam and Eve had realized the supreme importance of obeying God, if they had realized that God meant every word that He had said about what would come upon them if they became disobedient, and if they had realized how terrible the consequences of sin would be, they would never have sinned. But, they sinned, and they found out.

They had never known what a guilty conscience was until after they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. They had never known what it was to be terrified at the voice of God until that day when they hid among the trees. In their innocence, they had thought nothing of being naked, but now that they had become sinful, they sewed leaves together for coverings. To the pure, all things had been pure, but to the defiled was nothing pure. What mighty changes were wrought, and so rapidly, for him whom God had created to be the earthly superintendent of His creation!

There were many consequences of that first sin that could be enumerated and elaborated upon, but in the present study, it is our intention to consider the curses that God pronounced because of that sin.

I. Upon Adam And Eve Personally.

A. Earthly Hardships.

God had placed Adam into the garden to dress and tend it. How wonderful the productions of the ground must have been in those early days. But, when Adam sinned, God said:

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:17, 18).

Part of the strength of the ground would henceforth be diverted from the crop to the weeds and pests. He would grow nothing unless he kept the weeds out, and when he cut the weeds off, they would grow back. Briarless blackberries were the original blackberries, but now when Adam

desired some blackberries to eat, he had to be careful not to run a thorn into his finger. And barefooted as he likely was, he was apt to step on a thorn among the berry vines at any time.

Evidently, Adam had not known earthly hardship such as was to be his after his sin. True, he worked, but it must not have been a burden to him. Though there were seasons, the weather was probably never unbearable. But, now it was different. Work was difficult, and life was no more easy. Gen. 3:19 says:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."

B. Eve Was Made Subject To Adam.

Eve got out of line when she led her husband into sin. Adam "hearkened" unto the voice of his wife (Gen. 3:17) instead of the voice of God. Therefore, God said to woman:

"Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

Every submission to his decisions and desires was a painful reminder of that time when she was the occasion of their mutual downfall. In a sense, she had eaten them out of house and home, and she suffered because of it.

C. Sorrows.

Surely, there was nothing to mar Adam and Eve's happiness before that fateful day. But, upon both man and woman did God pronounce sorrow in future days. To Eve, God said:

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow" (Gen. 3:16).

To Adam, He said:

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:17).

Before God had said these words, sorrow had already gripped their hearts because of their sin, but little did they realize all the sorrow to come upon them. When Adam found that every curse that God had pronounced was bitter, how sorrowful he must have been. When they were banished from the beautiful garden and were sent forth to shift for themselves, how they must have desired to go back to the beautiful home in Eden. When Adam had to work hard to raise a crop; when the weeds about outgrew the crop; and when they sat in perspiration eating their food, how they must have thought about the sorrow that was theirs. When one day their firstborn son killed his brother, how sorrow must have been their portion. When bad became worse, and when there seemed to be no hope for the future, how dark it all must have been.

D. Pain.

Prior to their sin, we have no record of their suffering any pain. God had told them to multiply, but nothing of pain connected therewith is recorded. But, every child that Eve bore was through great pain, for God pronounced upon her the following curse:

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16).

E. Death.

God had said in warning them of eating of the forbidden tree:

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

In the very day that man ate of it, God came, pronounced the curse of death upon him, and started the death process by separating him from the tree of life. Gen. 3:19 says:

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

And that very day, God said:

"Now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:22-24).

How terrible life was. A new day was nothing to look forward to. The future offered nothing prospectively good. These curses were the curses brought in upon Adam and Eve, plus losing their standing and fellowship with God, and they continue to be the curse of the human race.

II. Upon Successive Generations.

A. Adam And Eve Alone Must Answer For Their Sin.

The Bible is against the idea that we shall be eternally punished because of Adam and Eve's sin. We may suffer here because of their sin, but from the day of judgment onward, each will suffer or not suffer depending upon what he himself has or has not done--not what Adam and Eve did. The Bible says:

"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel (and it is not used in Christianity either). Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:2-4).

In passages relating to the judgment, the Bible shows that each will give an account of himself:

"Every one of us shall give account of himself (not Adam and Eve) to God" (Rom. 14:12); "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body (not what Adam and Eve did), according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

From the day that God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, we know nothing of them except that Cain, Abel, and Seth were born, that Adam lived eight hundred years after the birth of Seth and begat sons and daughters, and that he died at the age of nine hundred and thirty. Whether he repented of his sins and lived for God, we are not told. If he did, then there is no doubt but what the mercy of God will extend to him, and he will be one of that great company over on the evergreen shores of eternity. Surely, suffering as he did in comparison to the bliss that he had originally

enjoyed ought to have caused him to walk before God in all fear. If he didn't repent and live as he should, then the consequences of his sin will deal with him during eternity, and he will find that God's earthly punishments were mild compared with His eternal punishments.

B. Nevertheless, The Bible Does Show That We Do Share In The Earthly Consequences Of Adam And Eve's Sin.

In the great resurrection chapter of I Cor., in which he discusses both death and resurrection, Paul said:

"For since by man (Adam) came death, by man (Jesus) came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:21,22).

Rom. 5:12-14 teaches the same thing. Throughout the Bible, the godly have suffered with the ungodly, and they have both gone to the grave. These tragedies of earth await every baby born into it, and there is no way that any can escape them.

C. All About Us, We Can See The Evidence Of These Consequences.

We do not have to have a passage of Scripture that points out that man suffers pain, endures earthly hardship, knows what sorrow is, and dies. These are all too familiar to us to need arguing that such happen. They have been here as long as man has been wicked before God, but it is the Bible that explains them to us as consequences. Why do women bear children through bitter pain today? Because of the sin of the first woman from whom all women have descended. Why do men find work difficult and sometimes unaccomplishing? Because of the sin of the first man from whom all men have descended. Oh, the far-reachingness of Adam and Eve's sin! Its consequences will reach even to generations yet to be born unless the Lord soon intervenes with His second coming.

III. Upon The Devil And His Program.

A. The Serpent, Through Whom The Devil Approached The Woman, Was Cursed.

The first curse pronounced by God in Gen. 3 was upon the serpent. To the serpent, God said:

"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3:14).

In other words, the serpent was changed into a creeping animal that day. In Gen. 3:1, he is spoken of as one of the beasts of the field. In Gen. 1:25, beasts are distinguished from creeping things. So, evidently, the serpent lost his legs and had to crawl thereafter.

Modernists have laughed at the Bible's account of the serpent's talking to Eve, for serpents do not talk. But, it is altogether likely that the serpent lost his vocal faculty that day also, the Bible's brief account not narrating it for us, for he did speak in Gen. 3:1, and he doesn't today.

B. The Devil's Doom By The Seed Of The Woman Was Pronounced.

In speaking to the serpent, and evidently referring to the devil himself, God said:

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

There is no question but what the seed of the woman involved the coming of Jesus. The Scriptures show that all living under the law of Moses were under the curse of sin committed, but sin not forgiven. Gal. 3:10 says:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."

Of course, the devil was behind all sin. Thus, the law cursing all under it was because of the devil. Aptly, in view of the promised struggle, does Gal. 4:4,5 tell of Jesus' coming:

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."

The battle between the Son of God and the devil raged bitterly throughout Jesus' ministry. In every temptation laid for Jesus by the devil, Jesus emerged victorious, though only after bitter struggles. Each victory, however, was in itself but a promise of the ultimate outcome. But, when finally the devil working through Judas, the leaders, and the mob brought about the terrible death of Jesus on the cross, what appeared to be a certain victory for the devil actually turned out to be a deathblow to the head of the devil. Notice Heb. 2:14,15 in this connection:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

From the battle lost at Calvary, the devil has never been able to recover.

"The prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11).

The time will come when all who refuse the Son of God as their Savior will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil, their master, for he will precede them there:

"The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10,15).

In those days, the redeemed by the Son of God will be in the new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:13). When sin is done, so will its curses be. In that land,

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

The reason is:

"There shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3).

Patriarchal Religion

Bible students have commonly divided Biblical history into three dispensations: the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. The Patriarchal ran from Adam to the giving of the law of Moses; the Mosaic from the giving of the law until Calvary; the Christian from the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. until Jesus comes again.

It is the purpose of the present study to consider the religion of the Patriarchal period. While our record in Genesis may be somewhat fragmentary upon this subject, yet a gathering together of its several portions will give us a general conception of their religion and of its several institutions.

I. Some Of The Elements Constituting The Patriarchal Religion.

A. Sacrifices.

The altar was the conspicuous piece of religious "furniture" employed in patriarchal times. As early as Cain and Abel, we find men offering sacrifices to God. The first recorded acceptable sacrifice was offered by Abel, who lost his life through the jealousy of his brother Cain, whose sacrifice God had rejected. A brief account of Abel's offering is set forth in Gen. 4:4:

"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

Notice several things about the above verse. Abel knew to bring the firstlings and of the fat of his flock (probably meaning the firstborn and the best of the others). He knew to sacrifice animals. And the character of Abel, the one offering, was taken into account as well as the offering made, for "the Lord had respect unto Abel" as well as to his offering.

Noah offered an offering of clean animals to God following the flood (Gen. 8:20). Several times, Abraham built altars, offered sacrifices upon them, and called upon the name of God (Gen. 12:7; 12:8; 13:18). We also see Jacob building altars and calling upon God (Gen. 28:18-22; 31:54; 35:6,7). This, I believe, we may fairly conclude to have been man's first religious act unto God.

B. Prayer.

Abraham's prayer for the righteous in Sodom is well known (Gen. 18:23-32). That was the prayer where he asked God to spare the city if he could find fifty righteous in it or even if He could find no more than ten righteous. Gen. 20:17 also records concerning Abraham's prayer for Abimelech. It says:

"So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and

they bare children."

When the servant of Abraham, sent to obtain a wife for Isaac, came to a well outside the city of Nahor, there he prayed this prayer:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come to draw water; and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (Gen. 24:12-14).

When Jacob and Esau neared, after the bitter parting of years before, Jacob realized the predicament that he might be in before the wrath of his brother. Consequently, he prayed:

"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude" (Gen. 32:9-12).

C. Tithing.

Gen. 14:20 tells of Abraham paying tithes to Melchizidek, a priest of God. When Jacob as a young man fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, as he was going into a strange land in the hope that someday he might return to his own land in peace, he promised God the following:

"Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen. 28:22).

D. Circumcision.

As far as we know, the rite of circumcision was the first religious rite given to one portion to humanity and not to all. It was given to Abraham and his descendants, and with this act, God was giving a forerunner forecast of an entire religion to be given to one portion of people (the Mosaic). All of this had many purposes, but one not to be overlooked is that in Christianity, God has instituted religious rites for His people, but which He did not give to the world. Abraham was ninety-nine years old and had but one son (Ishmael), when God said to him:

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of your seed" (Gen. 17:10-12).

Thus, it was that Isaac was circumcised (Gen. 21:4) and others later throughout their generations.

E. Clean And Unclean Animals.

Though we do not know when the law of clean and unclean animals was given to them, we do know that they did have such distinctions. When God was gathering Noah and the animals into the ark He said:

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of the beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female" (Gen. 7:1,2).

The probability is that such a distinction had principally to do with which animals to sacrifice and which animals not to. While the law delivered later through Moses forbade man either to eat or to sacrifice an unclean animal, yet it is generally held from a study of Gen. 1:29 and Gen. 9:2,3 that it was not until after the flood that God had given man the liberty of eating meat. If this be true, then "clean" animals before the flood must have meant animals that could be sacrificed and "unclean" animals those that could not be sacrificed.

After the flood, Noah and the inhabitants of the ark came forth, and a sacrifice of clean animals and clean birds was made to God. Gen. 8:20 says:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar."

F. Moral Laws.

There is strong evidence that God had forbidden murder. Why else would Cain have been convicted of his deed as he was? Why would God have dealt with him as a sinner as He did? Why would God have punished Cain for his deed as He did (Gen. 4:11-13)? Lamech, the first man recorded in the Bible to have taken more than one wife (Gen. 4:19), also was guilty of murder (Gen. 4:23).

Let us remember also that God condemned the old world to be destroyed because it was wicked and sinful. How could they have been sinful if there had been no laws to break? Sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4). Therefore, they must have had laws to break. But, if one would argue that the laws they broke were possibly the laws concerning tithing, sacrificing, and other matters discussed above, we would reply that Gen. 6:5 indicates that their wickedness, though probably not limited to it, was principally one of moral corruption. That verse says:

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

So, in closing out this section, we see that the religion of the patriarchal period included a considerable number of elements.

II. The Father, As Head Of His Household, Was A Prominent Part Of The Patriarchal Religion.

The word "patriarchal" comes from the word "patriarch", which means "father". From the fact stated above--the prominence of the father religiously--and to be discussed, this dispensation has derived its name "Patriarchal".

A. The Father Was Evidently The Teacher.

Of Abraham, God said:

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19).

When we discuss the final main division of this study, it will be evident why that God needed such a teacher in every home.

B. The Father Was Evidently The Priest.

It is generally held that Job lived during the Patriarchal dispensation. If so, we can turn to his book and possibly learn something of the religion of those days. In the first chapter of Job, we see him performing the duties of a priest to his family. One day after his sons and daughters had feasted together, Job. 1:5 says:

"Job offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."

It is quite clear, then, that the father was a teacher and a priest to his household in the Patriarchal dispensation. We might also observe that Melchizidek was a priest to Abraham upon one occasion (Gen. 14:18-20), and it appears that Abraham was a priest to Abimilech upon one occasion (Gen. 20:3-7). These references are considerably abstract, at least to the point that I am not sure we can safely conclude too much concerning them. It may be in from the case of Melchizidek that we could conjecture that God may have had special priests of a higher realm at various places for the special needs of people.

III. How Did The People Of Patriarchal Times Know What To Do? Did They Have A Bible?

We have no record of God telling Cain and Abel to bring sacrifices. We have no record of God instituting prayer for the patriarchs. We have no record of God commanding the patriarchs to tithe. We have no record of God distinguishing the clean animals from the unclean animals for the patriarchs. Did God reveal His will concerning these and other elements of their religious life, or did they merely devise these themselves, God accepting the works of their hands because of the sincerity of their hearts to do something for God?

A. Modernists' Position.

As to be expected, modernists have men devising their own religious rites. They say that man in his fallen condition felt that he must do something to atone for his shortcomings. Thus, he devised these various religious rites.

B. The True Position.

We must not suppose with the modernists that men just began practicing these rites. They had their beginning with God. While He probably made no written record of His will, as He later did for the Israelites through Moses, He made known His will for these things to be done nonetheless. Take for instance, the matter of circumcision. We have a definite record of God instituting this with Abraham. Others earlier than Abraham did not practice this. After it had once been given to Abraham, it was to be taught to each

new generation, who was not only to practice it, but to teach the next generation to do the same thing. I believe that we may safely assume that the other rites had similar beginnings and were to be perpetuated in the same way. This is likely why the father was the teacher to his household.

Therefore, I conclude that prior to Abel bringing his offering to God, God had given definite instructions concerning offerings.

"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4).

A later verse tells us that it was by faith that Abraham offered up Isaac (verse 17). Other verses tell us that by faith Noah built the ark (verse 7), by faith Abraham left his homeland and went out into a strange country (verses 8,9), etc. There is a difference between doing something "by faith" and "by a guess". Abel was assured that he was doing what God wanted and that God would bless him for it. But, if God had given no such commandment, how could he have been so assured? Would it not have been but a guess?

Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14,15) who walked with God (Gen. 5:24) and who pleased God because of his faith (Heb. 11:5). It may be that some of the items of patriarchal religion were first made known through Enoch. We are not able to say to which person or persons some of these matters were first revealed, but we are confident that when they were once revealed, they were to be handed down from generation to generation, and that there was great blessing in keeping the commandments of God. Those patriarchs of the long, long ago did not have a place of religious meeting like the Israelites with their tabernacle nor were they a part of a great fellowship such as we have in the church today. But, they did have a religious life by which their faith and obedience could be tested, and we are assured from various reports throughout the Bible that some of those wonderful characters of the past who walked in the light as God gave it to them, though it was but the "starlight" of God's revelation, will be a part of those who will inhabit the new heaven and new earth forever and ever.

The Great Flood

What child has not shuddered with fright concerning the story of the great flood in Noah's day? In the springtime, when it would rain day after day so that water stood everywhere because the water-soaked ground could drink in no more, and we would have to stay indoors, as a boy I would wonder, "Are we in for another flood like the one that took place in Noah's day? How can we be sure that God will keep His promise that such will never happen again?" As a child, I am afraid that at times fear was possibly stronger than faith!

It is worthy of our notice that not only does the Bible contain a record of the flood, but that since all the present-

day population of the earth has descended from the eight people who were in the ark during the flood, every tribe of the earth (though they did not have the Bible) has as a part of its history the account of a flood that came upon the wicked world, destroying all but a few--one man and his immediate kin--who were in a large boat with some animals. This is true of the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, and the Egyptians of the ancient world. This is true of the Chinese and the Hindoos of the Far East and the Mexicans, Indians, Cubans, Chilians, and Peruvians of the West. The Scandinavians and the British Druids of the north and the aboriginal tribes of the South Sea islands all have such historical traditions. As is to be expected, the accounts vary in certain details, but their resemblance in so many features to the Biblical account shows that they have the great flood of Noah's day in mind. If space permitted, how we would like to share a few of these records of the flood with you. Since it doesn't, let us come directly to the body material of this study.

I. A Difficult Decision

A. The Extreme Wickedness Of Man.

All of us possibly have heard preachers say in their sermons, "We are living in the most wicked time in the world's history." While fully recognizing the wickedness of this present age, I have never made that statement, for as wicked as this age is, there is no doubt but what the world was the most wicked of all time in the days of Noah. Notice the bankrupt condition of that age as set forth in the book of Genesis:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:11,12).

B. It Took Just Ten Generations From Creation For Man To Corrupt Himself So.

Beginning with Adam and culminating with Noah, we find that there were just ten generations: (1) Adam, (2) Seth, (3) Enos, (4) Cainan, (5) Mahalaleel, (6) Jared, (7) Enoch, (8) Methusaleh, (9) Lamech, and (10) Noah. These generations are listed for us in Gen. 5:3-29. According to the figures given in the Gen. 5 reference, there were 1,656 years from the creation of Adam until the year of the flood. Adam lived 930 years; therefore, let us say that he lived until the year 930. Noah was 600 years old when the flood came (Gen. 7:11). Since Noah was 600 in the year 1656 (the year of the flood), he was born in 1056. Therefore, Adam had been dead but 126 years when Noah was born. We have given these figures that if it be argued that no point should be made of the fact that humanity deteriorated itself morally in but ten generations since they were long generations that one can see that with Adam living contemporarily with most of the pre-flood people--a man created by the hand of God, a man who could tell them what God approved and disapproved, and a man who could warn them from experience about wrongdoing--it seems so inexcusable that things became bankrupt in but ten generations.

C. "I Will Destroy Man Whom I Have Created."

While the world was enjoying its sins, it was ignorant of what God was deciding to do. So often, it is that way. They were probably enjoying their sinful ways, but the Bible shows that their conduct grieved God. Are more remorseful words to be found in the Bible than those found in Gen. 6:6,7 (which follow)?

"It repented the Lord that he had man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Reading the foregoing lines would remind us of a father of a wayward, useless son who disgraces himself and brings shame to his family. He will not listen to instruction nor advice. How his father's heart is broken matters not to him. Inwardly, the father is tempted to say to himself, "Why did I ever bring him into the world?" When God looked the terrible conditions over, He felt the same way. It was a terrible decision to make, but what else could He do? The only way out was to decree, "I will destroy man whom I have created."

II. A Special Assignment.

A. God Informed Noah Of His Plans.

When the record tells of the wickedness of the earth, God's heart-broken grief, His regretful feelings, and His decision to cleanse the earth of man, in remarkable contrast, Gen. 6:8 simply says:

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

We do not have a life-story of Noah from which to draw out the many excellencies that he possessed although surrounded by men of violence and moral rottenness, but we do have these few words concerning him in Gen. 6:9:

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."

It was to this good man that God came to talk over matters concerning the future. His words to Noah were:

"The end of all flesh is come before me: for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:13).

B. He Commanded Noah To Build The Ark.

Before proceeding to tell Noah in just what way He would bring an end to life upon the earth, He instructed him as follows:

"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be..." (Gen. 6:14,15).

All things done by God or by God's direction have a plan (the tabernacle, the plan of salvation, the church, the ark). Noah was expected to build according to the pattern. This was a long way back in history, yet it was not an experiment as to boat-making. Being six times as long as wide is the very proportion on which modern ships are built. After giving him the plans for the big boat,

He then told him in what way the world would perish:

"Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Gen. 6:17).

He, then, explained that the purpose of the ark was that he and his immediate family were to be saved in it while the flood was upon the earth (Gen. 6:18).

C. He Also Assigned Him The Task Of Assembling The Animals And Foodstuffs Into The Ark.

He instructed him as follows:

"Of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them" (Gen. 6:19,20).

It is noticeable in the above as well as later statements about the flood that no mention is made of fish or water animals being taken into the ark. This would be as we would reasonably expect, for they could survive a flood in abundant numbers without being brought into the ark.

D. He Was A Preacher Of Righteousness.

This fact is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, but Inspiration gave that extra portion of information to the apostle Peter, who passed it onto us in II Pet. 2:5. It may be that he had always been a preacher of righteousness (his family showed evidence of something that caused them to walk with God), but we surely believe that he would have preached righteousness in those years preceding the flood, which seems evident from Gen. 6:3 (the verse that also indicates the time from God's announcement to Noah until the time of the flood as one hundred and twenty years). In many ways, this must have been the most heart-breaking of all his work. He was right, and he knew it. Therefore, he stood fast regardless of whether others listened or not. What an example for preachers of the Word today!

Yes, Noah believed every word that God had said, and he did what God told him to do, and as a result, he and his house were saved. How well the writer of Hebrews has summarized it all for us:

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

III. A Terrible Destruction.

A. It Was (And Is To This Day) The World's Worst Disaster.

The world has known some terrible disasters--the Johnstown Flood, the Chicago Fire, the San Francisco Earthquake, Pearl Harbor, etc. Our newspapers carry stories of disaster that make one cringe and shudder to read. But, none of these disasters, as bad as they were, can in any degree of destruction compare with the tragedy of the flood

in Noah's time. Think of every man, every woman, every child, every animal, every bird, all the current year's crop, and all the houses swept to their destruction! When was there ever such a tragedy on the earth? And what a mad-house the earth must have been turned into as the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep broken up! Can you not see panic written across every face and fright in every eye as people grabbed what little they could and ran for higher summits? Can you not hear the shouting and the screaming as people saw their end certainly and rapidly drawing near? Finally, every hilltop was covered, and all mankind and ground animals drowned. I see but one thing--the birds flying back and forth with no place to set their feet and with nothing to eat. Finally, as the strength of their wings give out, one by one they fall into the water to splash it out for a few final seconds before joining that great throng of the lifeless dead.

B. All Of This Was A Demonstration Of God's Wrath In Action.

When we think about the terribleness of those forty days of rain which covered land for a full five months, we are led to ask why God would so deal with His creation. There is just one answer:

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18).

The love of God created man, gave him his every benefit, and wanted him to do right, enjoy himself in a righteous way, and glorify God, but when man would turn against the Creator and live in disobedience to Him, he tasted of the bitterness of God's almighty wrath and power. Man at the time of the flood surely learned the truth of the following two statements in the Bible:

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (or 'destruction')" (Gal. 6:7,8); "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:30,31).

If they had been warned about the coming flood, they paid no attention to the warning, for Jesus said of them:

"For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38,39).

And so today, when people in general are not expecting the Lord's coming, and when people have either so corrupted themselves with sin or so busied themselves in mere earthly pursuits so as not to give Christ due consideration in their lives, we need to be careful not to become conformed to the fashion of this world, for the Scripture says:

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:17).

We need to stop and realize that the ark that God had ordained for the safety of His trusting people was the only place where safety and salvation were to be had in the days of the outpouring of His wrath in the times of

Noah. The people of his day might have laughed him to scorn when they saw him building it. I can hear them say, "So you think you folks are going to be the only ones saved?" Noah kept right on doing what God had told him to do. There was nothing else to do. Had he listened to the voice of the people and turned from the way of God, he would have been lost with them. But, when the flood hit, there was salvation for all in the ark, and there was salvation for none out of it! What a lesson for us today! Jesus and his church is our ark of safety today. I John 5:12 says:

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

For those who belittle the meaning and the importance of baptism, there is a lesson in Peter's writings as he makes a comparison. After saying that there were eight souls saved in the ark in the days of Noah, he said:

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

If people wanted to be saved in the days of the flood, they had to be in the ark, for all in it were saved, and all out of it were lost. And if people expect to be saved today, they must be baptized. God has as much commanded baptism of us today for salvation as He commanded Noah to build an ark in his day. May God hasten the day when men will quit quibbling with God about His requirements and quit neglecting specific acts of obedience under the illusion that a sanctimonious attitude toward religion will suffice and begin to take God's warnings and instructions more seriously, even as did Noah of whom it is recorded:

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22).

Post-Flood Happenings

All who have grown up in Christian homes where Bible stories were either told them or read to them will recall the way Noah determined that the flood was past. First a raven was sent forth that never did return (Gen. 8:7). He next sent forth a dove which returned because she found no place for her feet (Gen. 8:8,9). A week later, when he sent the dove forth, she returned with a leaf in her mouth (Gen. 8:10,11). By this, Noah knew that the flood was past. A week later when he sent forth the dove, she didn't return (Gen. 8:12).

God had told Noah to enter the ark before the flood (Gen. 7:1ff), and he remained within the ark until God told him to come forth from the ark, bringing the animals out with him (Gen. 8:15-17). When Noah entered the ark, the world was full of people busy with the affairs of life, but when he emerged, all were gone, and the world was his and his sons to subdue and use.

The book of Genesis contains some very interesting material concerning post-flood happenings which we shall consider in this lesson.

I. God's Rainbow Covenant.

A. Noah's Sacrifice.

Godly people have always thought of God before they have thought of themselves. Before taking anything for themselves, they have ever thought of God with the firstfruits of their increase (Prov. 3:9). When scattered from their homes because of persecution, the saints fleeing from Jerusalem did not first think of obtaining homes, but of preaching Jesus where they went (Acts 8:1,4). The first thing that Noah did when coming forth from the ark was not build a home, but build an altar to God who had taken good care of them during the long months of the flood:

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20).

B. God's Covenant With The New World.

When an offering pleased God, the Bible says it was a "sweet smelling savour" to God (Num. 15:3; Eph. 5:2). When God did not accept a sacrifice, the Bible says it was an "abomination" to Him (Prov. 15:8). One of the leading ideas involved in the word "abomination" is "that which stinks" or is nauseating. When Noah made his offering to God, God was pleased with it, for Gen. 8: 21 says:

"The Lord smelled a sweet savour."

It was then that God said in His heart:

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake...neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:21,22).

Having made this decision, He spoke to Noah and his sons about it:

"I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:9-11).

The significance of the rainbow, that beautiful arching blend of colors that is unsurpassed for beauty and that cannot fail to thrill the heart, is brought out in the words of God to the family of Noah:

"This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant" (Gen. 9:12-15).

Concerning this covenant, let us observe a few facts. It was made with the animals as well as man, for a devastating flood wipes out animals as well as human beings. This

covenant does not mean that God won't punish the wicked. It simply means that God will let the population of the earth live a reasonable life-span, each to stand before God in the last day to give a personal account. A time is coming when God will put an end even to the earth itself--not merely those who live upon the earth--but that time, the destructive element will be fire instead of water (II Pet. 3:7,10). But, as long as the earth stands, God plans to perpetuate nature upon a regular basis of seasons (seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night). God has been faithful to His promise throughout the many centuries of time that have passed since He made this covenant.

C. Why God Decided Against Periodic Purgings Of The Earth.

God had a reason for making the promise that He did. It wasn't because the inhabitants of the earth would maintain themselves in perpetual godliness. Oh that that were the reason! But, quite the contrary was the reason. Gen. 8:21 records God's reason:

"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

In other words, God would be kept busy purging the earth and starting all over again if He sent a flood every time the earth became evil. Man in his unregenerate state is morally degraded. That is why as soon as a person becomes old enough to be taught the will of God, he is to have the gospel of salvation preached to him, for he has sinned already. The imagination of his heart is evil from his youth.

II. God's Special Instructions To The Post-Flood World.

Following the flood, God gave certain instructions to the new world order that are no more dispensational than suffering, sorrow, and death pronounced upon Adam and Eve are dispensational. All of us were involved as descendants of Adam and Eve when God made those pronouncements to them. The same is true of these instructions to Noah and his family from whom all of us have descended.

A. The Commandment To Repopulate The Earth.

With humanity cut back to eight people and the number of animals being limited to the few in the ark, it was fitting that God instruct them to multiply. While Noah was yet in the ark, God said to him:

"Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth" (Gen. 8:16,17).

B. Meat Given For Food.

Possibly before the flood, animals were not shy of people. As far as we know, men did not hunt them for food, for it appears that mankind was vegetarian in the beginning (Gen. 1:29). Probably only as men made sacrifices did they take the lives of animals before the flood. But, after the flood, God delivered animals into the hand of man for food:

"The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that moveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:2,3).

This fear of man on the part of the animals was probably due to their being hunted by him for food. But, whatever the reason, we see that it is true. Man may not be larger nor stronger than some beasts, but where beasts have not respected the superiority of man by nature (though most of them have, even the most savage beasts evacuating where man moves in), man has retained that superiority by his manufacture of weapons and fire-arms. Man's dominion over the animal world is reflected also in Jas. 3:7:

"Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."

C. The Importance Of Blood Stressed.

Though it was not known for long centuries (though it is universally recognized today), the very first book of the Bible said that life was in the blood (Gen. 9:4). Lev. 17:11,14 teaches the same thing. For this reason, God forbade man to eat meat that had the blood yet in it (Gen. 9:4). This was one of the special warnings given to the Gentile Christians (Acts 15:20).

The blood of man was so important that whenever a man killed another, God was not satisfied until the murderer had been killed (Num. 35:30,31). Only blood could atone for the shedding of innocent blood. If the blood of a man was shed by an animal, that animal had to pay for his deed with his own life (Exo. 21:28-32). All of this is involved in Gen. 9:5,6:

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require (in other words, if a man's life was taken, God would require the life of the guilty one); at the hand of every beast will I require it (if a beast had done the killing), and at the hand of man (if a man had done the killing); at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood (the blood of the murderer) be shed; for in the image of God made he man (because of being made in the image of God, the life of man is peculiarly important so that if a man who ought to know it or even a beast who can't know it should take the life of a man, his own blood must be shed for the deed)."

III. The Outcropping Of Sin Once More.

A. The Drunkenness Of Noah.

The devil went to work on the "second beginning" of earth's population even as he worked on Adam and Eve in the first beginning. The Bible does not conceal the weakness of its heroes (whether it be David or Peter, Samson or Barnabas, Moses or Noah). It, consequently, records a sin that Noah committed quite some time after the flood:

"And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken" (Gen. 9:20,21).

Some, possibly feeling it necessary to uphold Noah's integrity, have thought that a great change in some things of nature took place as a result of the flood, fermentation

being something unknown to the people before the flood. Therefore, according to them, Noah possibly didn't know that the fruit of his grapes would make him drunk. But, I see no necessity to assume something that cannot be Biblically proven. Too, such a position seems to imply that his drunkenness occurred shortly after the flood, but it appears to have occurred quite some time after the flood. None of Noah's sons had any children at the time of the flood, but by the time of his drunkenness, Ham's fourth son (Canaan--Gen. 10:6) was alive and evidently old enough to have taken part with his father Ham in enjoyably beholding the nakedness of Noah, for he received a curse because of it (Gen. 9:25). We would spank a child for such misconduct, but surely to be old enough for himself and his posterity to be cursed as a result of it, Canaan (Noah's grandson) must have been at least a young man. Therefore, I personally conclude that Noah was guilty of sin by his drunkenness, and Ham (and evidently Canaan also) were guilty of sin in their beholding Noah's nakedness.

B. The Tower Of Babel.

God was not pleased with men's doings in a plain in the land of Shinar. The people were building a city and a great tower. Their intentions were revealed in the following words:

"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4).

Pride seems to have entered into their plans as well as fear. Anyway, the thing they feared (being scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth) was the very thing that happened. Being displeased with the proceedings, God confused their speech, making different languages, so they could not understand each other, resulting in their dispersion from the site and originating nationalities.

C. The Condition Described In Rom. 1:21ff.

That Paul is describing the condition of the Gentile world in Rom. 1:21-32 is clear to every student of the book of Romans. When Noah and his sons came out of the ark, they were righteous, and idolatry was no part of them. But, between the time of the flood and the coming of Jesus, the going deeper and deeper into sin and farther and farther from God described in the following verses took place:

"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God

in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness (and he continues by giving a long, long list of prevalent sins)" (Rom. 1:21-29).

The Gentile world continued in its state of wickedness until after Jesus came and sent the gospel forth to them to redeem the reachable ones among the Gentiles from their sins. The descendents of Abraham (the Hebrews) generally did better--they should have--though at times, they made themselves as abominable to God as were the Gentiles.

IV. Noah's Prophecies Concerning His Sons.

When Noah awoke from his drunkenness, knowing what had happened in the conduct of his sons (Ham having seen his nakedness, Shem and Japheth modestly covering him without looking), he pronounced the following blessings and curse.

A. The Curse Upon Canaan (Ham's Son).

"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25).

We might ask why Noah cursed "Canaan" instead of "Ham". A legend among the Jews that comes down to us from a very ancient time says that Canaan was the one who first saw his grandfather's shame and that instead of covering him and concealing his nakedness, he told his father for which cause he and his descendents bore the curse. While Ham's son Cush was the ancestor of the Babylonians, the Ethiopians, and the people of southern Arabia; while Ham's son Mizraim was the ancestor of the Egyptians; and while Ham's son Phut was the ancestor of others who lived in Africa, Canaan was the ancestor of Phoenicians and other tribes inhabiting Palestine (a fact we shall make reference to shortly).

B. The Blessing Upon Shem.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:26).

The Hebrew people, as well as the Armenians, Persians, Assyrians, and Arabians, descended from Shem. The Hebrew, Chaldee, Assyrian, and Arabic languages are called Semitic languages after Shem. The prophecy probably was more concerned with the Hebrew element of his descendents than any other. When the children of Israel (descendents of Shem) came out of Egypt and took the land of Canaan under Joshua, subduing Canaan and making the Canaanites (descendents of Shem) subservient to them, we have a remarkable fulfillment of Gen. 9:26.

C. The Blessing Upon Japheth.

"God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27).

Truly, God has "enlarged" Japheth. The lands around the Mediterranean, Europe, and most of Asia (and today North and South America and Australia from them) have been populated. Possibly in several ways has Japheth dwelt in the tents or place of Shem. Japheth long ago replaced Shem as the world power, earlier world powers having been of Shem while later world powers have been of

Japheth. Religiously, Gentile people of Japheth have replaced Hebrew people as the people of God. Truly, then, Japheth is dwelling in the tents of Shem. Canaan also was to serve Japheth.

From these three sons of Noah was the whole earth repopulated (Gen. 9:19). Gen. 11:10-26 traces the generations from Shem to Abraham, the great man in the plan of God who will be the subject of our next study.

Abraham's Place in the Plan of God

Abraham (originally known as "Abram") is introduced to us in Gen. 11:26, the son of one Terah of Chaldea, and although Gen. 25:8 records his death at the age of one hundred seventy-five, the Bible never loses sight of this great man of the patriarchal world. He was given a great place in the plan of God, and no one can be properly referred to as a mature student of the Bible who does not generally understand his place in the unfolded plan of God.

The time of Abraham marked the time when God began to work visibly toward the salvation of the human race that He had promised in Gen. 3:15, a verse of "beginning again" for the human family. The time of Abraham was also a time when the ancient world was steeped in idolatry, even Abraham's father, being an idolater (Josh. 24:2). The call of Abraham was also the beginning of God's particular dealings with one people to the exclusion of all other peoples as far as special revelation was concerned. He began to work with and through one nation of people (the Hebrews) seemingly to the disregarding of all the other nations as far as dealing with and through them was concerned. To this, Paul referred when he said:

"Who in times past suffered all nations (Gentiles) to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:16,17).

Let us, then, consider this man who plays one of the major human roles in the plan of God.

I. Abraham Was A Man Of Great Faithfulness.

Like all who are human, he was not sinless, but he must certainly be regarded as one of the great characters of the Bible. Particular mention is made by Biblical writers of his faithfulness to God and his faith in God.

A. He Obeyed God's Call.

Acts 7:2,3 and Gen. 12:1 show that God first appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia and later in Haran, both times

calling him to leave where he was and to go where God would show him. The faith and faithful obedience of Abraham are noted by the Hebrew writer as follows:

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8).

B. He Believed God's Promise Of A Multitude Of Descendants.

God had spoken to Abraham about his "seed", but years had passed, and no children were born to him. He took occasion one day to speak to God about the matter. One night, God took him out into the open and spoke to him as follows:

"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:5).

In other words, Abraham was to become the progenitor of an innumerable multitude. Later, He changed his name from "Abram" to "Abraham" (Gen. 17:1-7). "Abraham" means "father of a multitude". But, the largeness of the promise did not find Abraham staggering in unbelief. The next verse after the promise says:

"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

All of this is the more remarkable when we consider the extreme age of both Abraham and his wife. True faith in God staggers not in the face of difficulties. Because of great faith in connection with numerous offspring, the Hebrew writer has not failed to include this in his report:

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (Heb. 11:11,12).

C. He Obeyed God's Commandment To Sacrifice His Son Isaac.

It was a great trial of his faith when God said to him:

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Gen. 22:2).

The Hebrew writer took into account that it was a great trial of faith, but recorded that his faith was equal to the commandment:

"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17-19).

II. Promises To Abraham Concerning His Physical Descendants.

God made several important and far-reaching promises to Abraham concerning his physical descendants. We desire to consider four important such promises below.

A. A Promise Of Becoming A Great Nation.

Gen. 12:2 contains the following promise:

"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great."

Thus, Abraham became the father of the Hebrew people. Actually, Abraham was the father of several nations (Gen. 17:5,6)--the Ishmaelites through his son Ishmael, the Edomites through his grandson Esau, the Israelites through his grandson Jacob, and even other nations.

B. A Promise Of Land.

When Abraham was called, God told him to go to a land that He would show him (Gen. 12:1). When he passed through the land of Canaan, God said to him:

"Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7).

After he and Lot separated, Abraham having shown such unselfishness as to let Lot choose his preference of land, God assured Abraham of much land. He said:

"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14,15).

The actual boundaries of the land to become that of his descendents was from the river of Egypt unto the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18). After the exodus, several hundred years later than Abraham, this land promise was fulfilled unto his offspring.

C. A Promise Concerning His Friends And His Enemies.

To Abraham, God said:

"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee" (Gen. 12:3).

It is possibly worthy of notice here that Abraham's friends were spoken of in the plural while his enemies were spoken of in the singular. God was going to work in such a way that many more would be good to Abraham than would hate him.

D. A Promise Involving The Messiah.

Twice (at Haran in Gen. 12:3 and when he had proven himself in the offering of Isaac in Gen. 22:18) did God make the greatest promise of all to Abraham, when He said:

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (12:3); "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (22:18).

What was meant by that promise? We are not left wondering, for Paul spoke concerning it in Gal. 3. In verse 14, he spoke of the blessing of Abraham coming upon the Gentiles through Jesus. "All the nations" of the promise in Gen. 22:18 would naturally include the Gentiles, and Jesus was the seed (offspring) of Abraham through whom the blessing came. We are confirmed in this by reading verse 16 of Gal. 3:

"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

Matthew, surely the "kingdom" gospel of the four, aptly traced the genealogy of Jesus to Abraham through David. He traced it to David to prove that Jesus had a right to the throne of Israel, and he traced it to Abraham because it was necessary for the Messiah to be of Abraham's offspring in order to meet the promise of Gen. 22:18. Notice the opening verse of Matthew:

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

III. Abraham Also Has Spiritual Descendents.

A. The Jews Thought They Were "In" Because Of Their Descent From Abraham.

As a people, the Jews made too much out of being physical descendents of Abraham as far as an individual standing with God was concerned. John the Baptist and Jesus both had to deal with this erroneous attitude. When John preached the necessity of repentance, he knew that some of the hypocritical Jews were counting strongly on physical descent from Abraham. Therefore, he said:

"Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Matt. 3:9).

He told them in the next verse that the ax was laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that was not bringing forth good fruit (regardless of physical descent) was going to be cut down and burned.

When Jesus said to certain Jews that they would know the truth, and that the truth would make them free, they immediately answered Him:

"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33).

B. Abraham Has Two Kinds Of Descendents.

Of course, Abraham had physical descendents. But, he also has spiritual descendents. Rom. 2:25-29 says:

"For circumcision (being a physical descendent of Abraham) verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision (those not of physical descent from Abraham) keep the righteousness of the law (obediently serve God like Abraham), shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision (become a descent of Abraham)? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly (physical descent); neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew (a true descendent), which is one inwardly (spiritually); and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

It certainly is not true that the physical descendents of Abraham are today the people of God. The above passage shows that they are not. God has a new people, and all of the good things to come from being descendents of Abraham come through being spiritual descendents of Abraham rather than physical descendents.

C. All Who Are In Christ Are Spiritual Descendents Of Abraham.

In Christ, all lineal distinctions are past. All are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus--not by physical descent from Abraham (Gal. 3:26). As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ regardless of who they are (Gal. 3:27). And Paul shows the following concerning those who are in Christ:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

Now, notice what Paul went on to say concerning those who are Christ's:

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

In other words, ever since Abraham's day, God's people have been the descendents of Abraham. Prior to Jesus' coming, they were Abraham's physical descendents, but since Jesus has come, they are Abraham's spiritual descendents (those who "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham").

D. An Argument Based Upon The "Time" When Abraham Was Approved Of God.

Rom. 4 is a wonderful chapter to study in connection with this present study. Verses 1 and 2 deny that Abraham was approved in God's sight by sinless perfection. Rather, in contrast, verse 3 affirms that it was his unswerving faith in God that gained him his approval with God. Verse 3, in support of this, quotes Gen. 15:6, when he believed God's mighty promise concerning the innumerable number of his descendents. Gen. 15:6 says:

"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

This state of righteousness with God is the state desired of all. But, who attains that state? The man who seeks it by morality apart from trust in God, or the man who seeks it by trusting in God? The chapter shows that it comes not by works of morality nor by works of the law, but by faith put into obedient action, even as was Abraham's.

But, upon whom can such blessedness come? Upon Jews only, or upon Gentiles also? Paul argues that since Abraham received the approval of God before he was circumcised (the mark of distinction between Hebrews and all others), circumcision (or being a physical Hebrew) necessarily has nothing to do with obtaining that blessed state of righteousness. Follow the train of thought and the logic of his argument in the following verses, and notice the conclusion reached:

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision? or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision (This statement of approval came in Gen. 15, but he was not circumcised until Gen. 17). And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also (the Gentiles): and the father of the circumcision to

them who are not of the circumcision only (Hebrews), but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world; was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect; because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations;) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be" (Rom. 4:9-18).

Man having sinned, there was no hope of his acceptance with God on any basis of personal righteousness. A belief in God and an acceptance of the mercy of God extended through the crucified Christ demonstrated through one's obedience was the divinely appointed way of acceptance with God. Though Abraham was not the first Biblical character to be an example of acceptance with God by an obedient faith (Abel, Enoch, and Noah having preceded him in this--Heb. 11:4-7), yet his case if given greater elaboration than any before him or any after him in this regard.

Thus, we see that Abraham occupies an important place in the plan of God from a number of important standpoints, and there are other considerations also that space has not allowed to include.

Isaac's Place in the Plan of God

Isaac was one of the grand old men of the patriarchal world. He was kind and gentle in his ways and attained an age greater than either his father or his immediate descendents (he lived to be 180, Gen. 35:28; his father Abraham lived to be 175, Gen. 25:7; Isaac's son Jacob lived to be 147, Gen. 47:28,29; Isaac's grandson Joseph lived to be 110, Gen. 50:26). No study of the plan of God would be complete without a study of the life of this man Isaac.

I. The Abrahamic Line And Promises Were Continued Through Him.

A. God Revealed This Fact To Abraham Before Isaac Was Born.

At the time that God gave Abraham the law of circumcision, He said the following to him about his wife Sarah:

"I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her (the only son that Abraham had at that time was Ishmael, who was born of Sarah's handmaid Hagar): yea, I will

bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations (the Israelites, Edomites, and others came from her); kings of people shall be of her (Saul, David, Solomon, all the kings of Israel, all the kings of Judah, as well as Edomite kings, and others came from her). Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old, and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation (the Ishmaelites descended from him). But my covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Gen. 17:16-21).

B. God Renewed The Promises To Isaac Personally After The Death Of Abraham.

When a great famine arose, Isaac was contemplating taking his family and going into the land of Egypt. But, God appeared to him and said:

"Go not down into Egypt: dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 26:2-4).

Thus, the first important thing about Isaac is that he and his descendents became the line through which the Messiah was to be brought into the world.

II. An Incident In Isaac's Life Was Used As An Allegory To Teach A Great Doctrinal Lesson About The Two Covenants.

A. The Incident Took Place At The Time Of His Weaning.

"And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with thy son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:8-13).

B. Paul's Inspired Use Of This Incident.

The Galatian churches were being turned back to the law by Judaizing teachers. Paul wrote the Galatian letter to correct this situation. To teach that Christians are exclusively under the new covenant and in no sense under the old, Paul wrote:

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons (Ishmael and Isaac), the one (Ishmael) by a bondmaid (Hagar), the other (Isaac) by a freewoman (Sarah). But he who was of the bondwoman (Ishmael) was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman

(Isaac) was by promise (God made special promise concerning his birth). Which things are an allegory (that is, they teach a lesson): for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai (the old covenant), which gendereth to bondage (it did not bring salvation); which is Agar (Hagar). For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia (where the old covenant was given through Moses), and answereth to Jerusalem which now is (the center of old covenant religion in Paul's day), and is in bondage with her children. But, Jerusalem which is above (the heavenly Jerusalem) is free (brings salvation), which is the mother of us all (all in Christ). For it is written (concerning Sarah before Isaac was born), Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate (Hagar) hath many more children than she which hath an husband (Sarah). Now we (Christians), brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise (our redemption through Christ was that promised to come through the seed of Abraham). But as then he that was born after the flesh (Ishmael) persecuted (at the weaning feast) him that was born after the Spirit (Isaac), even so it is now (the Jews of old covenant loyalty were persecuting Christians of the new covenant). Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael) shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (Isaac). So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman (the old covenant), but of the free (the new covenant)" (Gal. 4:21-31).

This is one of the most elaborate allegories to be found in the Bible. It is rich in its teaching and easy to follow if one is at all familiar with the births of Ishmael and Isaac and the incident that transpired at Isaac's weaning feast.

III. Interesting Incidents In Isaac's Life.

A. The Time When He Was About Offered As A Sacrifice.

Young Isaac did not know that he was to be the sacrifice when he, his father Abraham, and the two young men set out for the land of Moriah. On the third day, when Abraham saw the mountain, he told the two young men to stay where they were while he and Isaac went to worship. Laying the wood upon Isaac, which probably the two young men had been carrying, Abraham took the torch of fire in one hand and the knife in the other, and they two started toward the mountain. How piercing to Abraham's heart must these words of Isaac been as they journeyed:

"My father...behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gen. 22:7).

Surely, God must have given Abraham the answer that he gave Isaac:

"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8).

When they arrived at the place, Abraham built an altar, laid the wood upon it, tied Isaac, and laid him upon the wood. What conversation might have taken place between the two as these proceedings were taking place, we are not told. Nor are we told how Abraham must have felt as he proceeded or how Isaac must have felt when he knew that he was soon to be killed. Though it was difficult, Abraham took the knife and stepped forward to take the life of the lad when an angel called Abraham by name and said:

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God,

seeing thou hast not withheld thy son" (Gen. 22:12).

Just then, Abraham looked, and there was a ram caught by his horns in a thicket nearby. The Scripture says:

"Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Gen. 22:13).

God did provide Himself with a sacrifice! And we, like Isaac, faced death, but God provided Himself with a sacrifice in the person of Jesus, who died for us or who was sacrificed in our stead like the ram was in Isaac's stead. How happy father and son must have been as they went down the mountain together, probably hand in hand! Probably Isaac, though already so dear to him, was all the more precious to Abraham after this experience. It is possible that the fright and emotional strain of this event caused Abraham and Isaac never to talk about it even later in life.

B. The Beauty Of His Marriage.

After the death of Sarah, there was a matter that Abraham wanted settled before he died. He, consequently, called in the servant who was over all that he had and made him promise with an oath that he would not take a wife of the Canaanites for Isaac, but that he would go back to Abraham's kindred and obtain a wife among them for him if possible. Accepting the responsibility, the servant set out for the city of Haran in Mesopotamia. As he and his camels were at the watering place where the young ladies came out to draw water, he prayed:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac: and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master" (Gen. 24:12-14).

Just then came Rebekah, described in the Bible as a damsel very fair to look upon and a virgin. The servant asked her for a drink. He drank from the pitcher in her hand. When he had drunk, she said:

"I will draw water for thy camels also until they have done drinking" (Gen. 24:19).

And the passage continues by saying:

"And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels (drawing water in a pitcher for ten thirsty camels was no small chore)" (Gen. 24:20).

When invited by Rebekah to lodge for the night with her people, the servant accepted the hospitality. But, before he would eat, he said that he must state his errand. Gen. 24:34-48 relates his words. As he concluded, he asked them what they would or would not do in view of the transpirings. Then, her father Bethuel and her brother Laban said:

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy

master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken" (Gen. 24:50,51).

Rebekah herself, though it was so sudden and though it meant to be parted permanently from her own people, gracefully bowed unto the will of the Lord, went with Abraham's servant and men, and became the wife of Isaac.

The concern of Abraham for a good wife for his son was commendable. The responsible and spiritual way in which Abraham's servant accepted and conducted all the proceedings reflects deep piety and godliness. And the way that Rebekah submitted to the will of the Lord breathes with the spirit of purity and humility. Though the customs of obtaining a wife have radically changed from Abraham's day, yet that same spirit of purity, prayer, and marrying according to the will of God should characterize everyone getting married today.

C. Redigging The Wells Of His Father.

The patience and big-heartedness of Isaac were expressed in his conduct toward the Philistines. They had filled the wells formerly digged by Abraham's servants. When Isaac digged again those wells, he named them by the names that his father had given them (a commendable act). But, each time his servants got one of them redigged, the herdmen of Gerar strove with his herdmen, saying the water belonged to them. Peaceably, he would withdraw, letting them have the wells. Finally, he found a place where they did not strive with him, so he settled, saying:

"Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (Gen. 26:22).

In this world of self-seeking and mercilessly over-running one another, it is difficult for us to appreciate Isaac's attitude as much as we should. Surely, if each person had a full measure of Isaac's spirit, there would be no wars, no labor disputes, no neighborhood rows, no family troubles, and no church strife!

Isaac, like every other human being, made some mistakes, such as having a favorite son (Esau) and one time telling a half-truth about his wife to the king of Gerar. But, he is to be remembered as one who lived a quiet, peaceful, godly life, less eventful than that of his son Jacob, but more above reproach and with fewer difficulties and trouble.

Jacob's Place in the Plan of God

The Bible has much to say about this man Jacob. Though he did not live as long as Abraham and Isaac, he was certainly a key man in the plan of God. Busy struggling with his twin brother in birth, his busy and eventful life was inaugurated which carried him through many interesting incidents in Old Testament history. Let us, then, consider

him who was the father of the Israelitish people.

I. Jacob Rather Than Esau Was Chosen To Be The Line Through Whom The Abrahamic Promises Would Be Fulfilled.

A. A Possible Hint Of This Was Made Known To Rebekah.

Before the birth of the children, God said to their mother Rebekah:

"Two nations are in thy womb (the Israelite and the Edomite), and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people (Israelite) shall be stronger than the other people (Edomite); and the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)" (Gen. 25:23).

B. At Bethel, God Confirmed The Abrahamic Promises To Jacob.

When Jacob fled from the wrath of his brother Esau, he lay down to sleep at the place which later became known as Bethel. Great things transpired there that night:

"He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:12-14).

C. The Frequent Linking Of "Abraham, Isaac, And Jacob" Together In The Bible.

Many, many times the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are used together in Scripture without any note or comment. This frequent association of their names has its significance. By way of examples, we cite just a few instances where their names appear together:

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11); "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:32); "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28).

Concerning the above three men, Halley has a well stated note in his "Pocket Bible Handbook", page 100, 19th edition: "In the line of promise, all Abraham's sons were eliminated, except Isaac. Of Isaac's sons, Esau was eliminated from the line, and Jacob only chosen. With Jacob the eliminating process stopped; and all Jacob's descendants were to be included as the chosen nation." Acts 7:8 abbreviates history of four generations for us when it says:

"Abraham begat Isaac...and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs."

The twelve patriarchs were Jacob's twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel--the nation which God chose as His people throughout Old Testament times. The tribe of Judah descended from Jacob's son Judah; the tribe of Dan descended from Jacob's son Dan;

the tribe of Benjamin descended from Jacob's son Benjamin; etc.

II. The Two Names That He Wore Well Describe His Life.

A. His Given Name Was "Jacob" (Supplanter).

Jacob well lived up to his name in the earlier years of his life. No Bible character better deserved the name "Supplanter" than he. The custom was that the firstborn received the chief honor, favors, and blessings. Esau, being the firstborn, would normally have been the recipient of the special favors, but it didn't work out that way. Jacob, ever zealous of accomplishment, showed a remarkable and inexhaustible determination to forge ahead at every opportunity, and before the story was finished, he was at the top of the ladder instead of Esau.

Gen. 25:22 shows that the two boys struggled together in birth, a struggle that never actually ended. Throughout life, there was a constant struggle between them, and their descendants after them inherited that same attitude toward each other. For example, when the Israelites (descendants of Jacob) were coming out of the land of Egypt, the Edomites (descendants of Esau) refused to allow them passage through their country (Num. 20:14-21). In the days of the kingdom of Israel, there were various wars between the Israelites and the Edomites. The one-chapter book of Obadiah is devoted to condemning the nation of Edom to a final overthrow because of its delight over and participation in some military catastrophe that befell the Israelites. Oba. 10-14 reads:

"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress."

In birth, though Esau was born first, Gen. 25:26 says that Jacob took hold of the heel of Esau. Thus, though it appeared that Jacob had lost in the struggle, Esau having been born first, Jacob was close behind and hanging on. Years later, when the boys had grown up, the Scripture says:

"Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom ("Red"). And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and

rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25:29-34).

Time passed, and Isaac fearing that he would soon die called in Esau, his favorite of the two sons, and told him to obtain and prepare some savoury meat which he relished and that he would bless him before he died (Gen. 27:1-4). In patriarchal times, it seems to have been the custom for the fathers before they died to pronounce the future fortunes of their children. Besides this example, we have the example of Noah (Gen. 9:25-27), the example of Jacob concerning the future of two of his grandchildren (Gen. 48:13-20), and the example of Jacob concerning his twelve sons (Gen. 49:1-28). It appears that Isaac had no intention to bless Jacob, but Esau only. Rebekah overheard all the proceedings, and having Jacob as her favorite son (possibly due to the fact that God made known to her at the time of the sons' births that Jacob was to be the greater), she was determined that Jacob and not Esau should receive the blessing. Consequently, she devised a system whereby Jacob could take food in to his blind father and receive the blessing intended for Esau by the father (Gen. 27:6-17). When Jacob took the food in to his father, Isaac was somewhat reluctant at first, being doubtful that the one in his presence was Esau (Gen. 27:18-24). But, when he felt assured that it was Esau, he ate and pronounced the following blessing upon him:

"God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen. 27:28,29).

Jacob had but little more than left when Esau arrived with his meat for his father (Gen. 27:30,31). How troubled the aged Isaac was when he realized what had happened, but the blessing having been pronounced, it could not be changed. When Esau entreated his father for the blessing, Isaac answered:

"Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing" (Gen. 27:35).

Realizing the full impact of what had happened and of what it was going to mean for the future, Esau exclaimed:

"Is not he rightly named Jacob ("Supplanter")? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing" (Gen. 27:36).

Concerning the foregoing blessing, some think that the blessing that Jacob here received was actually what he was supposed to receive as a result of his having obtained the birthright from Esau. Heb. 12:16,17 might seem to indicate that it was the same. Gen. 27:36 might seem to indicate that it was something different. There is a problem here which is not easy to solve. But, there is no question but what Jacob well lived up to his given name "Supplanter". And what he did to his brother Esau, he likewise did (with God's help) to his father-in-law Laban (Gen. 30:25--31:42).

B. Later, He Was Called "Israel" (Prince Of God).

It was while returning to his native land after having been gone for many years that he wrestled all night with

the angel of God at Peniel (Gen. 32:24,25). When daybreak came, he refused to let the angel go until he had blest him (Gen. 32:26). The angel said to him:

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

By God's help, he had already prevailed in a great way but through his twelve sons, he was to become the actual progenitor of the Old Testament people of God--the people through whom God brought the Messiah into the world. Through those people were all descendants of Abraham and of Isaac also, they were not called the "children of Abraham" nor the "children of Isaac", but the "children of Israel" (who was Jacob). In a spiritual sense, his name is preserved in Christianity, the people of God today (the church) being referred as the "Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16.

III. Jacob's Prophecies Concerning His Sons.

Twenty-five verses of Gen. 49 are devoted to a remarkable forecasting of the future fortunes and misfortunes of Jacob's twelve sons. Though we would like to, we must not take the space here to consider his prophecies concerning them all. We are primarily concerned about through which son (which tribe) the promised Messiah would come.

A. Reuben, The Firstborn, Lost The Priority Because Of Sin.

It was customary for the firstborn son to be first in line for both honor and authority. But, from Jacob's prophecy concerning Reuben, we see that such did not descend upon the head of Reuben and why it didn't:

"Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: unstable as water, thou shalt not excel: because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defildest thou it: he went up to my couch" (Gen. 49:3,4).

Instead of "unstable as water", the Revised Version says "boiling over as water". The instance referred to was when Reuben went into Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22). Both translations ("unstable as water" and "boiling over as water") probably fit Reuben in that regard. Anyway, he who should have excelled, being the firstborn, would not excel because of this sin.

B. The Blessing Of Preeminence Fell Upon Judah.

Jacob said:

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee...The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver (the ruler's staff--R.V.) from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:8-10).

The truthfulness of this prophecy is seen in both Old Testament and New Testament times. Judah was the largest of all the tribes, and from it came David, the great ruler of the Israelites to whom the rest of the tribes looked for leadership and protection. The tribe of Judah also produced Jesus (Heb. 7:14), and to His authority all have bowed down, and the gathering of the people has surely been to

Him. Though there are some problems connected with it, it has generally been taken that the word "shiloh" refers to the coming Messiah. This special blessing upon Judah may have come to him because he demonstrated leadership in those chapters relating to obtaining corn in Egypt, even being willing to bear the blame and the penalty both to his father for the life of Benjamin (Gen. 43:3-9) and to Joseph when Joseph was going to keep Benjamin in ward (Gen. 44:18-34). Such a spirit well depicted ahead of time the attitude of Jesus (Judah's descendant), who was willing to be punished that we might go free.

As we bring this study toward a close, we might ask why it was that God chose Jacob instead of Esau. While it is true that Jacob was possibly not as godly in his overall demeanor as were Abraham and Isaac, yet even at that, he was a credit beside Esau. But, more than that, the real reason lay in this difference: Esau treated his birthright and the blessings that would have attended it (especially in coming generations) with contempt from the standpoint of value while Jacob had the utmost regard for the value of being heir to the Abrahamic promises. Heb. 12:16 calls Esau a "profane person", who for one (only one) morsel of meat (something earthly whose value was slight) sold his birthright (that which had time-lasting blessings connected with it). Those many today preferring the pleasures of sin which last but for a season to the joys of the Lord that will last forever are showing the same lack of character as Esau. Truly,

"Esau despised (belittled) his birthright" (Gen. 27:34).

There are surely many things to be observed in the life of Jacob. He fooled his father when he impersonated Esau; his own sons deceived him when they brought back Joseph's coat of many colors stained with blood. He brought sorrow to others; his sons brought sorrow to him when they sold Joseph. He didn't live as long as his forefathers, and his life had many trials and hardships. How apt are his words when he came to Egypt and was brought in before Pharaoh:

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage" (Gen. 47:9).

The Israelites in Egypt

In that period of time when God was conversing often with Abraham about his offspring, Abraham having just offered a sacrifice to God fell into a deep sleep about sundown. In his sleep, a horror of great blackness came upon him because of something that was to happen to several generations of his offspring. He was assured, however, that blessings would follow that period of blackness.

This vision that God gave to him is one of the most remarkable in all the Bible. It went:

"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance" (Gen. 15:13,14).

This prophecy, well known to Bible students, was obviously looking to the time when the children of Israel would be slaves in Egypt and after a long period of time (here referred to in round numbers as 400 years) would come out with great substance, which they did when the time of the exodus came.

With these thoughts as a background, let us study about the Israelites in the land of Egypt.

I. How They Got There.

A. Joseph, Taken There As A Slave, Arose To Great Power.

Jacob had loved Rachel, but because of the custom of the times and place for a father to marry off his firstborn daughter first, he found himself unwittingly married to Leah (Gen. 29:16-26). Loving Rachel as he did (and it not being unc customary for the patriarchs to take more than one wife), he agreed to serve another seven years for her (Gen. 29:27,28). It was Leah who bore Jacob his first four sons--Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (Gen. 29:31-35)--after which she ceased bearing for a time. Envyng her sister and being unable to bear Jacob children herself, Rachel gave her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob to wife, which resulted in Bilhah bearing him his fifth and sixth sons--Dan and Naphtali (Gen. 30:1-8). Seeing that she was no longer bearing children and seeing that Rachel had given her handmaid to Jacob to wife, Leah decided to give her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob to wife. This resulted in Zilpah bearing Jacob his seventh and eighth sons--Gad and Asher (Gen. 30:9-13). Then, through a bargain between Rachel and Leah whereby Rachel obtained from Leah's son Reuben some mandrakes (a plant believed to stimulate childbearing), Leah was given to Jacob again in the role of a wife (evidently, Rachel was dominating Jacob entirely at this time). The result was three more children by Leah (two sons and a daughter)--Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah (Gen. 30:14-21). Thus, eleven children had been born to Jacob, but his favorite wife Rachel had not as yet borne him a child. When God finally opened Rachel's womb, and Joseph was born (Gen. 30:22-24), it is easy to understand why Joseph became Jacob's favorite son. Gen. 37:3 also adds the thought that Joseph was his father's favorite because of having been born in Jacob's advanced years. This favoritism caused Joseph's brothers to hate him (Gen. 37:3,4).

Besides, God had given Joseph some inspired dreams whereby Joseph's ultimate superiority to them was made known. Gen. 37:5-10 says:

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And He said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood

upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"

Years later, when his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain from him, and they bowed down before him as the mighty ruler in Egypt, he remembered his dreams (Gen. 42:6-9). To say the least, these dreams, though of God, added fuel to the raging fire of hatred already blazing in his brothers' hearts toward him. One day, when far from home, their animosity took definite action when they first thought of killing him, but changed their plans to selling him to a caravan of traders passing by on their way to Egypt (Gen. 37:12-28). Thus, the first of the Israelites arrived in Egypt. When the caravan arrived in Egypt, they sold Joseph to Potipher, one of Pharaoh's officers (Gen. 39:1).

The next verse opens with a statement (repeated centuries later by Stephen in Acts 7:9) that accounts for all that developed later in Joseph's favor:

"And the Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2).

First, through the blessings of God's prosperity, Joseph became great in Potipher's eyes (Gen. 39:3-6). But, through the wickedness and misrepresentation of Potipher's wife, Joseph was temporarily demoted, being cast into prison (Gen. 39:7-20). But, through the blessings of the Lord, Joseph there became great in the eyes of the prison-keeper (Gen. 39:21-23). While still in prison, he became great in the eyes of Pharaoh's imprisoned butler, who was reinstated to his butlership as prophesied by Joseph (Gen. 40:1-23). Though the butler forgot to remember Joseph to the king as he had promised to do, Joseph's time was yet to come, which did come when Pharaoh dreamed the dreams about the fat and thin cows and the fat and thin ears of grain, and Joseph was called in to interpret them (Gen. 41:1-36). As a result, Pharaoh put Joseph over the entire project of storing the grain during the years of plenty, making him next in power to himself in Egypt. Gen. 41:39-41 records the words of Pharaoh to Joseph as follows:

"Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou...See I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

And the reading in Genesis continues:

"And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 41:42,43).

B. Jacob And All His Move To Egypt.

It is a well known story of the mighty famine arriving as predicted, and how the aged Jacob sent his sons (except Benjamin, his last child who was a full brother of Joseph, having Rachel as his mother also, whose birth had transpired after the selling of Joseph) into Egypt to buy grain (Gen. 42:1-4). It is also familiar to most readers of Joseph's making himself known to his brothers on their second journey to buy grain (Gen. 45:1-8). Because there yet remained five more years of the famine, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and the rest of Jacob's household to move them to Egypt (Gen. 45:9-11). When Jacob received the news that Joseph was yet alive and a ruler in Egypt, it was too much to believe, but when he saw the great wagons sent from Egypt, he knew the report was true, for his sons had no way of owning such wagons (Gen. 45:26-28). Thus did Jacob and the other Israelites move into the land of Egypt (Gen. 46:5-7).

C. Where They Settled.

Pharaoh was most cordial to the father and people of Joseph. Learning they were shepherds and could profitably use good grazing land, he gave the following orders to Joseph:

"The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle" (Gen. 47:6).

The land of Goshen was in the northern part of Egypt that lay east of the Nile delta and was very ideal for a pastoral people such as the Israelites.

II. Israelites Put Into Bondage.

A. Factors Bringing This About.

With Joseph being such a mighty man in Egypt and with Pharaoh being so gracious to the Israelites, we might wonder at first just what could have brought about the enslavement of these people. Sometime after the death of Joseph--we know not how long after--the Scripture says:

"There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Exo. 1:8).

Possibly with none of Joseph's people succeeding to his glory in the land of Egypt after his death, it was only a matter of time until the Israelites were not regarded with any particular regard by the Egyptians. Living as they did in a somewhat segregated portion of Egypt and being shepherds (which was an abominable occupation to the Egyptians--Gen. 46:34), the Israelites easily remained a distinct people in Egypt. With this expected estrangement, it is easy to see how a future king might arise who did not regard the Israelites as the pharaoh of Joseph's day had done.

There was another factor, however, that entered in to the Israelites becoming enslaved. They were multiplying so fast. Exo. 1:7 says of them:

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

This caused a fear in the heart of the king. He said to his fellow-Egyptians:

"Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land" (Exo. 1:9,11).

Therefore, the descendants of Jacob were cast into an enslavement to the fearful Egyptians.

B. Measures Employed By The Egyptians Against The Israelites.

The first thing they did was to set taskmasters over them, who made them build treasure cities for the king and who afflicted them (probably with whips) as they worked. But, the Scripture says:

"The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (Exo. 1:12).

When this didn't cut back the population, the king gave specific instructions to the midwives attending the births of the Israelite children to kill all the male children born among them. This didn't work either, for the Scripture says:

"The midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive" (Exo. 1:17).

Though such mistreatment and abuse did not blot out the Israelites, it did make life most miserable and almost unbearable for them. Exo. 2:23 says:

"The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage."

And the next two verses say:

"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Exo. 2:24,25).

Thus, it was evident that God was going to step in and change the picture for His covenant-people, which brings us to our next study.

Delivered From Egyptian Bondage

Christ, our high priest, can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4:15), and it was just as true of God the Father that He was touched with the pitiful condition of His people, the Israelites, in the severe and uncivil bondage which they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. And we know that whenever people cry to God, as the Israelites did, and their cry comes up before God, as theirs did (Exo. 2:23-25), God is surely going to do some-

thing in behalf of His own. As we shall see in this study, He arose and saved them with a mighty and outstretched arm.

I. Moses, God's Earthly Agent Of Deliverance.

A. His Family.

His father and mother (Amram and Jochebed--Exo. 6:20) were both of the tribe of Levi (Exo. 2:1). He had a brother Aaron (Exo. 6:20) and a sister Miriam (Exo. 15:20). Moses was the last-born of the three children, but by far superceded the other two in both character and importance. As odd as it seems, the fact remains that though Moses was the great law-giver, Aaron the first high priest of Israel, and Miriam a leader of women in Israel, neither of them got to enter the land of Canaan.

B. Adopted By Pharaoh's Daughter.

Moses was born in those days when the king's commandment was to throw every male baby of the Hebrews into the river. The faith of his parents caused them to disregard the order as long as they could:

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Heb. 11:23).

But, as he became about three months of age, it became increasingly hard to conceal him. When she could conceal him at home no longer, his mother made a little basket out of bulrushes, daubed it with slime and pitch, put the baby into it, and let him float in the reeds along the river's edge while his sister Miriam kept watch at a distance. What days of anxiety those were for the little family! How they hoped for the best, though what that would be, they had no idea. (It is interesting to note here that John D. Rockefeller, that great multi-millionaire oil magnate, dispatched many men and much equipment to Egypt to prospect for oil as a result of seeing the word "pitch" in Exo. 2:3 in his Bible class one Sunday morning. Believing in the complete accuracy of the Bible, he reasoned that wherever there was pitch, there was oil. Some of his richest producing oil fields were those he found in Egypt as a result of the above incident.)

When the king's daughter came to the river to bathe, she sent one of her maidens into the river to get the ark. When she opened it, there was the little baby crying. Somehow, this touched her heart, and although he was one of the Hebrews' children, she took him to be her own child. At the proper time, Miriam hurried up to the scene and asked her if she would like to have one of the Hebrew women nurse the baby. Thus, Moses' own mother was brought to the king's daughter, who said to her:

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages" (Exo. 2:9).

And what an important matter this turned out to be--reared by his own mother who was going to teach him concerning the true God and that the Hebrews were His chosen and covenant people. Being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he naturally had every educational advantage. Of his education,

Stephen said:

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22).

There is some historical evidence that might point toward the fact that Moses was in line for the Egyptian throne had he not in time renounced his royal ties.

C. Fled into Midian.

By combining Exo. 2:11-14; Heb. 11:24-26; and Acts 7:23-29, we have the following thread of thought:

"By faith Moses when he was come to years (Heb. passage)--that is, forty years old (Acts)--he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter any longer, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God (the Hebrews to whom he really belonged) than to enjoy all the luxuries and pleasures of the palace (Heb.). Thus, sympathizing with his brethren who were so bitterly hated and treated and evidently having the full intention of delivering them from the Egyptians (Acts), seeing an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand (Exo.). This was evidently the beginning of his plans to deliver them, though his brethren did not take to his leadership (Acts). The next day, when he saw two Hebrews striving together, he sought to make peace between them, but when one of them said, 'Wilt thou kill me as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?' Moses fled both because fearing that this supposedly concealed news would reach Pharaoh and because his brethren had not rallied to his deliverance ideas (Acts)."

The faith that Moses had has been rightfully credited to those early years of teaching and training by his godly and believing mother. When he fled from Egypt, he took refuge in the land of Midian (on the Arabian Peninsula).

D. His Forty Years In Midian.

While there, Moses married Zipporah, one of the daughters of Reuel (sometimes called Jethro), who was priest of Midian (Exo. 2:16-21). The Midianites and the Hebrews were both descendants of Abraham--the Hebrews through his son Isaac, and the Midianites through his son Midian by his wife Keturah.

One day when he was eighty years old (Compare Acts 7:23 with Acts 7:29,30), as he was keeping the sheep, the call of God came to him to return to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from their bondage. Exo. 3:1 speaks of this call occurring at Mt. Horeb while Acts 7:30 speaks of it taking place at Mt. Sinai. It is possible that the same mountain is meant, the two names merely being used interchangeably with each other (which is not uncommon), or it is possible that one name was the range and the other a particular peak in the range. The call began when a bush was on fire that was not consumed. As Moses drew near, evidently to inspect the matter, God spoke to him out of the burning bush:

"Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground...I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob...I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their

taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites...Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (Exo. 3:5-10).

Thus, Moses (as leader) was to become a part of that great unfolding plan of God which had included Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for Moses was to lead the people who descended from them into the very land that God had promised to them and their descendants. But, Moses possibly had psychological problems connected with going back to Egypt. He had left there in fear because of having killed the Egyptian (Exo. 2:15), but that king had died (Exo. 3:23). We don't know whether this incident that had occurred so many years ago still struck fear into Moses or not--at least, he did not include it in his remarks to God at the burning bush. At the burning bush, we see "Moses, the excuse-maker", for he offered God several excuses:

"Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"... "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"... "But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee"..."O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exo. 3:11-4:10).

Each excuse, God answered adequately. His first excuse ("Who am I that I should do this?") was answered by a promise that God would be with him. The second excuse ("Who shall I tell them you are?") was answered by God's telling him to say that "I am" had sent him, who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The third excuse ("They won't believe me") was met by giving him the miraculous use of his staff. His fourth excuse ("I am not eloquent, but slow of speech") was met by the promise that God would be with his mouth to help him. It was evident to God that Moses was just trying to keep from going, and when Moses suggested that he get somebody else to go, the anger of God was kindled against him. Finally consenting to go, God gave him his brother Aaron as a spokesman (Exo. 4:14-16). Thus, they headed out for Egypt.

II. God's Plagues Upon The Egyptians.

A. They First Went To The Israelites.

This was natural. They communicated to them their intentions, and they performed wonders in the sight of the people. The result of their going to the Israelites was:

"And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exo. 4:31).

B. They Next Went to Pharaoh.

At this first visit, they merely asked for a three-days' leave of absence for the Israelites so that they could go into the wilderness and sacrifice to Jehovah. Pharaoh wanted to know who this Jehovah was that he had to obey His voice to let Israel go sacrifice. Suffice it to say, before Moses and Aaron were through with him, he was going to know who Jehovah was! Instead of letting the people go, Pharaoh supposed the Israelites had too much time on their hands, so he commanded the taskmasters to make their work harder. As a result, the wearisome Israelites came to Moses and complained because of what his action had brought upon them, and Moses in turn went to God about the matter, saying:

"Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all!" (Exo. 5:22,23).

God assured Moses that He would work Pharaoh over so properly that he would let the people go and that He would give them the land of Canaan, which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exo. 6:1-8). But, although Moses spoke these good words to the people, they didn't believe them, for so far, they had seen nothing come out of Moses' efforts (Exo. 6:9).

C. They Went Into Pharaoh A Second Time.

They went in before Pharaoh again, made their demands, and Aaron cast down his staff before the king, and it became a serpent. The king called for his "tricksters", who cast their rods, and they became serpents. Even though Aaron's serpent swallowed theirs, Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let the people go.

D. The Plagues Began.

Because Pharaoh hardened his heart in disobedience to God, God started a series of plagues upon the land. The first was turning the water to blood, which resulted in the fish dying and the people having no water to drink (Exo. 7:17-25). The second plague was that of the frogs (Exo. 8:1-7). The third plague was turning the dust into lice (Exo. 8:16-19). The fourth plague was the scourge of flies (Exo. 8:20-24). The fifth plague was the smiting of Egypt's cattle with murrain and death (Exo. 9:1-6). The sixth plague was the smiting of the Egyptians and their beasts with boils (Exo. 9:8-11). The seventh plague was the sending of fire and hail (Exo. 9:13-26). The eighth plague was the scourge of locusts (Exo. 10:3-15). The ninth plague was that of three days of thick darkness over the land of Egypt (Exo. 10:21-23).

At first, when a plague was brought, the king would call for his magicians to do the same thing. They failed him when they came to the third plague, declaring to him that God was truly behind this plague. But, he paid no attention. When a plague became so unbearable, he would repent and say that he would let the people go. The plague would then stop, and he would harden his heart and reverse his decision.

It is worthy of attention that the Israelites were free from

the blight of these plagues (Exo. 9:6; 9:24-26; 10:22,23). It is also a fact that the gods of the Egyptians failed them in the time of these plagues, for these various plagues were aimed directly at a number of their important gods (like the Nile, the frog, the sun, cattle, etc.). Repeatedly was it said that by these miraculous plagues would the Israelites and the Egyptians both know that Jehovah was God (Exo. 6:7; 7:5; 7:17; 8:22; 10:2; 14:4; and 14:18). Much interesting material could be presented upon this matter, but we must refrain from the lack of adequate space for it.

D. The Final And Crushing Plague.

God had a crushing plague left--the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, both of man and cattle. He instructed the children of Israel to kill a lamb per household (unless the household was too small to eat a lamb, in which case two households could go together), roast it, put its blood on the door posts of their houses, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exo. 12:3-9). At midnight, God would send a mighty death angel throughout Egypt, and in every house where there was no blood on the door post, the firstborn of its cattle would die. Thus, it happened. Death visited Pharaoh's own household, and it visited the household of the most insignificant Egyptian (Exo. 12:29,30). The Egyptians had had enough! Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron yet that night and said:

"Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also" (Exo. 12:31,32).

Having obtained jewels of gold and silver and fine raiment from the Egyptians, they started out yet that night.

III. Their Exodus From Egypt.

A. The Prophecy of Joseph.

Before he died, Joseph predicted the Israelites' exodus (departure) from Egypt and charged them concerning his body:

"God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" (Gen. 50:24,25).

They had sold him into Egypt. They were to carry his dead body out of Egypt. The promise they made to Joseph must have been handed down from generation to generation, for when Moses and the children of Israel began their journey from Egypt, they took Joseph's bones with them (Exo. 13:19).

B. Crossing The Red Sea.

It was evidently several days before the Israelites came to the Red Sea, which they would cross to leave Egypt. During their journeying, a pillar of cloud went before them in the daytime, and a pillar of fire by night (Exo. 13:21). Pharaoh could not stand to think of losing all the slave labor of the Israelites (Exo. 14:5). Consequently, he decided to pursue after them to recover them if he could (Exo.

14:6-9). He overtook them as they were camped by the sea. The sight of them approaching naturally struck terror into the hearts of the recently liberated Israelites. What was to be done? Moses spoke:

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (Exo. 14:13).

Immediately, God spoke the following instructions to Moses:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen" (Exo. 14:15-18).

That night, the angel of the Lord caused the great pillar of cloud to stand between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exo. 14:19,20). Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and God sent a strong east wind, which caused the waters of the Red Sea to divide so that the Israelites were able to walk across the bottom of the sea on dry land between the two great walls of water (Exo. 14:21,22). When the Egyptians saw them emerging on the other side, they started across also, but when they got into the midst of the sea, God told Moses to stretch his hand out over the sea, and the walls of water gave way, and all the Egyptians were buried together in the midst of the sea. There is no doubt but what it would take great faith for the Israelites to go down into the bottom of the sea when the walls of water on both sides of them towered so much above them. The Hebrew writer has not overlooked the matter of their faith. He wrote:

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned" (Heb. 11:29).

The news of this miraculous passing through the sea and of the death of Pharaoh and his men got around to the other nations, and they didn't forget it either. Forty years later, after Moses was dead, when Joshua sent the two spies into Jericho, Rahab (a woman of Jericho who talked with the spies) expressed the knowledge and feeling of the other nations. In fear, she said:

"I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:9-11).

In closing this study, we notice that there are many striking comparisons to be made between Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage and our deliverance from the

bondage of sin: (1) They were in a terrible bondage, and so were we; (2) They could not deliver themselves from that bondage no matter how much they desired to do so, and neither could we; (3) God raised up Moses to be their deliverer, and He raised up Jesus to be our deliverer; (4) They had to believe Moses and follow his leadership in order to be delivered, and we have to do the same concerning Jesus; (5) When they were on their way out, Pharaoh did everything he could to retain their service, and the devil does the same thing today; (6) They were not out of Egypt until they had gone through the waters of the Red Sea, and we are not out of the state of bondage until we have gone through the waters of baptism; (7) They came up on the other side with a song of victory and thanksgiving to God for their deliverance, and we come up out of the waters of baptism thankful for our deliverance from sin, and we go on our way rejoicing; (8) Shortly at Mt. Sinai, they were taught what God expected of them, and following baptism, we are taught to observe the commandments of Jesus for our lives; (9) When they emerged from the sea, they were not yet in their home in Canaan--just starting--so when we are baptized, we have not yet reached heaven--just begun our journey thitherward; (10) Not all (only a few) who started for Canaan actually arrived there, and not all who begin the Christian life actually gain heaven's shore; (11) Only those who pleased God by their lives throughout the wilderness period entered Canaan, and only those who please God by their Christian lives will be admitted to heaven. May God help us to be in that number "when the saints go marching in".

The Law Given at Sinai

The movements of the children of Israel between Egypt's bondage and "Canaan's fair and happy land" were completely in God's hand. When the pillar of cloud or of fire moved, they followed; when it stopped, they encamped. The first principal stop that God had planned for them was Mt. Sinai in southern Arabia. But, before they got to Mt. Sinai, there were several interesting items of their history that took place.

When they came to Marah, the drinking water was bitter for them. God directed Moses to cast a tree into the water which, when done, made the water sweet (Exo. 15:23-25). This murmuring by the Israelites was only a foresight of further murmuring during the next forty years association that Moses would have with them.

In the Wilderness of Sin (thought to have been named for the Babylonian moon God "Sin"), they murmured for food. God's answer to this was a daily shower of manna from heaven, Manna (which means, "What is this?") was a small round substance as small as frost (Exo. 16:14), white like coriander seed (Exo. 16:30), and tasted like wafers

made with honey (Exo. 16:30). Each morning, each person was to gather his allotment of one omer (seven pints), but no more. Whatever was not eaten was to be destroyed. Some of them (people-like) gathered more, and others tried to keep some of it over, but God caused it to spoil on their hands, and what an odor! (Exo. 16:16-20). The day before the sabbath, they were to gather twice as much (Exo. 16:5,22). Manna was the Israelites' food until they entered Canaan forty years later (Exo. 16:35). An omer of it was to be preserved by the priests for a perpetual witness to the goodness of God through the wilderness period (Exo. 16:32,33). Twice during this forty-years' period God miraculously fed them with quails also (Exo. 16:12,13 and Num. 11:31,32).

At Rephidim, there were two incidents that took place. Once more, the people murmured to Moses, this time because they had no water. Water was brought forth to them out of a rock that Moses struck with his staff at God's direction (Exo. 17:1-7). It was there also that the Amalekites came against them in battle. Joshua (of whom we read much later) was chosen as the general to lead an army against them. Joshua put the Amalekites to flight as Moses stood on a hill overlooking the battle with his hands held up by Aaron and Hur (Exo. 17:8-13). Several hundred years later, God sent king Saul against the Amalekites in remembrance of their hostility against the Israelites at this time (I Sam. 15:2,3). As they came to the "mount of God", Moses' father-in-law came to him and rejoiced because of the Israelites' victory over Egypt that God had worked through Moses, but when he saw all the responsibility that Moses had to bear, he advised him most wisely to secure capable assistants, which he did (Exo. 18).

It was three months from the time they left Egypt until they encamped near Mt. Sinai. This stop must be considered an important mile-post in their history and travels, for it was here that God delivered to them the law by which they and their succeeding generations were to be governed.

I. The Circumstances Of The Giving Of The Law.

A. The People Instructed To Prepare For God To Speak To Them.

God said unto Moses:

"Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount!" (Exo. 19:10-13).

Surely, all of this was to impress the people that God was a God to reverence, and that it was a solemn matter for them to listen when He would speak to them.

B. God's Descent Upon The Mount To Speak To The People.

The people had made themselves ready as directed, and

on the third day, God descended upon Mt. Sinai as He had promised:

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice" (Exo. 19:16-19).

God called Moses to come up into the mountain. Realizing that the people might try to break through in curiosity to see God, He gave Moses the following instruction:

"Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish" (Exo. 19:21).

C. The First Portion Of The Law Was Delivered Orally From Mt. Sinai.

When Moses had gone down and had charged the people about not breaking through in an effort to gaze upon God, God spoke the ten commandments' portion of the law to the people (Exo. 20:1-17). While He spoke the people stood afar off, listening and beholding the smoking mountain (Exo. 20:18). Trembling, they said to Moses:

"Speak thou unto us, and we will hear: but let not God, speak with us, lest we die" (Exo. 20:19).

Then for more than three chapters (Exo. 20:23--23:33). God gave Moses laws to deliver to the people. This extended passage opens:

"Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold. An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon" (Exo. 20:22-26).

After Moses received these laws, he spoke them to the people (Exo. 24:3); then he wrote them in a book (Exo. 24:4). Next, he built an altar upon which were offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exo. 24:4). Moses took half of the blood and sprinkled the altar (Exo. 24:6), and the other half he sprinkled on the book of laws he had written and on the people (Exo. 24:7,8; Heb. 9:19).

D. Moses Called Up Into The Mountain.

Taking Joshua with him, they went up into Mt. Sinai while Aaron, Hur, the seventy elders, and the people remained below. Forty days were they in the holy mount (Exo. 24:18) in which time God revealed to Moses the pattern for the tabernacle, the instructions to make Aaron and his sons the priests in Israel, and detailed words concerning keeping the sabbath (Exo. 25:1--31:17). It was at this time that He gave Moses the two tables of stone

engraven with the ten commandments (Exo. 31:18).

II. Disobedience Broke Out At The Foot Of Mt. Sinai.

A. Three Times Before Moses Went Into The Mountain, The People Had Affirmed That They Would Be Obedient.

Before God had spoken any law to them, He said to them:

"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exo. 19:4,5).

To this good offer, all the Israelites answered together:

"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exo. 19:8).

Then, when God had spoken the ten commandments to them from Mt. Sinai and Moses had rehearsed to them what God had spoken to him, all the people said with one voice:

"All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Exo. 24:3).

Then, at the time that Moses brought the children of Israel into covenant-relationship with God by sprinkling with blood both the book of the covenant and the people, even after he had freshly read all the book of the covenant to them, the people said:

"All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exo. 24:7).

B. The Golden Calf Set Up And Worshipped.

Because Moses was gone for several short weeks (long weeks to the Israelites), the people got it into their heads that he was not coming back. They came to Aaron and said:

"Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exo. 32:1).

These people, having known nothing but an endless number of gods in all their years in Egypt, were quick to revert to idolatrous ideas. Aaron showed his weakness when instead of rebuking the people, he chose not to resist them. He told the people to break off their golden ear rings from which was formed a golden calf (one of the most common idols of the Egyptians). The next morning, the people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar that Aaron had built before the calf, and they carried on their idolatry before it. All of this happened in spite of the fact that God had forbidden them to make any graven images and in spite of the fact that they had solemnly promised three times to obey all that God had said unto them.

C. Moses Sent Down To The People.

Knowing what the people were doing, God said to Moses:

"Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the

land of Egypt...I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Exo. 32:8-10).

We cannot but appreciate the unusual concern that Moses demonstrated for the reputation of God in his reply to God:

"Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever" (Exo. 32:11-13).

But, don't suppose that Moses was taking a soft and compromising attitude toward the people's actions, for when he and Joshua neared the camp to the place where they received their first view of what was actually taking place below, Exo. 32:19,20 says:

"It came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and straved it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it."

He next reprimanded Aaron for the whole affair, who sought to excuse himself for the action.

D. The Outcome Of This Idolatry.

When Moses saw the nakedness of the people (for they were naked in their idolatrous ceremonies), he stood in the gate full of righteous indignation and said:

"Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me" (Exo. 32:26).

The tribe of Levi shared Moses' attitude toward the whole matter and took their stand with Moses. Moses gave them the following instructions:

"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour" (Exo. 32:27).

And they did so, and three thousand Israelites lay dead at the hands of the faithful Levites (Exo. 32:28). God called Moses back up into the mountain, and new tables of stone were engraven with the words that had been written on the former tables (Exo. 34:1-28).

III. The Law Lasted Until The Cross.

The giving of the law took place between fourteen hundred and fifteen hundred years before the birth of Jesus. This law was given by God to the Israelites as their rule of faith and practice. It thoroughly furnished them unto every good work. The Scriptures show that this law lasted until Jesus died upon the cross, but no longer.

A. Jesus Referred Men To It As Authoritative As Long As He Lived.

For instance, when Jesus had healed a leper, He gave the healed man the following instructions:

"Go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded" (Mark 1:44).

This is concrete proof that Jesus considered a law as much in effect at the end of the dispensation for which it was given as at the beginning of its dispensation. The same is true today of truth and commandments given through the apostles for our present dispensation. In other words, when God gives a law, it is in effect until God sees fit to repeal it.

So often today, we hear people deny the necessity of baptism because of Jesus' promise to the penitent thief that he would be with Him in paradise (Luke 23:42,43). But, the thief lived and died under the law of Moses (of which baptism was no part); he never lived under the New Testament as we do (of which baptism is an essential part). This but shows the ignorance of the dispensations set forth in the Bible and possibly the prejudice that so many have against the truth of the New Testament which they so boldly deny.

B. Scriptures That Teach That The Law Ended At The Cross.

The following verses in the New Testament epistles were written to Christian people:

"Ye are not under the law" (Rom. 6:14); "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4); "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16).

Notice, according to the following verses, that the law ended with Christ:

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24,25); "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made (that is, Christ--see verse 16)" (Gal. 3:19); "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead (Jesus)" (Rom. 7:4); "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4); "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14).

C. Some Of Its Principles Have Been Incorporated In The New Testament.

Stealing (Eph. 4:28), murder (I John 3:15), adultery (Gal. 5:19), covetousness (I Cor. 6:10), and many other acts legislated about in the law of Moses have likewise been legislated about in the New Testament, though the authority for regarding them as sins lies in the fact that they are legislated against in the New Testament rather than because they are legislated against in the law of Moses, whose authority ended at the cross.

The Contents of the Law

Many a fine New Year's resolution to "read the Bible through this year" has come to an abrupt end when the reader gets into the laws recorded in Exodus and Leviticus in spite of the good beginning made when reading Genesis and the first half of Exodus. To one who merely "reads" the Bible, these laws given by God to the children of Israel will hold but little interest, but to the real student of the Bible, the laws enacted by God for His chosen nation are far from being dry and uninteresting. While a law-maker today would naturally delight himself in the studying of these laws (many of our own civil laws have been drawn from the law of Moses to the Israelite nation), yet the Christian student appreciates knowing more about God's mind upon the common matters of everyday life as expressed in the Hebrew law. He further finds it important to study the ceremonial portion of the law for its typical value and for lessons fulfilled in various times of the New Testament faith. Various references to those Old Testament laws are made in his New Testament, and the more familiar he is with those Old Testament laws, the more sense his New Testament makes to him.

It is a shame that so many care so little for the Hebrew law section of the Bible. This is inexcusable. Anyone who is spiritual should pick up his Bible tonight (or as soon as sufficient time is available--even an hour will be sufficient to whet the appetite for more reading) and read and memorize the ten commandments in Exo. 20. Then, beginning with Exo. 21, take a chapter at a time and work through each chapter with great care. You will notice that so many verses begin, "If this or that happens," and then goes on to say what should be done. You will probably not be able to remember all the things legislated against and their particular punishments, but you will remember many of them. Then, when you come to the 25th chapter of Exodus, you may wish to reserve the next few chapters (which give the instructions for the building of the tabernacle) and the last chapters of Exodus (which describe in detail the actual building and erection of the tabernacle) for a special study later on of the tabernacle itself. Before going to the little more difficult laws in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, you may wish to go back and review yourself on the laws in Exodus that you have learned. Even though these laws are repealed, they should not be cut out of the Bible, nor should they be piously left in the Bible and then impiously neglected! You may say that it is hard reading in places, but remember that "there's honey in the rock, my brother!"

We trust that this present study will not only increase your understanding of this part of God's revelation, but that it will create a personal appetite in you for more study in this much-neglected field.

I. The Ten Commandments.

The ten commandments are the best known portion of the law of Moses. This is as it should be, for they are the very heart of the entire law. Of all the laws that God gave through Moses, these alone were chiseled into rock. Their brevity, limited number, practicality, and systematic arrangement all enter in to advance their general familiarity to religiously-minded people. They are recorded twice in the Bible: Exo. 20 (when originally given) and Deut. 5 (when rehearsed by Moses forty years later to the new generation ready to enter the land of Canaan).

A. The Ten Commandments Listed.

1. The 1st commandment:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exo. 20:3).

2. The 2nd commandment:

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exo. 20:4,5).

3. The 3rd commandment:

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Exo. 20:7).

4. The 4th commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates" (Exo. 20:8-10).

5. The 5th commandment:

"Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exo. 20:12).

6. The 6th commandment:

"Thou shalt not kill" (Exo. 20:13).

7. The 7th commandment:

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo. 20:14).

8. The 8th commandment:

"Thou shalt not steal" (Exo. 20:15).

9. The 9th commandment:

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" (Exo. 20:16).

10. The 10th commandment:

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exo. 20:17).

B. "Seventh-Day Keepers" Position.

The Seventh Day Adventist and others who keep the seventh day claim that since these ten commandments were chiseled into stone that it was only the ceremonial and other such dispensational laws that passed away at the cross, but that these ten laws engraven in stone are actually

the eternal law of God and as such are still in effect today by virtue of that fact. In our last study, we pointed out that the Scriptures teach that the law of Moses passed away, though some of its statutes have been re-enacted in the New Testament. Whatever distinction God had in mind by putting these few laws in stone, He surely did not have in mind the idea that these would abide forever, even throughout our present dispensation. Why do I say this? Simply because when Paul wrote that the law had passed away, he referred expressly to the laws on the tables of stone as having passed as much as he did to any other. Two such references will have to suffice:

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; NOT IN TABLES OF STONE, but in fleshy tables of the heart...Not that we are sufficient of ourselves...but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter (the law) killeth, but the spirit (the gospel) giveth life. But if the MINISTRATION OF DEATH, WRITTEN AND ENGRAVEN IN STONES, was glorious...so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation (the law) be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness (the gospel) exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away the law—even that engraven in stone) be glorious, much more that which remaineth (the gospel) is glorious" (11 Cor. 3:3-11).

In the above lengthy quotation, we have employed capital letters to call your attention to various relevant statements so as to make it possible to eliminate extensive comment. Notice also Col. 2:14,16,17:

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

When Paul, in the above passage, tells of the law that was nailed to the cross, he included the sabbath, even labeling it as a type, but not the real substance. Heb. 4 shows that the sabbath at the end of the working week was typical of our heavenly rest at the end of life's work.

C. Will People Be Saved By Keeping The Ten Commandments?

God's high evaluation of the eternal truth in most of the ten commandments is seen in the fact that He has re-enacted most of them (though not the sabbath one) in the New Testament. Yet, people are often heard to say that if one merely keeps the ten commandments, he will be saved. The next time someone tells you that, ask him to name all ten of them for you. After all, he ought to have the "plan of salvation" well in mind! The chances are, he won't be able to do it! Try it and see. If the ten commandments alone would save anybody, that is all the Bible that anybody would need. Why do we have more? The ten commandments contain a lot of

good truth from God, but there are many other instructions and condemnations in the Bible that are not included in the ten commandments (such as drunkenness, prayer, doing good to our enemies, parents' responsibilities toward their children, a husband's attitude toward his wife, and vice versa--only to name a few). Even as a moral code, the ten commandments would not be sufficient because they were never given as a complete governing code. Furthermore, if men can be saved by keeping the ten commandments, Christ came and died in vain, for they had the ten commandments to live by a long time before Christ ever came to the earth! Let us appreciate the ten commandments, but let us not misteach them.

D. Why "Two" Tables?

God gave Moses "two" tables of stone containing the ten commandments. Why "two"? It may have been because there would not have been room to have written so much on just one stone without it being too large to be carried conveniently by Moses and later stored in the limited area of the ark of the covenant (Deut. 10:1-5). Or, there might have been some special significance. Most Bible scholars divide the ten commandments into two groups: (1) The first four governing their relationship to God, (2) The last six governing their relationship to one another (that is, man-to-man). If there would be any special significance, it would seem that possibly the first four were written on one table, and the last six on the other table.

II. Different Kinds Of Laws.

There were many, many laws given to the Israelites--far more than we can possibly treat in the confines of this present study. They are not particularly cataloged for us in the Bible with any system, but for convenience's sake, scholars have classified them under various headings. While all classification systems do not totally agree, they are naturally very similar. Anyway, some suitable system will be helpful to adopt. But, regardless of what system is adopted, remember that all of the law was nailed to the cross--not just a particular kind of laws, such as "ceremonial laws".

A. There Were Civil Laws.

By "civil", we mean the kind of laws regularly enacted by a government for the governing of people's business affairs, property rights, etc. Remember that the Hebrew people were a nation, and since they would be living under no earthly government, it was necessary for God to enact certain civil laws to govern them. A look at a few of these laws will prove most interesting:

"He that stealeth a man (kidnapping), and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (Exo. 21:6).

"If a man (a master) smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free (release the slave) for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake" (Exo. 21:26,27).

"If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die; then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if

the ox were wont (accustomed) to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death" (Exo. 21:28,29).

"If a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein; the owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his" (Exo. 21:33,34).

"If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Exo. 22:1).

"If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution" (Exo. 22:6).

"If a man borrow ought of his neighbour, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof being not with it, he shall surely make it good" (Exo. 22:14).

B. There Were Moral Laws.

These laws had to do with what was morally right and wrong. There were many of them given. We shall give you just a few.

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Lev. 19:16).

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (Lev. 19:32).

"The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 20:10).

"He that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death" (Exo. 21:15).

"Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death" (Exo. 22:19).

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart" (Lev. 19:17).

"If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." (Deut. 21:18-21).

C. There Were Religious Laws.

The term "religious" is used in an accommodated sense, for religion itself involves doing anything that God commands. By "religious" laws, however, we mean those laws that relate to God Himself that can hardly be classified either "civil", "moral", or "ceremonial".

"He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Exo. 22:20).

"Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee" (Exo. 23:24,25).

"Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And

he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him" (Lev. 24:15,16).

D. There Were Ceremonial Laws.

There were many laws that were "ceremonial". They related to sacrifices, feasts, consecration of priests, the tabernacle, leprosy, touching dead bodies, clean and unclean meats, and others could also constitute a section on "health laws".

"If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 1:2-6).

"These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat" (Lev. 11:2,3).

"These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales...they shall be an abomination unto you" (Lev. 11:9,10).

"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread (the passover), and in the feast of weeks (pentecost), and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:16,17).

Time and space both fail us to go further into the contents of the law, but you can see that the water is deep, but rewarding.

Near the end of Jesus' life, when His enemies were pressing Him from every side, one of the "experts" on the law of Moses asked Him what the greatest commandment in the law was. After this study on the law, we ought to be interested in His answer:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

In other words, Jesus boiled all of the law down to two cardinal duties: (1) Love for God, and (2) Love for fellow-man. Paul showed in Rom. 13:8-10 that love for one's fellow-men would fulfill all the law about stealing, killing, bearing false witness, etc., for if a man loved his neighbor, he wouldn't do those things to him. Though these two laws are a foundation for all the other laws, it is significant that God did not give but these two laws. Man needed, especially in his relationship to God, a guide whereby he might be able to direct his love in such a way that there would be no doubt as to whether he was doing right or not. Zacharias and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's parents, are

good examples of those who carried out God's will as relates to the law (Luke 1:5,6), but the Pharisees are otherwise. They took care of some of the external requirements (like tithing), but they omitted these basic, underlying requirements (judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God) (Matt. 23:23 and Luke 11:42).

Under Christ, we have every moral requirement that the Hebrews had, but praise God, we have a Savior in our covenant that was no part of the law except in type and shadow!

The Tabernacle

Seven chapters of the book of Exodus (25-31) are devoted to God's instructions for a tabernacle to be built, which was to become the very center of the Israelites' religious life. Six more chapters (35-40) are devoted to telling of its construction, erection, and dedication. It took about seven months to construct the tabernacle, and when it was first erected at the foot of Mt. Sinai, it had been just about one year since the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt. The many chapters devoted to the subject, the important place that it played in the religious life of the Israelites, and because it foreshadows so many elements of Christianity justly merit for the tabernacle a place in these special studies in "The Plan of God".

I. The Pattern For The Tabernacle.

For a Biblical study of the tabernacle's pattern, consult Exodus, chapters 25-31.

A. The Pattern Was God-Given.

Our God is a God of order and plan. The orderliness of our universe indicates it. He gave Noah a pattern for the ark. A pattern for the Jerusalem temple was given to David, who passed it onto his son Solomon, who built the temple. He has given a plan of obedience for the alien sinner to comply with in order to come into possession of the remission of his sins. He has revealed instructions for the Christian life, for marriage and the home, and for the church of the saints. It is no wonder, then, that He gave a pattern for the tabernacle, and especially in view of the fact that it was to be one of His most elaborate pieces of Old Testament typology. Moses received this pattern when he was in Mount Sinai when God first delivered the tables of stone to him.

B. Moses Charged To Build All Things According To The Pattern.

No less than four times did God charge Moses to build all things of the tabernacle according to His pattern. Listen to those charges:

"According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exo. 25:9); "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exo. 25:40); "Thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof

which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exo. 26:30); "As it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it" (Exo. 27:8).

When everything had been constructed, Moses saw that everything had been done according to God's plan:

"Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they... And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them" (Exo. 39:32,43).

The Hebrew writer possibly included Moses' faithfulness in the building of the tabernacle when he wrote:

"Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after" (Heb. 3:5).

Considering the fact that the tabernacle typified certain facts in Christianity, it was important that it be built according to divine specifications; otherwise, there would have been no analogy between it and that which it was intended to typify.

C. The Tabernacle And Its Furniture Were All Of Portable Construction.

When we say that all these were portable, we do not mean to convey the idea that they were cheap. Far from it. The different pieces of furniture were overlaid with pure gold, and the candlestick and the mercy seat were themselves of solid gold. Its various curtains and hangings, the coverings of the tabernacle proper, as well as the walls and sockets, etc. used in putting the tabernacle together were of the costliest materials.

Yet, it was portable. It had to be. It was to serve a people who would be on the march for almost forty more years. They must have something that they could take along with them. A temple built of stones would not do. The various pieces of furniture had rings at their corners through which staves were slipped so they could be carried (Exo. 27:4-7; 30:4), evidently without being touched by the hands of those who bore them. What a lesson in reverence for the things of God! If men were not to touch these things of God in transporting them, how much less will God forgive men actually tampering with and changing His things to suit them!

Wherever they journeyed, they dismantled the tabernacle, and carried it with them. After they crossed the Jordan and conquered the land, the tabernacle was set up at the town of Shiloh (Josh. 18:1), which was in the land allotted to Ephraim. You will remember that it was in Shiloh that the high priest Eli lived, and that Samuel grew up. Notice the references to Shiloh as the place of the Israelites' worship, the abode of the high priest, etc. in I Sam., chapters 1-3. In time, hundreds of years after the settlement in Canaan under Joshua, the portable tabernacle was replaced by the magnificent temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, which had a lay-out very similar to that of the tabernacle.

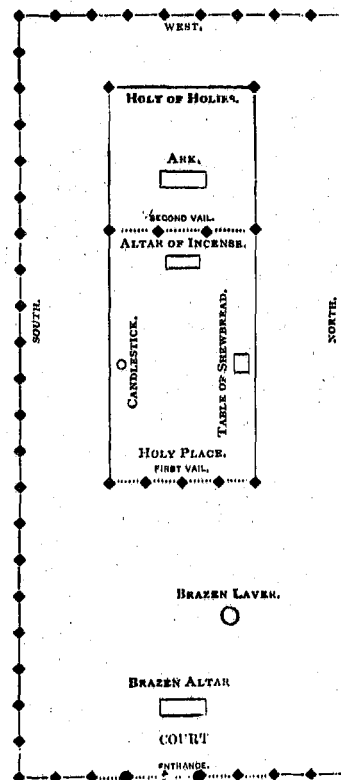
D. The Tabernacle's Various Compartments.

See the diagram. The Court (figuring eighteen inches to

a cubit) was one hundred fifty feet long and seventy-five feet wide (Exo. 27:18). The curtained sides were seven and one-half feet high (Exo. 27:18). The Holy Place (according to an intricate study of Exo. 26) was thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. The height of the sides of the Holy Place was also fifteen feet. The Holy of Holies was fifteen feet long, fifteen feet wide, and its sides were also fifteen feet high. While the area in the outer Court was open to the sky, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies area was actually in the form of a tent. Within the tent, they were divided from each other by a curtain (called the "vail"). The tent itself was made of fine linen, blue, purple, and scarlet tapestry with cherubim (angels) woven into the material, which must have made a most elaborate effect (Exo. 26:1). Evidently for protection from the weather, the tent itself had three coverings over it--directly above it was a covering of goats' hair (Exo. 26:7); above that one was a covering of rams' skins dyed red (Exo. 26:14); above that one was the one made of badgers' skins (Exo. 26:14). The Hebrew for "badgers' skins" is more properly "seals' skins".

E. The Furniture In Each Compartment.

See the diagram. Exo. 40:1-7 is a condensed section concerning the location of the various pieces of furniture. The altar of burnt offerings and the laver were in the Court outside the tent. The candlestick, the table of shewbread, and the altar of incense were in the Holy Place. The ark of the covenant with its mercy-seat top surmounted by the two golden cherubim was in the Holy of Holies.



The pattern for the altar of burnt offerings is given in Exo. 27:1-8. The pattern for the laver is given in Exo. 30:17-21. The pattern for the golden candlestick is given in Exo. 25:31-39. The pattern for the table of shewbread is

given in Exo. 25:23-30. The pattern for the altar of incense is given in Exo. 30:1-10. The pattern for the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat is given in Exo. 25:10-22. The ark contained (Heb. 9:4) the two tables of stone (representing the law of God to Israel), the pot of manna (representing the goodness of God to the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings), and Aaron's rod that budded (representing the divine authority vested in the Aaronic priesthood among the Israelites).

II. The Construction Of The Tabernacle.

For a study of this section, consult Exodus, chapters 35-40.

A. The Materials For The Tabernacle Were Generously Contributed By The Israelites Themselves.

God said to the people through Moses:

"Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' (seals') skins, and shittim wood, and oil for the light, and spice for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate. And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded; the tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets, the ark, and the staves thereof, with the mercy seat, and the vail of the covering, the table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the shewbread..." (Exo. 35:5-19).

All Israel departed to their tents, and Exo. 35:22-28 says:

"And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted, and brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered offered an offering of gold unto the Lord. And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and red skins of rams, and badgers' (seals') skins, brought them. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair. And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate; and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense."

One of the finest examples of generosity in giving is this offering the children of Israel made for the tabernacle. They brought, and they brought, and they brought. Finally, the builders told Moses they had too much material, and Moses issued a decree to the people to bring no more:

"And they (the builders) spake unto Moses, saying: The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man or woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing" (Exo. 36:5,6).

B. Those Who Led In The Construction.

God selected and empowered Bezaleel and Aholiab to lead in the actual construction of the tabernacle. He said to Moses in the mount:

"I have called by Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee" (Exo. 31:2-6).

C. The Tabernacle Set Up And Dedicated.

We have already made mention of the fact that Moses examined the various elements of the tabernacle and found them to be according to the pattern (Exo. 39:33-43). Moses having found everything correctly made, God instructed him to set the tabernacle up and the various pieces of furniture, and the priests who were to function in the tabernacle with oil was also included in the Exo. 40:1-15 instructions. When all these instructions were carried out, God honored it by filling it with His glory and in causing the cloud by which they had been led to stand above it (fire by night):

"Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys" (Exo. 40:34-38).

And so the book of Exodus comes to a close!

III. The Typical Nature Of The Tabernacle.

For a study of the typical nature of the tabernacle, study principally Hebrews, chapters 9 and 10.

That the tabernacle typified the religion of Christ cannot be Scripturally denied. Heb. 9:8,9 says:

"...The first tabernacle...was a figure for the time then present."

The priests of the tabernacle and the gifts that they offered are said to have been an example and shadow of coming things (Heb. 8:4,5). The typology of these various Mosaic enactments is likewise affirmed in Heb. 10:1.

Following are the conclusions quite generally accepted concerning the various courts, their respective furniture, and the priests who ministered in them.

A. The High Priest.

The Scripture plainly calls Jesus our high priest (Heb. 4:14). More about this in our next study.

B. The Other Priests.

The common priests functioned in the holy place. The

Scripture is very plain is saying that we Christians form a holy priesthood (I Pet. 2:5). More about this in our next study.

C. The Altar Of Burnt Offerings.

Upon this altar, the animal sacrifices were made. This altar found its fulfillment in the death of Christ (Heb. 10:9-12).

D. The Laver.

This in which the priests washed before entering the holy place to minister to the Lord is generally taken to be typical of baptism. A probable reference to this is Heb. 10:22.

E. The Outer Court.

This is usually taken to be typical of the world in which Jesus was crucified. If so, notice that baptism (the laver) is not something that one obeys after he has entered the church (the holy place, as we shall see), but which he obeys before entering the church. Denominationalism has tried to move the laver into the holy place.

F. The Holy Place.

This place in which the priests served (Heb. 9:6) was typical of the church in which Christians today serve God. The following points dealing with the furniture in the holy place also indicate that the holy place typified the church.

G. The Candlestick.

This was the only light in the holy place. By its light, the priests did their work in the holy place. It hardly needs arguing that the candlestick typified the Holy Spirit inspired enlightening Word by whose light Christians go about their service (I Tim. 3:14,15).

H. The Table of Shewbread.

There is a table in the church from which Christians partake. It is the Lord's table spread with the emblems of His body and blood. Surely the table of shewbread prefigured the Lord's table. It is important to notice that the bread upon the table of shewbread was renewed once a week. The Lord's supper is observed weekly.

I. The Altar Of Incense.

Several passages show incense and prayer closely related (Rev. 5:8; Luke 1:18). This altar was located right next to the holy of holies, which contained the symbolic presence of God above the mercy seat. When does one feel the presence of God more than when in prayer? Notice, too, that this altar of incense was not in the outer court (the world). Many today have tried to move it out into the outer court instead of leaving it in the holy place by saying that people out of Christ have the right to pray.

J. The Holy of Holies.

Heb. 9:24 shows that the holy of holies typified heaven into which Jesus, as our high priest, has entered for us, presenting His own blood to the Father once for all time for our redemption.

K. The Vail.

The way into heaven was not realized under the Old Testament, for the high priest alone went through the vail into the holy of holies (Heb. 9:7,8). When Jesus died, the vail of the temple (which took the place of the tabernacle) was rent from top to bottom (Matt. 27:50,51). Heb. 10:19,20 shows that through the crucified body of Jesus, we now have entrance to heaven granted to us.

All the services rendered to God by the priests were carried out with the greatest amount of solemnity. Not everybody had the privilege of ministering--only the priests. They were strictly charged of God concerning their work. They must do all things in the way God directed. A severe punishment attended irreverence for God's instructions. Nadab and Abihu were destroyed by fire for an act of disobedience in performing their duties (Lev. 10:1,2). All the time the priests were in the holy place, only a curtain separated them from the symbolic presence of God. If these who performed the service that was merely typical of our service did it with the strictest reverence and the highest regard for God, should not our service be equally so solemn as theirs?

Let us close our study by reading Heb. 10:19-23:

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."

The Levitical Priesthood

During the patriarchal times, the father had been God's priest over his household. When He spared the firstborn of Israel's sons and cattle at the time of the tenth plague upon the Egyptians, He said:

"Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine" (Exo. 13:2).

It is generally thought that God's intention was to make the firstborn of each family the priest in behalf of the family. But, the firstborn of the Israelites evidently forfeited the privilege of being God's priests when they mixed in with the rest of the Israelites in the calf-worship at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Only the Levites had kept themselves free from that idolatrous incident (Exo. 32:25-28). From that time on, the tribe of Levi came into prominence and was chosen of God to be the priestly tribe. Num. 3:40,41 shows that God purposely replaced the firstborn by the Levites:

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Number all the first-

born of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the Lord) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel."

When Moses numbered the firstborn, there were 22,273 (Num. 3:42,43). This was approximately an equal number to the Levites--22,000 (Num. 3:39). So, the exchange was about equal. God even made the Israelites buy (redeem) the 273 extra firstborn (Num. 3:46-51).

Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. God separated him and his offspring from the rest of the tribe of Levi to be the ones who actually ministered unto Him in the priestly role (Exo. 28:1). Besides Aaron and his sons, the tribe of Levi had descendants from Kohath, Merari, and Gershon known as the Kohathites, the Merarites, and the Gershonites. These different families had different responsibilities relating to the tabernacle and the religious life of the Israelites, but they did not minister to God in the office of the priests as did Aaron and his sons. While all the Levites were sometimes referred to as priests (Josh. 3:3), yet the word "priest" was usually applied to Aaron and his descendants as those who ministered before the altar and the word "Levites" to all the others. Thus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:31,32), the "priest" was evidently a descendant of Aaron who offered sacrifices, and the "Levite" was either a descendant of Kohath, Merari, or Gershon.

I. The Consecration Of Aaron And His Sons.

A. Special Garments Were To Be Made For Them.

Exo. 28 describes in minute detail the priestly garments. verses 2-39 describe the high priest's garments, and verse 40 tells of the garments of the other priests. A study of that chapter indicates these garments were very costly and must have been very beautiful. It is of particular interest that the high priest wore a small stone set in gold upon each shoulder. Six of the tribes' names were engraven in one of the stones, and the other six names in the other stone. A golden bell was to be worn on his robe so that his sound could be heard as he went into the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle and as he came out. It is said that these costly garments were for glory and for beauty. These garments no doubt prefigured the "royalty" of the New Testament priesthood (I Pet. 2:9) and the spiritual beauty of those functioning as priests unto God today (Heb. 7:26; Eph. 2:10).

B. The Actual Consecration.

God spoke to Moses as follows:

"Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; and gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 8:2,3).

With the children of Israel gathered on the east side of the tabernacle, Moses washed Aaron and his sons with water, put upon them their garments, anointed the tabernacle and its furniture and Aaron with oil, killed a bullock

upon which the priests had laid their hands, and sanctified the altar with its blood. The fat and other parts of the inwards, he burned upon the altar. The bullock's hide, flesh, and dung, he burned outside the camp. Next, he brought in a ram on which the priests laid their hands; then he killed it, sprinkled its blood upon the altar, and burned the ram's body upon the altar for a burnt offering. Another ram, called the "ram of consecration", was likewise killed after the imposition of the priests' hands, and the blood of that ram was used to anoint the priests' right ears, the thumbs of their right hands, and the great toes of their right feet. It is generally thought that the ear must be sanctified, for with it, the priest would hear the law of God; the hand must be sanctified, for with it, he would offer sacrifices to God; and the foot must be sanctified, for with it, he would tread the sacred courts of the tabernacle. Certain parts of this ram's body, together with unleavened bread, a cake of oiled bread, and a wafer, were put into the priests' hands to wave before God as a wave offering after which Moses burned it for another burnt offering. Even Moses took the breast of that ram and waved it as a wave offering before God for himself. The oil and the blood which were upon the altar, Moses used to sprinkle Aaron and his sons to sanctify them and their garments. Aaron and his sons were commanded to remain within the tabernacle for seven days, which were required for their consecration. All of this is given to us in Lev. 8, all of which was in keeping with the way God had commanded it to be done in Exo. 29.

C. The Priestly Office Was Given Exclusively To Aaron And His Sons.

God said to Moses:

"Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office; and the stranger (anybody else) that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num. 3:10).

There came a time when certain other Levites challenged both the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. They contended that since they too were holy, Moses and Aaron should not be in an exalted position above them. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (the three leaders in the sedition) were swallowed alive by the earth, and the two hundred and fifty men who aspired to be priests were consumed by fire. Their brasen censers were taken by Eleazer (one of Aaron's sons) and beaten into broad plates for covering the altar of incense which they had approached. Num. 16:40 says the purpose of these plates was as follows:

"To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord."

Num. 16 tells of the foregoing rebellion and the way it ended.

When the rest of the Israelites charged Moses and Aaron with thus killing the people of the Lord, God commanded a rod for each tribe (with the name of the tribe written upon it) to be laid up before the Lord so He might choose in the presence of the people who was to be His priest. Num. 17:7-10 tells us the rest of the story:

"And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not."

Heb. 9:4 shows that Aaron's rod was actually kept in the ark of the covenant. King Uzziah, with his heart lifted up, presumed to enter the holy of holies and there burn incense before God in defiance of the Aaronic authority, but he was smitten with leprosy as he resisted the attempts of the priests to banish him from the temple (II Chron. 26:16-21).

II. Qualifications Of A Priest.

A. Physical Fitness Required.

One might eat of the holy things with the other priests who had some physical defect, but he could not serve in the holy place. Lev. 21:17-23 says:

"Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, or crookbackt, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in into the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries; for I the Lord do sanctify them."

As the physical excellence of sacrificial lambs prefigured the spiritual excellence of Christ, the true lamb (I Pet. 1:18,19), it seems safe to conclude that the physical excellence of those who waited upon God as priests under the Old Testament prefigured the spiritual excellence of us who are priests today (I Pet. 2:5).

B. Moral Fitness Required.

Eli was high priest at the time Samuel was born. His sons, who also were priests (I Sam. 1:3), were exceedingly wicked. I Sam. 2 tells of their villainous deeds. To Samuel, whom God had chosen to succeed Eli, God spoke the following message:

"In that day will I perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Sam. 3:11-13).

God did not want such scoundrels as Eli's sons in His priestly office. Neither did He approve Eli's softness in dealing with them.

C. Special Instructions Concerning Their Marriage.

The following instructions were given governing priestly marriages:

"He shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take; but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife" (Lev. 21:13,14).

III. Their Duties.

A. They Were Given Specific Instructions To Carry Out.

One cannot read the laws governing the priestly duties without realizing that God gave them most pointed instructions. They were told what kind of animals to sacrifice, when to enter the tabernacle, what garments to wear, where to put the blood of sacrificial offerings, what part of an animal to burn upon the altar, what part of the various sacrifices was theirs to eat, what to prescribe for the various ceremonial cleansings, and a great multitude of other detailed instructions. To suppose that the unchanging God is not a God of law and order is not to be concluded from studying the instructions given the Old Testament priests.

B. He Expected Those Instructions To Be Carried Out.

Lev. 10:1,2 tells of fire coming out from the presence of the Lord and devouring the priests Nadab and Abihu for using "strange fire" one day when burning incense to God. Evidently, God had told them where to get the fire for burning incense (most scholars think it was from the altar of burnt offerings whose fire was never to go out - Lev. 6:13), but they had substituted fire from another origin. Their sudden death testified to the fact that God meant for His instructions to be carried out!

We have seen that God forbade the priests marrying any woman outside of Israel. When Ezra returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, he found that many of the priests left in Jerusalem during the captivity had intermarried with the idolatrous neighbors (Ezra 9:1,2). Therefore, they were commanded, along with others likewise guilty, to put away those wives and the children born by them (Ezra 10:1-5). God meant what He said!

Mal. 1 and 2 dealt with the terrible apostasy of the priests as the writings of the Old Testament came to a close. Malachi dealt most sharply with them. They were polluting God's altar with offering sick animals for sacrifices (Mal. 1:6-8) as well as causing the people to depart from the way of the Lord (Mal. 2:1-9).

C. General Survey Of Their Duties.

A priest was a mediator between man (the sinner) and God (the sinned against). In a broad sense, Heb. 5:1,2 summarizes the mission of the priesthood:

"Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

To boil down into a brief section all the duties of the priests is most difficult. Appreciating the fine digest of this subject as carried in Smith's Bible Dictionary, we quote from it as follows: "The chief duties of the priests were to watch over the fire on the altar of burnt offering and

to keep it burning evermore both by day and night (Lev. 6:12; II Chron. 13:11); to feed the golden lamp outside the veil with oil (Exo. 27:20,21; Lev. 24:2); to offer the morning and evening sacrifices, each accompanied with a meat offering and a drink offering at the door of the tabernacle (Exo. 29:38-44). They were also to teach the children of Israel the statutes of the Lord (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 33:10; II Chron. 15:3; Eze. 44:23,24). During the journeys in the wilderness, it belonged to them to cover the ark and all the vessels of the sanctuary with a purple or scarlet cloth before the Levites might approach them (Num. 4:5-15). As the people started on each day's march, they were to blow an alarm with long silver trumpets (Num. 10:1-8). Other instruments of music might be used by the more highly-trained Levites and the schools of the prophets, but the trumpets belonged only to the priests. The presence of the priests on the field of battle (I Chron. 12:23,27; II Chron. 20:21,22) led in the later periods of Jewish history to the special appointment at such times of a war priest. Other functions were hinted at in Deuteronomy which might have given them greater influence as the educators and civiliziers of the people. They were to act (whether individually or collectively does not distinctly appear) as a court of appeal in the more difficult controversies in criminal or civil cases (Deut. 17:8-13)."

Schaff's Bible Dictionary boils the matter down as follows: "The chief duty of the priests was to prepare and offer the daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices and such as were brought by individuals at the great annual festivals or at especial occasions. But, generally, they conducted the public service, officiated at purifications, took care of the holy vessels, of the sacred fire, and the golden lamp, and of all the furniture of the sanctuary. In war, they sounded the holy trumpets and carried the ark of the covenant. In peace, they ministered as judges at the trial of jealousy, at the estimation of the redemption money for a vow, etc. They kept a kind of superintendence over the lepers, and they expounded the law to the people."

One of the principle functions of the high priest was on the annual day of atonement when he sought to make an atonement for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. Lev. 16 discusses this important Hebrew day, and Heb. 9 discusses it in view of Jesus' more availing priesthood.

Much yet could be said upon the Levitical priesthood, but we shall close our present study of the subject with but two brief considerations. Like the rest of the Levites, the priests were given no land inheritance when the land was divided between the tribes. However, God's provision of tithes and offerings from the rest of the people as well as granting to them certain parts of the things sacrificed formed God's plan for caring for their needs. Finally, Heb. 7 shows that perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood (verse 11) and that the priesthood has been changed (verse 12). The change is that Christ, our high priest in this dispensation, is not a priest after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek (verse 11).

Old Testament Sacrifices

One of the principal functions of the priests (studied in our last study) was the offering of sacrifices. From the time that Cain and Abel are seen bringing their offerings to God in Gen. 4, the Old Testament doesn't lose sight of the all-important place that the altar played in pre-Christian ages.

The law given through Moses outlined a most detailed and elaborate system of sacrifices for the Hebrew people. The principal sacrifices for the Mosaic dispensation were the burnt offerings, meal offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings. Let us notice how frequently these various kinds of offerings were made at the tabernacle.

There were two daily burnt offerings—a lamb burned in the morning and another lamb at night (Exo. 29:38-42). On the sabbath, there was to be a double burnt offering made (Num. 28:9,10). Every month was to open with special burnt offerings (Num. 28:11-15). This was what was referred to as the "new moons". Besides, burnt offerings were to be made at their great annual feasts—the passover (Num. 28:16-25), pentecost (Num. 28:26-31), the feast of trumpets (Num. 29:1-6), and others. These sacrifices (some of them being rams, some goats, some bullocks, some doves, and some pigeons) were wholly burned. No part was given to the priests to eat. Their significance is usually taken to be that of complete dedication to God.

When one reads the King James' Version, he reads of "meat offerings". The American Standard Version reads "meal offerings". Inasmuch as those offerings were of flour, oil, and wine, we have referred to them properly as "meal offerings". There were daily meal offerings accompanying the daily burnt offerings (Exo. 39:40,41). A double meal offering (two tenth deals of flour instead of the customary tenth deal) was also made each sabbath (Num. 28:9,10). Each new moon (once a month), there were meal offerings made (Num. 28:11-13). Besides, there were meal offerings at their various annual feasts (Num. 28:16-29:39). Contrary to most of the other offerings, there was no blood shed in this offering. It is generally held to have been a thank offering to the Lord. A portion of the meal offerings was burned, and the rest was given to the priests.

If it did not consume too much space, we could go on to show similarly concerning the peace offerings, the sin offerings, and the trespass offerings. But, we cannot take much space here. Besides these principal offerings, there were yet other offerings commanded of the Lord for the Hebrew people.

I. Three Facts Concerning These Sacrifices.

A. *Only The Best Of Everything Could Be Offered To*

God.

As early as Abel, men of God brought to Him the best. Gen. 4:4 says:

"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings (probably firstborn) of his flock and of the fat (the best ones) thereof."

This was in rightful recognition that God deserved the best that man could bring in recognition for all His wonderful goodness to the children of men, and such action further indicated that God actually demanded the first and the best in order that He would actually occupy the place of God (the Supreme One) in the eyes and hearts of men.

In giving the law, God said:

"Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evil-favouredness: for that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 17:1).

By "blemish", God meant anything that kept it from being a perfect physical specimen. He said:

"It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer...Ye shall not offer unto the Lord that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut" (Lev. 22:21,22,24).

This was to indicate that not just anything that man might sacrifice would be acceptable to God, and while these unblemished lambs looked forward to the unblemished Jesus who would be sacrificed (I Pet. 1:18,19), reference is also made to them in describing our own living sacrifice to God in Rom. 12:1. Our sacrifice of self must be "holy" and "acceptable to God", too.

The animals that were offered to God were to be in their first year (Num. 28:3). This would be when they were in the prime of health. Also, they were thus given to God before they were ever used for anything earthly. Thus, God would claim everything from them.

We also notice that man was to offer to God the first-fruits of his harvest:

"The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God" (Exo. 23:19); "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Prov. 3:9).

Before men got to use any of God's increase for themselves, they were expected to offer the first of the harvest to God. How much in keeping with the practice of proportionate giving today that sets aside a portion for God before any is used for personal needs! How different from the practice of living up whatever we need and want first and then giving some of the "tailings" to God!

B. These Sacrifices Involved A Great Outlay and Much Bother For The People.

Sacrificing the firstborn of their animals and having so many specified sacrifices to make surely amounted to something very sizable by way of financial outlay to the Hebrews. How much easier it would have been to have kept the best for themselves and forget God?

Having to go to Jerusalem so often with their animals and their agricultural products likewise involved what

people would call a lot of "bother". To be sure that everything brought to offer was exactly as it ought to be involved some care and forethought that could have been avoided if God had not specified everything so minutely.

But, therein, as stated above, we see God's purpose in having these sacrifices made fulfilled. They *did* take time, forethought, and outlay. In a sense, they said, "Won't man take time from his things to do something for God who has taken so much time in blessing man? Won't man give some forethought in recognition of the constant forethought that God gives to man's needs? Won't man put himself out a little for the God who has given him everything he has?" God had to provide some system whereby man could show his concern for the things of God, whereby he could acknowledge his guilt, and whereby he could demonstrate a thankfulness to God for what God was constantly doing. When men turned from God, they forgot these sacrifices, and when they turned from these sacrifices, they went farther and farther away from God. Yet, God did not want these sacrifices made unless man's heart was behind them (Isa. 1:2-4, 11-15).

C. These Sacrifices Could Not Take Away Sin.

For all the cost involved and all the extra trouble to which the Israelites were put to make these offerings, these sacrifices did not take away sin. The Jews thought that by their law, they had eternal life (John 5:39), but they didn't have. The writer of Hebrews plainly says of them:

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. 10:1,2).

Heb. 10:11 likewise says:

"Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins."

II. Why These Sacrifices Couldn't Take Away Sin.

A. The Blood Of An Animal Could Not Atone For The Sin Of A Man.

Right after Heb. 10:1,2 states that the Old Testament sacrifices could not take away sin, the writer shows why:

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (verse 4).

An animal is not on the same plane before God as a man. An animal is of a lower order in God's creation than a man. How could an animal, then, be an acceptable representative for man as a sacrifice? Furthermore, man's need of a Savior lay in the moral realm, but an animal is not a moral creature. Man could be saved from his moral failure before God only by a moral being who could take his place before God, and whosoever that moral being would be would himself have to be a perfect specimen of a moral being. Jesus, tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), alone is able to save us from our sins:

"Through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are

justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).

B. The Old Testament Sacrifices Were Not Offered By A Sinless Priest.

One of the things the Hebrew writer raises time after time against the idea that the Old Testament sacrifices obtained the forgiveness of sins is that they were offered by an imperfect priest. But, that which was lacking in Old Testament times has been supplied for us through the sinlessness of Jesus, our high priest:

"For such an high priest (Jesus) became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore" (Heb. 7:26-28).

C. God Did Not Ordain The Old Testament Sacrifices To Take Away Sin.

Inasmuch as God knew it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), we must conclude that He had another purpose in mind in having these sacrifices made. Obviously, then, if God hadn't ordained the Old Testament sacrifices to take away sin, they never could have taken them away, for all that relates to the forgiveness of man's sin must of necessity root in and issue from God and His plan. In other words, He didn't ordain them for that purpose, or they would have fulfilled His purpose in that way.

III. What Those Sacrifices Accomplished.

Let us not conclude that because those sacrifices didn't bring forgiveness, they did not have some very definite accomplishments. Let us realize that all that God does is done well. He had some definite purpose in mind in having those many sacrifices offered.

A. They Brought To Man's Minds The Fact Of Their Guilt Before God.

Had those sacrifices taken away sins, they would have ceased to be offered (Heb. 10:1,2). Jesus' sacrifice, because it does take away sins, was made but one time (Heb. 10:9-12). Every year, there was the day of atonement, upon which the high priest went into the holy of holies to make an atonement for the sin of the nation, but because he himself was imperfect and because he took in animal blood with which to make the atonement, God would not cleanse the people of their sins. Next year, he had to do the same thing over again. Thus, instead of enjoying the remission of sins through one availing sacrifice (like we do through Jesus' sacrifice), each year they were reminded once more that their sins were still on God's books. In other words, those sacrifices, instead of bringing remission of sins, brought a recollection of the fact that they were still in their sins before God:

"In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year" (Heb. 10:3).

This growing burden of this load of sin was divinely intended to cause men to seek the true relief to be offered

them in time through God's coming Messiah.

B. These Priestly Offerings Were God's Way Of Instructing People Of The Necessity Of A Sacrifice For Sin And Of Their Need Of A Mediator.

When an Israelite sinned in some particular way, God commanded him to do as follows:

"It shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing: and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin" (Lev. 5:5,6).

Notice two things: when he sinned, a sacrifice was necessary, and he could not offer the sacrifice himself—he had to have the priest (a go-between or a mediator) do it. What basic lessons were thus taught. It taught men to associate the necessity of sacrifice with sin and the necessity of a mediator with God. The law of Moses most definitely taught men the following truth:

"Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

All of this was intended to prepare men for the truth recorded in I Tim. 2:4-6:

"Who (God) will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time".

C. These Sacrifices Did In A Ceremonial Way What Jesus' Sacrifice Does In An Actual Way.

It is a full study all of its own to consider the many ways in which these sacrifices prefigured the death of Jesus. Among them, Heb. 9:13,14 shows that they purified the flesh in a ceremonial way, and that if they were able to do that, Jesus' blood is surely able to cleanse our consciences from sin:

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

The above verses are immediately followed with that which we have chosen to use as the concluding thought of this study; namely, that the death of Christ actually atoned for the sins committed during the Old Testament times:

"For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE TRANSGRESSIONS THAT WERE UNDER THE FIRST TESTAMENT, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

No doubt, those who obediently carried out the sacrificial system of Old Testament times will be saved by the death of Christ; and those who didn't will be lost. If this be right (and surely it is, for those who were under the law will be judged by the law), those sacrifices instead of providing the actual cleansing themselves (as the Israelites thought) turned out to be the conditions of their salvation through the blood of Christ which they prefigured just as

baptism and the Lord's supper (pictures of that death) are among those conditions of salvation today.

The Three Great Jewish Feasts

Deut. 16:16 says.:

"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose".

Those three times were: the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles. (These three feasts were called by various names in different places in the Bible, in its respective section below, each feast's names will be considered.)

According to our calendar, these three feasts occurred annually as follows:

Passover in April
Pentecost in June
Tabernacles in October

We notice that all "males" were required to go to these feasts, There were times, as in the case of Jesus and His mother (Luke 2:41-43), when the entire family went, though the law did not make the attendance of the entire family compulsory. We notice also that while the original Passover (observed in Egypt in connection with the tenth plague) was conducted in their private houses (Exo. 12:21-23), the law given through Moses a few weeks later prescribed that the Passover and the other feasts of the Jews would be observed "in the place which he (God) shall choose". That "place" was wherever the tabernacle (later where the temple) was. After the conquest of Canaan, that was at Shiloh where the tabernacle was stationed (Josh. 18:1; I Sam. 1:3). Later, the tabernacle was replaced with the temple at Jerusalem, That is why Jesus' parents went to "Jerusalem" to keep the Passover.

There were, in addition to the above three feasts, other Jewish feasts also, though all the males were not expressly commanded to journey to Shiloh or Jerusalem to keep them. There was the feast of Trumpets (Num. 29:1ff), The Jews had two kinds of calendars--the sacred calendar and the civil calendar. The feast of Passover occurred in the first month of their sacred calendar, Six months later, or the same month during which the feast of Tabernacles came, their civil year began (just as the Jews' civil year today begins in the fall), The feast of Trumpets was their way of celebrating the arrival of the new civil year. There was also the feast of Purim (Esth. 9:20-32) instituted in the days of Esther to commemorate the Jews' deliverance from their enemies in her days, The feast of Dedication, which we read about in John 10:22, was a feast which arose during the four hundred year period between Malachi and Matthew

to commemorate the rededication of the temple by devout Jews after it had been desecrated by the Grecian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes, whose bitter hatred for the Jews was climaxed in his insulting expression of burning a sow on their temple altar.

But, as interesting as the many feasts of the Jews were, we must not allow ourselves to go too far afield in this introduction from the main consideration of this lesson; namely, the three particular feasts that we have announced for this study.

I. The Feast of Passover.

A. The First Feast of Passover Was Observed In Egypt,

Exo. 12 tells of God's intention to smite the firstborn of Egypt with death. Not that God needed a display of blood upon the individual Hebrew houses in order to know which houses were the Hebrews, but for typical reasons and possibly to test the obedience of individual Hebrews He instructed them to prepare and eat a lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs in the place where they displayed the blood of the lamb, The promise was fulfilled that wherever the blood was found, the firstborn of that household lived, but death visited the home of every Egyptian family that unforgettable night. At that time, God informed them that such a feast would be a permanent part of their religious life. At Mt. Sinai, in conjunction with the giving of the other laws through Moses, He gave permanent instructions concerning the observance of this feast. Most of the instructions given through Moses parallel the original observance in Egypt.

B. Instructions Concerning Their Observance.

As we have seen, there was a particular place for this feast to be observed--as long as the tabernacle stood, wherever it was; and after it was replaced with the temple, Jerusalem was the place.

God devised the sacred calendar for the Hebrew people, beginning their year with their deliverance from Egypt, At the time that the preparations were being made for the tenth plague and the first Passover, God said to Moses and Aaron:

"This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exo. 12:2).

In that first Passover, they kept their lambs up from the tenth day of that month, killed it on the fourteenth day at sunset, and ate it that night (which would have been their fifteenth day of the month) (Exo. 12:3-10). At that time, God indicated they should eat unleavened bread for a week (Exo. 12:14-20); Thus, the feast of Passover is commonly referred to throughout the Scriptures as the feast of Unleavened Bread also (Luke 22:1; Deut. 16:16; and many others). Thereafter, the Israelites began their Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month (Num. 9:3-5; Josh. 5:10). For those who were ceremonially unclean for some reason acceptable to God, they were permitted to observe their Passover one month later (Num. 9:6-11). Any man, however, who refused to keep the Passover was to be cut off from Israel (Num. 9:13).

At the time of institution, Moses said to the people:

"It shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service, And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses" (Ezo. 12:25-27).

In studying this subject, it is important to observe that the word "passover" is sometimes used as regards that brief period of time in which the lamb was killed and eaten; other times, it is used with reference to the entire feast; still other times, it is used of the lamb itself (such as when it talks of "killing the passover"). Unless one keeps this careful distinction in mind, the last half of the book of John will be very confusing.

C. Christ Is Our Passover Lamb.

I Ca. 5:7 says:

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

How apt! All under the blood of the passover lamb in Egypt were safe. All not under it were destroyed. Even so, all under the blood of Jesus are in possession of salvation; all not under that blood will be destroyed. The passover lamb actually died in place of the firstborn—any family that would not sacrifice a lamb would have lost its firstborn. Jesus actually died in our place. God thereafter considered the firstborn His. Even so, we who have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus are considered God's (Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:19,20). In our partaking of the feast of Christ, our Passover, we are to cast out the leaven of sin and malice even as the Hebrews were to cast out all leaven from their houses in order to participate in their feast of Passover (I Cor. 5:7,8).

II. The Feast Of Pentecost.

A. The Time Of This Feast.

Most of you have heard that the day of Pentecost, the year the church was established, came fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. That is correct, and though the conclusion is known by many, the actual proof could be given but by few. Let us see how it is figured.

The very first of their crops were beginning to ripen at Passover time. When they came to the feast of Passover, they were to bring some of the first-ripe grain along. During Passover week, there naturally would be a sabbath day. According to Lev. 23:11-13, on the day following that sabbath, the priest was to wave those firstripe heads as a sheaf before God, a lamb was to be offered for a burnt offering, a meal offering was to be offered, and also a drink offering. Verses 15 and 16 of that chapter say:

"Ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days."

If they were to start numbering fifty days, beginning with the day after the sabbath of Passover week, they started with the first day of the week as day number 1. The next

sabbath would be 7; the next sabbath 14; the next (or third sabbath) would be 21; the fourth sabbath 28; the fifth 35; the sixth 42; and the seventh sabbath 49. Therefore, the fiftieth day would be another first day of the week, This was the day of Pentecost (which means "fiftieth" in Greek). You can also see why that feast was sometimes called the "day of the firstfruits" (Exo. 34:22) (Num. 28:26), sometimes the "feast of harvest" (Exo. 23:16), and sometimes the "feast of weeks" (Exo. 34:22).

Since Jesus arose on the day following the sabbath of Passover week, which was day number 1 in the count, it is evident why teachers have told people the day of Pentecost both came on the first day of the week (it always did) and came fifty days after Jesus' resurrection (for He arose on the day when the count of fifty days began).

B. The Purpose Of This Annual Feast.

When they would have gathered in their harvest, there should have been two particular things to have been thankful for: for the harvest itself and that they were no longer bondmen in Egypt, but had fields of their own to reap. It was, therefore, a feast of thanksgiving and rejoicing, and it is described for us in Deut. 16:10-12:

"Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, In the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt."

The reason why the stranger, fatherless, and widow would likewise rejoice was that the Hebrew was commanded, in anticipation of this feast, not to harvest the corners of his fields nor any loose gleanings in the fields, but to leave these for the stranger and the poor (Lev. 23:23).

Many see also a typical fulfillment of the things of this feast in the beginning of Christianity. The resurrection of Jesus was that which actually gained permanently for time and eternity the first complete believers in the absolute deity of Jesus. These would include the women who went to the tomb, the two men to whom He appeared at Emmaus, and the ten apostles to whom He appeared—all on the day of His resurrection. These were the "first-ripe" heads forecasting the real harvest soon to be gleaned. Then, fifty days later, when the Jews were bringing the firstfruits of their grain harvest to God, the real firstfruits of the gospel harvest (three thousand souls--Acts 2:41) were being presented to God. If the above reasoning is correct, there is a wonderful analogy between them.

III. The Feast Of Tabernacles.

A. The Time Of This Feast.

The law of this feast as given in Lev. 23:34 indicated the exact time and duration of this feast:

"The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord."

The feast of Passover came in the first month. The

feast of Tabernacles coming in the seventh month would, therefore, be *six* months after Passover and at the *same* time *six* months before the next Passover.

B. The Purpose Of This Feast,

The purpose of this feast was double, It was a feast of thanksgiving for the year's crops then completely harvested, and it also commemorated the years of their forefathers in the wilderness when they lived in tents (or tabernacles),

Coming in the autumn as it did, the grapes had been harvested, the figs had *been* gathered, the olive crop had been processed, and all the grain crops had likewise been gathered into the storehouses. That is why it is called the "feast of ingathering" (*Exo. 23:16*). The thanksgiving element is involved in Deut, *16: 13-15*:

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice."

In commemoration of the wilderness wanderings of their forefathers, they dwelt in booths (whence the name "feast of tabernacles") during the feast:

"Ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days...All that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generatipns may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 23:40,42,43).

C. This Feast Was Heavy With Sacrifices.

Of the three feasts, this feast was attended with *more* sacrifices than the others. On the opening day of the feast, the burnt offering consisted of thirteen young *bullocks*, two rams, and fourteen lambs (*Num. 29:13*). On the *second* day, the *sin* offering consisted of twelve young bullocks (one less than on opening day), but the number of rams (two) and the number of lambs (fourteen) remained the same (*Num. 29:17*). Each day of the feast, the number of rams offered was two and the number of lambs fourteen, but the number of young bullocks *diminished* by one per day up until the last day (*Num. 29:20-32*). On the eighth (or last day), there was one young bullock offered, one ram, and seven lambs (*Num. 29:35,36*).

A study of the above quoted chapter (*Num. 29*) will also give you the information concerning their various meal offerings and sin offerings by days.

In studying the New Testament, we come across the above three feasts numerous times. We have already made reference to the fact that Jesus' parents attended the Passover every year (*Luke 2:41*). It was at a Passover season in Jerusalem that we see Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve confounding the wise men of the Jews and affirming that He must be about His Father's business

(*Luke 2:41-49*). At the first Passover during His ministry, He cleansed the temple and thereby infuriated the Jewish leaders (*John 2:13-18*). At another feast (undoubtedly the Passover), He healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda, and because it was done *on* the sabbath, He was involved in a controversy with the Jews (*John 5:1-16*). John 7 tells us of Jesus and the disciples: attending the feast of *Tabernacles*, It was Passover time when Jesus was crucified (*Luke 22:1--23:33*). It was at the feast of Pentecost, when Jews from all over the then-known world were gathered together at Jerusalem, that Jesus sent the gospel forth, and the church had its beginning (*Acts 2:1-47*). Paul sometimes made it a point to be in Jerusalem at the time of some of these feasts.

There are many things very interesting about those feasts. They played an important part in the religious life of the nation. Except for the continual feast upon spiritual things that we Christians have (we don't have to go to Jerusalem to worship--*John 4:19-24*), the only set feast that we have is the Lord's supper, but instead of it occurring just once a year or three times a year, it occurs every Lord's day. May we be faithful to Him, eating and drinking at His table in His kingdom (*Luke 22:29,30*).

Israel Condemned in the Wilderness

God had a double blessing in mind for His people. He was going to deliver them from Egyptian bondage, and He was going to give them a home (a land that flowed with milk and honey), Thus far in our studies, they have received only one-half of the promised blessing--they had escaped Egyptian bondage. On broad lines, we might say that God's *mercy* exhibited itself in delivering them from their afflictions and oppressions in Egypt, and His goodness toward them sought to give them the wonderful land of Canaan for a home.

Having stopped at Mt. Sinai to obtain the law, construct and erect the tabernacle, and to have a priesthood consecrated for them, they then were led directly toward Canaan. At Kadesh, where they pitched camp, they were only fifty miles from Beersheba, the southern gateway to Canaan. This is where things took a definite turn for them.

I. The Spies Sent And Return.

A, God Commanded Moses To Send Spies Into The Land,

God didn't need information concerning the land and its inhabitants. He knew all about Canaan. He evidently wanted to test the faith of His people before proceeding. Thus, He said to Moses:

"Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every

one a ruler among them" (Num. 13:2).

The names of the twelve spies were: Shammua, Shaphat, Caleb, Igal, Oshea (who was also known as Joshua), Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, and Geuel (Num. 13:4-15).

B. Moses' Instructions To Them.

Moses gave those twelve men the following instructions:

"Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land" (Num. 13:17-20).

C. They Enter The Land.

When they entered the land, they were entering the land of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What a natural attachment and appreciation they should have had for the land! They searched out the land for forty days (Num. 13:25). It was the season of the first-ripe grapes (Num. 13:20). Near the brook Eshcol, they cut down a cluster of grapes, the size of which must be somewhat indicated by the fact that they carried it between two of them on a staff (Num. 13:23). They also brought back pomegranates and figs (Num. 13:23). They found it to be such a land as that which God had promised to them when they were yet in Egypt (Exo. 13:5).

D. Their Report.

When they returned, they gave the following report to Moses, Aaron, and all the people:

"We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan" (Num. 13:27-29).

E. Caleb Fails To Persuade Them.

Caleb, the spy from the tribe of Judah, recognized the might of those who lived in the land, but he realized that God had promised them the land. Therefore, he insisted that they go up against the land to take it:

"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30).

But, all the other spies except Joshua contended that they were not able to take the land. The thing which seemingly loomed as the greatest barrier to them was the giant-sized men in the land:

"We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we... The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:31-33).

F. The Congregation Weeps And Murmurs Against Moses.

The people were dismayed. Their hopes all seemed to be dashed to the ground in a day. As usual, when things didn't go as they desired, they complained against Moses:

"Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! (Note—God was going to keep this statement in mind.) And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?... Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Num. 14:2-4).

G. Caleb And Joshua Almost Stoned.

In your writer's judgment, one of the greatest speeches recorded in the Bible is this one delivered to the complaining Israelites, the faithless Israelites, by those two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, and it is but two and one-half verses long. Listen to it:

"The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Num. 14:7-9).

What faith! "If the Lord delight in us, he will give it to us." What faith! "Don't fear the people, they are bread for us, and their defence is departed from them." What faith! "The Lord is with us; fear them not." Forty years later, when the succeeding generation entered the land, what Caleb and Joshua here said was proven true! Yes, they had faith; their listeners didn't (they took up stones to stone Caleb and Joshua). Because they had faith, they were permitted to enter the land in spite of the rebels to whom they preached, and because the people didn't have faith, they were cursed, as we shall see in the following section of study.

II. That Generation Condemned To Die In The Wilderness,

A. God Was Insulted.

God was witnessing all that was going on, and He was sorely displeased with it. He said to Moses:

"How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Num. 14:11,12).

Unbelief itself is a terrible sin! So many people have the idea that the only way a person can sin is by some wicked deed, but one can sin by not believing what God has said. Herein lies the danger of not believing that one's sins are forgiven when he has obeyed the terms of pardon. Herein lies the danger of not believing that God answers the prayers of His children. Herein lies the danger of not trusting the Lord for material provisions when we give ourselves to spiritual things. Oh, the prevalence of unbelief today! Few indeed have totally escaped its paralyzing effect. When the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8).

B. Moses Entreated God Not To Wipe Them Out.

Moses, well aware of God's feelings, entreated God as follows:

"Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now" (Num, 14:13-19).

Though this entreaty involved the future of the people, it was God whom Moses was particularly concerned about. God's great name—what would happen to it? This is the voice of true worshippers, It is not always so much, "What about us?" but, "What about God?" Oh, that people would so give themselves to God and His work today that it would go forward with great strides! But, so many are content to relax "just so long as they are saved", How unspiritual an attitude! How unlike Moses! Yes, and probably the day of judgment will show how far short of salvation they themselves are because of lacking a spiritual attitude!

C. God Was Entreated In A Sense.

God listened to Moses' entreaty. He did not wish to disregard it totally. But, He was not shut up to a choice between wiping the whole people out or sparing the whole people and giving them Canaan anyway. He was determined that those who had sinned would be punished for their sin, and though He was not going to blot out the whole nation, He was not going to spare a single one who had disbelieved His ability to fulfill His promises to the children of Israel. Consequently, He said to Moses:

"I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with Him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it" (Num, 14:20-24).

He then told Moses and Aaron to deliver the following message to the congregation:

"Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein,

save Caleb the sons of Iephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die" (Num, 14:28-35).

God said it, and He meant it! Every word that He spoke came true.

When God took things in hand and killed the ten unfaithful spies with a plague (Num. 14:36,37), the people could see that they had been wrong. Consequently, they rose up early the next morning willing to proceed into Canaan. They said:

"Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned" (Num. 14:40).

How childlike! How frivolous! They evidently thought they could over-prevail upon the mercy of God. Because He had tolerated them before, they thought His mercy was still great toward them. But, it wasn't. God had sworn with an oath that they would not enter that land, and He would not change thnr decree. Furthermore, He was going to see that they wouldn't enter it. Consequently, when they disregarded Moses' telling them not to go up because the Lord was not with them (Num, 14:42), they were badly defeated by the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Num, 14:44,45). What reasoning they employed--they wouldn't go up to battle when the Lord was with them, but they would go after He had departed from them.

III. The New Testament Uses This History To Exhort Us.

A. Some People's Reasoning Needs Correcting.

There are those who teach that a Christian cannot be lost no matter what he does. If he was once God's child, they say, there is no possible danger of him ever being lost. But, such reasoning does not hold up when we study I Cor. 10:1-12 and Heb. 3 and 4 (as well as many other well known passages of Scripture). In correcting such an idea, Heb. 3 and 4 uses the very history studied in this study. Let us look at it.

B. A Consideration Of Heb. 3 and 4.

In speaking of the Israelites in the wilderness, the Hebrew writer said:

"I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter my rest" (Heb. 3:10,11).

The very next verses continue with a warning based upon the above:

"Take heed, brethren (Note—he is writing to Christians), lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:12-14).

In looking back upon those Israelites, the Hebrew writer continued:

"With whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? and to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:17-19).

Now, notice the way the next chapter opens:

"Let us (Christians today) fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest (that is what we have been promised), any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4:1).

There was a danger that many of the Hebrew Christians, through falling away from faith in God's Messiah, were going to miss out on the goodnews of heavenly rest that God had told them about. The writer was urging them on with exhortation after exhortation. How useless if their heavenly inheritance could not be lost through backsliding and unbelief! Notice, by way of closing out this thought, what he said in Heb. 4:11:

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

God brought them out of Egypt, but He did not take them into Canaan. The New Testament shows that He can save us from our past bondage of sin, but if we do not persevere in faith and faithfulness to Christ, we shall never enter heaven (the antitype of Canaan to the Hebrews).

The Conquest Under Joshua

Many interesting and heart-breaking incidents occurred during the forty years of wilderness wanderings. The book of Numbers (so named because the first part of the book contains the numbering of the generation that came out of Egypt and the twenty-sixth chapter contains the numbering of the new generation that would enter Canaan) supplies us with what transpired during those forty years. The patience of both God and Moses were sorely tried numerous times during those years. Wearing by their continual griping, Moses one time referred to them as suckling babies that he was carrying in his bosom (Num. 11:10-12). The song writer of "I Must Tell Jesus" obtained some of his words from Moses' words:

"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14).

But, surely, they were no harder on Moses than on God. Time and time again during those forty years, God had every reason to confirm the rightness of His oath to exclude

that generation from Canaan. What a rightful description of them Heb. 3:10 gives:

"They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways."

Somewhere in the latter half of this wilderness period, our present study begins.

I. Preparations For The Conquest.

A. Joshua Chosen To Succeed Moses As Leader.

One of those times when Moses' patience had reached the breaking-point, he (and Aaron with him) committed a grave sin. But, all unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17) whether such takes place at a time of weakness, or whether it is something deliberately done. His sister Miriam had just been buried when the people gathered together against Aaron and him because they had no water. In an outburst of undisciplined temper, Moses smote a rock twice and said:

"Hear now, ye rebels: must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. 20:10).

Though the incident is narrated in but a few sentences, leaving possibly a few questions in our minds, we know that Moses and Aaron (who was necessarily involved, according to the record) overstepped their bounds and failed to give proper glory to God for the issuance of water from the rock. Consequently, God said to them both:

"Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12).

Surely, there is no respect of persons with God. When a righteous man sins, God takes notice and deals with him accordingly (Ezek. 18:24). Though Moses had been so good all along the way, God did not overlook the wrong committed at the rock at Kadesh. How down-hearted he and Aaron must have been! How crest-fallen! But, God would not change His decision. Moses recited to the new generation how he had said to God at the time:

"O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon" (Deut. 3:24, 25).

Evidently, he so spake to God several times, for God said to him:

"Speak no more unto me of this matter" (Deut. 3:26).

Instead of Moses leading them into the land, God chose Joshua. He said to Moses:

"Charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see" (Deut. 3:28).

This Joshua had been their military leader (Exo. 17:9), he had been with Moses in the mountain when the law was given (Exo. 24:13), and he was one of the two faithful spies (Num. 13:8, 16).

B. Moses' Instructions To The New Generation.

The word "Deuteronomy" breaks down into "deuter" (second) and "onomy" (law). The book of Deuteronomy has been so named because it contains a record of Moses reciting much of the law to the new generation that was about to enter Canaan. Many chapters of the book are consumed with this repeating of the law. This explains why there are two accounts of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament (Exo. 20 and Deut. 5).

In Deuteronomy, Moses also recited to them the history of their forefathers, recalling to them why God had refused admittance to their parents. In recalling God's goodness upon them, he included the interesting information that God had caused their clothing not to wear out throughout those forty years (Deut. 8:4).

When they would enter the land, Moses charged them not to intermarry with the people of the land, but to destroy completely all of them and their idols (Deut. 7:1-5). He also instructed them to write the law in plastered stones, which were to be set up in Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:2-4).

Moses also gave them the following appropriate warning:

"When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 6:10-12).

C. Moses Viewed The Land And Died.

The last chapter of Deuteronomy opens with these words:

"Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead (east of the Jordan) unto Dan (the northern extremity of the land) and all Naphtali (along the Sea of Galilee), and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh (the central section), and all the land of Judah (west of where he was in Mt. Nebo) unto the utmost sea (the Mediterranean), and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho (the first city that would be conquered under Joshua), the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither" (Deut. 34:1-4).

The next verses say that he died there, and the Lord buried him in an unknown place, he being at the time one hundred twenty years old, with his eye-sight yet good and his strength yet with him. A strange reference is made to the body of Moses in Jude 9, where it tells of the devil and the archangel Michael disputing about his body. The Bible fails to shed light upon this dispute further, this brief passage in Jude being the only reference to it in the Bible. The fact that Moses appeared "in glory" with Jesus upon the Mt. of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-31) would seem to indicate that God kept Moses out of Canaan in fulfillment of His word, but that in the time that intervened between Moses' sin at the rock and the time of his death, he possibly got matters right with God so that his non-admittance

to Canaan does not necessarily mean his non-admittance to heaven. A sudden, unexpected death may be physically and mentally desirable, but knowing of the approach of coming death has some spiritual advantages--which Moses probably utilized to his ultimate salvation.

D. Two Spies Sent Into The Land.

Joshua sent two men across the Jordan into the town of Jericho to spy it out. This was to be the first city to be conquered. Rahab, frequently referred to as a harlot, hid the spies from the king of Jericho who sought them, for she believed that God had given Israel her city:

"I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you" (Josh. 2:9).

Their fear of Israel was based upon the way God had dried up the Red Sea for them, and the way He had delivered other peoples into their hands (Josh. 2:10). How wrong the unfaithful spies had been! They were scared of the people of the land, but the people of the land were truly afraid of Israel! For hiding the spies, she asked for mercy upon her household when they would destroy the city (Josh. 2:12,13). The men agreed to it on the basis of her having a scarlet cord in her window (to identify the house probably, and there possibly could be a type involved in it also) with all her family gathered into that house at the time (Josh. 2:14-19). When these spies returned to Joshua, telling him that the whole country was smitten with fear of them, he was ready to enter the land and begin the conquest.

II. The Conquest Itself.

A. The Crossing Of The Jordan.

It was flood-time on the Jordan (Josh. 3:15 and 4:18). The priests led the way, bearing the ark of the covenant. As soon as their feet touched the water, God stopped the waters above them so that it piled up like a heap. The priests stopped in the midst of the river-bed while the people filed across. A man from each of the twelve tribes took a stone apiece out of the river-bed where the priests' feet had stood while the children of Israel crossed. These stones were used to erect a monument on the west side of Jordan (at Gilgal) so that when coming generations might inquire as to the meaning of the stones, they would be told of Israel's miraculous crossing of the Jordan. Joshua also set up twelve stones in the river-bed where the priests stood. Then, the priests passed over, and the river began to flow once more, spreading out over the plain in its former flood condition. The above facts are narrated in Josh. 3 and 4.

B. The Manna Ceased.

During their years in the wilderness, they could do but little about supplying their own food. Therefore, God did for them what they could not do for themselves. He gave them manna for food. But, now that they were in a land of abundance, it was different. He withdrew the daily provision of manna (Josh. 5:12). He had promised them this land, and if they didn't go forth to conquer it with His help, it would be their own fault if they starved.

C. The Fall Of Jericho.

God reassured Joshua of His presence and help when He caused the angel-captain to appear to him (Josh. 5:13). All Jericho in those terror-filled days remained within the city walls (Josh. 6:1). A most unusual military strategy was to be employed for taking the city. This, no doubt, was to assure the minds of the people that it was *God* who made the victory possible and not their own military process. The strategy was for all the men of war to march around the city once a day for six days. Then, on the seventh day, they were to march around it seven times. The seven priests preceding the ark of the covenant were then to blow the trumpets, and all the people were to shout. The wall was then to fall down flat, and every man was to go directly forward across the old fallen wall and smite. The orders were to kill everybody except Rahab and her family and all the animals, but the silver, gold, brass, and iron were to be consecrated to the Lord. No one was to take any of it for himself. All of the foregoing is told for us in Josh. 6. Everything went off according to orders and promise. It is interesting to notice that Rahab became a part of Israel (Josh. 6:25) and became an ancestor of Jesus.

Unbelievers attempted to fault the Bible upon the basis that it would be impossible for people to walk around a city seven times on one day. While that would be true as regards our modern-day cities, yet archaeology has found that the wall of Jericho enclosed an area of about seven acres. This area would be smaller than our small towns. The city was a military fortress city in which people crowded for protection. Thus, it did not cover a large area. So, it was altogether possible for the soldiers to encompass the city seven times on one day!

Archaeology has further shown that in the ruins of the wall, there was one part of the wall that didn't fall down. Rahab's house! The Scripture also says they burned the city with fire (Josh. 6:24). John Garstang, who excavated the ruins of Jericho in the early thirties of this century, found a deep layer of burned debris. Ashes from the fire set by Joshua and his men!

Joshua pronounced a curse upon anyone rebuilding the city:

"Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it" (Josh. 6:26).

About five hundred years later, a man by the name of Hiel rebuilt Jericho. Abiram, his firstborn son, died at the time of laying the city's foundation, and his youngest son Segub died when he completed the city by setting up its gates just like Joshua had pronounced (I Kings 16:34).

D. Their Failure At Ai.

Ai was such a small town compared with Jericho. Only a limited army was dispatched to take care of it. But, the men of Ai rose up and surprized the Israelites with a stunning defeat. What was wrong? Joshua went to God in prayer about the matter. God told him there was sin in the camp. God sent him to find the sinner. It proved to be a man by the name of Achan, and his sin was that he had taken and hidden a rich Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight from the

battle of Jericho. This was all to be dedicated to God. God was displeased with such covetousness, and His wrath would not be turned away from the people until they had gotten rid of the sinner. This was another lesson that Israel needed to know and remember. Consequently, Achan and all his were stoned and burned. Josh. 7 enumerates the various details of the failure at Ai. The next chapter gives an interesting account of Israel's victory over Ai in their next attempt.

C. Joshua Conquered As Long As He Was Able.

Chapters 9 through 12 of Joshua contain a record of the rest of Joshua's conquests. When Joshua was an old man, there was yet much land to possess (Josh. 13:1). Joshua had been faithful throughout his years of leadership to the instructions God gave him concerning conquering (Josh. 11:15). When the conquest had gotten as far as it could get under the physical strength of Joshua's leadership, the land of Canaan was divided up according to the various tribes (chapters 13-22 of Joshua). Thereafter, each tribe was expected to conquest its own individual territory (see Judg. 1). Almost any Bible will have among its maps a map of Canaan as divided among the tribes. Notice (on the map in your Bible) that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh settled east of the Jordan River. (Actually, only one-half of Manasseh settled east of the Jordan. Notice another area allotted to Manasseh on the west side.) The two and one-half tribes had requested Moses to give them that east land as their inheritance, for that land of Gilead was wonderful pasture-land (Num. 32:1-5). Moses had promised it to them provided they would go ahead with the Israelites throughout the conquest of Canaan itself (Num. 32:20-22). They had been true to their pledge to Moses. Consequently, the division of the land under Joshua gave Gilead to them (Josh. 13:15-32). If you look on your map, you will see that no inheritance was given to the tribe of Levi. This was according to God's directions through Moses that the Levites should have no inheritance in the land-division, but they were to receive a tenth of all that the other tribes produced for their priestly service in behalf of the other tribes (Num. 18:20-22).

Joshua was a great leader, greatly obedient to God, who lived a most eventful life. At the age of one hundred ten, he died and was buried in the border of his inheritance (Josh. 24:29,30). The influence of his godly life is evidenced in these parting words concerning him:

"And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel" (Josh. 24:31).

He had been true to God's original orders to him at the time of Moses' death:

"Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all

the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:2-9).

May God increase the tribe of Joshua!

The Time of the Judges

Moses had led the children of Israel for the first forty years of their national history. Joshua was raised up to lead them following the death of Moses. Thus, from the time they left Egypt until the death of Joshua, they had a leader who served to weld the nation together. The division of the land among the tribes, each of which went its own way to its allotted land, made for a disorganized people, whose only resemblance of anything central was the location of their tabernacle at Shiloh to which they came for their set feasts throughout the year.

Let it not be concluded from the above, however, that Israel was in any way unprovided for as far as a plan from God was concerned. Had they carried out the will of God, they would have been as adequately taken care of, each tribe dwelling happily and godly and its own possession, as Israel had ever realized under Moses and Joshua. But, they didn't obey the will of God, and the same sad story of sin, that has so characterized men and nations throughout the annals of time, was re-enacted once more to the sorrow and dismay of the people.

I. The Commandment That Israel Failed To Obey.

A. God's Commandment Concerning The People In Canaan.

Moses said to the new generation:

"When the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them" (Deut. 7:2).

This commandment to destroy all the people of those nations was repeated over and over again.

B. The Terrible Religion Of The Canaanites.

Some have thought to criticize the commandment to wipe out those peoples, but when one considers the degeneracy

of their religion and that God wanted to spare Israel from becoming involved in it, it is no wonder that God commanded all the people to be wiped out without mercy. Halley's "Pocket Bible Handbook" gives us some valuable data concerning their religion: "Baal was their principal god; Ashtoreth, Baal's wife, their principal goddess. She was the personification of the reproductive principle in nature. Ishtar was her Babylonian name; Astarte her Greek and Roman name. Baalim, the plural of Baal, were images of Baal. Ashtaroeth, the plural of Ashtoreth. Ashera was a sacred pole, cone of stone, or a tree trunk, representing the goddess. Temples of Baal and Ashtoreth were usually together. Priestesses were temple prostitutes. Sodomites were male temple prostitutes. The worship of Baal, Ashtoreth, and other Canaanite gods consisted in the most extravagant orgies; their temples were centers of vice...In excavations at Gezer, Macalister, of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1904-09, found, in the Canaanite stratum, which had preceded Israelite occupation, of about 1500 B.C., the ruins of a 'high place', which had been a temple in which they worshipped their god Baal and their goddess Ashtoreth (Astarte). It was an enclosure 150 by 120 feet, surrounded by a wall, open to the sky, where the inhabitants held their religious festivals. Within the walls were 10 rude stone pillars, 5 to 11 feet high, before which the sacrifices were offered. Under the debris, in this 'high place', Macalister found great numbers of jars containing the remains of children who had been sacrificed to Baal. The whole area proved to be a cemetery for new-born babes! Another horrible practice was what they called 'foundation sacrifices'. When a house was to be built, a child would be sacrificed, and its body built into the wall, to bring good luck to the rest of the family. Many of these were found in Gezer. They have been found also at Megiddo, Jericho, and other places. Also in this 'high place', under the rubbish, Macalister found enormous quantities of images and plaques of Ashtoreth with rudely exaggerated sex organs, designed to foster sensual feelings. So, Canaanites worshipped, by immoral indulgence, as a religious rite, in the presence of their gods; and then, by murdering their first-born children, as a sacrifice to these same gods. It seems that, in large measure, the land of Canaan had become a sort of Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale. Do we wonder any longer why God commanded Israel to exterminate the Canaanites? Did a civilization of such abominable filth and brutality have any right longer to exist? It is one of history's examples of the wrath of God against the wickedness of nations. Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than He did."

C. Israel Did Well Under Joshua, But They Didn't Finish The Job.

We pointed out in our last study that in the years that Joshua lived and was able to lead the people, he did not compromise with those nations, but besieged them with all his military might (Josh. 11:15-20). It was after the division of the land among the tribes and the death of Joshua that the various tribes failed to carry the task to completion. What is recorded of Manasseh below is likewise recorded of the other tribes in the first chapter of Judges:

"Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of

Bethshean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out" (Judg. 1:27,28).

II. What This Disobedience Brought.

A. What God Foresaw That It Would Bring.

God expressly forbade them making any covenant with those nations (Deut. 7:2) or to intermarry with them (Deut. 7:3). He commanded them to destroy their altars and their images (Deut. 7:5). He knew that intermarrying with them and a "live and let-live" policy toward them would result in Israel becoming idolatrous just like them:

"For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly" (Deut. 7:4).

As early as the giving of the law through Moses, God had said:

"They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me; for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee" (Exo. 23:33).

B. This Is Exactly What Happened.

People then must have been much like people today--they had their own ideas about things and did what they pleased more than what God commanded. But, the truth of God's Word was amply shown in the results that followed. Judg. 3:5-7 says:

"The children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves."

C. Because Of Their Idolatry, God Delivered Them Into The Hands Of Their Enemies.

Judg. 2:14,15 says:

"And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed."

How much then they wished they had obeyed God in the first place! People-like, they disobeyed carelessly, but repented bitterly.

III. Where The Judges Fit In.

A. The People Cried To God For Deliverance.

Not always (Rev. 9:19-21 and Rev. 16:8-11), but many times men will turn to God in times of misfortune, reverse, and chastening. In those days of bitter bondage to their enemy neighbors, the burden became so heavy that they cried out to God for deliverance (Judg. 3:8,9; 3:15; 4:3; etc.).

B. Each Time, God Raised Up A Deliverer For Them.

Herein we see the mercy of God toward His people. The Psalmist said in Psa. 103:9 that God would not always chide nor keep His anger forever. When their cry came up before Him, He would raise up deliverers, called "judges", for them. These judges were not judicial men, as we commonly employ the term, but were military leaders and sometimes religious reformers.

C. The Different Judges.

Altogether, there were fifteen different judges. They were, with the Scripture references covering their labors, as follows:

Othniel - Judg. 3:5-11
 Ehud - Judg. 3:12-30
 Shamgar - Judg. 3:31
 Deborah and Barak - Judg. 4:1--5:31
 Gideon - Judg. 6:11--8:32
 Tola - Judg. 10:1,2
 Jair - Judg. 10:3-5
 Jephthah - Judg. 11:1--12:7
 Elon - Judg. 12:11,12
 Abdon - Judg. 12:13-15
 Samson - Judg. 13:2--16:31
 Eli - Judg. 17:1--I Sam. 4:18
 Samuel - I Sam. 3:1--25:1

D. These Men Were Famous For Their Great Deeds Of Valor.

Othniel subdued the Mesopotamians. Ehud personally killed the king of Moab and led in a great triumph over the Moabites. Shamgar killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad. Deborah and Barak obtained a mighty victory over Sisera and his men. Gideon's victories over the Midianites are stories full of great faith and courage. Jephthah led in victory over the Philistines. The great feats of valor performed by Samson against the Philistines are probably the best known of all the judges' victories. Only time and space failed the Hebrew writer to detail some of their great victories in his "Faith Chapter" (Heb. 11:32-34).

E. The Period Of The Judges Covered A Longer Period Than Most People Realize.

Following Othniel's triumph over the Mesopotamians, Judg. 3:11 says they had rest for *forty years*. After Ehud's slaughter of the Moabites, Judg. 3:30 says the land had rest for *eighty years*. These were but the first two judges. Thus, it is evident that this period in Old Testament history, commonly referred to as the "Judges' Period", covered a considerable expanse of time. Acts 13:20 states:

"He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years."

Thus, this becomes one of the longer periods of Old Testament history.

IV. An Important Matter Near The End Of This Period.

A. The People Desired A King.

In Samuel's older years, some of the prominent men of Israel came to him with the following request:

"Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5).

Here was Israel's same old trouble--they wanted to be like the nations around them. God had called them to be different. They were His "special" people. He said to them through Moses:

"The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth...Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them...Thou shalt be blessed above all people" (Deut. 7:6,11,14).

But, Israel wouldn't have it that way! How much like people today, who instead of being the people of God by carrying out His Word are consumed with the mania to be like their religious neighbors and thus compromise any peculiar tenets of the gospel. Congregations are infested with them! They are the ones holding "Israel" back!

B. What Their Request Indicated.

Samuel thought they had rejected his leadership. But, God said, "No, they have rejected Mine." And He permitted them to have a king:

"Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee (Samuel) for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7).

God had loved Israel. He had fed them. He had led them. He had given them a land. He had given them victory. What more of a king could they have wanted? God never did forget this insult, and He ever afterward referred to it as a sin (1 Sam. 10:19; 1 Sam. 12:12; 1 Sam. 12:16-19; Hos. 13:9-11).

C. God, Realizing Ahead Of Time This Request That Would Come, Had Given Instructions Concerning Any King They Might Have.

Through Moses, God had said:

"When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deut. 17:14-20).

D. God Gave Them Their Wishes To Their Own Sorrow.

So often in Scripture, God gave disobedient people their wishes to their own regret later. Wishes uttered rashly in moments of temper or impatience have come true, much to the sorrow of those who wished them. They wanted a king. They were determined to have a king. God gave them a king, but not without telling them of some of the grievances that would come upon them because of their king:

"He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horseman; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day" (1 Sam. 8:11-18).

But, the people didn't give heed to these words either (verses 19 and 20). They still wanted a king. Some people can't be told--they must be shown. If we may so speak, they got shown all right. It did cost them tremendously to support a king, his palace, his court, and his army. By the time that Solomon had gotten through with them (just the third king), they were calling for relief from such heavy taxation. Their kings led them into idolatry, which brought their national ruin at the punishing hand of God. Their wars (because they were a nation with a king and had assumed the usual role of a nation with a king) greatly weakened the nation time and time again.

How right God was! How wrong they were! Thus, with the coming of the kings came the end of the judges. When Samuel died, Israel had had its last judge.

Israel's First Three Kings

Israel thought an earthly king would be a step forward; God told them it would be just the opposite. While the truth of God will always be manifested in time, yet the will of man must exert itself in the meantime. Just because God permitted them to have a king did not mean that He approved the idea. Sometimes, He permits some things to take place for punishing reasons. This was the case with their request for a king.

In this study of the first three kings of Israel, we are considering a period of their history that covered one hun-

dred years. Each of the three kings reigned forty years: Saul (Acts 13:21), David (II Sam. 5:4), and Solomon (I Kings 11:42). Let us look at each of their reigns.

I. The Reign Of King Saul.

A. His Anointing.

When young Saul, a Benjamite, was out looking for his father's asses, he found himself as lost as the asses. He and the servant accompanying him went to the prophet Samuel in hopes that he would be able to direct them back to their home. Before they came, God informed Samuel that the one whom He had selected to be Israel's first king would be in his presence within a day. When Saul came in, God told Samuel that this was he (I Sam. 9:17), and he anointed him before he left (I Sam. 10:1).

B. Saul's Early Humility.

When Samuel spoke to him, Saul answered:

"Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (I Sam. 9:21).

When Saul's uncle asked him what Samuel had said to him when he called upon him, I Sam. 10:16 says:

"He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not."

When Samuel assembled all Israel together for the purpose of setting Saul over them as king, he did it by having them come before him by tribes. When they came, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. In the tribe of Benjamin, the family of Matri was taken. In the family of Matri, Kish's son Saul was taken. Now, let us read from I Sam. 10:21:

"And when they sought him (Saul), he could not be found. Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward."

When he stood forth among the people, Samuel proclaimed him king, and the people all shouted that which has become famous in England concerning her kings:

"God save the king" (I Sam. 10:24).

When Saul went to his home, there were some wicked men (spoken of as "children of Belial") who looked down upon him. But, Saul was as meek as Moses:

"But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace" (I Sam. 10:27).

Later, when some advised putting these men to death, Saul refused their request (I Sam. 11:12,13). Had Saul always retained the spirit of humility before God and his meekness before men, his life would have been one of the most beautiful recorded in Holy Writ.

C. His First Battle.

The men of Gibeah appealed to Saul for help against the Ammonites. The Israelites were not minded to help them, but the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and the following is

recorded in Scripture:

"The Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of the messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent" (I Sam. 11:6,7).

Thus, Israel learned that Saul meant business. The Ammonites were sorely defeated by Saul and his men. In later battles with the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and others, Saul was established as a man of great might.

D. His Disobedience.

On one occasion, Saul's three thousand men were faced with thirty thousand Philistine chariots and six thousand horsemen. In great fear, the Israelites hid themselves in caves, thickets, and rocks--just anywhere. Saul himself carried at Gilgal seven days according to an appointment he had made with Samuel. But, when he feared that Samuel was not going to come, he himself offered a burnt offering to God for deliverance from the Philistines. When he had finished his sacrifice, Samuel showed up and rebuked him. Saul tried to explain his action, but Samuel did not excuse Saul for disobeying God in offering this sacrifice:

"Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee" (I Sam. 13:13,14).

On another occasion, God commanded Saul to go smite the Amalekites. He told him to wipe them out with an utter destruction, sparing neither human nor beast. Saul marched against the Amalekites, slaughtering them with a great slaughter. But, instead of wiping out everything and everybody as he was told to do, he spared the best of the cattle and the sheep for sacrificial purposes, and he brought the king back alive. He returned under the thought that he had obeyed God. Suffice it to say, he came much nearer obeying God's commandment to destroy the Amalekites than much of religion today does of obeying God's commandments. But, what he failed to do was counted disobedience by God. When Samuel took him to task for his action, he defended himself as having destroyed everything but the king and the animals that they were going to sacrifice to God, to which Samuel replied:

"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Sam. 15:22,23).

The next chapter tells of God's sending Samuel, unknown to Saul, to anoint the boy David as the next king.

E. His Rage Of Jealousy.

Without going into detail to narrate, the story of the young lad David killing the giant Goliath in the presence of Saul and his army is well known (I Sam. 17). After this, Saul set David over his men of war (I Sam. 18:5). All went well until one day when David was returning from the Philistines, the women of Israel in all the cities sang the praises of Saul and of David as follows:

"Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Sam. 18:7).

This didn't set well at all with Saul, for I Sam. 18:8,9 says:

"And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

For thirteen chapters following, the story of his bitter animosity against David, at times even hunting him like a dog hunts a rabbit, is unfolded step by step. How cruel he was toward David, and how merciful David was toward him! Finally, with the battle going against him and with his sons already slain in the battle, Saul fell upon his own sword in a miserable suicide death. Thus came to an end the rule of Israel's first king.

II. The Reign Of David.

A. His Anointing.

I Sam. 16 tells of Samuel anointing the youngest son of Jesse to be the next king. At that time, David was but a sheep-keeping boy. The Scripture describes him as ruddy and of a beautiful countenance (I Sam. 16:12). Thus, when David played his harp before Saul to quiet him (I Sam. 16:14-23), and when he slew Goliath (I Sam. 17), he had already been anointed to succeed Saul, though we are sure he never breathed a word of it to Saul.

B. David's Early Years As King.

Following the death of Saul, Saul's captain Abner sought to make Saul's son Ishbosheth king, and though this caused David considerable trouble at first, the whole threat was subdued, and David was the recognized king of Israel (II Sam. 2:1--5:10). The first seven years of his reign, he reigned at Hebron, a city south of Jerusalem. Later, he attacked and defeated the Jebusites, who still had the country where Jerusalem now stands. There is some indefiniteness about the origin of the name "Jerusalem", but it is possible that "Jerusalem" means "Salem of the Jebusites", its real form being "Jebusalem" with the "b" being changed to "r" for euphony's sake. It is thought that this "Salem" was the city of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18). The location of Melchizedek's "Salem" fits. Thus, in David's time the city that came to be the central city of the Biblical record came into the picture. In these early years, he also signally defeated the Philistines, who had given Saul so much trouble (II Sam. 5:17-25).

C. A Promise That Grew Out Of A Proposal.

After God had given David peace from his enemies, he proposed building a magnificent temple to God, but God rejected the idea of David being the builder inasmuch as He had used him as a man of war (I Chron. 22:7,8). Instead,

He said that David's son would be the builder (I Chron. 22:9,10). But, David, the man after God's own heart, was not to go without a blessing, and the blessing that God promised him upon this occasion far out-shone that of building any temple. Notice these words of God to David:

"I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (II Sam. 7:8-16).

God never lost sight of this promise of establishing the throne of David. In Psalms, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and elsewhere, we find remarkable references to it. The Bible shows that that promise is fulfilled in Christ, who was born of the lineage of David (Luke 1:30-33; Acts 2:29-36; and many others). Just as David ruled over God's Old Testament people, so Christ today rules over His New Testament people.

D. David's Sin And His Troubles That Followed.

David's adulterous act with the wife of Uriah and his killing of her husband are well known to any reader of the Bible (II Sam. 11). As a drop of oil on a beautiful white garment, so was this sad event upon the unblemished life of David. Though God pardoned him, He pronounced this terrible sentence:

"The sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife...Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun" (II Sam. 12:10-12).

David's sin against Uriah had been both adultery and killing, and David was to see such take place right within his own house. And he saw it. His daughter Tamar was raped by his son Amnon (II Sam. 13:1-19). Because of this, David's son Absalom murdered Amnon (II Sam. 13:20-37). Absalom went in unto David's concubines (II Sam. 16:21,22) when he led in a rebellion against his father in an attempt to take his throne, which ended in the death of Absalom at the hands of Joab (II Sam. 15:1--18:17). What sorrow this death brought to David! The words of his weeping for him are well known:

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"
(II Sam. 18:33).

Another case of anarchy against David, though not within his own family, was led by Sheba, and even though this case also ended successfully for David (II Sam. 20:1-22), we must not overlook the sorrow brought to him by these various rebellions.

III. The Reign Of Solomon.

A. Solomon Chosen To Succeed David.

Solomon was not the oldest of David's sons and, therefore, was not naturally in line for the throne. But, for some reason, God chose him to be David's successor (I Chron. 22:7-10). With David's death near at hand, Adonijah, another of his sons, sought to become the next king (I Kings 1:5-7). With Amon and Absalom both dead, and with Chilibab probably dead also, Adonijah was likely David's oldest living son. But, his attempt at gaining the throne was foiled when Solomon's mother and the prophet Nathan obtained a decree from David himself that Solomon was to reign (I Kings 1:11-49). Though Solomon showed mercy to Adonijah (I Kings 1:50-53, he later executed him for further attempts to take the throne (I Kings 2:13-25).

B. His Famous Choice.

One night, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask a special blessing. In response, Solomon said:

"Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (I Kings 3:6-9).

God was greatly pleased with his request, realizing that he might have asked for long life, riches, or the lives of his enemies (I Kings 3:10,11). Therefore, in addition to granting him wisdom, He promised to give him both riches and honor and length of life if he would live godly (I Kings 3:12-14). How wonderfully these promises were fulfilled to Solomon! In his own day, his fame went abroad, bringing the queen of Sheba to try him with hard questions. When she had heard his wisdom and had beheld the sumptuousness of his quarters, the number and manner and apparel of his servants, and the food upon his table, she had no more spirit in her and said to him:

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (I Kings 10:6,7).

The rest of the 10th chapter of I Kings tells of his great wisdom and riches in considerable detail, verse 23 stating:

"So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom."

Solomon attained the reputation of being the world's wisest man, but Jesus was greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:42). He was apparelled the finest that was humanly possible, yet Jesus said the lilies of the field that God clothed were more gorgeously arrayed than Solomon in all his glory (Matt. 6:28,29).

C. The Temple Built At Jerusalem.

One of Solomon's greatest achievements was the building of the temple in Jerusalem. God had given David the pattern for it, who in turn committed it to Solomon (I Chron. 28:11-19). Some of the materials for the temple were accumulated by David (I Chron. 22:14). The temple was made of costly stones with much cedar-work and lavish use of gold throughout. The famous cedars of Lebanon were purchased from the king of Tyre, who also supplied Solomon with skilled artisans (II Chron. 2). Altogether, it took seven years to complete the building (I Kings 6:38), and when completed, it was dedicated with the utmost solemnity by Solomon and Israel (I Kings 8). It was built on the extreme edge of Jerusalem on the hill Moriah, the very place where David had built an altar when God visited Jerusalem with a great plague because of David's sin in numbering Israel (II Chron. 3:1; I Chron. 21:14-27) and maybe on the same hill where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. About four hundred years after its erection, it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25). There were two later temples erected upon the same spot--Zerubbabel's (in the period of the return from Babylonian captivity) and Herod's (the one in which Jesus taught). Herod's temple was destroyed by the Romans about forty years after Christ's crucifixion, even as Jesus had predicted (Matt. 24:1-28). Today, a Mohammedan temple occupies the ground formerly occupied by these temples.

D. Solomon Turned From God In His Old Age.

After a life of unprecedented prosperity, it is saddening to read that in his last years, Solomon's heart was led away from God. He who had been known for his wisdom certainly failed to employ it when he married so many women. Altogether, he had seven hundred wives or princesses and three hundred concubines (I Kings 11:3). Many of these wives were women of other nations whom God had expressly said should not be taken in marriage (I Kings 11:1,2). In giving that law (Deut. 7:3,4), God had forewarned that if they married outside of Israel, they would be turned to the idolatry of their wives. This is exactly what happened to Solomon:

"It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites" (I Kings 11:4,5).

I Kings 11:7,8 says he built high places and altars for the gods of all his wives, for which God was angry with him and said to him:

"Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not

kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen" (I Kings 11:11-13).

Our next study will show that this is exactly what happened.

Thus, the sun was setting on the golden age of Israel. Israel had reached its height of military power under David and its height of prosperity and happiness under Solomon. But, sin was going to usher in the reign of decline. Thus, came and thus went the first three kings of Israel--Saul, David, and Solomon.

The Kingdom After it Divided

No sooner had God informed Solomon of His intention to wrest the main part of the kingdom from his son until He began to stir up trouble for Solomon himself. First, He stirred up Hadad of Edom (I Kings 11:14). Next, He stirred up Rezon, ruler in Syria (I Kings 11:23-25). The third and most influential of his adversaries was Jeroboam. He was one of Solomon's military captains. One day as he was going out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah met him and cut up Jeroboam's new garment into twelve pieces, giving him ten of them, saying:

"Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee..." (I Kings 11:31).

Thus assured of God's will to give him the kingdom, he lost no time, for he so strengthened himself against Solomon that Solomon sought to kill him, but he fled to Egypt to King Shishak, who received him kindly until after Solomon's death (I Kings 11:26-40). Jeroboam probably told Shishak of all the riches of Jerusalem's temple and whetted the selfish king's appetite to obtain the temple's treasures, for shortly after the division of the kingdom, while the first king of the southern kingdom was ruling, Shishak came against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of both the temple and the king's house (I Kings 14:25,26). Verse 26 especially says he took away all the shields of gold that Solomon had made. Here is something interesting. In 1938, archaeologists found the mummy of Shishak in a gold-covered sarcophagus--probably some of the very gold that Solomon had one-time possessed in Jerusalem!

After Solomon's death, Jeroboam and the congregation of Israelites came to Rehoboam and asked that the burden laid upon them by Solomon be lightened under his reign, and if it was, they would serve him (I Kings 12:1-4). Rehoboam conferred with some of the younger men, who advised him

to make the load even heavier (I Kings 12:10,11). When he accepted their advice, the majority of the tribes revolted and set up Jeroboam as their king, leaving Rehoboam only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (I Kings 12:16-24). Thus, the kingdom actually divided as God had foretold--the ten tribes of the north under Jeroboam and his successors being known as "Israel" and the two tribes of the south under Rehoboam and his successors as "Judah". This division took place almost one thousand years before the coming of Christ.

I. The Ten Tribes Of The North.

A. Jeroboam's Introduction Of Calf-Worship.

There was one thing that bothered Jeroboam in particular. What about the annual feasts of all the Israelites at Jerusalem? He feared that those of his kingdom going to Jerusalem so often would have the tendency to reunite everything under the Jerusalem king (I Kings 12:26,27). Therefore, he made two calves of gold, placing one at Bethel for those in the southern part of his kingdom and one at Dan for those in the northern part, appealing to them on this wise:

"It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (I Kings 12:28).

Israel's inherent weakness toward idolatry ever since they had spent those four hundred years in idolatrous Egypt, where the calf especially was worshipped, demonstrated itself once more when the northern kingdom accepted these calves. But, this bold act on his part was not to go unrebuked by God. I Kings 13 tells of God sending an unnamed young prophet to Bethel to cry against Jeroboam's idolatry:

"O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee" (I Kings 13:2).

When Jeroboam heard this, he put forth his hand to take the young prophet, but his arm dried up so that he couldn't pull it back (I Kings 13:4). The altar also was split open, and the ashes upon it poured out from it. In the midst of such calamities, Jeroboam asked the young prophet to pray that his hand might be restored (I Kings 12:6), which he did. Refusing the king's reward and invitation to dine with him, he headed for home according to God's directions not to eat in the accursed place (I Kings 13:7-10).

About one hundred fifty years later, there was a king of David's line, Josiah by name, who led in a mighty campaign to eradicate idolatry and who fulfilled the young prophet's prediction of what would happen to the priests who ministered before the idolatrous altar at Bethel:

"The altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam...had made, both that altar and the high place he (Josiah) brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed" (II Kings 23:15,16).

The calf-worship that Jeroboam introduced never departed from the northern tribes. Of the kings who succeeded to the northern kingdom's throne, the Bible expressly recorded that they didn't depart from the sin of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin (I Kings 15:25,26; 15:34; 16:25,26; etc.).

B. Jezebel's Introduction Of Baal-Worship.

If Ahab, the seventh ruler of the north, ever might have been a good ruler, all hope of such was demolished when he married Jezebel, a ruthless, unscrupulous, domineering daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, who was a devotee of Baal-worship (a shameless, wicked religion already described in the study, "The Conquest Under Joshua"). When she came into the life of Israel, she brought Baalism with her, the result of which is set forth in I Kings 16:32,33:

"And he (Ahab) reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom). And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

In addition to bringing Baal-worship in, she killed off many of the prophets of God (I Kings 18:4).

In the midst of such corruption, the prophet Elijah was raised up to tell Ahab that a terrible drouth was to come upon the land (I Kings 17:1). Having so prophesied, he took refuge by the brook Cherith, where he was fed by the ravens as long as there was water in the brook (I Kings 17:3-7). After the water there failed, he fled to far-away Zarephath, where a widow and her son took care of him from the flour barrel and oil supply that were miraculously replenished (I Kings 17:9-16). After three rainless years, Elijah showed up. When Ahab saw him, he said:

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (I Kings 18:17).

Elijah corrected him, saying:

"I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim" (I Kings 18:18).

Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mt. Carmel to prove who was the true God. The contest ended in favor of the true God, who answered by fire (I Kings 18:20-39). After this, Elijah killed all the prophets down at the brook Kishon (I Kings 18:40), which enraged Jezebel when she learned of it so that she set out to take the life of Elijah (I Kings 19:1,2), who in fright fled for his life.

Ahab died in fulfillment of remarkable predictions uttered by the prophets Elijah and Micaiah. Elijah's prediction said to Ahab, who had taken Naboth's vineyard after having him killed:

"In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (I Kings 21:19).

Micaiah's prediction foretold the battle in which Ahab would meet his death (I Kings 22:1-28). I Kings 22:29-38 contains the fulfillment of both prophets' predictions.

It was Jehu, though--not Elijah--who was raised up of

God to destroy Baalism itself out of Israel. At the anointing of Jehu to be king, this prophecy was made:

"Thou shalt smite the house of Ahab, thy master, that I may avenge the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish...And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah: and the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her" (II Kings 9:7-10).

At this time, Ahab's son Joram (Jehoram) was still ruling, but God led Jehu against him in a chariot-battle that resulted in Joram's death (II Kings 9:16-26). Jehu rode on into the city where Jezebel was, who painted her face in an attempt to seduce Jehu, but when she looked out the window at Jehu, he was not to be bought off. He asked who in there was on his side, and two or three trembling eunuchs responded, to whom he then gave orders to throw Jezebel down. She was thrown down, her blood splattering on the wall, and they drove over and over her body until her body was mangled and torn. The dogs then came and ate everything but the skull, feet, and hands (II Kings 9:30-37). Thus, the Baal-worshipping king (Joram) was gone, and so was Jezebel, the instigator of Baalism in Israel. But, there were seventy sons of Ahab left plus many Baal-worshippers throughout Israel. Jehu next came against the city of Samaria, where all seventy of Ahab's sons were cared for. The only way that Jehu promised to spare Samaria was for them to bring the heads of Ahab's sons to him at Jezreel within one day. Though they were very reluctant to do this, there was nothing else to do. Thus was exterminated the entire house of Ahab (II Kings 10:1-11). His last job was to exterminate the Baal-worshippers. To accomplish this, he feigned himself a convert to Baal. He said to all the people:

"Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live" (II Kings 10:18,19).

All the worshippers of Baal met--there was none that came not to the assembly. Jehu had given orders to his men that every Baal-worshipper was to be slain in the midst of their worship service, warning them that if any of them escaped, the guard's life who let him escape would have to pay with his own life (II Kings 10:23,24). At the word of Jehu, here is what happened:

"They smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel" (II Kings 10:25-28).

Though Jehu himself retained Jeroboam's golden calves throughout his reign, God promised that his seed should rule in Israel for four generations for exterminating Baal-worship (II Kings 10:29,30).

C. Israel's Last Years.

After the death of Jeroboam II, there was only one king (Menahem) of Israel who died a natural death. During those

fifty some years (from Jeroboam II's death until the fall of the northern kingdom), there were four assassinations of the kings. Zachariah was assassinated after reigning but six months, Shallum after reigning but one month, Pekahiah after reigning but two years, and Pekah after reigning twenty years. Such was a sign of the spirit of anarchy that kept weakening the kingdom. These same years were also marked by the constant rising to world-power of Assyria. The prophets Hosea and Amos prophesied the fall of the northern tribes because of their sins (Hos. 10:1-11:6 and Amos 3:9; 5:1,2). But, they gave no heed. As a result, during the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came against the northern tribes and carried some of the people back to Assyria as captives (II Kings 15:27). In the reign of Israel's next king (Hoshea), another Assyrian king, Shalmaneser, came against them, and the entire northern tribes became tributary to Assyria (II Kings 17:3), but when King Hoshea sent to Egypt for help against Shalmaneser and refused to send any tribute to Assyria as he was supposed to do, Shalmaneser marched into the land of Israel once more, and though it was a long, bitter struggle, after three years, the entire northern kingdom was crushed by Assyrians (II Kings 17:4-6). Shalmaneser himself died during those three years of siege, but his successor Sargon carried the work to completion, and into Assyrian captivity and finally dispersion, the ten northern tribes went about two hundred years after the crowning of its first king.

D. A Run-Down Of All Their Kings.

	REIGNED	CHARACTER
Jeroboam	22 years	Bad
Nadab	2 years	Bad
Baasha	24 years	Bad
Elah	2 years	Bad
Zimri	Seven days	Bad
Omri	12 years	Extra Bad
Ahab	22 years	The Worst
Ahaziah	2 years	Bad
Joram	12 years	Mostly Bad
Jehu	28 years	Mostly Bad
Jehoahaz	17 years	Bad
Joash	16 years	Bad
Jeroboam II	41 years	Bad
Zechariah	Six months	Bad
Shallum	One month	Bad
Menahem	10 years	Bad
Pekahiah	2 years	Bad
Pekah	20 years	Bad
Hoshea	9 years	Bad

II. The Two Tribes Of The South.

A. Their In-And-Out Relationship With Idolatry.

Many of the kings of the south were also idolatrous, though not usually so much so as the northern kings. There were a few kings who ascended the throne of the southern kingdom who led in great revivals of the religion of the true God in opposition to idolatry.

In Rehoboam's day, idolatry was seen throughout the kingdom (I Kings 14:21-24), which was perpetuated by his

son Abijah (I Kings 15:1-3). Asa, the next king and son of Abijah, led in a wonderful revival of the worship of God and against idolatry (II Chron. 15). The revival was continued and completed under Asa's son Jehoshaphat, who also sent princes, priests, and Levites throughout his kingdom to teach the people the law of God (II Chron. 17:1-9). The next king married a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (that wicked couple of the northern kingdom), and as a result, idolatry swept into the south once more (II Chron. 21:5,6). His son Ahaziah followed the same idolatry (II Chron. 22:1-4) as did the usurper Athaliah, who followed Ahaziah to the throne. Joash was a godly king as long as the priest Jehoiada lived. During his reign, great reforms took place after Athaliah had been executed (II Chron. 24:1-14), but he fell away in his latter years (II Chron. 24:17-19). Amaziah, the next king, was a relatively good king (II Chron. 25:1,2). Uzziah was a very good king (II Chron. 26:3-5), though he erred in seeking to offer incense, not being a priest, for which he was smitten with leprosy until the day of his death (II Chron. 26:16-21). Jotham, Uzziah's son, was a good king, though the people were corrupt (II Chron. 27:1,2). Ahaz, his son, returned to the idolatry of the northern kingdom and the surrounding nations (II Chron. 28:1-4). Hezekiah, who followed Ahaz to the throne, was one of the best kings the southern kingdom ever had. II Chron. 29:3-31:21 tells of the great revival that he prosecuted during his reign. Isaiah lived in his day and worked with him in this great reform. Shortly after the fall of the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom would also have fallen to Assyria had it not been for Hezekiah's great faith in God to whom he prayed for deliverance, which brought about the destruction of the king of Assyria's mighty army by death-angel means (II Chron. 32:1-22). At the first of Manasseh's reign, he was the opposite of his father Hezekiah, reverting to idolatry (II Chron. 33:1-10), but when the Lord delivered him into the hand of his enemies, he repented and returned to the Lord, who caused him to be restored to his throne in Jerusalem after which he was a godly king (II Chron. 33:11-16). Amon, his son, was an idolatrous ruler (II Chron. 33:21-23). Josiah, Amon's son, was a king possibly as good as Hezekiah had been. His great reformation is recorded in II Chron. 34:3-35:19). His good kingship greatly aided the prophesying of the prophet Jeremiah, who led in a great lamentation for him when he met his untimely death (II Chron. 35:25). Well might Jeremiah have lamented his passing, for none of the succeeding kings of Judah was favorable to his prophesying, which included the wicked kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. The kingdom fell in Zedekiah's reign.

B. A Run-Down Of All Their Kings.

	REIGNED	CHARACTER
Rehoboam	17 years	Bad
Abijah	3 years	Mostly Bad
Asa	41 years	Good
Jehoshaphat	25 years	Good
Jehoram	8 years	Bad
Ahaziah	1 year	Bad
Athaliah	6 years	Extra Bad
Joash	40 years	Mostly Good
Amaziah	29 years	Good

Uzziah	52 years	Good
Jotham	16 years	Good
Ahaz	16 years	Bad
Hezekiah	29 years	Good
Manasseh	55 years	Bad and Good
Amon	2 years	Bad
Josiah	31 years	Good
Jehoahaz	Three months	Bad
Jehoiakim	11 years	Bad
Jehoiachin	Three months	Bad
Zedekiah	11 years	Bad

C. A Great Number Of Prophets Were Raised Up In An Attempt To Save The Southern Kingdom.

The following prophets prophesied to the southern kingdom before its fall: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. In many ways, the most remarkable of these to study with reference to the fall of the kingdom is Jeremiah. From his fifty-two chapters, one can see the terrible idolatry and its fruit of sinfulness that led to its destruction as well as the actual fall of the kingdom that came about exactly as he predicted. Throughout his book, he charged Judah with a double sin--forsaking the true God and serving idols. (Jer. 1:16; 2:13; 2:26-28; etc.). In his book, the true God is vividly contrasted with the futility of idols (Jer. 10:3-10). He held the southern kingdom even more in guilt than the northern, for the south should have profited from the bitter experiences of the north, but it didn't (Jer. 3:6-11). Though his life was endangered so often, and he even despaired of life at times, he faithfully predicted the fall of Judah to the Babylonians (Jer. 25:1-11; 32:1-5).

D. The Fall Of The Southern Kingdom.

After the death of Josiah, the strength of the southern tribes disintegrated. Josiah's successor Jehoahaz was defeated by the king of Egypt, who carried him to Egypt a captive and set Jehoiakim over the southern kingdom (II Chron. 36:2-4). Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Jehoiakim and took him and some of the temple vessels back to Babylon (II Chron. 36:5-7). After ruling but one year, his successor Jehoiachin was deposed and carried to Babylon with more of the temple vessels (II Chron. 36:9,10). Zedekiah, his successor, was a weak, vacillating ruler, who hardly knew at times whether he was coming or going. Jeremiah urged him to yield peacefully to Nebuchadnezzar, and God would spare the south from terrible destruction (Jer. 27:12-15), but he listened to other counselors who told him to rebel against Babylon, for which Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, destroying it and its temple, killing Zedekiah's sons before his eyes before putting his eyes out, and carrying the most of the people of the southern kingdom to a long night of bitter captivity in Babylon (II Kings 25:1-21). This was the judgment of God (He even called Nebuchadnezzar "my servants"--Jer. 25:9) upon the southern tribes for their idolatry and their refusal to hearken to the warnings of His prophets.

Thus came to an end the southern kingdom after about four hundred some years of existence.

Surely, by this time, the Israelites saw how foolish it was to reject God as their king and to ask Samuel to set a

king over them like the other nations! Israel flourished awhile under her kings (just like the other empires), but she fell into disintegration and defeat (just like the other mighty empires). When will men begin to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? When will men begin to realize that godliness is profitable for all things and that the way of the transgressor is hard?

The Restoration Period

When the southern kingdom went into Babylonian captivity, the people became slaves in Babylon. Daniel especially, but also his three friends, through the special providence of God were given special places of authority under the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. When Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians (as predicted by Daniel at Beshazzar's drunken feast - Dan. 5:22-28), Daniel enjoyed the same kind of prominence under Darius, the Mede, and Cyrus, the Persian. Generally speaking, the first six chapters of Daniel tell of Daniel under the Babylonian kings and the last six chapters of him under the Medes and Persians.

With the enthronement of the latter kings, the enslavement that had been upon the Israelites came to an end. One of the factors that no doubt entered in to bring about this more pleasant condition was that in the Jews' own Scriptures, more than one hundred fifty years before the coming of Cyrus to the throne, God had told how He was going to raise up Cyrus (even calling him by name) to perform His good pleasure (Isa. 44:24-28; 45:1-4,13). This, of course, would please Cyrus greatly and at the same time cause him to reverence the God of the Jews. He was most cordial to the Jews and was greatly blest of God for it. Thus, the latter years of the Jews' exile from home were much more pleasant than their early years in Babylon.

In this study, with the above thoughts as a background, we are to consider the period of returning from the land of exile.

I. The Captivity Forever Cured The Jews Of Their Idolatry.

A. The Fact Of It.

As we have seen in former studies, the Hebrews' enslavement in Egypt got idolatry into them, which kept cropping out at every opportunity. What an up-and-down, in-and-out relationship they had with idolatry during the days of the judges and the kings! It was because of idolatry, as we have before studied, that they were taken from their land and the north carried to Assyria and later dispersed and the south to Babylon. It is a fact of history that when they returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, the Jews were never again an idolatrous people. A scribe of Jesus' day well stated the attitude of the Jews ever after the Baby-

lonian captivity when he approved Jesus' words concerning the first commandment of all:

"Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he" (Mark 12:32).

In apostolic times, idolatry plagued the Gentile world, and the apostles had to deal with it wherever they went (Acts 14:11-16; 15:19,20; 17:16). But, as odd as it may seem, the Jews of the apostles' times were so married to the law of Moses, which their fathers constantly turned from in the days of Old Testament history, that the apostles' problem with the Jews of their day was to get them to accept Christ and Christianity in place of their former Mosaic religion. Even to this day, the worshipping of images is so foreign to the Jews even though it has been more than two thousand years since their forefathers returned from Babylonian captivity.

B. What Cured Them Of Their Idolatry.

Prior to the fall of the southern kingdom, the people listened to false prophets instead of to God's true prophets. God's prophets were all foretelling the doom to come upon the nation because of idolatry, but the false prophets were all prophesying peace and prosperity for the future. This is why the people all spoke well of the false prophets (Luke 6:26). They rebuked the true prophet because he didn't prophesy unto them "smooth things" (Isa. 30:9,10). With every prophet of God prophesying so certainly concerning the coming destruction, though the people did not accept their prophesyings, they could not forget them. They even mocked the prophets, all of which helped them to remember exactly what the prophets had predicted. The prophets had one retreat--the future. They said a time would come when they would know that Jehovah--not Baal, not Moloch, nor any other idol--was God. Listen to the effective way that Ezekiel stated it:

"I will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD" (Eze. 6:3-7).

Continuing his quotation about those who would escape the sword in the day of slaughter upon Jerusalem, Ezekiel said:

"Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And THEY SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them" (Eze. 6:8-10).

When the "smooth words" of their false prophets failed

them and the messages of the true prophets came to pass, they were all too willing to acknowledge that Jehovah was the one and only God. Though it took a most bitter chastisement to bring them to their senses, the chastisement brought results. When people won't learn any other way, God will teach them with a chastening hand, but oh how bitter!

II. God Did Return The South To Its Land.

A. The Prophets Had Predicted This Return.

The people in Old Testament times were just as wicked-hearted and as guilty of misrepresenting God's prophets as people today are of gospel preachers. They hated God's men and hesitated not to slander them most villainously. They looked upon the prophets as old sore-heads, who had nothing but a message of doom. But, in this, they were not altogether accurate. Amid the prophets' utterances of God's coming wrath, they included predictions of an actual return to their homeland, and when once they had been carried away, it was as difficult for them to believe they would ever be returned to their land as it had been for them to believe that they would ever be carried out of it. Such was unbelief then, and it is the same today. People down cannot grasp God's promises of goodness--discouragement prevails. People who are enjoying smooth sailing cannot be moved by warning preaching--they do not look for judgment upon them.

Actually, God's prophets had a message of condemnation for those who were reprobate in their evil, but a message of ultimate consolation for those who, though evil now, would in time be corrected to repentance. In this connection, Jeremiah had a vision of two baskets of figs after Nebuchadnezzar had carried some already away to Babylon, God showed Jeremiah two baskets of figs. One basket had very good figs in it, but the other one figs that were too bad to be eaten. God explained the vision as representing the two classes referred to above:

"Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in the land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt; and I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers" (Jer. 24:5-10).

Jeremiah predicted that the years of the Jews in Babylon would be seventy (Jer. 29: 10). As proof of his sincerity in the message that he preached that the righteous would be restored to Palestine after seventy years, Jeremiah bought a field (Jer. 32:6-15). By this, they could see that he believed in the restoration of the Jews to their land.

B. Four Bible Books Tell Of Their Return And Their Return-Activities.

The historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah all enlighten us concerning the return of the Jews to their land and their re-establishment in it. The opening verses of Zechariah contain a lot of important truth as he delivered them to the people of his day:

"The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers (the ones whom He punished with captivity)... Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye (the people of Zechariah's day) unto me...and I will turn unto you...Be not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets (like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others) have cried, saying... Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings (the message of the former prophets); but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? (punished as God had predicted) and the prophets (the false prophets), do they live for ever? (they were gone too as Jeremiah had predicted) But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? (yes, they came true) and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of host thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and accordings to our doings, so hath he dealt with us" (Zech. 1:2-6).

The above referred to four books tell of the return of about fifty thousand under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple, then of the return of about two thousand under Ezra almost eighty years after Zerubbabel's return, to revive the spiritual life of the people, and finally of the return of Nehemiah and his workmen to rebuild the wall around the city of Jerusalem.

When Jesus was born among the Jewish people in Palestine, they had been back in their homeland for about five hundred years.

C. Why God Returned Them To Their Land.

Surely, His purpose in returning them to their land was at least two-fold. One was in consideration of His promise of goodness to the house of David, which, of course, embraced the Messianic in its actual fulfillment. The other was that people might know that His goodness was as great upon penitent as His wrath had been upon the impenitent. Let us look at these two reasons briefly.

As long as God could consistently be good to the tribe of Judah (David's tribe) and the city of Jerusalem (David's capital city where God had recorded His name), He certainly tried. When the prophet Ahijah cut up Jeroboam's garment and promised him the most of the kingdom, he did not give him all the tribes. Notice the reason:

"But he (Solomon through his son) shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel" (1 Kings 11:32).

He further stated, which we here quote for the sake of emphasis:

"I will take the kingdom out of his (Solomon's) son's hand; and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name

there...I will for this (Solomon's idolatry) afflict the seed of David (the southern kingdom), but not for ever" (1 Kings 11:35,36,38).

According to prophecies already uttered, Bethlehem (the birthplace of the Christ) had already been pointed out (Mic. 5:2), and the prominence of Jerusalem in relation to the new covenant had already been pointed out (Isa. 2:2,3) and many others). All of these transpirings were to come to pass in fulfillment of God's special promises to David. For instance, in the angel's announcing the birth of the Savior to the Judean shepherds, they said He had been born that day "in the city of David" (Luke 2:11). This One, the angel Gabriel had said, would be given "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32).

Now, let us consider the other motive for restoring them to their land. When God spoke to the wicked of the way He was going to punish them, He meant it, and He wanted them to know it. Everything that He threatened them with concerning the coming of Nebuchadnezzar and the pillaging he gave their city and the sorrowful results to follow upon them surely came true. This was because they had deserved such treatment. Jonah well realized the great mercy of God (Jonah 4:2). But, let us consider the other side of God—that of mercy upon the penitent. David praised the multitude of His tender mercies (Psa. 51:1). Even interspersed within the ten commandments was a direct statement of God's mercy (Exo. 20:6). God had punished the generation of idolaters with Babylonian captivity. However, with the new generation free from the idolatry of their parents, God was going to deal differently with them. In speaking of this very question, Ezekiel said:

"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel...The soul that sinneth, it shall die...If he (a father) beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel...he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live" (Eze. 18:2-17).

Thus, God wanted it to be known that He was as willing to show His goodness to those who were obedient as He was to show His wrath to those who were disobedient.

III. The Mosaic Ordinances Were Reinstated In Their Religious Life.

A. It Had Been A Long Time Since They Had Had A Pure Religion.

Israel's greatest greatness was in those days when they walked according to God's revealed law. God had given them laws concerning sacrifices, the priesthood, feasts, marriage, tithing, presenting the firstborn, morality, honesty, sabbath-keeping, defilement, and countless other matters of their private and national life. But, with kings who were idolaters so much of the time, it is no wonder that the law of God through Moses had been forgotten. With the law of Moses pushed aside, it is no wonder that its precepts were not kept. With the people deported to far-away lands as they were, without a temple and without a place for their priests to function, there were many Mosaic rites that could not be

observed by them during their years in Babylonian captivity. So, altogether, it had been a long time since they had had a pure religion. Just as there has been a "Dark Ages" since the giving of the New Testament, so did they have their "Dark Ages" during Old Testament times. Observing, then, what they of the restoration period did with reference to the law of God under which they were to live can give us today divine enlightenment as to what we should do with reference to the law of God under which we are to live.

B. They Returned To The Plan Of God Given For Them Through Moses.

They rebuilt their temple. They put back into it the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out. They kept the feast of Passover as it had been instituted. They set up the altar and offered Scriptural sacrifices upon it. They had priests as God had ordained through Moses. They began to keep the feast of Tabernacles as God had ordained. They put away their foreign wives and the children born of them. The observance of the sabbath was reinstated. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of this great return to God's plan for them.

C. This Reinstatement Of The Mosaic Ordinances Was In Keeping With God's Intention In Giving Them.

Just because it had been about one thousand years since the law of Moses had been given from Mt. Sinai was no reason for its obedience not being reinstated and thereafter obeyed. Many would so argue today, feeling that God would not expect us to abide by a law delivered almost nineteen hundred years ago. But, it is not a matter of how long ago God delivered a law, but are we still in the same dispensation as that for which the law was given. The Mosaic dispensation began at Mt. Sinai about fifteen hundred years before Christ, and it continued until the death of Christ. The laws for that entire dispensation of time were given at the first of the dispensation, but those who lived at the end of that dispensation were as much expected to carry out those laws as those who lived when they were actually given. This is true of any dispensation. When God gives a commandment, it is in effect until He repeals it or supercedes it with another. So many today do not realize this. Therefore, they continue doing whatever they have been doing, or whatever their parents did, or whatever the rest of the people do and "hope" that it is pleasing to God, supposing that it is, but not being definitely sure that it is. At the same time, they do not see the need of returning to the New Testament plan of salvation, the Bible description of a Christian life and Christian home, and the divine pattern for the church found in the Scriptures. In fact, they not only question whether such is necessary, but they resist all attempts at being reformed in their religious practices by that which is to be found in the Bible. They will either say the Bible is out-of-date, or that it has been translated so many times we can't be sure of it, or that there are so many different ways of interpreting the Bible, or that the thing God is interested in is the condition of the heart and not particularly a rigid adherence to precepts. Needless to say, such thinking paralyzes any attempt to return to the primitive pattern of Christianity.

But, except for the objection of numerous translations

almost everyone of the objections are such as could have been raised in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. People could have said their law was out-of-date. The objection of numerous times of translation of our New Testament is not well founded, for our English versions represent but one translation--from the original Greek into our English (no more!). In Ezra's day, they could have charged their law with difficulty of interpretation. The fact is, the Old Testament law is far more complicated than the New Testament. In Nehemiah's day, they could have argued that all that God was interested in was the heart-condition. But, the great reforms of Ezra's and Nehemiah's days--all God-approved--are the Bible's replies to people's loose thinking of today!

The truth is, when God gives a law, it is divinely in force until God removes it. In Jesus' day, he referred lepers whom He cleansed to the law of Moses for how to become ceremonially clean (Matt. 8:4; Luke 17:14). The third from the last verse in the Old Testament says:

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel with the statutes and judgments" (Mal. 4:4).

In conclusion, let us notice that they had been punished with deportation to Babylon because of not keeping the law of God under which they were to live, and they were returned to their land and blest by keeping the law. May each of us get the lesson that God has for us in the restoration period of Old Testament history!

The Prophets Foresaw the Messianic Age

Though the matter of predicting the future was far from being the only business of the Old Testament prophets, yet it is an undeniable fact that prediction was one of their important missions as far as we of the present day are concerned.

According to Edersheim and other authorities on the customs and beliefs of the Jews, the Jews even of Jesus' day were looking for an "age" to come. It would, of course, be when their Messiah would come. They had formed their conceptions of what that age would be like from the predictions made of it in the writings of their prophets. We who live almost two thousand years this side of Christ are in a much better position to understand the exact meaning of their prophets' predictions than they were. Therefore, instead of conceiving of the Messianic age as a time when the Messiah came, set up His throne in Jerusalem as the king of the Jews, and reigned victorious over the rest of

the world as a Jewish monarch under whom the Jews enjoy freedom from their enemies who so long oppressed them, we find (if we conceive of the Messianic age as beginning with the time when the Messiah came and began fulfilling those predictions) the Messianic predictions breaking down into those predictions relative to His first coming and earthly life, which was followed by the present dispensation that began on the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D., which in turn will be followed by the endless ages of eternity.

Before actually dealing with the Old Testament predictions themselves, it will be important for us to consider the fact that many times, the Old Testament prophets spoke of the future in the language and religious phraseology of their day. For instance, in Malachi's day, the Jews were offering God polluted offerings or sacrifices upon the altar. In contrast to their contemptible action, Malachi looked toward the Messianic age and made the following prediction:

"From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 1:11).

Now, the Catholics, who have incense ever burning in their cathedrals and church buildings, try to make much of this verse, saying that Malachi was predicting the Catholic religion. They delight to point out that they alone of the religious bodies believe in incense-burning. But, Malachi was predicting no such thing. He was employing the religious language of that time in speaking of a future time. How do we know? Several ways, but principally because the New Testament itself has legislated against some of the very rites which that passage predicted. I would have you notice in the passage from Malachi that the prophet not only predicted incense, but also a "pure offering". This offering, which was predicted to be a "pure" one, was in contrast to the corrupt offerings being offered by the Jews of his day (Mal. 1:8,13,14). He was talking of animal sacrifices, yet we know there is to be no animal sacrifices in Christianity. To offer God an animal sacrifice today would be sinful, for it would mean that Jesus' sacrifice is not sufficient to atone for sin. To do so would be to fall from grace (Gal. 5:4), for animal sacrifice was an integral part of Mosaic justification. Notice two other examples of such predictions. Rom. 10:15 quotes from Nah. 1:15, a verse which also spoke of keeping "solemn feasts" and performing "vows", which were Mosaic and not Christian as ordinances. Zech. 14:16-21 is a classic passage upon this subject. In looking to the Messianic age, it spoke of keeping "the feast of tabernacles" every year as well as "bowls before the altar" in which they would come and make "sacrifices" to the Lord.

Space is not available to discuss the above principle as we would desire, but it is an important principle to keep in mind as we study through the predictions of these men. Let us now go to the three-fold break-down of their predictions as they relate to the Messiah and His reign.

I. They Foresaw His Coming To Earth.

A. They Foresaw The Fact Of His Coming.

It has been pointed out that there are more than three hundred predictions in the Old Testament of the first coming of Christ. Isaiah predicted so many things about Christ that he is commonly referred to as the "gospel prophet". The Old Testament abounds with predictions that created an expectancy for One to come. To cite an example, let us notice the familiar Isa. 9:6,7 passage:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

There are many indications that the Jews of Jesus' day looked for the Christ to come. When John the Baptist began his revolutionary ministry, they wondered if he claimed to be the Christ. He said that he wasn't (John 1:19-25). Jesus Himself urged the Jews to search their Scriptures, affirming that those Scriptures testified of Him (John 5:39). It is noteworthy that even the Samaritans, who also had portions of the Old Testament, likewise shared in the belief that there was a Messiah coming (John 4:25).

B. They Foresaw The Time Of His Coming.

Daniel spoke of seventy prophetic weeks to come to pass in Jewish history, part of which had to do with the coming of the Messiah. Not always, but a few times in prophecy, a day stands for a year (Eze. 4:6). Since a prediction is surely to be understood in the light of its fulfillment, there is no doubt but what each week of Daniel's "seventy weeks" prophecy represented seven years, for that is exactly how it figures out. In Ezra's day, the king of Persia gave commandment for Jerusalem (which was then in a state of ruin) to be rebuilt. His decree was in the year 457 B.C. This was the starting place for the seventy weeks:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" (Dan. 9:25).

Sixty-nine weeks altogether from 457 B.C. until the coming of the Messiah! Sixty-nine weeks would have four hundred eighty-three days in them. Figuring a year per day, that would be four hundred eighty-three years. Four hundred eighty-three years after 457 B.C. brings one to 26 A.D. This was the very year when Jesus was baptized and began His public ministry! What a remarkable prophecy! It is no wonder that Jesus upbraided the Jews for not knowing what time it was prophetically.

C. They Foresaw The Place Of His Birth.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem seeking the Christ-child, the scribes told them He was to be born in Bethlehem, according to the prophet Micah (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6). Years later, the Jewish people were for the most part ignorant of the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, for they rejected Him because He was from Galilee, saying:

"Shall Christ (or the Messiah) come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem,

where David was?" (John 7:41,42).

D. They Foresaw Many Events Of His Life.

In the back of nearly any study Bible, you can find a table of Old Testament predictions fulfilled in the life of Christ. We refer you to such listings. Lest we become too lengthy here, we content ourselves with a consideration of two chapters containing abundant references to the crucifixion--Psa. 22 and Isa. 53. Psa. 22 contains the following easily recognized predictions:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?...I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him...They pierced my hands and my feet...They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

Notice the following excerpts from Isa. 53:

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him...Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth...He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

With the Old Testament so clear upon these things, it is no wonder that we read as we do in Luke 24:25-27:

"Then he (Jesus) said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

He did the same thing to the apostles (Luke 24:44-47). Philip began with Isa. 53:7,8 and preached "Jesus" unto the eunuch (Acts 8:32-35).

In closing out this portion of our study, let us remark that these Old Testament predictions were like a picture of the Messiah sent on ahead of Him by which He would be identifiable. An excellent illustration of this happened several years ago when I arrived by train at Hampton, Virginia to preach. I had never been there before, but THE VOICE OF EVANGELISM had preceded me there. When I saw an elderly gentleman looking at a picture of me in THE VOICE, which he had in his hand, and then looking at me to see if I was the right one, I thought of the Old Testament picture of Jesus sent on ahead of time.

II. The Prophets Foresaw The Christian Dispensation.

A. They Foresaw The Coronation Of The Messiah.

When Jesus ascended to God, He went up in a cloud (Acts 1:9). Daniel foresaw His ascension and His coronation as King upon His arrival where God was:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came

to the Ancient of days (God), and they (evidently angels) brought him (the Son of man) near before him (God). And there was given him (the Son of man) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14).

With the Messiah established as the king of the kingdom whose approach had been preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles, and the seventy before the cross, everything was set for the beginning of the present dispensation.

B. They Foresaw The Day Of Pentecost.

The day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. (the same year that Jesus died and was resurrected) marked the beginning of the present dispensation. On that day, the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which they had been promised by Jesus (Acts 1:4,5), which equipped them for their apostolic work. When this unusual occurrence took place, some of the people did not understand exactly what had happened. Peter explained that it was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy which had said that before the great day of judgment that God would send upon men would come, God would first pour out His Spirit. Concerning the Holy Spirit baptism of Pentecost, Peter said:

"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams..." (Acts 2:16,17).

Zech. 12:10-14 foretold a great mourning among the Jews because of having crucified the Messiah, telling how God would pour the spirit of grace upon them. The verses that immediately follow (Zech. 13:1-6) begin:

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness."

Surely, this (like the Joel 2:28-32 prophecy) began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus, whom they had put to death.

C. They Foresaw The Making Of A New Covenant.

As early as Jeremiah's day, God was revealing the fact of His going to make a new covenant. This covenant, incidentally, which God actually made with both Jews and Gentiles was predicted in the language of the times; that is, as if God would make this covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Notice Jeremiah's prediction:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:

for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more" (Jer. 31:31-34).

That this was a prophecy of the New Testament, see Heb. 8:8-12.

D. The Conversion Of The Gentiles.

Anytime that you read in the Old Testament prophets about the Gentiles worshipping Jehovah acceptably, you know that you are reading a prediction of the new covenant times, for not until Christ commissioned the apostles to carry the gospel to all nations do we find God accepting the Gentiles. The Old Testament prophets frequently foresaw the acceptance of the Gentiles, though the prejudice of the Jews' minds kept them from grasping that divine truth.

Again speaking in the religious language of the Jews, Zech. 8:22,23 vividly predicted Gentile conversions:

"Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you."

It is a remarkable fact that we Gentiles today worship the God who was the God of the Jews only in Zechariah's day. Besides other plain statements of Gentile acceptance (which we shall cite in a later study), there are a couple of interesting kinds of references to that fact. Hosea had a daughter Loruhamah (which meant "not received mercy") and a son Loammi (which meant "not my people"). These, in the historical setting of Hosea's day meant that God would disclaim the idolatrous Israelites and show them mercy no longer. But, in time, their names were to be changed to Ruhamah ("received mercy") and Ammi ("my people"). In Rom. 9:22-26, Paul makes an argument on Hosea's children to show that even the Gentiles are now the people of God:

"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee (Hosea), I will call them my people (Ammi), which were not my people (Loammi); and her beloved (Ruhamah), which was not beloved (Loruhamah). And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living of God."

Zerubbabel's temple (the one built during the restoration period to replace Solomon's temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar) was rebuilt by those who had remained in Palestine during the captivity and by those who came from far-away Babylon. In the days of the prophet Zechariah, Zerubbabel's temple was built. Zechariah made this Messianic prediction:

"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH (a title often used by the prophets for the coming Messiah); and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord" (Zech. 6:12).

Just as the Jews in far-away Babylon came back to help build Zerubbabel's temple, even so Zechariah continued by making a prediction concerning the Messianic age when the spiritual temple would be built under the Messiah:

"And they that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord" (verse 14).

Eph. 2:11-13 makes it evident that those "afar off" were the Gentiles.

E. They Foresaw The New Testament System of Justification.

Over and over again, the New Testament preachers preached and wrote that we are justified through faith in Christ (an obedient acceptance and following of Him) rather than through the law of Moses (Acts 13:38; Rom. 3:28; and many others). It is noteworthy that the inspired apostles found the New Testament way of righteousness, or justification, foretold in the law and the prophets:

"Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, BEING WITNESSED IN THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS" (Rom. 3:21).

There are many ways in which the law and the prophets predicted the New Testament system of justification, but one prophet so often quoted as having forecast the way of faith was Habakkuk. In 2:4 of his book, he had said that the just shall live by faith. Notice the following times in the New Testament where Hab. 2:4 is quoted: Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:16,17; and Heb. 10:38.

III. They Even Foresaw Eternity.

It is sometimes thought, and erroneously so, that every prediction of the Old Testament prophets was fulfilled by the time that Jesus arose from the tomb. But, that is not so. We have already shown that the prophets predicted Jesus' coronation, the day of Pentecost, and the conversion of the Gentiles. We could show abundantly that they also had much to say about the coming kingdom (This we shall show in a later lesson). All these things took place after Jesus' resurrection. But, the truth of the matter is, the Old Testament prophets take us right down into eternity itself with their predictions. Since the Messianic age to the Jews began when the Messiah was born and was to continue on thereafter, the passages we shall be citing from the Old Testament relative to eternity would, therefore, be among those which they classified Messianic. Let us look at but a few of them.

A. Joel Prophesied The Day Of The Lord.

The expression, "the day of the Lord," signifies a time of divine judgment or human crisis brought on by God. It seems to have this idea: "Man has had his day to do as he pleases, but when God takes over, it is the day of the Lord to do as He pleases with him who has resisted His will." Do not conclude, however, that every time you read about the day of the Lord in the prophets, you are reading of the return of Christ and final judgment. It doesn't always mean that--not even in the book of Joel (a book significant for its frequent use of the expression, "the day of the Lord"). But, I am confident that Joel 2:31 is talking of the same day of the Lord as II Pet. 3:10 talks about; that is, the return of Christ and the day of final judgment. I have had

people try to say that the day of the Lord referred to in Joel 2:31 was the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. But, that cannot be. The entire section of Joel 2:28-31 should be considered together. Open your Bible to it. Notice that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh *before* the great and terrible day of the Lord would come. If that day of the Lord was the day of Pentecost, was the Holy Spirit poured out *before* the day of Pentecost? Then, the day of the Lord in Joel 2:31 *was not* the day of Pentecost. Furthermore, Bible students take the expression "all flesh" upon whom God would pour His Spirit to mean both Jews and Gentiles. But, His Spirit was to come upon the Gentiles *before* that great and terrible day would come. If space allowed, we could dig further into this passage to bring out similar thoughts as above to show that that day was not the day of Pentecost. Furthermore, it was a *wonderful* day when God poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but Joel 2:31 is predicting another kind of a day altogether--a "terrible" day. Furthermore, the darkening of the sun and the moon being turned into blood which are to precede the great and terrible day of the Lord of Joel 2:31 are perfectly parallel with New Testament prophecies as to what is to happen prior to Jesus' second coming (Luke 21:25-27; Matt. 24:29,30; and others). In all honesty to the text, I believe we must conclude that Joel 2:31 prophesies the wind-up of human affairs connected with the return of Christ. What a grand prophecy, then, Joel 2:28-32 is--a prophecy that spans the entire Christian dispensation from the standpoint of time, beginning with a prediction of the coming of the Holy Spirit that opened this dispensation and taking us clear down to the day of the Lord that will end it!

B. Daniel Prophesied The Resurrection.

Dan. 12:2,3 makes the following important prediction that should not be overlooked:

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

This has not taken place yet. This is still future. But, Daniel the prophet foresaw it.

C. Isaiah Closed His Book Prophesying Of Eternity.

The last three verses of Isaiah read:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh!" (Isa. 66:22-24).

This is the passage that Peter refers to in II Pet. 3:13 when he says that according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth. Notice once again that in speaking of new moons and sabbaths, Isaiah is employing Mosaic terminology. Finally, outside of the city of Jerusalem lay the Valley of Gehenna, where the garbage of the city was dumped which was constantly fed upon by the

worms (the live garbage) and where the fire was constantly burning (the burnable garbage). Jesus employed the word "gehenna" in the Greek to tell of the awful end to which all the wicked would come. Our word "hell" is a translation of that Greek word "gehenna". Furthermore, Jesus made direct reference to this last part of Isaiah when He preached what is recorded in Mark 9:43-48. So, Isaiah ends telling of the new heavens and the new earth in which the righteous will dwell eternally, who will continue their worship of God, and who will be free from all who have corrupted themselves with sin and who will suffer for it in the Gehenna-fires of hell.

Possibly only one who has the field of the Old Testament Prophets as one of his regular teaching assignments can fully appreciate the difficulty of trying to decide what material to include in such a brief treatise and what to leave out. There are so many other things that I would like to have introduced and discussed, but my space is gone, and I must quit. May this which has been included prove to be a great help in your further study of God's Word in this important field!

The Messiah is Born

The One who was born in Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago has brought such tremendous changes that the world's calendar of dates is laid out from the time of His birth. Prior to the system of our present calendar, everything was dated from the founding of the city of Rome. Some five hundred years after the birth of Jesus, Dionysius fixed the date of Jesus' birth as seven hundred fifty-four years after the founding of Rome. This dating system was followed for many years before it was found that Dionysius had made an error in his figuring of four years. Therefore, instead of changing the date on every legal document by four years, which would have been a tremendous and costly job, it was decided to leave the calendar as it was. Thus, though it seems odd, according to our calendar, Jesus was born in 4 B.C. and died in 30 A.D.

The story of how Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem with reference to taxation and how Jesus was born to them there is a story so well known and so well loved. We would that all who treasure the story of Messiah's birth would so accept Him and live for Him that they could truthfully sing: "Jesus is all the world to me--my life, my joy, my all!" Among the many important things that can be profitably discussed concerning His birth, we have chosen the following ones.

I. He Was Born Of A Virgin.

A. There Are Those Who Deny His Virgin-Birth.

Various polls of what people, particularly religious leaders, think religiously have indicated a startling number

who do not accept the fact of Jesus' virgin-birth. This is due not to any historical facts recently brought to light, but is only a part of that growing trend commonly called "modernism" or "liberalism" which is seeking to remould the Bible story to coincide with modern thinking, rejecting the idea not only of a miraculous begetting such as Jesus had, but of all miracles recorded in the Bible. We can as yet be thankful that the common man still believes in an Inspired Bible and the virgin-birth of Jesus, but if the common man does not wake up and put religious leaders on the spot as to what they actually believe about the virgin-birth of Jesus and the other miracles of the Bible, as well as the inspiration of the Bible itself, the trend toward liberalism will continue, and those of coming generations will not have the same faith in the Bible that is commonly held, and rightly so, today.

B. The Bible Teaches The Virgin-Birth.

When hearing or reading the liberals' denials of Jesus' virgin-birth, one needs to remember that he is hearing or reading that which is directly different from what the Bible says. This is disbelief. This was the devil's first attack upon the human race, when he denied to Eve what God had said to Adam and her. This disbelief is what the Bible condemns to an eternal hell prepared by God for those who accept it instead of His Word. Let us notice the clarity of the Bible upon the unique and virgin-birth of Jesus.

The virgin-birth simply means that Jesus was born of a woman who had never known man even at the time of His birth. If she was a virgin at the time of His birth, how then did she come to be with child? The Bible's answer is that her child was not begotten by a human being, but by the Holy Spirit of God. Notice how clearly this is set forth in the conversation between Mary and the angel Gabriel prior to the begetting when Gabriel was first telling Mary of the good news:

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:30-35).

Being not as yet married, but seeing that Mary was with child, Joseph was minded to put her away. He was stopped from so acting by the angel, who told him that the child was not begotten by any man:

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done (Matthew adds), that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet (Isa. 7:14), saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:20-23).

C. The Importance Of His Virgin-Birth.

We believe that Jesus was more than a mere man because He was begotten by God. We, therefore, accept Him as the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of God. Apart from His deity, He would have no power to save us from our sins. We, therefore, necessarily surrender everything when we surrender His deity, and we surrender His deity when we surrender His virgin-birth, for as we have seen in the quotations above, He is called the Son of God *because* He was begotten by the power of the Highest. Turn from any teacher or preacher as a foe of the deity of Jesus who denies or casts doubt upon the virgin-birth of Jesus. This will be true of many ministers in the larger Protestant bodies even as it is a growing trend among the leadership of the Disciples of Christ.

II. He Became A Part Of An Humble Household In Galilee.

A. The Facts Of The Case.

Jesus was a very poor individual all His life. As has been pointed out before, He was born in a lowly carpenter family. The place of His birth was a borrowed stable, and His first bed was a manger. During His ministry, He had no place to call His own. His chief followers were humble fishermen with little or no formal education. He rode into Jerusalem upon a borrowed beast. By the time of His dying breath, His clothes (His only known earthly possessions) had been claimed by the soldiers who put Him to death, and His place of burial was in a borrowed tomb.

But, in addition to these well known facts, there is another striking indication of the extreme poverty of His parents. The law of Moses required that a mother be cleansed of her ceremonial uncleanness brought on by birth by offering prescribed sacrifices as follows:

"When the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering" (Lev. 12:6).

The law made provision for those financially unable to sacrifice a lamb as follows:

"If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and other for a sin offering" (Lev. 12:8).

The poverty of Jesus' parents is shown in the fact that they had to offer the "poor people's sacrifice" (Luke 2:22-24).

B. The Significance Of These Facts.

Choosing such humble parentage for Jesus was surely not without design on God's part. Such would keep men from ascribing His greatness to human causes. Had He been born among the prominent of earth, men would have ascribed His greatness to His "start", "pulls," or other natural causes. But, Jesus had none of these in His favor. In fact, some even rejected Him because of His humble surroundings, feeling that He could not be great coming from such earthly lowliness. The people of Nazareth said:

"Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55).

Nathanael questioned Philip's statement that they had found the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth by asking:

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem confidently rejected Jesus, saying:

"Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:52).

Another possible design in choosing humble parentage for Jesus was that in so doing, God both honored the honest and meek of the earth and gave them hope of ultimate divine exaltation through the Messiah born among them.

III. His Birth Was Welcomed.

A. By The Angels.

Speaking of Christ, Heb. 1:6 says:

"And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

A sample of the joy of the angels over the birth of the Christ-child is seen in Luke 2:13,14 after one of them had announced the birth to the shepherds. That passage reads:

"And suddenly there was with the angel (who had done the announcing) a multitude of the heavenly host (angels), praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

B. By Judean Shepherds.

The same night that Jesus was born, the following took place:

"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:8-12).

When the shepherds learned of His birth, they went into Bethlehem immediately and found the Christ-child. They, therefore, became Jesus' first visitors. There are two noteworthy things about their being Jesus' first visitors: first, they were Jews--this was only right as they had been God's covenant-people through whom the Messiah was to come; and, secondly, they were the working class of people--this again indicated God's concern for and intention to help those who were not too good to work with their hands and who had little hope of earthly prominence. In both these first visitors and in the poverty of Jesus' parents, we find a rather forecast of the truth stated in Jas. 2:5:

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

C. By The Wise Men From Afar.

These men--maybe three in number, maybe more; at least, a plural number--came from the east following a star that was to take them to the place of the Jews' newly-born

king. God must have revealed to them the fact of His birth and assigned the star to direct them to His whereabouts, for in no other way would they have known of the birth of one who was to become a king, and in no other way would they have known the meaning of the star. As they got into the land of the Jews, God withdrew the star, so they resorted to Jerusalem, the most natural place to make inquiry. No one there knew of the birth, but the scribes who knew the law and the prophets said that Bethlehem was the place where the Messiah was to be born. So, to Bethlehem they headed, and as they left Jerusalem, the star re-appeared to them. It is evident that this was not a star operating in its customary path, for the Bible represents it as fulfilling a special purpose. Furthermore, it must have been a star of exceedingly low altitude. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were but a very few miles apart--only six miles. Had this star been of customary height for stars, they could have looked up into the sky at Jerusalem at some star, have gone to Bethlehem and there looked up at it again, and it would have appeared in the same position as it had at Jerusalem. Only one low enough--exceedingly low for a star--could have led them to the place where the baby was. Upon their arrival, they fell down and worshipped Him and presented to Him the costly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts were evidently God's provision for the humble family for their sojourn into Egypt for the baby's safety which He was going to call upon them to make. The foregoing details of the visit of the wise men are recorded in Matt. 2:1-11.

The visit of the wise men is not without significance. They were not Jews as the shepherds had been. But, the Messiah was not to be a Savior merely for the Jews, but for all peoples. Thus, God led both Jews and Gentiles to the Christ-child. Furthermore, God has not excluded the rich and prominent of the earth from salvation through Christ. Therefore, it was but fitting that He should bring the rich (who could present costly gifts of adoration) as well as the poor shepherds (who brought no gift) to visit the infant Messiah.

IV. Opposition Set In Early.

A. The Prophet Simeon's Prediction.

When His parents took Jesus to the temple at the age of forty days, an aged prophet Simeon was there, who took Him into his arms and blest Him. Then, having blest both Joseph and Mary, he turned to Mary and said:

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34,35).

"Spoken against!" said Simeon. Yes, and more than mere speaking! With these words, he foretold the opposition that the child would experience. It is noteworthy that though Simeon had been talking to both Joseph and Mary, it was to Mary alone that he said a sword would pierce through her own soul also. The reason for that was that there is every indication that Joseph was dead at the time of the crucifixion--surely the time when a sword, so to speak, pierced Mary's heart. One of the clearest indications that Joseph was not living at the time of the crucifixion is that Jesus

committed His mother to the care of John at the cross. And John 19:27 says that he took her into his own home from that hour.

B. The Wrath Of Herod.

The beginning of the opposition foreseen by Simeon was close at hand. Herod had hypocritically told the wise men of his desire to go and worship the baby. But, God told the wise men not to return to Herod with information of Jesus' whereabouts. When enough time had passed that Herod was convinced the wise men were not returning to him, king-like he felt the need to kill the one whom he supposed would become his successor if permitted to live. Having neither name nor address of the baby, he hastily issued a decree for all male children two years old and under in the Bethlehem area to be killed. Such crying as was heard throughout all the region around Bethlehem! Herod probably felt assured that he had gotten the baby, not realizing that God had warned Joseph to take Him into Egypt until Herod himself had died. Matt. 2:13-18 tells of the above events.

Yes, the Christ-child was hated from the beginning, but not by those who realized their lostness and desired salvation through Him, not by those who were all too glad to turn from their sins to something better to be brought to them by the Messiah. He was hated by one who thought only of himself, who wanted to have his own way, and who was not willing to bow down before Him. Such were Jesus' opposers throughout His days. Such were those who led in His crucifixion. And such are those today who persecute people "for the Son of man's sake".

Somehow, God did not see fit to have either the exact place or the birthdate of Jesus preserved for our knowledge. Encyclopedias do not claim that December 25 is the actual day when Jesus was born. Catholicism has so fixed upon that day, and the Protestant world has followed. Catholics also have commercialized upon a spot at Bethlehem which they tell visitors marks the place of the birth, but no one knows where the actual spot is, and little does it really matter. Since, therefore, we know not the place nor the day of Jesus' birth, and since He has asked to be remembered specifically for what He did for mankind upon the cross rather than His sleeping in a manger like any other baby sleeps, those seeking to follow the Bible pattern for things have gotten little excited over a Christmas started by the Catholics and adopted so largely by a Protestant world that goes all-out for a few days at the end of the year to reverence Jesus in *their* way, but neglect to remember and reverence Him in the special way that He ordained when He instituted the Lord's supper, which He instituted to be observed every week! As a song writer has called to our attention the fact that we do not worship the cross, but the *Christ* of the cross, so we need to remember that we do not worship the birth of Christ, but the Christ who was born.

The Psalmist has said that the man who is blessed delights in the law of the Lord and meditates upon it day and night.

The Genealogy of Jesus

As dry as the genealogical tables of Jesus' ancestry may seem, they are nevertheless very important. They have but little purpose to the one who merely *reads* the Bible, but they are of great worth to the one who *studies* it. Coming to an acceptance of Jesus as the Christ from the Gentile line of humanity, the ancestry of Jesus possibly did not mean as much to us at the time of our conversions to Him as it would if we had been Jews instead of Gentiles. The Jews realized that God had selected a particular family line through which the Messiah was to be born. He would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. But, Judah had many descendants. Hundreds of years after Judah, God told David (a descendant of Judah) that the Messiah would come through Him. But, after the days of David, God made no more particular promises to anybody of David's line until about the time when the Messiah was to be born when He dispatched the angel Gabriel to the would-be parents of John the Baptist and Jesus.

The genealogy of Jesus is recorded two times in the Bible. Matthew opens his book with a seventeen-verse treatment of it (Matt. 1:1-17), and Luke gives his genealogy in Luke 3:23-38 right after he recorded the baptism of Jesus. Since Matthew wrote his gospel account to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, it was very fitting that he open with that which would be in every Jew's mind concerning anyone purporting to be the Messiah: "Is he of the right tribe and family?" The account in Luke, given at the time of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, also seems to be given at a fitting time since that is the time when one would become interested in Him and what He was about to do. The further material of this study will be a treatment of Jesus' genealogy.

I. A Consideration Of The Two Genealogical Tables.

A. *One Is Historical In Order; The Other Is History In Reverse.*

It is Matthew's account that tells us:

"Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram..." (Matt. 1:2-16)

Notice that this listing is one generation after another just as history unfolded itself. But, Luke's account begins with Jesus and reverses history generation by generation until the very beginning of time:

"Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph..." (Luke 3:23-38).

B. *Matthew Traces Jesus' Ancestry Merely From Abra-*

ham; Luke Traces His Ancestry Clear Back To Adam.

Since Matthew wrote to the Hebrews, he began where Hebrew history began--with Abraham. God having made special promises to Abraham and many hundreds of years later to David, the Jews all looked for the Messiah to be a descendant of both Abraham and David. How significant, then, that Matthew should open his gospel account with these words:

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

Then, he proceeded to give the family tree generation by generation from Abraham on down, of course, tracing the line through David. But, Luke, writing to a Greek by the name of Theophilus traced Jesus' ancestry all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-28).

C. Matthew Traces The Line Through Joseph While Luke Traces It Through Mary.

Notice Matthew's table beginning with David:

"David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias (Uriah); and Solomon begat Roboam (Rehoboam); and Roboam begat Abia (Abijah); and Abia begat Asa; and Asa begat Josaphat (Jehoshaphat); and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias (Uzziah); and Ozias begat Joatham (Jotham); and Joatham begat Achaz (Ahaz); and Achaz begat Ezekias (Hezekiah); and Ezekias begat Manasses (Manasseh); and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias (Josiah); and Josias begat Jechonias (Jechoniah or Jehoiachin) and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon; and after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel (Shealtiel); and Salathiel begat Zerubbabel (Zerubbabel)" (Matt. 1:6-12).

The names by which they were known in the Old Testament have been given in parenthesis. These men were all kings, descendants of David. Matthew traces the line through Joseph (Jesus' foster-father) to prove His legal right to the throne of David. Luke's record, however, traces Jesus' actual blood-line through His mother. Mary's genealogy in Luke, in accord with Jewish custom, was in her husband's name. Joseph was actually the son-in-law of "Heli", the Jews having but one way to say both "son" and "son-in-law". Therefore, we take it that Joseph was properly the "son-in-law" of Luke's "Heli", for we know that Joseph's father was "Jacob" (Matt. 1:16). Furthermore, the Jewish Targums record that Mary's father's name was Heli. Therefore, Luke gives us Jesus' blood-line through His mother Mary, and Matthew gives us His father's genealogy to prove His legal right to the throne of David.

D. Matthew's Omissions And Groupings.

It is a fact that Matthew makes certain omissions in his table. For instance, Matt. 1:8 says that Joram begat Uzziah. Actually, according to Old Testament history, Joram begat Ahaziah, and Ahaziah begat Joash, and Joash begat Amaziah, and Amaziah begat Uzziah. Notice, then, that Matthew omitted three men from his table. There are also a few other omissions in his table. There evidently was some reason for his making these omissions, which we shall give later.

We notice also that he divides his table of names into three groups: (1) from Abraham to David. (2) from David to

the carrying away to Babylon, and (3) from the carrying away to Babylon to Jesus (Matt. 1:17). The Holy Spirit led him to group these names into these groupings. This was evidently to aid the memories of his readers who would want to commit this table to memory to use to convince others (that was when printing was unknown and people had to rely much upon memory). The omissions, mentioned above, must have been purposely made in order to shorten the names in each group to fourteen (Matt. 1:17). The names omitted were of such a nature that every Jew knew that Uzziah was a descendant of Joram even though the intervening between the two men were not listed by Matthew

II. Noticeable People In Jesus' Ancestry.

In studying the genealogical tables of Jesus, there are additional truths for us besides the fact that He descended from Abraham through David. Let us consider some of the people through whom God ran the chosen line.

A. Good People.

Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Shem were all godly men. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have all been discussed in former studies. But, good Joseph, whom we might have expected to be an ancestor of Christ, is missing. Instead, the line ran through his brother Judah. Boaz and Ruth were both wonderful people. David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Zerubbabel were all considered among the good kings of the south. His parents, Mary and Joseph, were the finest of earth.

B. Bad People.

But, not everybody in Jesus' ancestry was good. Lamech was the first recorded polygamist (Gen. 4:19). He also was a murderer (Gen. 4:23). Terah was an idol-worshipper (Josh. 24:2), but so was almost everybody else of his time. Matt. 1:3 tells of Judah begetting Pharez and Zarah. These were twins, and they were born of harlotry (Gen. 38:6-30). Matt. 1:5 tells that Boaz's mother was Rahab. She had been a one-time harlot of Jericho. David had several sons, but the line went through Solomon, who was born of Bathsheba, the woman whom he took from Uriah (which fact was even included in Matthew's table) (1:6). Solomon himself, though good at first, turned out to be extremely far from God in his older age (1 Kings 11:4). Rehoboam, Abijah, Joram, Ahaz, Manasseh, Amon, and Jechoniah were all considered wicked kings.

No doubt, the inclusion of such people in Jesus' genealogy is to give hope to the sinful through the Christ. To say the least, the mercy and condescension of God are evident in the genealogy of Jesus.

C. Obscure People.

Many of these names, especially those of the four hundred years between the two testaments, are either partly or completely obscure as far as our knowing anything about them is concerned. Yet, they are listed, for they are necessary ancestral links in tracing the genealogy. Some of them were no doubt godly, and some were probably ungodly. But, none of them probably realized they were those through whom the Messiah would come.

D. Outsiders Brought In.

It is noticeable that there are at least two Gentiles (among the women, which would not nullify the bloodstream that ran through their husbands) in Jesus' genealogy. Ruth was a Moabitess, but a mighty fine one, who desired to have the God of her mother-in-law Naomi (the true God) to be her God (Ruth 1:16). She married Boaz, one of the fine men of Israel. Rahab was the other outsider. But, though she had been a harlot, she believed that the God of the Israelites was surely the true God, for so she spoke to the spies whom she hid (Josh. 2:1-11). Realizing that God had delivered her town Jericho into the hands of the Israelites, she asked for mercy for herself and her household (Josh. 2:12,13), which was granted (Josh. 6:22,23). Heb. 11 and Jas. 2 both speak favorably of Rahab, who became a part of Israel, marrying a man by the name of Salmon.

The inclusion of these two outsiders who came to believe in Israel's God and who desired to be a part of God's people indicated God's willingness to receive even Gentiles through the Messiah.

By way of conclusion, let us say that if the Messiah was to be the descendant of Abraham through David (and He was), and if Jesus of Nazareth was not the true Messiah, there would be absolutely no way of identifying the ancestry of the true Messiah should He yet be to come, for since 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, the long-preserved Jewish ancestry tables have been destroyed, and there would be no way to check His ancestry. This is one of the many convincing arguments for the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth!

The Forerunning Ministry of John

The gospel of John opens its account of John the Baptist by saying:

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6).

No better introduction could have been made of him. All the other gospel writers referred to him as "John the Baptist", which was necessary to distinguish him from John the apostle. But, the fourth gospel account, written by John the apostle, needed not to append the words "the Baptist" to John's name for distinguishing purposes as did the other writers. John was called "John the Baptist" because he baptized--not because there was any religious party by that name to which he belonged. Neither did John found a religion to bear his name.

Jesus and John were relatives. According to some versions' rendering of Luke 1:36, their mothers were cousins. The Revised Version renders the word "kinswoman" rather than "cousin", which would still leave Jesus and John related. Both of their births were announced by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:11-19 and Luke 1:26-31). Jesus' parents

were from Nazareth, which was up north near the Sea of Galilee (Luke 1:26,27). John's parents lived in the south-land of Judea (Luke 1:39,40). It is hard to tell whether the two chosen boys got to see each other very often during their boyhood days. They probably got to see each other at least every year at Passover time, for Jesus' parents always went to Jerusalem every year at that time (Luke 2:41), for Jerusalem would not be too far from John's home, and John's parents no doubt went to Jerusalem also each year at that time.

I. The Unusualness Of John.

A. Ways In Which He Was Unusual.

John stayed out in the wilderness and did his preaching. Instead of going where the people were, they came out where he was. He was not finely dressed, but had camel's hair clothing with a leather girdle about his loins, and his diet was nothing lavish--locusts and wild honey (Matt. 3:4). While Jesus was often to be found dining in the homes of people, John remained out in the wilderness, for which he was accused of having a demon (Matt. 11:18). You know, whatever a preacher does, some people are going to criticize it. John was no exception.

B. His Ministry Greatly Resembled That Of Elijah.

Gabriel had told his father that John would go before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). The ministry of Elijah paralleled that of John in that both of them were bitterly outspoken against prevailing sin, and both of them were hermit-type of men who chose the wilderness to the city. Although he fulfilled the prophecies about an Elijah who was to come (Mal. 4:5 and Matt. 17:10-13), he did not personally realize it (John 1:19-21). As far as God revealed to him, he was merely the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for the Messiah (Luke 3:3-6 and John 1:22,23).

C. He Needed No Miracle Power.

We have no record of John's performing any miracles. We have reason to believe that he performed none. Those who knew well of his ministry and were completely favorable to him give us the following statement:

"John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man (Jesus) were true" (John 10:41).

We might wonder why God did not empower John to work miracles. Somebody has suggested that John was so different that he himself was a sign. But, possibly it is better to point out that John was telling them of that which was going to come to pass very shortly. Therefore, the proof of his ministry would be evident when those things came to pass.

II. John's Message.

A. He Preached That The Kingdom Was At Hand.

Matt. 3:1,2 says:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This was the kingdom that Daniel, hundreds of years

before, had prophesied would be set up in the days of the kings of the fourth worldwide kingdom (Dan. 2:31-44). John did not live to proclaim the kingdom as an established fact, but he did live in those final days before it was set up. He said that it was "at hand".

As odd as it may seem, there are some who say the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are two different things. But, if one will get out his concordance, he will find that Matthew's account employs the term "kingdom of heaven" while the other accounts employ the term "kingdom of God" in recording the same incidents. For instance, compare Matt. 13:11 ("kingdom of heaven") with Mark 4:11 ("kingdom of God"); compare also Matt. 13:31 ("kingdom of heaven") with Mark 4:30 ("kingdom of God").

B. He Told Of The One Coming After Him.

This is why John is referred to as the "forerunner" of Christ. Many times did he tell of the One coming after him. This was his chief mission. A sample of his utterances upon this point is found in Matt. 3:11,12.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Jesus said that John was a prophet, but more than a prophet (Matt. 11:9). The next verse tells in what sense John was more than a prophet—he was a special prophet to be the forerunner of Christ. John was sent before the Christ to get people ready for His coming as much as a highway crew is sent out to build a super highway. Isaiah had prophesied of him and his work as follows:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:4-6).

After Jesus had come and was ready to begin His public ministry, John said to the people:

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:29,30).

C. He Preached Repentance.

God sent prophets only when there was a need for prophets. Therefore, the message of repentance was always characteristic of the prophets' preaching. John was no exception. He spoke to them in no uncertain terms as follows:

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... The axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:2,10).

Not only did he tell them to repent, but when asked what to do by way of bearing the fruit of repentance, John was quick to tell them exactly what they had to do (Luke 3:10-14). There was nothing indefinite about John's preaching. All got the point—a few of them too well!

III. The Response To His Ministry.

A. His Preaching Met With Unusual Success.

Matt. 3:5,6 says:

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

The above passage surely shows the impact that John's ministry made upon many people. The powerful way that he brought the truth of God to bear upon their consciences brought many to his baptism, and it is noteworthy that they came and confessed their sins. Surely, people have been brought under deep conviction when they acknowledge what they have been doing. In Ephesus, they did the same thing when Paul preached (Acts 19:18,19). That every preacher had such a definite message against sin and the courage to deliver it so pointedly that men everywhere would come out into the open for God, realizing that their sins had been uncovered! The floodtides of conversion and revival would be as high today as in the days of the apostles.

Some even wondered whether John was the Messiah at first (Luke 3:15). This gave John the opportunity to say that he wasn't, but that the Messiah was on His way.

B. But, The Leaders Did Not Receive Him.

In contrast to the mass of the people, Luke 7:29,30 says of the leaders:

"And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized of him. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."

Jesus had something to say about the leaders and their response to John's preaching:

"Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him" (Matt. 21:31,32).

When John beheld some of them in the crowd, he said:

"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:7-9).

John spared no words of bitter denunciation in addressing those hypocritical leaders of the day. In this, he was like Jesus (John 8:44 and Matt. 23:27-33) and like Paul (Acts 13:9,10).

IV. John's Last Months.

A. He Was Imprisoned.

A man sent of God, as John was, should have been received by all. When he preached righteousness, all should have agreed and cooperated with him. But, "this vile world is no friend of grace," and John found it out. For rebuking Herod's sin of taking and having his brother's wife, he was imprisoned (Matt. 14:3,4). Instead of imprisoning him, Herod would have killed him, but he feared the people who looked

upon John as a prophet (Matt. 14:5). The place of his imprisonment is not mentioned in the Bible, but it would likely have been either at Tiberias on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee or at Machaerus east of the Dead Sea. Herod had residences at both places.

B. Oddly, Herod Conferred With Him Often.

It would seem that Herod would have nothing to do with John. But, the contrary was true. Mark 6:20 reports of John's prison-life:

"Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

In this, John was like Paul, who while imprisoned was sent for often by Felix (Acts 24:24-26).

C. John's Doubt.

John had preached that the kingdom was at hand. He had also foretold the coming of Jesus. But, Jesus was not coming into His kingdom in the way that John had looked for. The gloom of prison-life no doubt had its toll upon his thoughts also. One day, therefore, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus with the following question:

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3).

Some have tried to soften these words as if they meant something else besides a doubt on John's part. But, such is not necessary. Abraham, David, Peter, and other characters of the Bible did some things that were not right, yet the Bible does not shield them. It is not necessary, therefore, to put John on a pedestal above the possibility of sin. Furthermore, the reply that Jesus sent back to John closed with these significant words:

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matt. 11:6).

If the apostles did not grasp the spiritual nature of the kingdom until Pentecost, but conceived of an earthly Jewish kingdom prior to that time, it is not surprizing if John also shared such thoughts about the kingdom--he knew only such things about the kingdom as God revealed to him, and we have no record of God revealing anything to him about the kingdom except that its coming was near.

But, lest the people should be quick to discount John and his ministry as a result of his doubt, Jesus preached a magnificent defense of the work of John. If space permitted us, we would print Jesus' words concerning John, but since it doesn't, we shall tell you where they are found--Matt. 11:7-19.

D. His Prison Death.

John was not slated for execution. He was not confined in Death Row. But, the way it turned out, he might as well have been. The story of his wife's bitter hatred for John is well known and how that she grabbed an opportunity to get John beheaded when Herod had foolishly offered her daughter anything she requested up to half of his kingdom (Mark 6:17-28). So, from the time John was imprisoned until the day of his death, he never knew what a day of liberty was. But, he had done his work well even though he did not get to serve long.

As we bring this study to a close, there are several miscellaneous items which we wish to consider. John had disciples. We read of them several times. We do not know what they did or what was the purpose of his having disciples. We do know that he had taught them how to pray (Luke 11:1). They, like John, engaged in fasting often (Matt. 9:14). When they heard of how many Jesus and His disciples were baptizing, they became jealous and reported the matter to John, supposing he would share their feelings. But, John shared none of their selfishness. John willingly accepted the role of Christ's forerunner and gladly said to his disciples:

"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

When we get as far into the book of Acts as the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters, we are surprized to find a preacher still practicing the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla took him home and straightened him out. Thereafter, Apollos went forth in the fulness of the gospel, and when Paul came to Ephesus and found twelve men who had been baptized with John's baptism, Acts 19:4,5 says:

"John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

So, the time came when the validity of John's baptism had passed. This was surely at the cross or possibly even sometime before.

We would also like to share some chronological thoughts with you. John was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:36). He had been preaching and baptizing sometime before Jesus came to be baptized (Luke 3:21). Jesus was baptized when he was thirty or thereabout (Luke 3:23). The Jews did not look upon one as of age until he was thirty. Probably, then, John had not begun his ministry until he was thirty. Therefore, it is usually thought that John had possibly been preaching six months or less before the time of Jesus' baptism. John was not imprisoned until nearly a year after Jesus' baptism, for following His baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness of temptation, he made a trip north to Galilee, and was there a brief time before going to Jerusalem to begin His Early Judean Ministry, which lasted eight months, and which was brought to a close by Jesus hearing that John had been imprisoned. From the best that can be figured out, John was in prison about another year before he was beheaded. If we have rightly concluded, John was about thirty when he began to preach; he preached and baptized about a year and a half; he was then a prisoner for another year; he died about a year before Jesus did, which would have meant he was about thirty-two years old when he died.

Jesus paid one of the greatest personal tributes to the character of John when He said that of all those born of woman, not a greater had arisen than John (Matt. 11:11). But, John lived and died before the kingdom was established. He got to be no part of it in its earthly phase. Yet, according to Jesus, the very least in the kingdom is greater than John (Matt. 11:11). All the foregoing reduces very simply to the following--men are made great by being in the kingdom, the least in it being greater than the greatest man out of it.

Jesus' Baptism and Temptations

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all three record the baptism and the temptations of Jesus. John, who usually passed over what the others covered thoroughly and instead dwelt upon those matters which the others did not include, made but passing mention of one incident connected with Jesus' baptism. With these important matters which we shall discuss in this study, Jesus was soon to enter upon His public ministry and become an important public figure throughout Palestine and surrounding regions.

I. His Baptism.

A. He Walked A Great Distance To Be Baptized.

Throughout most of John the Baptist's ministry, he baptized in the Jordan River--probably the lower portion of the Jordan as it flowed along Judea before emptying into the Dead Sea. He was from Judea himself; when he baptized, he did so in the Jordan; the people of Jerusalem came out to his baptism; Jesus' ministry followed John's preparation, and He began with an Early Judean Ministry--all these point toward John beginning His baptizing in the Jordan as it touched the land of Judea. Jesus is thought to have been baptized in the lower Jordan, for it was not until after His baptism do we read of John baptizing near Bethabara and at a still later date of AEnon. Mark 1:9 shows that He came from Nazareth of Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized. This would have been a distance of from sixty-five to eighty miles, depending upon the exact location of His baptism. But, God was commanding baptism of the Jewish people through the preaching of John, and though Jesus had no sins to confess and to be forgiven of, yet He walked this distance in order to be obedient to this commandment of the Father. If the baptism of John was important in his day--and it was--the baptism that Jesus has authorized is likewise important in our day, and if Jesus took such measures to be baptized in His day, people today should do the same thing.

B. He Was Baptized At The Height Of John's Judean Ministry.

Luke 3:21 says that when all the people had been baptized, Jesus came to be baptized. We might wonder at first why Jesus delayed His baptism. We would think He would have presented Himself for baptism at the first. But, there was a reason for His waiting as He did. In order for John to fulfill His role as forerunner, it was necessary for him to have somewhat of a ministry before Jesus came onto the scene. John must tell them of the One who was going to come after him. When the stage was set, Jesus came and was baptized, God pointed out to John that this was indeed the One, and thereafter John told the people that Jesus was the One of whom he had been telling them. Thus, this gives people today no grounds for delaying their baptism.

C. He Was Baptized "In" The Jordan--Not Beside It.

A famous painting depicts Jesus standing on the shore along the river with John pouring water out of a shell upon His head. How misrepresenting this picture is! Mark's account is very good to use in correcting this picture. Mark 1:9 says that He was baptized "in Jordan"--this is different from being alongside the Jordan, as the artist has pictured. Furthermore, the next verse (Mark 1:10) shows that following His baptism, He came up out of the river--something He could not have done if He merely stood on the bank as the picture indicates. John was not a "sprinkler"--he was an "immerser". John 3:23 shows that at one time, he purposely baptized at AEnon because there was much water there. If he merely sprinkled or poured, anywhere he might have been, he could have gotten sufficient water for sprinkling or pouring, but since baptism has always been immersion, there would have been many places where not enough water was available for that.

D. He Prayed As He Came Up Out Of The Water.

Luke's gospel account is a fine one to study when studying the matter of prayer. It is noticeable that Luke's account alone records the fact that when Jesus was coming up out of the water, He was praying (Luke 3:21). We are not told what He was praying, but what a fitting example Jesus has left for all being baptized! As He was arising to face the devil's temptations and to begin His ministry for God, how appropriate it was for Him to call upon the name of the Father, and as people emerge from the waters of baptism to face the temptations that Satan will be sure to throw at them and as they begin their Christian lives, how appropriate it is to call upon God for strength and grace!

E. He Was Anointed As The Messiah At His Baptism.

The word "Messiah" (which is a Hebrew word) and the word "Christ" (which is a Greek word) mean "anointed". Nearly everyone who knows anything at all about the baptism of Jesus recalls that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at the time of His baptism, but it is surprising to find how many people are ignorant of the purpose of the Spirit's descent upon Him. Peter preached that God had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power (Acts 10:38), and shortly after His baptism, as He spoke in the synagogue at Nazareth, He claimed to have already been anointed with the Spirit (Luke 4:17,18,21). All the evidence points to the descent of the Spirit upon Him at the time of His baptism as the time when He was anointed. How fitting if He was to show Himself to the people as the Messiah (or the anointed one) that that anointing should take place before He began to show Himself to the people!

F. The Descent Of The Spirit Was Also A Sign To John.

John, being a relative of Jesus, doubtlessly knew Him well. But, John did not depend upon his past association with Jesus for the absolute knowledge that Jesus was the One of whom he had been preaching. His original hesitancy to baptize Jesus (Matt. 3:14) would indicate his thoughts concerning Jesus, but God wanted him to have a definite sign of Jesus' Sonship which he could proclaim to the people. The gospel of John records the following words concerning the above:

"And I (John the Baptist) knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:31-34).

No doubt, the purpose of the Holy Spirit's descending in the form of a dove was for John's sake. The Spirit could come upon Jesus without a bodily form just as He enters the life of everyone becoming a Christian without a bodily form, but a bodily form was necessary if John was going to "see" the Spirit descending and abiding upon Jesus.

G. God Claimed Jesus As His Son At His Baptism.

God was pleased with Jesus, for He was His Son and was obedient, and He wanted John and anybody else who may have been present at Jesus' baptism to know it. The Scriptures do not tell us whether people were present at His baptism or not. But, it was at His baptism that the voice came from heaven:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Mark's account gives what Jesus received from the message:

"Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

H. False Conclusions To Draw.

One might say, "Jesus wasn't baptized until He was thirty years old, so I am going to wait until I am thirty before being baptized." That would be a dangerous conclusion to draw. There was a reason why Jesus wasn't baptized before He was thirty. John, the first to administer divine baptism, wasn't baptizing when Jesus was twelve, eighteen, or even twenty-five. Jesus was about thirty years old when John began baptizing. Therefore, it is evident why Jesus wasn't baptized younger. Those who hear the gospel and believe are to be baptized (Mark 16:15,16) regardless of their age. Whenever one is old enough to hear and believe, he had better not tarry his decision to be baptized.

There are those who contend that one must be baptized in running water before he is Scripturally baptized. As their example, they cite the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. But, were we to cite the three thousand baptized on the day of Pentecost as an example of those who were not baptized in running water, then no one could say that Scriptural baptism must take place in running water. Three thousand were baptized on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), and the Jews' day ended at 6:00 in the evening. It was mid-morning when the preaching and exciting activities of the day began on Pentecost (Acts 2:15). From one to three hours would certainly have to be allowed for the sermon, the inquiring as to what must be done, the exhortation, the decisions, the good confessions taken, etc. that went into getting everything ready for the baptisms. Combining the fact that there is no living stream in the Jerusalem area with the fact that they were all baptized that very day points to but one conclusion--they were baptized in the man-made pools in Jerusalem, of which there were several. There was

no other place for them to be baptized. In the light of the above facts, it would be impossible for one to prove that the three thousand baptized on Pentecost were baptized in running water.

II. His Temptations.

A. The Wilderness Of Temptation.

Following His baptism, the Scripture says:

"And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12).

Supposing that we have rightfully concluded upon the place of Jesus' baptism, it would not be too hard to conclude on the location of the above wilderness. To the north and west of the Dead Sea, close to where the Jordan empties into that sea, there is a wilderness well situated to be the wilderness where Jesus was tempted.

B. The Purpose Of Jesus' Temptations.

As far as the devil was concerned, the purpose of the temptations was to get Jesus to sin and thereby overthrow the plan of God to save the world through His Son. But, God too had a purpose in having Jesus tempted, for we notice that it was the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness for the express purpose of being tempted (Matt. 4:1). Having been put to the severe trials of temptation, He is qualified through experience to sympathize with us, to be a merciful high priest toward us, and to intercede to God for us (Heb. 2:17,18 and Heb. 4:15,16). Heb. 2:18 says:

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (help) them that are tempted."

C. The Devil Threw The Hardest Temptations Possible At Jesus.

We are not told why Jesus was fasting forty days (Matt. 4:2). It could have been a voluntary act upon Jesus' part as He contemplated and prayed concerning the ministry He was soon to begin. Or it could have been that He was expressly forbidden by the Holy Spirit to eat until He had given Him permission. Anyway, the first temptation listed by both gospel writers who record the temptations individually is the one concerning eating. With the words of the Father, "Thou art my Son," still ringing in His ears, how convenient it was for the devil to suggest:

"IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD, command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4:3).

Those smooth, brown stones, which looked so much like the hard-crusted bread of Palestine, made one who had not eaten for more than a month ravenously hungry. Jesus was the Son of God, and He didn't have to turn stones into bread in order to be God's Son, but He wasn't going to disobey the Father and follow the suggestion of the devil. When the devil failed on this temptation, he turned to other temptations. "Jump off the pinnacle of the temple--God will let you come down so easily that you won't even bruise a heel," the devil suggested. That would be an easy way for Jesus to obtain followers, but the suggestion came from the devil. God had a different method of revealing Jesus' deity to the people than that of empty show. Then, from an exceedingly high mountain, Jesus was able to look out over the world below. All He saw was offered Him by the devil

if He would follow the devil's plans instead of God's. God's way for Jesus to have a people was to die (John 12:32,33), but Jesus turned down the way that most people accept from the hand of the devil. All these temptations were temptations for Jesus--bitter temptations. The devil knew of no harder ones, or he would have used them on Jesus.

D. Temptation Is Not A Sign Of Personal Wickedness Unless One Brings The Temptation Upon Himself.

Jesus never committed a sin (I John 3:5), yet He was tempted (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, temptation is one thing, and sin is another. Yet, Jesus was not responsible for His temptations. A corrupt heart did not bring on any of His temptations. James tells us that people are tempted when they are drawn away of their *own* lust and enticed (Jas. 1:14). In such a case, the temptation itself is held up to divine condemnation, for they have been responsible for it. While Jesus was tempted, yet did not sin, let us not suppose that this in anyway gives us a license to court temptation. Rather, we are to pray for divine leadership away from temptation (Matt. 6:13).

E. Jesus Successfully Resisted The Devil Each Time.

Jesus well knew the nature of sin (acceptance of the devil's will and rejection of God's). Jesus knew what God had said, and He knew when the devil was trying to get Him to do something else. He knew the tragedy that would befall Himself and the entire world were He to give in to the devil's temptations. While it was momentarily hard to resist, yet it would be eternally disastrous to yield--which is true of every temptation. Therefore, each time the devil made a suggestion, Jesus recognized it as from the devil and reaffirmed His loyalty to the will of God by quoting some appropriate instruction of God from the Scriptures which yielding to the devil would have violated (Matt. 4:4,7,10). The Scripture tells us to do exactly what Jesus did:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas. 1:7).

This is what Jesus did, and the devil left Him.

F. But, This Was Not The Last Time That Jesus Was Tempted.

Luke 4:13 says:

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

These words prepare us to look for other times of temptation in Jesus' life. The devil doesn't leave once and for all. We may successfully resist him, and he leave, but he will come back stronger than ever, or he may come back with some temptation altogether different. As we study through the life of Jesus, we can see other times when He suffered temptation, such as His struggles in Gethsemane when there was the temptation to avoid the cross (Luke 22:42). Another good definition of temptation is when the human will is seeking to exert itself against the divine will. This was happening to Jesus in Gethsemane.

G. God Sent Strength To Jesus After His Victory.

The devil tries to get people to think they *must* sin.

But, Jesus did not believe the devil. Oh that we human beings were more like Jesus in this respect! It may have seemed to Jesus' body that He was about to die without bread, but when He refused to use His miracle-power to satisfy Himself, God sent angels to minister to Him (Matt. 4:11). The same thing happened in Gethsemane. When He was successfully resisting His temptations, an angel came and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43). In our temptations, if we will draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us (Jas. 4:8) even as He did to Jesus.

When these temptations were past, Jesus emerged from the wilderness, headed north where He was pointed out by John (John 1:29) and obtained His first followers (John 1:30ff), went to the wedding feast at Cana where He performed His first miracle (John 2:1-11), from where He went to Jerusalem for the Passover at which He set out in earnest upon His ministry.

The Ministry of Jesus

As I begin the writing of this lesson concerning the ministry of Jesus, I feel much like John did when he brought his account of that ministry to a close. Jesus' life and ministry were so eventful that it is impossible to do more than merely touch some of the highpoints of them. To put it in the words of John:

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

The adult life of Jesus, treated for us by four different writers in the New Testament, has properly caused the best of earth to appreciate Him. The teachings of Jesus have challenged the world's greatest minds to give themselves to a thorough study of what they contain and to proclaim them to others. I am personally happy to have been taught about Jesus from my childhood, and to borrow the words of Paul that He has counted me faithful, putting me into His ministry (I Tim. 1:12). To borrow the words of Peter, I have tasted and have seen that the Lord is gracious (I Pet. 2:4), and I have thanked God that it has been and as yet remains my privilege to teach others about Christ.

I. The Length And Location Of His Ministry.

A. The Length.

John wrote his gospel account many years after the other three writers wrote theirs. We are indebted to his account for many things not included in the other three accounts. One of these things for which we are especially indebted to John's account is the marking of time so many times by which we are able to ascertain how long Jesus' ministry was.

His ministry was somewhat longer than three years in length--possibly not more than three and one half years. Here is the way it is figured. We count the passovers during Jesus' ministry, which were one year apart. Each passover, then, that we read of during His ministry means another year. All we have to do, then, is to count up the number of passovers. John 2:13 tells us of a passover. Let us start our figuring with it. John 5:1 tells us of another feast at Jerusalem, which is usually taken to be another passover feast (with which we are in complete agreement--see the parenthetic discussion at the end of this section offered in proof of this being another passover feast. This feast, then, would mark the end of one year of ministry. John 6:4 tells us of the next passover, which would mark the end of two years of ministry. John 11:55 tells us of another passover (the one at which He was crucified), which would mark the end of three years of ministry. We know that in addition to the above three years, His baptism, forty days of temptation, His appearance at Bethabara where He was pointed out by John the Baptist as the Lamb of God, His turning the water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana, a few days' stay in Capernaum, and a return trip to Jerusalem all took place before the first passover in the above count. Then, after His resurrection, He remained on earth forty more days before He ascended. It is not usually thought that what took place before the passover of John 2:13 and the forty days after His resurrection would not exceed six months, but they do add up to several weeks and months of time. Thus, it is usually calculated that Jesus' ministry was around three and one half years in length.

Material offered in proof that the feast of John 5:1 was the passover: Harvest of their crops began around passover time. After the passover of John 2:13, Jesus and His disciples remained in Jerusalem and Judea, teaching, performing miracles, and baptizing until He had made and baptized more disciples than John the Baptist had done--which was no small accomplishment in itself. When He left Judea for Galilee, He went through Samaria. At Jacob's well on the trip, we have a statement from Jesus that indicates it was but four months until the next harvest (John 4:35). That would mean He had spent eight months in Judea. The other accounts of His life indicate that He was going to Galilee to conduct a ministry because John the Baptist had just been imprisoned. It is not likely that upon arriving in Galilee to begin His Galilean Ministry, He immediately turned around and went back to Jerusalem for the only other feast that John 5:1 might have been besides the passover--the feast of dedication, which was a feast not even commanded in the Old Testament and that came three months before the passover. Students of the life of Christ are almost unanimous in ascribing at least the first of Jesus' three Galilean tours to the months prior to the feast of John 5:1, which if right would indicate that the feast of John 5:1 was actually the passover.

B. The Location Of Jesus' Ministry.

At first thought, it seems strange that One now so well known as Jesus confined His own preaching to a small land not more than one hundred fifty miles long and about fifty miles wide--the land of Palestine. The only time He

ever was out of Palestine was when He went to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod, but He was only an infant then--not a teacher. The reason why Jesus confined His teaching to so small a geographical area was that He, as well as John the Baptist, was sent only to the Israelites (Matt. 15:24), and the Israelites lived within the narrow confines of Palestine in Jesus' day. The worldwide preaching was reserved for a later time at which time Jesus was no longer upon the earth.

II. The Claims And Miracles Of Jesus.

A. His Claims.

A study of the claims of Jesus properly relates to a study of His deity. The Christ, who was later to be preached by the apostles for men's acceptance as the Son of God come down from heaven, was during His ministry manifesting Himself in various ways as true deity. Had Jesus not made the claims of being deity in the flesh, disbelievers would have hopped onto that fact and would have said that surely He wasn't the Son of God, for He didn't so represent Himself. But, He *did* represent Himself as God in the flesh. Let us notice some of His claims.

He claimed to be the Messiah when in conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:25,26). Beginning with John 5:17, Jesus spoke of God as His Father and Himself as God's Son a good many times in just a matter of verses. The Jews who listened realized that He was not merely claiming to be a child of God as we are (in a spiritual sense), but that He was claiming to be the Son of God in the sense of being deity (John 5:18). He claimed to be the living bread which came down from heaven to give everlasting life to those who would believe upon Him (John 6:47-51). He claimed to have been from above, and that all who believed not upon Him would die in their sins (John 8:23,24). He claimed to have existed even before the time of Abraham (John 8:58). He claimed to be the Son of God to the man born blind whom He healed (John 9:35-37). He claimed that He could keep from dying, and that having died He would raise Himself (John 10:17,18). These are but a few of Jesus' claims found in the earlier chapters of the book of John. There are many more. (Note: For a fuller treatment of the subject of Jesus' claims, see the chapter on "The Deity of Jesus" in the author's book, "52 Simple, Stimulating Studies".)

Many people come with high-sounding claims, but if they are false, the world soon knows about it. But, with Jesus, nobody yet has been able to prove Jesus' claims to be false. Were they false, they would, of course, remove Him from the realm of the truthful. In such a state of being false, we would not worship Him, for He would not be deity.

We understand that a man has to do more than merely make claims. But, at this stage in our study, let us take notice of the fact that Jesus *did* make His claims of being deity. In the next section, we shall take up the argument for His deity from His claims.

B. His Miracles.

To those who accept the Bible as the Word of God and are at all familiar with its contents, there is no question

as to whether Jesus performed miracles. Some of the most beloved Bible stories for children are the miraculous healings performed by Jesus. But, Jesus' miracles were not limited to physical healings. In addition to demonstrating His power over the human body by His healings, He demonstrated His power over death by raising people from the dead; He demonstrated His power over the weather by quieting the storm; He demonstrated His power over the laws of nature by walking upon the water; He demonstrated His power over animal life by the two miraculous catches of fishes; He demonstrated His power over the vegetable world by cursing the fig tree; and there were many other realms over which Jesus showed Himself Master by His miracles.

Some have argued that Jesus' miracles did not prove Him to be deity, for Moses, Elijah, and the apostles performed miracles. That these men performed miracles, we grant, but to say that Jesus' miracles had no connection with His deity, we cannot grant. Here is why. Miracles testified that a person was what he claimed to be--they were credentials. The apostles' miracles proved them to be apostles, for that's what they claimed to be. In the same way, Jesus' miracles proved Him to be the Son of God, for that is what He claimed to be. In other words, Jesus' claims and miracles combine to demonstrate His deity. His claims alone would prove nothing about His deity, nor would His miracles apart from His claims prove Him to be deity any more than the apostles' miracles would prove them to be deity. But, His miracles backing up His claim to be the Son of God form a combination to prove Him deity.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31).

III. The Teaching Of Jesus.

A. He Was A Master Teacher.

He knew His subject. Being God in the flesh, He naturally possessed the truth of God. In fact, He was the truth, and He came to teach the truth. He was the light, and He came to enlighten men. He was the Savior, and He came to speak words of salvation. He had a message to deliver--thus, He met the first qualification of a teacher.

He knew His hearers. Some of them were sincere--to them, the great body of His teaching recorded for us was taught. But, some of them were hypocritical. He had many run-ins, particularly with the Pharisees, before they were willing to call it quits. In these discussions, He ever proved Himself master of the situation. When the Herodians came to trap Him in His talk, they asked Him what appeared to be an innocent question (about paying tribute to Caesar), but Jesus was able to see the trap they were laying for Him, and He promptly answered them in a way that they were not able to take hold of (Matt. 22:15-22). The Sadducees and the Pharisees met with the same treatment that same day when they tried to ensnare Him (Matt. 22:23-40). But, Jesus could also drive His insincere hearers into a corner. He didn't answer every question asked Him. Sometimes, He would reply to an enemy's question with a question of His own. For instance, when asked by what authority He had cleansed the temple, He replied with the

proposition that if they would tell Him whether John's baptism was of God or of men, He would answer their question. They feared to answer, for if they said John's baptism was of God, He would have asked them why they didn't believe John, and if they said it was of men, the people would have been against them, for they held John to be a prophet (Matt. 21:23-27).

He knew how to present His material. The common people heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37). For the most part, He employed the simplest of words and a common type of illustration that they could understand and appreciate. Yet, when He felt it imperative either to withhold a full comprehension of some subject until later or to humble the learned class, He would couch His words in expressions that accomplished His end (John 2:18-22 and numerous others). He employed the same kind of technique in conversing with Nicodemus (the kingdom hadn't come yet when they talked; neither had the Spirit been given; the baptism that brings one into the kingdom of God had not yet been instituted). There was no way for Nicodemus to understand fully what Jesus was saying, but he could not help knowing that Jesus knew what He was talking about while he himself scratched his head in bewilderment. Especially is Jesus remembered for His parables. Such simple matters of life as fishermen casting a net into the sea, a woman putting leaven into meal, a merchant seeking pearls, and others became vehicles for teaching great and lasting truths by the Master Teacher.

B. The Effect And Lastingness Of Jesus' Teachings.

Jesus' teachings were different. He spoke with authority, for He was sent from God with a message, and the people were quick to recognize that He spoke with authority (Matt. 7:28). His words did not always go along with the way people were thinking and living. This fact resulted in great changes in the thinking and lives of those who believed Him and great opposition from those who didn't.

How revolutionary to hear one teach love for his enemies instead of hatred and self-retaliation (Matt. 5:43-48). How unusual to read His beatitudes as they pronounce blessing upon those whom the world would pronounce unfortunate (Matt. 5:3-12 and Luke 6:20-23). How uncompromising His demands that men forsake all to follow Him (Matt. 16:24,25). He didn't come to give men what they wanted in their carnal state. Rather, He told them what they needed. They believed Him, and thus Christianity got off to a significant beginning.

Today, almost two thousand years later, the teachings of Jesus are the best known teachings in the world. We who live in the Western Hemisphere (far from the land of Jesus' ministry); we who are of Gentile origin (instead of Jewish as He was); we who speak a different language than He spoke--even we confess His teachings to be right, and we confess that we--not they--are wrong in any way that we may not be living up to them.

C. What Jesus Taught About The Kingdom.

In this study on "The Plan of God", it is necessary that we see each lesson as it relates to the general unfolding of that plan. While Jesus did not stay on earth to

preach the actual arrival of the kingdom, yet He belonged to that class of men who before the cross (John, the twelve, and the seventy) joined in proclaiming both the coming of the kingdom and some things about it. Here are some of the things He taught His hearers concerning the kingdom.

The Jews of His day looked for an earthly kingdom. So did the apostles (Acts 1:6). They talked of chief seats in the kingdom and disputed among themselves from time to time as to who would be the greatest in it. But, in contrast to their thoughts, Jesus taught that the kingdom would not be of this world (John 18:36), for it would be within them (Luke 17:20,21).

He taught that the kingdom would include Gentiles and exclude many of the Jews (Matt. 8:11,12 and Matt. 21:33-43). This, though according to the Old Testament, was not according to either the Jews or the apostles' way of thinking.

He taught that the kingdom would soon come (Matt. 4:17), assuring them that God would give it to them (Luke 12:32). He taught His followers to pray for its coming (Luke 11:2), even promising them that it would come during their generation (Mark 9:1). He promised Peter the keys to it (Matt. 16:19).

His parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-8, 18-23) predicted the several ways that the preaching of the kingdom would be received--some paying no attention to the preaching, others being greatly interested in it until persecution arose concerning it, others allowing earthly interests to crowd it out, and still others receiving the news of it graciously and being faithful to it.

He taught that one must be more than merely religious to enter it (Matt. 7:21). He taught that genuine conversion was necessary (Matt. 18:3)--even a birth of a spiritual nature and life (John 3:5)--before one could enter it.

He taught that the greatest in the kingdom would be those who served the most (Matt. 20:20-28)--not those who gave the orders.

In two parables (the parable of the hidden treasure and the parable of the pearl merchant), He taught that the kingdom was so valuable that men should invest everything earthly in order to obtain it (Matt. 13:44-46). He further taught that men should seek the kingdom even before they would food to eat or clothing to wear (Matt. 6:25-33).

In conclusion, let us notice that Jesus demanded His hearers to be more than good listeners. He demanded that they do what He taught them:

"Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:26,27).

He further declared the impossibility of remaining neutral toward Him. He plainly told His hearers:

"He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 21:30).

And the words of Jesus, through the Bible, come ringing down through the centuries to us today, ever clear in their

instructions, ever calling us to Him, ever warning us not to disregard them. Let us, then, be good disciples of His teachings and good followers of what He teaches.

Jesus as Judged by Others

In our last study, we considered, among other things, some of the claims of Jesus. In this study, we want to consider what *others* said about Him. Naturally, we can cover but a limited amount of the abundant material available upon the subject.

I. His Enemies Criticized Him Most Severely.

A. They Charged Him With Breaking The Sabbath Many Times.

At a feast at Jerusalem, Jesus healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda. It was on the sabbath day. Therefore, the Jews sought to slay Him as a sabbath-breaker (John 5:15,16). On their way home from that feast, His disciples were condemned by the Pharisees as sabbath-breakers (Matt. 12:1,2). After His arrival at Capernaum, He healed a man in the synagogue who had a withered hand. Again He enraged the Pharisees by this action on the sabbath (Matt. 12:9-14). When he healed a woman in a synagogue on the sabbath who had been in a bent position for eighteen years, He infuriated the ruler of the synagogue, who took the position that since there were six other days in the week when such healings could take place, they should not be performed on the sabbath (Luke 13:14). While such healings could have been performed on other days, Jesus did not hesitate to perform them on the sabbath. On this synagogue-ruler, He employed the rebuttal that none of His enemies could ever meet:

"Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" (Luke 13:15).

Of course, sabbath-breaking was a false charge. Jesus did not break the sabbath. It was merely a charge they brought against Him, and they brought it against Him because they hated Him, and they thought they had something on Him.

B. He Was Charged With Casting Out Demons by Beelzebub.

They could not deny the fact that He cast out demons. Since they couldn't deny it, they tried to smear Jesus by stating that He was in "cahoots" with the devil in His casting them out. When this charge was made in Galilee, Jesus dealt with the reprobate hearts of His accusers in which He gave the extended teaching concerning the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:22-37). This charge was made several times after various healings of demoniacs.

C. He Was Criticized For Associating With Sinners.

The Pharisees were a self-righteous lot. They had no mercy for the "down-and-outer", though they themselves were merely outwardly righteous (Matt. 23:27,28). Jesus, in His attempt to help the lost, oftentimes befriended those who were far from God. For instance, He attended a feast in the home of Matthew which was attended by many publicans and sinners. He was criticized for this (Matt. 9:10,11). A Pharisee criticized Him for allowing a sinful woman to anoint Him (Luke 7:37-39). When He went home with Zacchaeus, they murmured against Him for going to be the guest of a sinner (Luke 19:5-7). In each case of this criticism, Jesus connected His association with them with His coming to save them. Here was another ill charge against Jesus.

D. His Disciples Were Criticized For Breaking The Traditions Of The Elders.

One of the traditions of the elders was to wash religiously when coming from the marketplace and always before eating. I presume that Jesus and His apostles customarily washed their hands before eating--not from a religious standpoint, but from a health standpoint as we today do. But, at least upon one occasion, they didn't, and the scribes and Pharisees quickly approached Jesus about it (Matt. 15:1,2). In a discussion that was not too pleasant for the enemies, Jesus exposed their inner defilement, which was a sin, but to eat with unwashed hands was not a sin.

E. Even John's Disciples Criticized Jesus Concerning Fasting.

John's disciples seemed to assume a jealous attitude toward Jesus because of His spectacular success in teaching and baptizing (John 3:25,26). While John rebuked their feeling, there remained at least a tinge of feeling against Jesus, for in Matt. 9:14, they came to Jesus about the fact that His disciples did not fast, though both they and the Pharisees did. Jesus replied by telling them it was not time for His disciples to fast--He was *with* them. But, after He would be gone, then they would fast when it would be in order (Matt. 9:15).

F. He Was Condemned For Forgiving Sin.

One time when a sick man was brought to Jesus, He called forth the condemnation of the scribes upon Him by pronouncing the man's sins forgiven. They counted this an act of blasphemy (Matt. 9:2,3). It would have been had Jesus not been the Son of God. Jesus purposely used this approach in performing that miracle so as to bring out the fact of His authority even in the realm of forgiving sins (Matt. 9:5,6).

G. He Was Likewise Condemned For Claiming To Be The Son Of God.

When He was defending one of His sabbath-healings, He claimed that God was His Father. This the Jews took to be an out-right case of blasphemy, which made Him worthy of death, and they told Him so (John 5:18). And it would have been unjustifiable blasphemy had Jesus not been indeed the Son of God! When the stage was all set in the wicked hearts of men to crucify Jesus, Jesus boldly made the claim of being the Son of God when on trial before the Jewish leaders. They jumped at the opportunity,

the high priest indignantly rending his clothes and stating that such self-stated blasphemy made any further witnesses against Him unnecessary (Matt. 26:63-65).

H. There Was The General Charge of Deceiving The People Heard At Various Times.

At the feast of tabernacles, there was a division among the people over Jesus. While some affirmed His goodness, there were others who said He was deceiving the people (John 7:12). The Pharisees sent soldiers to take Jesus at that very feast. When the soldiers neared the place where Jesus was, He was engaged in teaching the people, so they paused and listened awhile first. They were so impressed with His teaching that they returned without Him. When they reported to the Pharisees that no man ever so spake as Jesus, they were immediately charged with being deceived (John 7:47). The chief priests and Pharisees called Jesus "that deceiver" when talking to Pilate (Matt. 27:63).

I. A Few Times, He Was Even Criticized By Friends.

In His closing days, when being anointed with very costly ointment by Mary in the home of Simon the leper, His apostles criticized Him for allowing what they considered to be an extravagant, unjustifiable waste of such expensive ointment (Matt. 26:6-9). Jesus was criticized by both Martha and Mary for not coming sooner when they sent word to Him that their brother Lazarus was sick (John 11:21,32). Though Jesus had righteous purposes in mind in both of the above cases, yet even being as good as Jesus did not lift Him above the criticism of even friends at times.

II. Trustworthy Voices Testified Of His Deity.

A. Gabriel To Mary.

In promising the birth of Jesus to Mary, the angel Gabriel said:

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest" (Luke 1:32).

B. The Angel Of The Lord To The Shepherds.

When shepherds watched their flocks the night that Jesus was born, the angel of the Lord came down with this message:

"Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

C. The Prophet Simeon.

The aged prophet Simeon of Jerusalem had been promised by God that he would not die until he had seen the Christ. When the parents of Jesus brought Him into the temple at the age of forty days, Simeon took the child into arms, blest God, and said:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel!" (Luke 2:29-32).

D. John The Baptist.

We have several important utterances from the lips of John:

"He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:11,12); "John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before...This is the Son of God" (John 1:29,30,34).

E. God.

Two different times, God spoke from heaven claiming Jesus to be His Son. At the time of His baptism, and later at the time of the transfiguration, He said:

"This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17 and Matt. 17:5).

F. Simon Peter.

Up near Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples a very frank question as to who they thought He was. Promptly, Peter answered:

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

G. The Centurion Of The Crucifixion.

The Roman centurion, who was in charge of the crucifixion of Jesus, would surely not be charged with prejudice in favor of Jesus. He had no doubt been in charge of many crucifixions of criminals. But, there was something about the crucifixion of Jesus that was different. Here was one to be crucified who had so many claiming Him to be sent of God, though Pilate had succumbed to the pressure of the envious leaders to sentence Him to death. He heard the tauntings of the hilarious crowd at Jesus' death. He could read Pilate's inscription that Jesus was the King of the Jews. Everything seemed to be going in favor of the crowd until about high-noon when darkness settled down upon the scene. Then, at three o'clock, when Jesus died, nature went into convulsions of protest. There was an earthquake; rocks tumbled into ravines below; stones were rolled away from the tombs. This had never happened before when a crucifixion took place. Matt. 27:54 says:

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."

In closing this section, we might marvel at the fact that Jesus' own brothers did not believe on Him (John 7:5). Maybe His parents had concealed His unusual birth from them. Maybe they accepted the attitude of their townspeople of Nazareth, who rejected Him. But, remember this--after the resurrection, they were convinced and were numbered among those who met with the apostles for prayer as they awaited the beginning of Christianity (Acts 1:13,14). James, one of His brethren, became a prominent leader of early Christianity in Jerusalem, Paul even referring to him as an apostle (Gal. 1:19; Acts 15:13; Acts 21:17,18).

III. Many Declared His Innocence.

A. Jesus' Challenge To His Enemies.

In the midst of a heated debate with some implacable Jews, He said:

"Which of you convinceth ('convicteth'--R.V.) me of sin?" (John 8:46).

What purely human being would dare offer people--especially enemies--the opportunity to point out wherein he had sinned? Jesus did.

B. God Declared His Pleasure With Jesus.

At the same time He affirmed Jesus' sonship, He affirmed His pleasure with Him:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17 and Matt. 17:5).

C. John The Baptist.

When Jesus came to John to be baptized, John was instant to reply:

"I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

D. Judas.

Judas, who had turned against Jesus for so paltry an amount of money as thirty pieces of silver found himself self-condemned after he had done the deed. He came back to the chief priests and elders with the money they had given him to betray Him to them. Notice his affirmation of Jesus' innocence in talking to them:

"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).

E. Pilate.

When the Jews were insistent that Jesus be crucified, Pilate, the governor before whom Jesus was being tried, said:

"Why, what evil hath he done?" (Matt. 27:23).

When he saw that they were determined to have Jesus crucified, Pilate washed his hands in their presence, stating the following words affirming His innocence:

"I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Matt. 27:24).

F. Pilate's Wife.

Pilate's wife was of much the same opinion. When Jesus stood before her husband, she sent the following message to him:

"Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27:19).

G. Herod.

Pilate had sent Jesus to Herod for an examination. After due examination of Him, Herod returned Him to Pilate stating that he found nothing worthy of death in Him (Luke 23:15).

H. One Of The Thieves.

One of the thieves crucified with Jesus was railing on Jesus with the same sort of words as the enemies at the foot of the cross. The other thief took up in Jesus' behalf stating:

"Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive

the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:40,41).

The title of this study has been "Jesus as Judged by Others". It might well be renamed, "How Jesus was Judged and Misjudged," for it is evident that some gave Him a fair judgment while others did not judge Him at all--they mis-judged Him!

The Heart of the Gospel

When Jesus was ready to return to heaven and to send His apostles forth with their message to preach, He said to them:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Notice what they were to preach--the gospel! Yet, crowds every Sunday morning are crowding into church buildings across the land only to hear something that is not the gospel. In fact, few of them would be able to give you a Scriptural definition or explanation of the gospel. I have noticed that wherever the preacher preaches something instead of the gospel that the sermon occupies but a few minutes (possibly fifteen to twenty) of an elaborate Sunday morning service, and there will be no evening service and no evangelistic meetings. But, wherever the people know and love the gospel, you will find sermons (not sermonettes), and preaching will be considered important enough to have a night preaching service and evangelistic meetings from time to time.

The Bible shows that there is only one gospel, and it warns preachers about preaching anything other than the gospel. Listen to Paul's letter to the Galatians:

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9).

In view of this, every preacher ought to be sure that he is preaching the gospel, and people should not be pleased to sit Sunday after Sunday and listen to something that is not the gospel of Christ.

Why is it so important that nothing but the gospel be preached? Paul answers this question for us in Rom. 1:16:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Yes, it is the power of God to save those who believe! Paul could never be ashamed of that which was his means of salvation, and neither can any Christian. That is why

Paul told men about Christ wherever he was, and he didn't compromise that gospel when addressing the Jews who didn't believe it and when he stood before heathen kings who knew nothing about it. We sing that fine old song, "Faith of our fathers living still... We will be true to thee till death." We cannot be true to that faith if we preach something else. Neither are those who pose as Christians true to it if they do not tell it to others and live it before their fellowmen. Yet, how many preachers are evidently ashamed of the old-time gospel, and how many church people too!

There are many things that converge and combine to make or form the gospel, but when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he emphasized three facts concerning Jesus. Notice that he identifies his message to them as the gospel:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel" (I Cor. 15:1).

Then he proceeded to point out certain important facts about the gospel:

"...the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (verses 1 and 2).

Then in verses 3 and 4, he came to the point concerning what he had preached to them. That was the gospel. Listen to those verses:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Following this, he listed quite a number who witnessed Jesus after His resurrection, concluding with himself as the final witness (verses 5-8). Notice that he briefly summarized the gospel as: (1) the death, (2) the burial, and (3) the resurrection of Christ. The word "gospel" means "good news". The gospel of Christ may be briefly summarized as the "good news" that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again. We have been pleased to call these facts the heart of the "good news"--not that it is all of the "good news", for there is that part of the gospel which man must obey in order to be saved (II Thess. 1:8), and there are also other things that Christ has done and will do that relate to our salvation (such as His heavenly intercession for us today, His coming again for us, etc.). But, what Jesus did for mankind when He died on the cross, was buried, and was raised from dead form the very basis upon which man's hope of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life is built.

We are, therefore, devoting this study to those three central facts of the gospel.

I. His Death.

A. God Planned Jesus' Death.

Before the world began, God had ordained that Jesus redeem us from sin by dying for us (I Pet. 1:18-20). In this sense, Jesus was spoken of as "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). When Peter preached on Pentecost, he said of Jesus:

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

God foreknew and had determined ahead of time that Jesus would die. Jesus did not die because men overpowered Him. He submitted to death as a part of the plan of God--He laid His life down of Himself (John 10:17,18); He could have prayed for angels to deliver Him from the hands of men (Matt. 26:51-53); and His death was an act of obedience (Phil. 2:8). But, even though God had willed the death of Jesus, He held those men guilty of killing Him who hated Him, cruelly mistreated Him, unjustly condemned Him, and finally nailed Him to the tree, for they did it as an act of hatred and envy and not to fulfill the will of God.

B. Jesus Bore Our Sins In His Death.

Isa. 53 is an unmistakable prediction of the death of Jesus. We know from two reasons: (1) Acts 8:32-35 quotes from it with reference to Jesus; and (2) The statements in it could be fulfilled only by Jesus. There is a verse in it that tells of the universal sinfulness of man and of God laying those sins upon Jesus:

"All we like sheep have gone astray (universal wickedness); we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

Verses 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, and 12 of that same chapter all six contain the idea of His bearing our sins. Many New Testament passages teach the same thing (Matt. 20:28; Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; Rom. 4:25; Rom. 5:6,8; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; I Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 2:24; and I Pet. 3:18).

There is no more important truth in the Bible than that which we are now considering. We, therefore, feel it would be altogether in order to quote in full at least two of the above New Testament passages:

"Who (Christ) his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24); "Christ also hath once suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (I Pet. 3:18).

C. His Death Was Even For Those Who Lived Under The Old Testament.

We who live on this side of the cross certainly partake of the benefits of Calvary. But, according to New Testament teaching, so do those who lived before Calvary. Heb. 9:15 plainly states that Jesus' death was likewise "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament". How will the benefits of Jesus' blood be appropriated to their cases? Let us use the people of Isaiah's day for an illustration here. In the first verses of Isa. 1, he upbraided them so severely because of their sins. In verses 16 through 20 of that chapter, he called them to repentance. In the midst of that section is found the well known verse, Isa. 1:18:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

There was a promise of cleansing given them, but Heb.

10:1-4 shows that the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament could not take away their sin. Therefore, any forgiveness that they were promised had to be realized through the blood of Jesus, the only cleansing power known in the Bible. After telling of the great heroes of faith of the Old Testament, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews closes by showing they all died in faith that the promises would be fulfilled, but that they were not perfected before our perfection, which has come through Christ (Heb. 11:39,40). If they heeded God's commandments and warnings, they will be saved through the blood of Christ just as we today will be saved through His blood if we heed the commandments and warnings that He has given to us.

D. Baptism And The Lord's Supper Both Commemorate Christ's Death, And Both Connect Us With The Benefits Of That Death.

Rom. 6:3 shows that when we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ's death, which would mean that we participated in the benefits of His death in baptism. I Cor. 10:16 shows that the Lord's supper is a communion of both the body and the blood of Christ, which would likewise mean that we participate in the benefits of Christ's death in the Lord's supper. As long then as baptism is Scripturally performed, it will be a memorial of His death, and every time the saints of God gather to observe the Lord's supper, they are commemorating the death of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19 and I Cor. 11:26). It is pitiful the way the religious world today is minimizing the importance of both baptism and the Lord's supper, but we could rightly expect the devil to attack anything that would bring people into vital connection with the sin-cleansing blood.

II. His Burial.

A. Jesus Was Buried In Joseph Of Arimathea's Tomb.

Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; and John 19:38-42 all tell us of the burying of Jesus' body at the close of the same day on which He was crucified. A study of those passages and verses that precede them will show that Jesus was buried between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. A closer study would favor a burial probably between 5:00 and 5:30 that afternoon. He died at 3:00. Several matters transpired after 3:00 and the actual burial, which must be allowed for. On the other hand, after the women beheld where He was buried, enough time must be allowed for them to return and prepare spices and ointments before the sabbath's arrival actually kept them from taking them to the tomb before the sabbath.

"Born in somebody's manger...buried in a borrowed tomb." That was Jesus, who though He was rich prior to His incarnation surely became the poorest of the poor for us (II Cor. 8:9). We know nothing of Joseph of Arimathea except what we read in the foregoing passages connected with the burial of Jesus. From them, we learn that he was rich; he was from Arimathea, referred to as a city of the Jews, but of its location we know nothing for certain; he was a counsellor (a member of the Sanhedrin); he was a man of good character who looked for the kingdom of God and had believed in Jesus but he did not always manifest it as boldly as he should have. Somehow, he had a newly-made tomb very near the place where Jesus was crucified. Here, with the help of Nicodemus (the one who came to

Jesus by night), he hastily buried Jesus with costly spices wrapped around the body with bands of linen and a napkin about the head, which was a customary Jewish burial.

B. His Burial Was A Fulfillment Of Prophecy.

The death and resurrection of Jesus were both predicted in the Old Testament (I Cor. 15:3,4), but so was His burial. That fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which tells so many things about the crucifixion, contains this prediction of His burial:

"He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death" (Isa. 53:9).

How well we see it fulfilled as they buried Him in the tomb of rich Joseph of Arimathea.

C. Baptism Symbolizes His Burial.

When people were baptized in Bible's times, they were immersed or buried in water. All must admit that the primitive form of baptism was immersion. Such is the meaning of the word, and such was the practice of the early church. Ever since the Catholic Council of Ravenna in 1311 A.D., many have accepted the substitutes of sprinkling and pouring for immersion. Such are wrong because they violate the divine form given us in the Bible, but they are also wrong because they destroy that which divinely symbolizes one of the central facts of the gospel--the burial of Jesus. Of baptism, the Scripture says:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

III. His Resurrection.

A. The Resurrection Of Jesus Is A Fact Of History.

Early on the morning following the sabbath, the women came to the tomb with the spices they had prepared just before the sabbath began. When they came to the sepulchre, they were amazed to find the stone rolled away from the door. Luke 24:3 goes on to say:

"And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus".

And we might say, nobody else has found the dead body of Jesus either. Why? Because He arose from the dead. That day, He began His resurrection appearances that were to carry Him through forty days upon the earth prior to His ascension (Acts 1:3).

Three facts are evident: (1) Jesus died; (2) He was buried; and (3) when the women arrived at the tomb, His body was gone. How could His body have gotten out of the tomb? The disciples *couldn't* have stolen it, for there was a guard of soldiers stationed at the tomb to see that such didn't happen (Matt. 27: 62-66). The enemies *wouldn't* have removed it to some other place without producing it on the day of Pentecost to deny Peter's preaching that He had arisen (Acts 2:24-31). Remember that Peter preached these words right in Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried, and he preached to them just a few days after this took place. Suffice it to say that Christianity *did* begin in Jerusalem at that very time, and it was begun by the preaching of a resurrected Christ. Those who accepted it

were in a position to know whether it was a fact, and if it had not been true, such numbers would not have accepted it under those conditions. If the disciples of Jesus couldn't have stolen the body from the tomb, and if the enemies wouldn't have stolen it and have kept quiet about it, there is only one other way that His body could have gotten out of the tomb, and that is the way that it got out of the tomb--He arose from the dead!

B. Jesus' Resurrection Was A Bodily Resurrection.

Modernists talk of the resurrection of Jesus, but they have a "spiritual" resurrection in mind--not a bodily resurrection. Yes, Jesus still lives, they say, but He lives in the sense that His ideals live on in His followers. But, such talk is not according to the Bible. The Bible talks about no resurrection of Jesus except a *bodily* resurrection. The women entered into the tomb and found not the body of Jesus (Luke 24:3). When the disciples first saw Jesus, they thought they were seeing a "spirit". Jesus told them to handle Him and see for themselves that He was in the body, pointing out that a spirit would not have flesh and bones as He had (Luke 24:36-39). When Peter preached on Pentecost, he showed that David's body was still in the tomb, but Christ's wasn't (Acts 2:29-32). Furthermore, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, His enemies asked Him for a sign of His authority. He told them to destroy this temple, and in three days He would raise it up. John 2:21,22 continues by recording:

"He spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

In view of this, it would be wise for those who attend services where they are not sure whether the preacher is a modernist or not to ask him on "Easter" morning whether he believes in a physical or a spiritual resurrection of Jesus. If he gives an evading sort of answer, further questions will reveal his liberal thinking, especially if he resents being questioned further.

C. The Resurrection Was The Crowning Proof Of Jesus' Deity.

There are many lines of evidence establishing the deity of Jesus. Any of them should be sufficient to establish that fact. Yet, God did not limit Jesus to any one line of evidence. We refer to the resurrection, however, as the *crowning* proof of His deity because it convinced many who had not been convinced previously, and Jesus Himself laid great emphasis upon it when asked for a special sign. When the Pharisees asked Him for a sign, He said:

"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas (Jonah): for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39,40).

We have already referred to the time when He gave them the sign of His rebuilding the temple in three days (John 2:18-21).

Jesus properly upbraided His disciples for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:14). He had told them He

was going to die, and at the same time He had told them He was going to rise the third day (Matt. 16:21). If they had entertained any doubts about whether Jesus was actually the Christ or not, they had an excellent way to test it most assuredly. They should have given Him the benefit of the doubt until the fourth or fifth day after His crucifixion. If He then was still in the tomb, they could have gone back to their homes assured that He had not been the Christ, for He had told them He would arise within three days' time. How unjust of them to have entertained such doubts before the prophecy had run its prescribed course!

D. Our Coming Deliverance Over Death Has Been Assured By Jesus' Resurrection From The Dead.

It was not possible for death to hold Jesus (Acts 2:24). Men of themselves did not overpower Jesus to put Him to death—they couldn't! He laid His life down of Himself, and He took it up again of Himself (John 10:17,18). When Jesus comes again, He will raise us from the grave (I Thess. 4:16). Had He not raised Himself from the dead, thus triumphing over death, He could not raise us in the last day. Our hope and faith in the resurrected life rest completely upon the fact that Jesus actually overcame death in His resurrection. I Pet. 1:3-5 is very emphatic upon this point:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

When Jesus appeared to the apostle John upon the Isle of Patmos years after they had walked together upon the earth, He introduced Himself in the following way:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell, hades (" - R.V.) and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

He was dead, but He is alive forevermore, and as a result of His having overcome death in His resurrection, He has the keys of hades and death, and when He comes the second time, He will use those keys. Those now in hades who have died, He will release with the resurrection, and those living, He will keep from dying. Why? Because He has the keys of (power or authority over) hades and death!

E. The First Day Of The Week Came Into Prominence Immediately Following The Resurrection.

Prior to Jesus' coming, the seventh day of the week (the sabbath) was one day that stood out above all days. What did the first day of the week mean at that time? The second? The third? The fourth? Etc.? Nothing. They had no special significance. But, with the passing of the law at the cross, the sabbath as a holy day was past. As we read in those documents from early Christianity, we are brought to consider the fact that for some reason, the first day of the week had come into prominence. At Troas, for instance, we see the brethren coming together upon the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). When Paul wrote the Corinthian church, he ordered them to lay together their benevolent money upon the first day of the week when they

were assembled together in their public service (I Cor. 16:1,2).

In seeking for a suitable answer as to what might have given prominence to the first day of the week, there is one prominent fact—that was the day upon which Jesus had arisen from the dead (Mark 16:9). Early Christian writers stated why they held the first day of the week significant. Eusebius, the so-called father of church history, said that it was on account of Jesus' resurrection having taken place that day (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 27). Justin Martyr, a name very familiar to all students of early Christianity, wrote: "Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, on the same day rose from the dead" (Apology, Chapter 67).

In bringing this study upon the gospel to a close, I can think of no concluding thought better than that wonderful accumulation of choice thoughts relative to the gospel found in II Tim. 1:8-10).

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The Significance of the Ascension

The forty days between the resurrection and the ascension were spent doing two things: (1) establishing the fact of His resurrection that His apostles might be confirmed in their belief that He was actually the Son of God (this was the purpose of His numerous appearances); and (2) further instructing them concerning the coming kingdom and what they were to do as apostles of it. These few days probably passed all too rapidly for the apostles, and the many recollections of them must have attended them throughout all the days of their lives. Though they did not get to see Jesus come out of the tomb on the morning of His resurrection, they did get to behold Him as He ascended to heaven from Bethany near the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem (Luke 24:50,51 and Acts 1:9,12).

Every important event in Jesus' life in some way related to His work of redeeming humanity. The ascension is no exception. A study of it will indeed prove rewarding.

I. In His Ascension, He Discarded His Robe Of Humanity.

A. In His Incarnation, He Took On The Body Of A Man.

John 1:14 says:

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

In referring to Jesus' earthly days, the Hebrew writer said:

"Who in the days of his flesh..." (Heb. 5:7).

B. At The Right Hand Of God Now, He Does Not Have That Fleshly Body.

When Jesus went to heaven, He went into the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). In this sense, He is spoken of as our "forerunner" (Heb. 6:20), for through His atoning work, someday we shall be permitted to be with Him there. Now, since Jesus is where we someday shall be--in the incorruptible presence of God--we know that he is not there in the physical body that He had while on earth. How do we know that? Simply because flesh and blood bodies cannot go there--they must be transformed into incorruptible bodies first. That is what Paul wrote concerning physical bodies and heaven:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:50-53).

C. Some Erroneously Teach That This Change In Jesus' Body Took Place At His Resurrection.

Some have concluded that because Jesus said to Mary Magdalene immediately following the resurrection not to touch Him, but to go tell His disciples that He had arisen from the dead that He already had a celestial body (John 20:17). But, this was not why He forbid her to touch Him at that time, for He later permitted people to touch Him (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27). Realizing the force of these three passages, some have even concocted the idea of an ascension to the Father after His first appearance to Mary (at which meeting He said, "Touch me not") and these times when He permitted them to touch Him. In other words, they say, He ascended to God and came back to earth again before He made His other appearances. Such a concoction is totally unnecessary as well as groundless.

Some have tried to argue that Jesus must have had a different body following His resurrection from the fact that He entered into rooms when the doors were locked (John 20:19,26). I see no reason to conclude that Jesus had a different body because of this. Such a feat on His part was no greater than His other miracles. If the Bible teaches that He did have His human body after the resurrection, we must conclude that His entrance through closed doors is to be listed with His other miraculous acts. The paragraph below gives positive Bible proof that He still had His physical body following the resurrection.

When Jesus entered the room where the apostles were fearfully gathered, they thought they had seen a spirit. Correcting their thoughts, Jesus said:

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:38,39).

Jesus could be handled. He had flesh and bones that could be felt. He said He was not just a spirit. Someone says, "He said 'flesh and bones'--'not flesh and blood,'" as if to try to argue from that that Jesus did not have a human body. How ridiculous! Jesus told them to feel Him--it was a "feel" test, and when they felt Him, they felt His flesh on the outside and the bones underneath. Just touch your body anywhere, and you can hardly touch it without being aware of the presence of the bone in the flesh. Of course, He had blood in His body. He ate in their very presence to convince them that He had arisen in the body from the grave (Luke 24:42,43). Could any kind of a body but a material body handle material food? If Jesus was not in His own material body when He ate in their presence to convince them that He was not a spirit, but one who inhabited a material body, then He was deceiving them by giving them the "eating" test. Yes, a flesh and blood body is essential for intaking and handling material food such as Jesus ate.

Since then He did have His material body during His forty days on earth, and since He could not enter the presence of God with it, it is evident that in the ascension His body was changed. Such could take place in but a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51,52). It all boils down to this: when He left heaven to come to earth, He laid aside His eternal form and took upon Himself the form of man, and when He left this earth to return to heaven, He laid aside His mortal form and returned to His original form with God.

II. His Ascension Related To His Priesthood.

A. The Old Testament High Priest Went Into The Holy Of Holies Once A Year To Make Atonement.

"The priests (the common priests) went always into the first tabernacle (the holy place), accomplishing the service of God. But into the second (the holy of holies) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:6,7).

Lev. 16 tells in detail concerning the annual day of atonement referred to above.

B. Jesus As Our High Priest In His Ascension Entered Into Heaven To Make Atonement For Our Sins.

Heb. 9:11,12 says:

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Now, into what sacred place did Jesus enter for us? Heb. 9:24 answers:

"Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Then, heaven itself is the fulfillment of the holy of holies of the Old Testament tabernacle, and in order to enter heaven as our high priest to make atonement for our sins in the presence of God, it was necessary for Him to ascend

to God.

C. As Our High Priest, He Now Makes Intercession For Us At God's Right Hand.

Rom. 8:34 says:

"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Heb. 7:25 states the same thing:

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

What is Jesus doing today? Among other things, He is making intercession for us at God's right hand. He there is touched by the feelings of our infirmities and temptations, and when we come to the throne of grace in His name for help, we receive both grace and mercy through Him (Heb. 4:15,16). This is the way that He is able to help us in the time of our temptations (Heb. 2:17,18).

Thus, His ascension related to His priestly work.

III. His Ascension Also Related To His Kingship.

A. For Long Years, God Had Been Prophesying Of His Coming Kingdom.

In the days of the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, which was the Roman empire or kingdom, God's kingdom was to be set up, and it was to be an everlasting kingdom:

"In the days of these kings (the kings of the fourth empire) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

B. Jesus Was Promised The Throne Of That Everlasting Kingdom.

Isa. 9:6,7 prophesied:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

That this prophecy referred to Jesus, there can be no doubt. If there would be any doubt about it, Luke 1:31-33 would settle it:

"Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

C. Jesus Went To His Throne At God's Right Hand In His Ascension.

David occupied an earthly throne, but it is evident from a study of the Scriptures that Jesus' does not. In what sense,

then, can it be said, as it so often stated in the Bible, that Jesus is sitting upon the throne of David? Simply in this way: David ruled over all of God's people in Old Testament times, and Jesus rules over them in New Testament times. God's Old Testament people were an earthly kingdom (that's why David had an earthly throne), but God's New Testament people are not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom (that is why Jesus' throne is not an earthly throne).

The Bible teaches that after Jesus suffered the humiliating death of the cross, God highly exalted Him with authority over everything in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:8-11). His seat of authority is at the right hand of God from which He rules. Notice this fact as set forth in the following passage together with the completeness of authority granted to Jesus:

"Which he (God) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:20-23).

There Jesus reigns today with all authority in heaven and earth delivered to Him (Matt. 28:18). As such, He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18), being Himself the "one lord" referred to in Eph. 4:5.

Have you ever wondered why ten days elapsed between Jesus' ascension and the day of Pentecost? Have you ever wondered why God didn't send the Holy Spirit to the apostles immediately upon the ascension of Jesus? True, nothing seemed to be doing here on earth. Rather, the apostles were "tarrying" (Luke 24:49) and "waiting" (Acts 1:4). But, things were doing in heaven. It was not a lull period. What was taking place in heaven? The coronation of Jesus Christ as the king of God's kingdom! This was a glorious time in heaven, for now was salvation possible for fallen mankind, and no doubt the heavenly celebration of the Messiah's coronation was something that could not be done in a few hours. At least, God took ten days before dispatching the Holy Spirit to the earth. You might ask, "How do we know that those days were spent in the coronation of Jesus as king?" Simply this: the above passages quoted tell us that Jesus is now seated at God's right hand as king. This took place following the ascension and before the day of Pentecost when Peter preached that Jesus was king upon David's throne (Acts 2:29-33). Furthermore, Dan. 7:13,14 gives us a very clear prophetic picture of the ascension of Jesus on the clouds to God (spoken of as "the Ancient of Days") and of the coronation of Him as the One with authority over the everlasting kingdom. Notice that passage:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven (the ascension), and came to the Ancient of days (God), and they (evidently angels) brought him (Christ) near before him (God). And there was given him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

What a wonderful picture of the kingdom over which

Jesus reigns, and it was upon His arrival in heaven following His ascension that this authority was officially delivered into His hands.

I believe that God and the angels crowned Jesus. I do not believe that His crowning is yet a future thing like so many religious songs seem to indicate. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" is a very beautiful song, but I personally question whether all of it can be sung without necessary alterations, and when it is sung, it should be sung with the understanding that we are singing of that which took place at the climax of Jesus' ascension rather than something that is to take place in the future. With this setting in mind, the first stanza is very expressive: "All Hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall! Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all!" Thereafter in the song, I believe it should be altered to fit the fact that Jesus is already crowned. This can be done in the other stanzas by substituting the word "hail" for the author's word "crown". I would, therefore, advise that the next stanza be sung as follows: "Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, ye ransomed from the fall, hail Him who saves you by His grace and hail Him Lord of all!" The next stanza would then read: "Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball to Him all majesty ascribe and hail Him Lord of all!" And the last stanza would read: "O that with yonder sacred throng we at His feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song and hail Him Lord of all!" In many other songs, I believe the same alteration should be made to get away from the denominational idea that the crowning of Jesus is a future thing and something that men do. In a sense, we may allow Jesus to become the king of our lives, but that is our accepting Jesus--not coronating Jesus. That God did--it is but left for us to accept Him whom God has crowned!

How we should thank God for the meaning of the ascension of Jesus! Yes, He was raised from the dead for our justification (Rom. 4:25), but that justification comes from the fact that He was raised from the dead that He might ascend with His blood to God the father. There was more to the ascension than most people realize and probably much more than any of us know. May the Lord bless these thoughts and meditations to our souls.

The Apostles of Christ

Jesus had many "disciples", but only a few "apostles". All the apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles. The word "disciple" means "a learner", and it came to be one of the most common terms by which all of Jesus' followers were known. All followers of Jesus were and are His disciples, but only a certain number of followers were called to be apostles. Notice the distinction between the two terms in Luke 6:13:

"He called unto him his disciples (his followers); and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

The word "apostle" means "one sent with a commission". These men occupied a special relationship to Jesus and the establishment of Christianity that distinguished them from all other followers of Christ, both then and now.

The word "apostle" is applied to at least sixteen different persons in the Bible. They are: the original twelve, Matthias who succeeded Judas, Paul, the Lord's brother James (Gal. 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and Jesus Himself (Heb. 3:1). Jesus was an apostle in that He was "sent" from God. James, the Lord's brother, was called an apostle possibly because he was so closely associated with the regular apostles and was such a recognized leader in early Christianity. Barnabas may have been referred to as an apostle for the same reason as James, though some suppose he was called an apostle because of having been "sent out" with Paul from Antioch. There might be grounds for the latter conclusion from the fact that where Phil. 2:5 calls Epaphroditus "your messenger", the Greek word translated "messenger" is "apostolos" (the word commonly translated "apostle"). Two unnamed brethren in II Cor. 8:23 are referred to as "the messengers of the churches", and the Greek word for "messengers" is "apostoloi". Therefore, Barnabas may have been called an "apostle" in the same sense as these latter cases cited.

There are some who think Matthias was not a genuine apostle, for Peter led in his selection during those days of waiting before the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:15-26). No matter how acceptable the argument may sound against Matthias's apostleship, I believe we are forced to the conclusion that God did recognize him as an apostle. On Pentecost, the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. When Peter stood up to explain to the multitude what had happened, Acts 2:14 says:

"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said..."

Notice that he stood up with "the eleven". That included Matthias. But, if he was not an apostle of Christ, it would have been so indicated by his not being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as late as Acts 6:2, we still read of "the twelve". Matthias was standing side-by-side with the apostles and served with them. No doubt, then, God must have been behind the appointment of Matthias to succeed Judas.

I. The Apostles During Jesus' Days On Earth.

A. His Relationships To Them.

Following His baptism and temptation period, Jesus appeared at Bethabara where John was baptizing. When John introduced Him as the Lamb of God, two of John's disciples (Andrew and probably John) followed after Jesus of their own accord (John 1:28-40). Andrew brought his brother Peter to Him (John 1:40-42). The next day, when Jesus would leave for Galilee, He called a man by the name of Phillip to follow Him (John 1:43,44). Phillip found Nathanael (thought to have been the same as Bartholomew) and brought him to Jesus (John 1:45-51). The next chapter opens telling of Jesus, His mother, and "his disciples" attending the wedding at Cana (John 2:1,2). As far as we know, these

"disciples" were Andrew, Peter, John, Philip, and Nathanael. They were not apostles as yet--just disciples or followers.

They were with Him when He went to Capernaum following the wedding (John 2:12). They were with Him at the next passover in Jerusalem (John 2:18-22). When He stayed in Judea for a period of ministry, they were with Him (John 3:22) and did the actual baptizing for Him (John 4:1,2).

After they returned to Galilee, the men returned to their homes and fishing near Capernaum while Jesus went to Nazareth. After His first rejection at Nazareth, He found them washing and mending their nets along the Sea of Galilee. It was here, and at this time, that He formally called four of them (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to cease their business pursuits and launch forth with Him in the work of preaching and teaching. Mark 1:17,18 says:

"Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him."

We later read of Him calling Matthew (called "Levi" in Luke 5:27ff), who likewise dropped his business (tax-collecting) to follow Jesus (Matt. 9:9). Where and when He summoned the others from their occupations, we are not told.

These whom He would distinguish from the rest of His followers, He formally appointed near the middle of His ministry (Luke 6:12-17). From this time forward, they were known by the term "apostles" as well as "disciples"

B. His Preparation Of Them For Their Work.

Wherever He went, they were with Him. This was necessary, for they were to become His witnesses to others (Acts 1:8). They were to be convinced of His deity and confirmed in that belief many times through association with and observation of Him. At a time when many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more, He asked them what they were going to. Would they also depart? Their faith is expressed by Peter, when he said:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68,69).

Their message concerning Jesus was one of first-hand information. John wrote:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3).

When forbidden to preach Jesus any longer, Peter and John answered:

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

It was also necessary for Him to prepare them for their work by teaching them many things. They heard Him in the various places where He went teaching. They were present upon such occasions as the preaching of the sermon on the

mount. They were there when He preached His sermon in parables concerning the coming kingdom. In addition, He even interpreted some of His parables to them privately (Matt. 13).

As he entered His third and final year of ministry, He realized that He must segregate the apostles from the multitude to give them special teaching and training. There were things they needed to be taught lest their faith would fail when the time of His trial and crucifixion came. Even as it was, their faith received a severe testing. What would have happened had He not spent these six months with them? Furthermore, they needed to be taken from the lime-light of big crowds and great activity. There are numerous indications of earthly-mindedness upon their parts that must have been a great concern to Jesus. They needed privacy. They needed special attention. They needed to be apart by themselves so Jesus could talk to them personally. Self-seeking and arrogance characterized them instead of the spirit of humility that they should have had. Therefore, the first six months of Jesus' last year of ministry were very important, and they form one of the most interesting sections of study in the life of Christ. The book, "The Training of the Twelve," by A. B. Bruce contains a wealth of profitable reading along this line.

One of the hardest lessons to get across to them was that He must die. It was during this period that He broke the news to them. Peter rebuked Him when He first talked of it to them (Matt. 16:21,22). He and the other apostles shared the common Jewish idea that the Messiah would triumph over all. Thus, in their thinking, Jesus was merely expressing despondency over the turn of events whereas He was actually foretelling to them what must take place. Not grasping what He said about the crucifixion, it is no wonder they didn't grasp what He said about the resurrection (Mark 9:9,10).

We cannot take the space to comment upon His washing of their feet, the lesson from the cursed fig tree, and the blessing of the children. But, all of these and other well known incidents in the life of Jesus had a direct bearing upon His preparation of the apostles for their work. Space also fails us to go into detail concerning His great farewell message to them (recorded in three chapters of John--14, 15,16) and of His intercessory prayer for them the same night (John 17:6-19).

When the dark hour of the betrayal took place, all forsook Him (Matt. 26:56). That very night, Peter denied Him time and again, and it is probable that it was yet that night when Judas, who had betrayed Him, remorsefully hanged himself. Only John is mentioned as being close to the cross with the weeping women (John 19:25-27). Their lack of understanding was likely the determining factor for the apostles' actions at that time. But, when He had arisen from the dead, He spent forty days with them, demonstrating to them--His appointed witnessess--the reality of His resurrection and teaching them further concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Concerning His first meeting with them following the resurrection, Luke 24:44-48 records the following:

"He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

II. The Work Jesus Assigned Them To Do.

A. His Promise To Them.

The apostles were present when the rich young ruler failed to sell all his possessions and follow Jesus. This brought to Peter's mind that they had left all to follow Jesus. He asked Jesus what they would have as a result. Jesus answered:

"Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me (the apostles), in the regeneration (the gospel age) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones (as authorities), judging the twelve tribes of Israel (the people of God)" (Matt. 19:28).

In the Christian dispensation, the apostles have been made Christ's inspired teachers. Their word is authoritative. We notice that the church continued in what they taught (Acts 2:42). When some doctrinal dispute arose, the matter was referred to them for settlement, such as the question of circumcising the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-31). When the apostles had given their judgment, their decree was delivered to the churches to abide by (Acts 16:4). Their all-important divine office actually made them a part of the foundation upon which the entire super-structure of Christianity rests (Eph. 2:19,20).

B. His Commission To Them.

In those pre-ascension days when Jesus was speaking to them concerning the coming kingdom, He outlined the work which they were to do. A complete picture of His instructions to them can be obtained only by consulting the several accounts of it:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19,20); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16); "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48); "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you... Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21,23); "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This commissioned them as the personal witnesses and

representatives of Jesus to do all that He commanded them to do. Their ministry was to be to all the nations and to the end of time. (Their teaching was first orally done, but they still teach through their written records.) They were to begin in Jerusalem after the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost world. Those who received them and believed in the Christ whom they preached were to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Forgiveness of sins is only realized by complying with the terms of pardon laid down by these apostles.) Those baptized were then to be taught the whole counsel of Jesus as taught to the apostles by Him. He closed with a promise of His presence with them.

C. His Empowering Of Them.

Teaching the people all things that Jesus commanded them was both a big task from the standpoint of remembering each thing and an *important* task from the standpoint of the people knowing and doing the will of Christ. They were subject to forgetfulness if left unaided by Heaven. There were also some things that Jesus had not taught them because they were not in a state of spiritual comprehension of them. They were going to need supernatural help. This help, Jesus was going to send them in the coming of the Holy Spirit to them:

"The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Following His ascension, they were to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4,5). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4), and they commenced their apostolic labors. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus also empowered them to work miracles by which their preaching was confirmed unto the people as from God (Mark 16:17-20).

D. Their Victorious Beginning In Jerusalem.

How the apostles must have been thrilled upon many occasions as they witnessed their Master teaching vast throngs of people! But, public sentiment had turned against Jesus at the time of the crucifixion. What a small handful His followers were to whom He gave the great commission! What odds they were going to face! And in that commission, He had told them to start in Jerusalem! He probably could have picked many easier places, they probably thought, to begin. What success would they have? How would they begin? These things remained unanswered in the apostles' minds as they tarried and waited.

Then came the day of Pentecost. Jews from all over the Roman Empire had assembled in Jerusalem for the annual feast. The twelve were all gathered together "sitting" when, unexpected by them, things began to happen. They possibly had come together for another day of prayer when God dispatched the Holy Spirit from heaven to them. They spoke in other languages. The cloven tongues like fire sat upon them. Word of these unusual happenings began to spread. People came to see and hear. Every man heard these men speak in his own tongue the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). Some honestly wondered what it all

meant. Others of a lighter mind mocked the apostles, saying they were full of new wine. At this stage, the Spirit prompted Peter (to whom Jesus had personally promised the keys of the kingdom, Matt. 16:19) to rise and speak. He told them that what they were witnessing was what Joel (in their own Scriptures) had prophesied; that is, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And following this explanation, while he had their attention, he proceeded to preach Jesus and the gospel. Spell-bound, convicted, humbled--it became unbearable when he told them that they had actually been guilty of crucifying the Messiah. In contrition, they burst out with a question as to what they must do. As quick as a flash, and in keeping with the great commission, Peter said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38,39).

The results of his preaching and exhorting--a whole three thousand converts! And no doubt, many others went to their lodging places that day thinking. What a wonderful beginning! Everything, however, was not going to favor Christianity, as they soon found out. But, Christ was with them, and they knew it, and the fine start that Christianity had in Jerusalem, its city of inception, was such that there is still Christianity in the world today--even thousands of miles from the city of its beginning. The Bible book, "Acts of Apostles," is a thrilling story of their heroic preaching and God-blest results. And as congregations came into existence, apostolic letters were written to them, and thus we have the epistolary section of the New Testament. There was a need for written records of the life of Jesus, and the four gospel accounts came into existence. Finally, all the apostles were dead except John. He was on the prison island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. There on that bleak island, with land and sea as a stage and with the heavens as a screen, Christ unfolded in symbolic form the future "ups and downs" and the ultimate triumph of the church recorded by John for us in the book of Revelation.

What a grand group of men--not perfect, for they were human, but devoted to the Master who had called them and walked with them. They have no successors, for we have all things that pertain to life and godliness through the teachings that they have left. There are no qualifications given for any successors. They need none. Their work goes on just as Jesus had planned that it would. We believe on Him today "through their word" (John 17:20). We contend earnest for the faith delivered once for all through them. And when we have left this earth and soar to that upper and better city, as we walk up the incline to enter those great gates of pearl, we shall take note of the great wall of the city built upon the twelve foundations of precious stones, and notice what we shall see:

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14).

Having been humbled and mistreated, they shall be exalted; having suffered, they shall reign. May we ever hold

them, through their writings, in our highest regard and respect as the Christ ordained that we should. Let us continue steadfastly "in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

The "Church-and-Kingdom" Question

When I was seventeen years of age, I was given a Bible school class of young people to teach. As I look back now, I realize I was not prepared to teach such a class, for there were so many important things in the Bible that were as yet foreign to my understanding. But, I was willing to learn and to serve, so I accepted and began my teaching work. One thing that I was determined to do as I accepted the class was to familiarize myself with the Bible so I would be in a position to answer the questions that might be asked me as the teacher. For years, I had observed the way that teachers had fumbled around with sincere questions asked--maybe giving no answer, maybe asking the other pupils in the class what they thought, maybe giving such a vague answer that I could see the class recognizing the inadequate preparation of the teacher. I knew young people would ask questions, and though I was young myself, I wanted to be able to give them Bible answers to as many of their questions as I could. Thus, I embarked first upon reading the New Testament through. Being heartily engaged in vocational work, I found it difficult to discipline my mind when I read the New Testament. During that time through the New Testament, I often found my mind wandering clear off the words that my eyes were reading onto other things. Naturally, I did not profit much from my reading. When I finished the New Testament, I realized I hadn't gotten too much from my reading. What was I going to do? Start back through it again or just give it up as a fruitless endeavor? That day, I made an important decision!

I said to myself, "The Bible is right. It is my fault that I didn't get more out of my reading. There is plenty in there, and I am going to discipline myself to go back and keep my mind on my reading until I learn what's in it." And so I started back through the New Testament. In just a matter of days, I heard a preacher on the radio make the statement that the church and the kingdom were two different things and, furthermore, that the kingdom of God was one thing and the kingdom of heaven something else. As I listened, I said to myself, "If that's true, I've learned something." I had heard Brother McMorrow bring out in his preaching that the church and the kingdom were one and the same thing. Now, what was right? I decided that as I went through the New Testament that second time, I would catalog all the references I came across in my reading that used the term "kingdom of God". I would

make another list of those passages that used "kingdom of heaven" and a third list of passages that used "church". My Bible reading took on new meaning as I "searched the Scriptures" to find out what was right. Before I tell you the results of that--my first real Bible study--let me tell you that when I finished going through my New Testament that second time, I was ready to begin all over again upon what the Bible taught about worldly amusements and worldly habits. I wanted that material to teach the young people who were at the right age for such teaching. By the time I got ready to start through the New Testament the fourth time, I had more than one subject to glean upon as I pursued my reading and searching. During those three years before I left home to preach the gospel, I had studied out many subjects like the above in my fourteen times through the New Testament. Since then, I have endeavored to work through my Old Testament studies likewise as well as keep up with New Testament studies. By such practice, I have learned that in order to discipline one's mind to what he is reading, he must be getting something out of his reading, and in order to get something out of his reading, he must be looking for something, studying some subject, working out some study project, or however you may want to state it.

Now for the results of my study on the kingdom question. I had a list of references on "kingdom of heaven", another on "kingdom of God", another on "church", and a miscellaneous list that included such expressions as "my kingdom", "kingdom of Christ and of God," "kingdom of God's dear Son," "kingdom" (unspecified), etc. Were all of these different kingdoms? Why had the radio preacher stopped with but two (kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven) when there could be others (following his line of reasoning)? What about those many passages where the word "kingdom" was used by itself? Which kingdom did those references belong to? Order came out of chaos when I noticed that "kingdom of heaven" was used only in the book of Matthew and that he used that expression where the other gospel accounts employed "kingdom of God". For instance, Matt. 13:31 says the "kingdom of heaven" is like unto a grain of mustard seed. In telling the same parable, Mark 4:30,31 says the "kingdom of God" is like a grain of mustard seed. The radio preacher's distinction between the two terms was found to be a false distinction, and I found nothing to confirm his distinction between the kingdom and the church, but everything to deny that such a distinction existed.

So much for the above study. We wish also to refer to the denominational position that the church is one thing and the kingdom another--that the church was established in the days of the apostles, but that the kingdom will not be established until Jesus comes. In our study, we shall be refuting this teaching as false.

We are having this study because it is so important to have a clear understanding of the question under consideration.

I believe that people's misunderstanding of this subject would clear up if they but realized that the Bible uses the term "kingdom" in two different ways. The two divisions of this study will treat those two ways.

I. The Kingdom On Earth Is The Church.

There is no doubt but what the church is God's kingdom upon the earth. The following points are given as substantial Scriptural proof of that fact.

A. Proof From What Jesus Said When Instituting the Lord's Supper.

When Jesus was instituting the Lord's supper, He said concerning the cup:

"I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"
(Mark 14:25).

In the Lord's supper, we commune with Jesus. We have the Lord's supper "in the kingdom of God" today. Here the term "kingdom of God" unmistakably refers to the church. We are to observe the Lord's Supper until He comes (I Cor. 11:26). With Jesus with us in person, we won't have the supper by which to "remember" Him. How could Mark 14:25 be fulfilled except in the church?

B. Proof From The Time Of The Setting Up Of The Kingdom.

Jesus (Matt. 4:17), together with John (Matt. 3:1,2), was preaching the approach of the kingdom. He taught His disciples to pray that it would come (Matt. 6:10). He went onto say that that kingdom would come during the lifetime of the apostles:

"Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power"
(Mark 9:1).

The church was established during the lifetime of the apostles. What else came during their lifetime that could in anyway be the fulfillment of Mark 9:1? Upon the truthfulness of Jesus, the kingdom has already come!

Furthermore, as we showed in a former study, the kingdom was to be established during the days of the kings of the fourth element in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan. 2:31-44--particularly verse 44). Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome were the historical fulfillment of those four elements. Then, the kingdom was to be set up in the days of the Roman kings. Jesus came when the Roman kings were ruling the world, and the church was set up in the days of those kings. What else that might answer to the kingdom was set up in those days?

If one takes the position that the church is the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament and of the kingdom preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve (Matt. 10:5-7) and the seventy (Luke 10:9), then all of it makes sense, but if the establishment of the church was not the fulfillment of those prophecies, then confusion necessarily reigns!

C. Proof From The Fact That Jesus Is Now King.

Where there is a king, there must be a kingdom. The apostles preached that Jesus is now ruling upon the throne of David (Acts 2:29-33) and that God has made Him "Lord" (Acts 2:36), which means "ruler". Paul said that he preached Christ Jesus as "Lord" (II Cor. 4:5), and he taught that every word should be said and every deed

should be performed in obedience to Jesus (Col. 3:17). Jesus Himself claimed that all authority had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18), and Paul preached that He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). The people in Thessalonica understood that Paul was preaching that Jesus was already a king (Acts 17:6,7)--not that He is to become a king at His second coming. In the study on the ascension, we pointed out that Jesus was coronated king upon His arrival in heaven (Dan. 7:13,14). He is a king today, and He has a kingdom as the succeeding points will show.

D. Proof From A Consideration Of The New Birth.

Gospel preachers have always preached the necessity of the new birth as outlined in John 3:3-6. It has been one of their sermons in that important field of "What a Sinner Must Do to be Saved!" They have shown that the terms of pardon as set forth in the great commission (Mark 16:15,16) are parallel with the new birth of John 3:5. They have shown that the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts are fulfillments of what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5. Now we know that compliance with the terms of pardon brings one into the church. What does the new birth bring one into? The "kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Then, the church is the kingdom referred to in John 3:5.

E. Proof From What Jesus Said In Matt. 16:18,19.

In one breath, Jesus said He was going to build His "church", and in the next breath, He promised Peter the keys to it under the term "kingdom":

"Upon this rock I will build my church. . . And I will give unto thee (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18,19).

Furthermore from the above passage, Peter was given the keys of the kingdom. When did he begin using those keys? On the day of Pentecost when he preached the gospel and the terms of salvation. When men conformed to those terms, what did they enter? The church (Acts 2:38, 41,47). Then, when Jesus promised Peter the keys of the "kingdom", He was talking about Peter admitting men to the "church".

F. Proof From What Paul Wrote In Col. 1:13.

In that verse, Paul wrote:

"(God) who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Notice that Paul was already in the kingdom. Notice that those to whom he wrote were also in the kingdom. To whom was he writing? To the church at Colosse! Then, those who were in the Colossian church were said to be in the kingdom. Why? Because the church is the kingdom of God upon the earth--they have Jesus as the king of their lives!

G. Proof From What John Wrote In Rev.1:9.

Writing to the people in the seven churches of Asia, the apostle John said of himself:

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

Notice that John spoke of himself as being in the king-

dom at that time, and his "also" indicates that those to whom he wrote were likewise brethren and companions in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

In closing this section of study, we ask: Why should it be thought strange that the term "kingdom" is used with relation to the church? The church is called a "body" (Col. 1:18), for He is its head. It is called a "flock" (Acts 20:28), for He is the good shepherd who has laid down His life for the sheep. It is called by many other terms. Why should it be strange that it also be spoken of as a "kingdom" when Jesus Himself is the king over His people?

There are other considerations that could be given, but these must suffice, for we must give attention to the second sense in which the word "kingdom" is used in the Bible.

II. The Heavenly Kingdom.

A. The Bible Also Employs The Word "Kingdom" In A Future Sense And That Is Not Limited To Those In The Church On The Earth.

To those who were in the church, Peter's second epistle said to add the various virtues. In so doing, he said:

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11).

Notice the word "entrance". Notice that these words were written to those who were in the church. Doing this would bring them "into" something that they were evidently not in as yet. The reference is undoubtedly to entering heaven itself.

I Cor. 15:50 is another passage that used the word "kingdom" with reference to heaven:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

He has been talking of the bodily change to take place at the resurrection on the part of those who will be raised to go to heaven. Then, in the above passage, he shows that a similar bodily change must take place on the part of those who will be living when Jesus comes. They must be changed, he says, because flesh and blood cannot inherit "the kingdom of God"--something that will be entered after this life is over.

This must be the sense in which Jesus used the word "kingdom" in Matt. 8:11:

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

They were never a part of the kingdom that Jesus promised to establish during the lifetime of the apostles. They had been dead for many centuries. But, they will be a part of that grand company that will gather in heaven--here spoken of as the "kingdom of heaven".

This must be the sense in which Paul used "kingdom" in Gal. 5:21 and I Cor. 6:9. In both cases, he was writing to people who were in the church, and he was warning them about living in wickedness, stating that if they did not live as they should, they would not inherit the kingdom of God.

When will men inherit that heavenly kingdom? In eternity. In judgment, when Jesus will sit upon His judgment throne, He will say to those saints of God on His right hand:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Notice that these who are told to inherit the kingdom are said in verse 46 to go into "life eternal" (heaven as contrasted with hell in that verse). A similar paralleling of "kingdom of God" with "life" is found in Mark 9:45 ("life") and Mark 9:47 ("kingdom of God"), both being again contrasts with hell in the context.

B. But, This Kingdom Will Be In Heaven--Not On Earth.

In speaking of that kingdom that was yet future, in one of the very last verses that we have from the pen of the apostle Paul, he wrote:

"The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (II Tim. 4:18).

Notice three things concerning this kingdom: (1) it was future from the last days of Paul; (2) Paul would be in it and (3) it will be a heavenly kingdom--not an earthly kingdom. Those sectarian teachers who teach that Jesus is coming to set up a kingdom teach that He is coming to set up His kingdom upon the earth. But, that is not the way the Bible says. That kingdom which the saints will enter when Jesus comes will not be one on this earth--it will be a heavenly kingdom.

To summarize: Daniel prophesied that God was going to set up His kingdom in the days of the Roman kings. John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy in their preaching before the cross preached that that kingdom was at hand in their day. Jesus, who was to be the king over that kingdom, said it would come during the lifetime of the apostles, promising Peter the keys to it. He told Nicodemus that a person had to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter it and upon one occasion used the term "church" interchangeably with it. On the day of Pentecost that kingdom was set up as the church over which Jesus today is reigning as head. The heavenly inheritance into which the saints will come when Jesus comes again is spoken of as inheriting the kingdom of heaven. In order to enter it, a Christian must faithfully serve the Christ-king here on the earth, adding the various Christian graces in order that he might be counted among the heirs. There are a number of related discussions that we could enter into, but the above summary is a Scriptural digest of the teaching set forth in the Bible.

In closing, there are several things wrong with the denominational teaching that there is no kingdom of God yet, but that Jesus will set it up right here on the earth when He returns. Those mistakes are: (1) it belittles the church (for which denominationalism has long been famous); (2) it makes void John the Baptist's and Jesus' teaching that the kingdom was "at hand" in their day; (3) it denies the truthfulness of Jesus' promise to His apostles that the kingdom would come in their day (Mark 9:1); (4) it teaches that Jesus is going to come to stay with His people upon

the earth whereas the Bible teaches that He is coming to take His people to be with Him (John 14:1-3 and I Thess. 4:16,17); (5) it denies that Jesus is now king ruling upon the throne of David; and (6) it teaches that He is coming to set up His kingdom upon the earth whereas the Scripture says He is coming to deliver up the kingdom to the God of heaven (I Cor. 15: 24) so that those who have been in His kingdom here on the earth may be a part of that great company who will inherit the kingdom which is above.

Yes, praise the Lord, we can be in the kingdom of God while yet upon earth and then be a part of that wonderful company in His upper and better kingdom in heaven throughout all eternity. Let all, therefore, seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness even before they do food and clothing (Matt. 6:33), and having found it, let them be faithful to their king (Jesus), adding to their faith the various Christian graces that they might be among that number who will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the saints of all times in that heavenly kingdom to which Paul looked with great anticipation as he neared the close of his faithful life (II Tim. 4:18).

The Law and the Gospel

We are to "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). Otherwise, we cannot be approved of God. So many people have Bibles, but understand so little about them.

Several years ago, when conducting a revival meeting, a preacher and I were calling on an elderly lady. He inquired as to whether she attended church services anywhere, and she told us she was no longer able to do so. He asked her if her eyes were strong enough for her to read much, and she answered that they were. He asked if she had a Bible, and she assured us that she did. He then asked if she read her Bible, and once more the answer was a "yes". When he asked if she understood the Bible, she said that she didn't, though she had been reading from it every day for years. He asked her if she would like for us to help her understand her Bible better, and she gratefully said that she would. In all my years of personal work, somehow I had never thought of using the above approach upon a person, but it was exactly the approach that Philip used upon the eunuch (Acts 8:30,31). I proceeded to show her the plan of God as it unfolded itself through the Old Testament and New Testament, showing that the Old Testament looked particularly to the coming of Christ, that Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected for our salvation, and that after His death, His testament went into force by which we can have that salvation appropriated to us individually. All the material that I handled seemed to be familiar to the woman, but even in its simplicity, it was a revelation to her that she

could grasp, but had never seen before. She represents vast multitudes of daily Bible readers who have not been taught the proper divisions of the Bible.

In this study, it is our intention to help people understand their Bibles better by providing a study upon the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. One can certainly not be considered a mature Bible student who does not at once distinguish between the law and the gospel.

I. The Law Was In Effect For 1,500 Years Before Christ. The Gospel Is In Effect Now.

A. The Law.

As all Bible readers and students know, God gave the law at Mt. Sinai about fifteen hundred years before the coming of Christ. Because this great event was covered in detail in the study, "The Law Given at Sinai," we shall not discuss the *giving* of the law in this study. Rather, we shall consider the *duration* of the law.

The Bible teaches that the law remained in effect until the cross of Christ. This can be easily and clearly shown, as we shall plan to do below.

During the days of Jesus' ministry, the law of Moses was still in effect. He told a leper whom He had cleansed to offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded cleansed lepers to offer (Matt. 8:4). This He would not have done had that law not yet been in effect. God called Abraham and made special promises to him. Several hundred years later, God added the law of Moses. Gal. 3:19 tells us how long the law that was added was to be in force:

"It was added because of transgressions, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE WAS MADE."

Verse 16 of that same chapter points out Christ as the seed that was to come. Then, sometime after Jesus came, or connected with His earthly sojourn, the law was to be abrogated. Gal. 3:24,25 carries the discussion farther:

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

The law was the schoolmaster. It was to bring us to Christ. Since the time of faith in Christ came, the law is no longer in effect. This is the gist of Paul's inspired reasoning.

As we shall see, the new covenant went into effect on the day of Pentecost fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Heb. 10:9 shows that the first covenant was taken away sometime prior to the inauguration of the new:

"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

They are not both in effect today. They never were both in effect at the same time. He took away the first covenant in order that He might establish the second or new covenant. To summarize: we have seen that the law was still in effect during the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus (Matt. 8:4); we have also seen that it

was to be taken away sometime before the day of Pentecost when the new went into effect. Now, when was the precise time and place where the law was abrogated? At the cross:

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS" (Col. 2:14).

Eph. 2:14-16 is another splendid passage showing that the law of Moses was abrogated in Jesus' death.

In spite of the fact that the Bible is so clear upon these things, there are some who still cling to the sabbath law and the clean-and-unclean-meats dietary laws of the law of Moses. Many others, who do not keep Saturday nor make a Mosaic distinction in meats, talk glibly about keeping the Ten Commandments. I think I have hardly conducted a revival meeting but what some good-intending person told me that she thought if people just kept the Ten Commandments, they wouldn't have too much to worry about. Yet, when asked to name the Ten Commandments, they usually can't get more than about five or six of them. (It looks like if those commandments were the way to heaven, those people would have them well memorized--especially since they are so brief--and be sure they are living up to them.) But, the truth of the matter is, the Ten Commandments were a part of the law of Moses, or if we might speak even a little more exactly, they were a brief elaboration upon the two basic ideas of the law--love for God and love for one's neighbor (Matt. 22:26-29). One who loved God would surely keep the first four commandments, and one who loved his neighbor as himself would surely keep the last six. But, to speak even more at length upon the Ten Commandments, they were but the abbreviation of the will of God for the Israelites of which the entire law was a complete elaboration.

To those who say the Ten Commandments will save an individual, let us point out this fact: if one can be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, he can be saved without Christ, for there is no mention of Christ in them--not even a prediction of His coming. Incidentally, men had the Ten Commandments before Christ came. If they could have saved men why did God send Jesus? Furthermore, as Christians, Christ has given us a much higher and more complete law by which to live than is found in the Ten Commandments. For instance, love is not commanded in the Ten Commandments; neither is kindness; neither is prayer; neither are many, many other important matters of the Christian life. Furthermore, one could keep the Ten Commandments and yet get drunk, for the Ten Commandments say nothing against drunkenness; neither do they legislate against anger--you could get as angry as you wanted to just so long as you didn't murder a person (wouldn't that leave a lot of lee-way?); furthermore, there is no condemnation of either pride or hypocrisy in the Ten Commandments.

We are not belittling the Ten Commandments. We are just saying that they were a part of the law of Moses that was nailed to the cross. They, like the rest of the law of Moses, were for the Israelites who lived between

Moses' time and Jesus' time.

B. The Gospel.

As we have before pointed out, the central facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:1-4). Therefore, the gospel of Christ could not have been preached as a completed message before those events took place. It is noticeable that *after* Jesus came back from the dead, He commissioned His apostles to go forth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15). Their preaching was to be worldwide (Matt. 28:19), and it was to begin in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). They were to wait to begin until the Holy Spirit had come upon them (Luke 24:49), which came to pass on the day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' ascension.

This message is to be in effect until the end of the world when Jesus comes (Matt. 28:20). Instead of supposing that any message is all right, we are told to contend earnestly for that faith which was once for all time delivered to the saints by these inspired men (Jude 3). Christ's death was executed once never to be done again (Heb. 7:27 and Heb. 9:28). He entered into the heavenly tabernacle with His blood for our sins once never to be repeated (Heb. 9:12). In the same Biblical language, He delivered the message of salvation once never to be redone, improved upon, or recast (Jude 3). Instead of agreeing with one who would preach another message, we are to let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9).

In view of the fact that the new testament is still in force, it is pathetic that so many people are calling the gospel out-of-date. It is too bad to hear people criticize gospel preaching as they do. It is disastrous that so many are substituting human ideas and human plans for it. And it is equally pathetic the way that many who profess to believe it are doing little about obeying it or telling it to others!

It should be said of every congregation as it was said of that very first congregation (the Jerusalem congregation):

"They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

We are still under the apostles' doctrine, and we shall be judged as disbelievers and disobedient by Jesus at His coming if we have not "kept the faith".

II. The Law Was For The Israelites. The Gospel Is For All People.

A. The Law.

There was only one nation of people present at Mt. Sinai when God gave the law (the Israelites). He did not tell them to go out and proclaim that message to the other peoples of the earth (though He did make provision for any to become a part of the old covenant if they wished to). In other words, nobody but an Israelite was ever commanded to keep the law of Moses in either the Old or New Testament. But, with the gospel, it is different.

B. The Gospel.

The prejudice of the Jews of the apostles' day kept

them from seeing that even their Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the universality of blessing under the coming Messiah. "All nations" were to be blest through Him, according to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:18). "All nations" were to flow unto the house of God when it was established (Isa. 2:2). The succeeding verses (Isa. 2:3, 4) shows that these many people from all the nations would learn God's will and walk in it. But, the Jews, like many people today, saw in their Scriptures only those things that appealed to them.

Yes, the gospel is for all. The birth of Jesus was announced by the angel as that which would be good news for "all people" (Luke 2:10,11). The gospel is God's power to save *everyone* who believes--both the Jew and the Greek (Rom. 1:16). As a result of having destroyed the barrier existing between Jew and Gentile at the cross, Christ is making of the *two* one new man (Eph. 2:11-14). The Gentiles, we are told in the foregoing message, who were "afar off" before the death of the Christ are now made "nigh"--just like the Jews. As far as salvation is concerned, the gospel knows nothing of earth's distinctions. Gal. 3:28 says:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

What an unscriptural thing to say that those of another race or nation should not be evangelized! And what an unscriptural thing it is for those who agree all right that they should be evangelized, but who deny them fellowship in any of their own congregations! We are not advocating the inter-marriage of races, nor are we legislating what our nation or any other nation should do in governmental and social problems connected with the racial question, but we are saying that in the church, it is already settled what we should do as regards the matter of Christian fellowship. Every expression of Christian fellowship within a congregation should be accorded to Christians of another color or nationality as would be accorded to one of our own race or nationality. There is no respect of persons with God. To go into a small community, where there should be but one congregation from the standpoint of size, and there find two churches (one white and one colored) is unscriptural, and the apostle Paul who fought for the oneness of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (a difference as wide or wider in the apostles' day than the white and-black question in our day) would spare no rod in condemning such a practice today. What the apostles fought to win at the circumcision council at Jerusalem is wickedly forfeited by such a practice. If I were a colored person who had accepted Christ, and I moved into the northland where few colored people live, I would expect to be received into fellowship by any congregation that was following the Bible even though I was the only colored person among them. If I as a white man lived in a community of the south where the only group representing the church of the Lord Jesus was composed of colored people, I would place my fellowship with them and worship with them in harmony with the fact that Christians are actually "one in Christ Jesus" regardless of their racial, national,

social, and sex differences. This may not be according to present-day practices, but, brethren, it is Bible--nobody can deny it--and if it is Bible, it is out to be abided by if we truthfully take the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice!

III. The Gospel Saves. The Law Couldn't.

A. Evidence From The Book Of Romans.

Rom. 8:1 says that there is no condemnation before God of those who are in Christ, walking after the Spirit (new covenant people). Verses 3 and 4 read:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us (new covenant people)."

What the law couldn't do, the gospel is able to do! Thank the Lord, then, for the gospel--the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16).

B. Evidence From The Book Of Hebrews.

Concerning the inability of the law and its sacrifices to take away sins, Heb. 10:1-4 says:

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

The law had only a shadow of good things to come. The law with its sacrifices can never make its adherents perfect or uncondemned before God. Instead of remitting sins, those continual sacrifices brought a remembrance again of their guilt. In contrast, notice the difference in the new covenant:

"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and THEIR SINS AND THEIR INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE" (Heb. 8:10-12).

The new covenant is a covenant of mercy. What the law could not do (remit sins), the gospel can.

C. Evidence From The Book Of Acts.

When Paul was on his first evangelistic tour, he preached to the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia the following concerning Jesus:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).

D. Evidence From The Book Of II Corinthians.

A careful study of the third chapter of II Corinthians would reveal the following facts: (1) the new testament is spoken of as the "spirit" that "gives life" while the old testament is spoken of as the "letter" that "kills" (Note--Paul is not using those terms to contrast literally doing what the Bible teaches from those who disregard doctrine but insist upon a heart-felt religion); (2) Paul said that that which was engraven in stones (the old covenant) was the "ministration of death"; and (3) he called the old covenant the "ministry of condemnation", but the new covenant the "ministration of righteousness".

There are many other significant contrasts between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, but the three considered in this study should fulfill the wish to help people better understand their Bibles and be able to understand where these two covenants fit into the plan of God.

The Two Sides of Salvation

If a man falls into a well of shallow water and is unable to get out by himself, he may cry aloud so that a neighbor hears him and lowers a ladder into the well, but unless the victim himself climbs out by means of the ladder provided, he will not get out. What the victim could not do for himself, another did for him, but still there was an individual task he had to do to be saved through the help offered him--he had to use the ladder provided for him. Again, a man might be found in a starving condition. He has no bread in the house, and he is too poor to buy more and too weak to go get it if he had the money to buy it. So, a friend finding him in that condition brings him some food. But, unless the man partakes of the food provided for him, he will still starve to death. Just so, God has beheld man in his helpless plight and has provided salvation for him, but unless man partakes of the salvation God has provided, it will not save him.

I would like you to get the difference vividly in mind between "providing" salvation and "partaking" of salvation. There is a vast difference, and both are important and essential to any sinner's salvation. The Bible abundantly shows that man cannot provide himself with salvation--God alone can do this. But, the Bible also shows that man must partake of salvation personally and individually, or he has no salvation. Some of the errors into which men fall by not making this proper distinction will be dealt with a little later. But, now to a consideration of those two sides of salvation.

I. God Does The Providing.

A. What God Saw As He Looked Down Upon Man.

He saw that man who had started out in a state of innocence had gone into sin.

"All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6).

The modernists picture man as starting out as a vicious savage who has grown steadily better with the passing of time. But, there is an error or two here. It is true that civilization comes along and picks man up a practical savage and works a marked improvement upon him in most every known field of earthly and social progress. But, this is after thousands of years of sinning and isolation from God have left such men outcasts. Adam as he came from the hand of God and the human family as it began its course were far different from the uncivilized savage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rom. 1:21ff shows that men started with a knowledge of God, but have increasingly become worse instead of better. When Jesus came, He found men on the downward slide--not the upward grade.

When God looked down upon the human race, He saw a sinful and selfish world well described in Tit. 3:3:

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Or as Col. 1:21 described the situation, men were alienated from God and enemies of God through wickedness. God's inspired picture of the Gentile world following the flood is drawn for us in Rom. 1:22-32--a most gruesome, but not exaggerated, picture:

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The Jews were always ready to pass judgment on the Gentiles, but Paul showed them in the second and third chapters of Romans (the chapters that immediately follow the extended quotation above concerning the Gentiles) that they had no right to say anything about the Gentiles, for they were guilty of the same things (Rom. 2:1). Paul could go right to their own Old Testament Scriptures and show that they were sinners also, and this he did beginning in Rom. 3:10:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:10-18).

I think we will admit that the above picture of the Jews is little better than the picture of the Gentiles in Rom. 1. Paul said:

"There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...Every mouth may be stopped (of boasting), and all the world (everybody) may become guilty (condemned) before God" (Rom. 3:23,19).

This was what met God's view. Yet, as we read the Bible, we can see that He saw something else too. The Psalmist raised this question:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:4).

What is he? He has been made in the image of God. God set him over the works of His creative hands. Like the coin that has lain in the gutter until covered with dirt and filth, yet with the government's E. Pluribus Unum still on it, man had gone astray and filth had besmirched him, yet he alone was made in the image of God; he alone was created for perpetual fellowship with God. There was something there of vast importance to the Creator, though the present condition itself was not encouraging. Some of humanity, if helped, would do right. There was a possibility that some could be converted from sin and again walk with God, but there were many important things that must be done before that day could become a reality.

B. God Was Minded To Save As Many As Could Be Saved.

The devil might have been able to turn the heart of man against God, but he could not succeed in getting God to keep His wrath against man if man would return to God. A great section of Scripture on this is Psa. 103:8-14:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

He may be angry with the wicked everyday as they now live (Psa. 7:11), but He is willing to forgive them if they will turn from their evil ways. Jonah was so right when he said:

"I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2).

But, Jonah was so wrong in seeking to withhold that mercy from that Gentile city Nineveh. God took him to task about it in the closing verses of the book of Jonah:

"Thou has had pity on the gourd, for the which thou has not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:10,11).

Rom. 11 shows that God dealt with Israel because of unbelief, but if they would repent, He would accept them. He received the Gentiles who believed, but He warned them of a possibility of unbelief also, stating that He would not spare them if unbelieving any more than He had the Israelites.

Such love and concern for humanity was bound to exhibit itself in any way and in every way that was possible for the salvation of those who would be saved.

C. What God Has Done And Will Do For Our Salvation.

Time fails us to elaborate upon this all-important point. But, we can list a number of those things He does to save us. He devised a plan whereby He could be merciful to man and at the same time not unjust to the law of righteousness. He prepared the way throughout Old Testament times for the coming of Jesus. He then sent Jesus and delivered Him up for all of us. Jesus at Calvary paid the price of our redemption. Buried, He rose again for our justification. He called, trained, and commissioned the apostles to make known the good news of pardon and how each one could come into possession of it. He ascended to God with His blood, which God accepted as an atonement for our sins. He dispatched the Holy Spirit to inspire the apostles in their preaching and to convict the hearts of sinners. When men obey the gospel, He forgives their sin, grants them the presence and help of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and gives them the hope of everlasting life. He has placed elders in the church to shepherd and develop these converted lives. He has made each convert a brother or sister to all the other saints, who are to be a source of personal help to him in living for God. He has given access to Himself through prayer, and He chastens when one strays from the fold to bring him to repentance. He has given access to Himself through prayer, and He chastens when one strays from the fold to bring him to repentance. He has given us the assembly of the saints with the Lord's supper, fellowship, prayers, and teaching to maintain our spiritual life. And when Jesus comes back, He will complete everything that is yet to be done. Scripture passages setting forth the above matters almost defy listing, so many are they.

If everything about salvation was merely God's part, all would be saved, for what He has done for one person, He has done for all. Christ died for all (I Tim. 2:6); God loves all (John 3:16); the gospel of salvation has been sent to all (Mark 16:15); and the invitation to salvation is open to all (Rev. 22:17). But, in addition to God's part, there is each individual's part in his own salvation, and what God has called upon us to do individually is just as important to our personal salvation as what God has done for us all.

II. Man Does The Partaking.

A. Men Sometimes Confuse The Partaking With The

Providing.

When you teach the necessity of baptism in order to be saved, there will be those who will respond, "It is Christ that saves--not baptism." But, such people are failing to distinguish between providing salvation and partaking of salvation. Christ saves in the respect of providing salvation, but baptism is a part of man's partaking of or appropriating salvation. The Bible teaches that Christ saves (Acts 4:12), but it also teaches that baptism saves (I Pet. 3:21), and if anybody objects to the phraseology that "baptism saves", that is the very language of I Pet. 3:21. Baptism does not provide salvation (Christ does that), but it is a part of that which a man must personally do if he is to be saved. When I have heard people say, "Jesus saves--not baptism," I have thought of responding, "What would you think if I said, Jesus saves--not faith?" One might as well try to contrast Jesus and faith as Jesus and baptism.

B. Man's Fulfilling His God-Appointed Part Does Not Rule Out God's Grace.

Sometimes people talk as if a person has denied God's grace if he insists upon doing what the Bible says a man must do to be saved. But, obedience to the will of God does not set aside the grace of God. Let me illustrate. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was as much by the grace of God as our salvation--yet they had to follow the leading of God's leader Moses and to walk through the Red Sea. Again, God gave the Israelites the land of Canaan--yet they fought under the will of God for it. Again, God gave the city of Jericho to them--yet they had to march around it, have the trumpets blown, and shout before the walls came down, and then they had to go in and slay the people. Jesus gave parables of great feasts. Those invited did not provide the banquets, but they had to come and partake of them to derive the good and the joy from them. God gives us our daily bread, but that does not exclude man's work in order to obtain it. No, man's doing his part in no way vitiates God's part.

C. God Has A Will For All Responsible Beings, And None Will Be Saved Who Have Not Obeyed That Will.

We say that He has a will for all "responsible" beings. Infants, children still with immature consciences, and those who have not developed mentally are not called upon to render obedience to the gospel. People are to confess with their mouths what they believe in their hearts about Jesus, but such are unable to have faith in their hearts concerning Jesus. But, all who are responsible beings are called upon to render an obedience to God in order to be saved, and this cannot be successfully denied by anyone who will consider the following Scriptures. Jesus said:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

In His closing words of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus demonstrated the security of those who were obedient to His teachings and the calamity sure to fall upon those who didn't. He said:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,

and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24-27).

Jesus having accomplished those things that qualified or perfected Him as a Savior, there was an obedience to Him the necessity of which is pointed out in Heb. 5:9:

"Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Yes, Jesus is the Savior. The above verse states it. But, whom does He save? The obedient. Yes, there is an obedience that leads to salvation. II Thess. 1:7-9 shows that those who do not obey the gospel are to be punished—not rewarded with salvation:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of his power."

We know that Jesus, in His mission to provide salvation, came to do the will of God (Heb. 10:7). Did He do it? Yes. Was it necessary for our salvation that He do it? Would there be any salvation offered today if Jesus had not fulfilled the will of God? Of course not. Jesus had to obey God's will in order to provide our salvation, but God has a will for us to obey too, and unless we obey His will, we cannot partake of salvation! No fact is more frankly taught in the Word of God.

D. Two Necessary Involvements In Partaking Of Salvation.

In order to partake of salvation, one must come to Christ or be in Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). When one is in Christ, he is a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). His sins have been washed away, and he is a new creature in Christ. Does faith alone bring one into Christ? No. Does repentance from sin mark the dividing line between the old life and the new life in Christ? No, but this is involved. Does confession of Christ bring one into a state of forgiveness? No. Many teach, however, faith in Christ, repentance from sin, and a public stand for Christ—then, they promise, them the forgiveness of sins. But, such is not the teaching of the Bible. After one has done all three of these, he is to be baptized, and that is the dividing line between the old life and the new life:

"We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

After one has thus accepted Christ, there is a second thing involved in his partaking of salvation, and that is, he must abide or remain in Christ faithfully. Heb. 3:14 says:

"We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the

beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end".

Jesus Himself said:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:4,6).

Yes, there are two sides of salvation—God's side and our side. God provides the possibility of salvation for all, but not all will be saved, because not all partake of that salvation. If men are lost in eternity, it will not be God's fault, for He made it possible for every soul to be saved, but it will be their own fault for not partaking of the salvation that He provided. Furthermore, we can have this assurance that if we will do our part, there is no question about our salvation, for God will surely do His part. You obey the gospel plan of salvation, and you have no need to fear what you have done in the past. God will put your sin as far from Him as the east is from the west. But, if you obey not the gospel, a fearful eternity faces you. If you have accepted Christ, then abide faithfully in Him each day, walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh, and you can be sure that there is no condemnation upon you. But, if you do not so abide, then fear, for God will not save you in that condition.

Yes, God provides; we must partake. Have you partaken?

The Doctrine of Conversion

With the coming of the age of modernism has come a dismissing of certain words from people's religious vocabulary. The time was when the word "conversion" was commonly heard and when every preacher urged people to be "converted", but the time is upon us when the word "conversion" is seldom heard and when few indeed are the preachers who still preach to sinners to be "converted". Besides the fact of modernism entering in, it is possible that conversion is not commonly preached because it is not commonly practiced. We know that the pulpit should affect the pew, but too many times the pew controls and affects the pulpit. This should not be! And it won't be when the pulpits are filled with men who take their orders from God rather than men!

Were we to take a text for this message, we would select Acts 15:3:

"And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."

There are several notable things in the above passage. Notice, they declared the "conversion" of the Gentiles.

Then, when people accept Christ, obey the gospel, or become Christians, they have been converted, for that is what the Gentiles had done. If a person is not a Christian; if he has not obeyed the gospel; if he has not accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord--he is not a convert to Christ. If he has, he is a convert and should not be ashamed of that fact. Notice also in that passage that those already in Christ rejoiced to learn of the conversion of others--even when they didn't know them personally and even when they were Gentiles. In this, they were like the angels of God who rejoice when a soul turns from the way of sin (Luke 15:10).

The Greek word translated "conversion" means to "turn". Biblically, "conversion" means to "turn" from sin to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot turn to something without turning from something. So, in conversion, one turns from the way he has been living, from the direction in which he has been traveling, from the master he has been serving, and from the destiny that had been awaiting him to a new master (Christ), to a new way (the Christian life), and to a new destiny (acceptance with God). "Conversion" is a good word, and it ought to be used. "Conversion" is a great and important doctrine, and it ought to be preached. "Conversion" is life's greatest privilege, and it ought to be the experience of every mature individual, and if God had His way, it would be!

Let us make a study of that subject in this study.

I. The Absolute Necessity Of Conversion.

A. Man Could Never Go To God's Heaven In His Unspiritual, Unregenerate State.

In speaking of heaven, Rev. 21:27 says:

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Sin defiles, and sin abominates. Therefore, those who have lived in sin will not be permitted to enter heaven unless they are changed from sinners to saints. Furthermore, alien sinners do not have their names written in Christ's book of life, but only those who do will be permitted to enter heaven.

Matt. 5:8 makes this promise to the holy:

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

If one is not pure in heart and holy before God, he will never behold the glory of God in heaven, for Heb. 12:14 says:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Rom. 8 speaks of Christians as being "in the Spirit", but it speaks of sinners as being "in the flesh" or being "carnal" ("carnal" and "flesh" come from the same word in the Greek.) Now, notice from Rom. 8 what God says of those who live after the flesh:

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh (not the things of God); but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be

carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

Notice that Eph. 2:1 pictures the alien sinner as "dead in trespasses and sins". Rom. 5:6 pictures the alien sinner as "without strength". Rom. 5:10 pictures him as an "enemy" of God. And Eph. 2:12 pictures him as "having no hope, and without God in the world."

B. This Is Why The Bible Demands Conversion.

When the apostles disputed among themselves as to which one was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they were talking as unspiritual men, and Jesus rebuked them for it. He must have shocked them greatly when He plainly said to them:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

"Which will be the greatest in the kingdom?" Jesus told them they wouldn't even be in the kingdom if they were not converted from their selfish, unspiritual attitude. Yes, conversion is absolutely necessary!

When Peter preached to the Jews, he said:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Notice that it is a commandment from God to be converted. It is not left up to the whim and fancy of man whether he will be converted or not. If he expects to please God, have his sins forgiven, and be saved, he must be converted. No verse could possibly make it plainer. Sinners resisting the call of the gospel ought to realize that there will be no sins forgiven unless they are converted to Christ. Preachers and personal workers ought to impress this fact so thoroughly that men and women cannot escape it.

Jas. 5:19,20 is another passage that shows that conversion saves a sinner's soul from death:

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Having seen that conversion is absolutely essential, let us consider

II. How Conversion Is Brought About.

A. The Pentecostal View.

All Pentecostal groups say much about conversion, but they do not give the Bible view of that subject. They are right in teaching that man in his unregenerate state is away from God. They are right in teaching that conversion is absolutely necessary. They are right in teaching that conversion brings a revolutionary change in an individual. But, they are not right in their teaching of how conversion is brought about.

All who use the altar call and have sinners come to "pray through", as they speak of it, have similar ideas of

how conversion takes place. And, yet, I am firm to say, their idea of conversion is not that which is taught in the Book of God.

When I was a student in school toward the beginning of my preaching days, there was a Pentecostal-type of meeting in progress in that southern city (a section of the country known for altar-call religion). One of the students in school was known for his argumentativeness, though he was not well enough read as yet to fight all the battles he could start. He let it be known that he was going to attend that meeting that night with the intention of tackling the evangelist after the service about the work of the Holy Spirit. Realizing that he might not be able to uphold his side of the discussion, I felt constrained, being a little older in the Lord's work than he was, to go with him just in case he needed help. And he needed help before the night was over, and I was glad I had gone along (and so was he). I would like to tell you about the discussion and how it turned out, but that would take too long, and that is not the purpose of bringing this up. The purpose is to tell you of the sermon we heard. The evangelist preached a sermon that was a clear presentation of the altar-type of conversion. He said he could call his sermon either "Pardon and Purity" or "Salvation and Sanctification". He pointed out that man is both lost in sin and depraved in his nature, and that only the Holy Ghost can do anything for him. He pointed out that sinners should come to the altar convicted of their sins and there pray for pardon or salvation. Thus, sinners are urged to come and pray and pray until they feel that the burden has been lifted from their hearts. When they get a sweet feeling of peace and joy in their hearts, then they are told that "they've got it", that "they have gotten through". The evangelist went on to say that such a person was pardoned of his sins, was saved, but that he still had a wicked heart that needed to be purified. In other words, he said, he needed to have a second work performed upon him--sanctification. He went on to say that those who had gotten saved at the altar should expect God to call them again in their hearts, and that when He did, they should come back to the altar for more prayer--this time to pray for a clean heart, for sanctification, for the Holy Ghost. This, he said, would destroy the old Adamic nature of sin inborn within man.

This is a sample of some Pentecostals' teaching on conversion. Yet, I fear not to say the Bible knows nothing of an altar-call, "praying through," etc. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that salvation and sanctification are not matters accomplished at separate times, but that both result from conversion. When a person is converted, his sins are blotted out (Acts 3:19), and when he is thus in Christ, he is a new creature as a result of it (II Cor. 5:17), old things having passed away, and all things having become new. Baptism, when preceded by those necessary things taught in the Bible, is for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16), and as soon as one is baptized, he begins to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4). In other words, the Bible shows that conversion results in two things with reference to the present subject: (1) the forgiveness of sins, and (2) the sanctification of the individual.

Years ago, I talked to an elderly Christian man who has since passed into the next world. I was in his town conducting an evangelistic meeting. He told me of his boyhood experiences in religion. He said that all of His people were of the altar-type of religion. Early in life, he was urged to go to the altar during a revival meeting. He went up night after night for the rest of the meeting (two weeks), but he never experienced the change of heart that he was supposed to and others were claiming to receive. Night after night, he prayed, but to no avail. They told him there was something in his life he was not surrendering, but he said he knew better. The meeting closed, and he was cast upon the sea of anxiety concerning his condition before God. After the meeting ended, because of his sincerity and his desire to be right with God, he would slip out into the dark of the night, and upon his knees would pray to God to save him. Sometime later, they were to have another meeting. He welcomed this, hoping this time to get "through". The first night of the meeting, he went forward for prayer. Nightly throughout the meeting, he did this, and when the meeting ended, he said he was on the very verge of going infidel, for he could not understand why God would not hear his prayers and save him. He came to wonder maybe if religion was all made up by man.

Not too much time passed by until a man by the name of Simpson Ely came to his town to conduct a "protracted meeting", as they were commonly called in those days. He decided to go hear Mr. Ely preach. From the very start, Mr. Ely's messages made sense as he expounded into his hearers the Word of God. From the New Testament, he showed what was involved in a sinner's salvation and how one could be saved from his sins. Billy Smith read his Bible, and he found the way of salvation clearly set forth therein. In humble submission to the Christ in whom he believed, he surrendered himself to an obedience to the gospel, and for the long years of his life thereafter, he never questioned the validity of his conversion. In his latter years as he related his story to me, he said that his failure to "pray through" in his earlier years was due to two things: (1) there was nothing actually to receive at the altar, according to the Bible, and (2) he was not of a highly emotional nature as was the rest of his family--a trait necessary to be made to think one had received something from God through the altar.

I remember hearing of another case that helps set forth the Pentecostal view of conversion. A man was a rough-and-tough sort of character. He drank; he gambled; he fought; he chased women. In fact, there was hardly a wicked thing he didn't do. He was anything but a church-going man. One Sunday afternoon, he was walking along the railroad track on his way to meet his old buddies who were going to spend the afternoon together playing cards and gambling in an old box car. As he was walking along, he said the Holy Ghost, out of a clear blue sky, slapped him down right there along the railroad track and there knocked the love of drink out of him, knocked the love the women out of him, and knocked the cards and the cursing and all sin right out of him. The man said he hadn't been to church services for years and that he had had no intention of changing prior to the experience above narrated. His testi-

mony would be accepted in any Pentecostal testimony meeting as a true conversion from heaven.

Sudden seizures of the individual while milking a cow, shocking corn fodder, or stacking hay are reported to be the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to convert them. Such as the foregoing are a part of Pentecostal-type of religion throughout our land today. But, their view of conversion is, as Billy Smith and others have found from a study of the Bible, is not the Bible view of conversion.

B. The Bible View.

The book of Acts is the book of conversions in the Bible. It shows how the apostles preached and what the Holy Spirit did to bring men and women to Christ. Behind the history in that book is the great commission of Christ that also bears upon the question of conversion, as well as Jesus' other preparatory teaching for this subject. Men may tell their experiences and trust their human feelings as proof of salvation, but let us rely upon the Word of God for its sure, unvarying testimony concerning salvation.

As far back as Psa. 19:7, we have this testimony to the fact that it is the Word of God that He uses to convert people:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

Later in the same book, David further stated:

"I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psa. 51:13).

Christianity is a religion of faith, but how does that faith come?

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

The Word that is preached and received into the heart is spoken of as the word of salvation (Acts 13:26). The words of Jesus are both spirit and life (John 6:63). The Word of God is powerful (Heb. 4:12) and is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Properly received and followed, it is able to save our souls (Jas. 1:21,22). Cornelius was instructed to do as follows:

"Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13,14).

Whenever people minimize the importance of the Word of God in the matter of conversion and salvation, you can be sure they are not speaking as the Oracles of God speak. God has given mankind His message. He has equipped us with eyes and ears with which to see and hear, and He has given us hearts with which to think upon that message. Of course, we must use our eyes, ears, and hearts, or we shall never be converted. Matt. 13:15 shows this:

"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted (as a result of their seeing, hearing, and understanding), and I should heal them."

Thus, the first thing in the great commission is preaching.

Though the human heart is wicked through sin, yet some are honest enough to admit it, tired of sin enough to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and noble enough to believe when the truth of God is presented. Thus, Paul was sent out as a preacher for the following purposes:

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 28:17,18).

When the gospel comes with its picture of man's sinfulness and lostness, the heart is smitten with a feeling of guilt before God. When the gospel goes on to show how God loved men so much that He gave up Jesus to die in their place, a realization of the goodness and mercy of God takes hold of one. Then, when this Friend Above calls sinners to repent and turn from the way of sin, a decision has to be made. Will he continue to live the rest of his life to the flesh and its desires, or will he yield to God? The devil is ever present to magnify the responsibilities and duties of the Christian life and to over-emphasize the difficulty of getting along without the sins in which he has been living. If the sinner permits these thoughts to rule him, there will be no conversion to Christ even though he knows what he ought to do. On the other hand, if he appreciates what God has and is doing for him; if he realizes how he has been breaking the will of God in his life; and if he looks ahead and sees where sin will lead him in life and land him in eternity, he will be having those truths of the gospel working in his heart in such a way that he will find his outlook changing, his desires turning, and his will yielding to the will of God. When he then makes full surrender to Christ, confesses Him before men, and is immersed in water in the likeness of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, as Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5), he will be truly and Scripturally converted to Christ, and saints and angels can rejoice over his conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:3).

Man's outlook and desires must be changed. These are changed through faith (many Scriptures). His will must be changed. This is changed through repentance (many Scriptures) and is sealed by confessing Christ (II Tim. 2:19). His state of guilt must be changed before God. This is changed through baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

This conversion--this change--brings one into Christ (Gal. 3:27), initiates him into a new life (Rom. 6:4), makes him a new creature (II Cor. 5:17), and launches him forth into a higher life of seeking the things which are above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1), and causes him to confess with the converted Saul of Tarsus:

"I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Not all who read these lines and study these Bible

verses may be converted as of now. Do not suppose that human goodness will be sufficient to carry you through. Jesus said you must be born again (John 3:6). If you chance to be one who has never been converted in harmony with the Bible teaching, can you not this day see your need of it? Can you not see there is something higher and better to live for? Can you not find it in your heart to desire to be a Christian? Why not, then, yield yourself to the Christ who died for you in whom you can believe without a bit of hesitancy as to its rightness? Having turned from your sins, name the name of Christ as a seal of your intentions to walk in Heaven's way instead of the world's and be baptized for the remission of your sins. Christ will move into your life in the person of the Holy Spirit, who will help you live the Christian life. If to the Lord you then remain faithful throughout the remaining years of your life as proof of your conversion, love for God, and sincerity of purpose to be saved, you will die in the full hope of seeing the Lord on the other side of the grave, where you will live and reign with Him throughout all eternity. May God help you to make that decision--life's greatest decision!

The Divine Importance of Baptism

One doesn't have to listen to his radio on Sunday very long until he hears some preacher belittling the importance of baptism--something that no apostle or Bible writer ever did! A man in my home town told my father, "I've been sprinkled, poured, and immersed, and there's nothing to any of them. I've baptized with the Holy Ghost--that's the thing that counts." Such a belittling way to speak of water baptism! If one teaches the necessity of baptism, even though it is exactly what the Bible teaches, he will be charged with "water salvation". It is odd that these teachers (?) don't charge Naaman the leper with having had a "water cleansing" from his leprosy when he was told by the prophet of God to go dip in the Jordan River seven times (II Kings 5). Naaman reacted to the prophet's orders at the first about like people today God's commandment of baptism, but I notice he was not cured of his leprosy until he obeyed the prophet's orders.

This brings me to observe that baptism is both mistaught and ridiculed about as much as any subject in the field of Christianity. It is mistaught as regards the form, the purpose, and who is a fit subject for it--plus a few other matters connected with it by lesser-sized groups.

It is not the purpose of this study to consider everything there is to be considered upon this subject. To do so would more than exhaust the space we have. However, it is our intention to pursue this one aspect of the subject--

the importance of baptism as set forth in the Bible. Bear this in mind; anybody not grasping the importance of baptism is bound to be off in some way--another concerning this subject. Therefore, if we can show from the Scriptures the divine importance of baptism, much has been accomplished.

I. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Great Commission.

A. From The Fact That It Is Even In The Great Commission.

We all know that the great commission was a very important announcement. From it has come our entire New Testament from the book of Acts onward. Had Jesus not said in the commission, "Preach," there would have been no preaching. Had there been no preaching, there would have been no converts. Had there been no converts, there would have been no congregations. Had there been no congregations, there would have been no one to whom to send the epistles of Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, etc. So, the importance of the great commission is evident.

B. Only Important Matters Got Into The Commission--Baptism Is Included In the Commission.

We can be sure that only important matters got into the commission. Can you relegate any of the items in the great commission to the class of the insignificant? Did you ever stop to think of how few items are actually contained in the great commission? Going, preaching, baptizing those who believe and repent, and teaching those converted. These are the commandments to the apostles. Few, aren't they? But, did you notice that baptism is one of them? Let us stop and think just a minute upon this fact: prayer isn't mentioned in the great commission; love isn't; kindness isn't; giving isn't; forgiving others isn't; the Lord's supper isn't; and many other important elements in Christianity are not specifically listed in the great commission. But, baptism is specifically named in it. Why, then, should people say these other matters (prayer, love, forgiveness, etc.) are necessary, but baptism isn't?

C. The Great Commission Connects Salvation With Baptism.

The importance of baptism is seen from the great commission in another way also. Did you know there is only one thing in all the Bible that is to be done into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? That is baptism:

"Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

There is not another thing in all the book of God so given. Anything connected with the name of the Godhead surely must be important!

Let us look at the great commission again. Mark 16:16 tells us the purpose of baptism:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Notice that "he" is at the beginning of the statement

and "shall be saved" is at the end of the statement. Who is the "he" that "shall be saved"? He that believeth and is baptized! We preach that a sinner must believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized in order to be saved from his past sins. Mark 16:16 gives us the first and the last elements (which we believe included the other in-between matters). Many teach a different order. They say, "Salvation comes immediately after faith, and that such a saved person should go ahead and be baptized. One Sunday night, a Texas lady present commented upon my sermon on baptism that they (she referred to her denominational associates) say that salvation comes solely as a result of faith. I asked, "Well, what do you do about baptism?" "Of course, every saved person ought to go ahead and get baptized," she answered. I asked her if their order was faith, salvation, baptism. She said that it was. I said, "Our understanding has the order faith, baptism, salvation. Now, let's look at the Bible and see which order is found there." We turned to Mark 16:16 where we read that he that (1) believeth and (2) is baptized shall (3) be saved--the exact order held by churches of Christ, but not by many people.

Yes, the importance of baptism is seen from the great commission.

II. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Conversions In The Book Of Acts.

A. Baptism Is Mentioned In Connection With Every Case of Conversion Narrated In The Book Of Acts.

How many cases of conversion are narrated in Acts? Nine: the people on Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the Samaritans (Acts 8:12), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-39), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:6-18; and 22:10-16), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1-48), Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14,15), the jailor of Philippi and his household (Acts 16:30-33), the Corinthians (Acts 18:8), and twelve men of Ephesus (Acts 19:2-5). By reading the above references, you will see that baptism was a part of every conversion in God's book of conversion. To the people on Pentecost, Peter commanded:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:41 tells of their response to his preaching:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

Concerning Philip's preaching in Samaria, Acts 8:12 says of the Samaritans:

"When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Here is what is said of the Ethiopian eunuch:

"As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to

stand still and they went down both into the water both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38).

Saul of Tarsus, having asked the Lord what he should do was told to go into the city where it would be told him what to do. God sent Ananias to the waiting, penitent Saul, who coming said:

"Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Though Peter, a Jew taking the gospel to the first Gentile, was certain to be called onto the carpet for his action, he did the following with reference to the Gentile Cornelius and his household:

"He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

Acts 16:14,15 says of Lydia and her household:

"A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

Notice what Acts 16:32,33 says concerning that jailor of Philippi:

"And they (Paul and Silas) spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

Notice this simple verse concerning the conversion of the Corinthians:

"Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

Having taught the Ephesian men the difference between John's baptism (by which they had been incorrectly baptized by Apollos) and the baptism commanded by Christ, Acts 19:5 says:

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

So, if a person is going to take the Bible as his guide, he will be baptized as a part of his conversion, for every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts includes baptism. This fact cannot be truthfully denied and, therefore, carries much weight with those who would be guided by the Word of God.

B. Notice Also That Conversions In Acts Were Not Counted Complete Until Baptism Had Taken Place.

Did you notice from the above that baptism was *always* the last thing mentioned that the people did in their conversions? Furthermore, did you notice that the preacher did not leave until the baptism had taken place? Why was this? Because baptism was a part of each conversion--the concluding act!

C. These Conversion Accounts Also Bear Some Significant Statements.

Acts 2:38 shows that remission of sins and the coming of the Holy Spirit into one's life were promised to those who would do two things: (1) repent, and (2) be baptized. Notice that verse:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (1) for the remission of sins, and (2) ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Is it essential to have the Holy Spirit? Yes, according to Rom. 8:9. When does the Holy Spirit come into one's life? Before or after baptism? After baptism! Then, if it is necessary to have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does not come into one's life until he has been baptized, then baptism is essential! Isn't it?

Notice the significant statements contained in Acts 2:40,41:

"With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Notice two things in the above: (1) they were told to "save" themselves. Whatever they were to do had to do with salvation. What did they do? They were baptized! Therefore, baptism and salvation are connected in the Bible. (2) Were they added to fellowship of the God's people before or after baptism? After baptism. They were not added until they were baptized!

Acts 8:38,39 shows that the eunuch rejoiced--but when? Did he rejoice before or after he was baptized? After his baptism--not before! Before his baptism, he was still in his sins. After baptism, he was a new creature in Christ Jesus!

A fourth passage in these conversions to which we call your attention is Acts 22:16. The words of that verse were directed to Saul of Tarsus, who was already a believer in Christ, who was already submitted to Christ in repentance, and who had been waiting in fasting until he received further instructions from the Lord. But, he was still in his sins until he was baptized. Do you ask for proof? Read Acts 22:16:

"Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Here is a clear-cut passage that those who pervert the Bible teaching of baptism admittedly have much trouble with. And well they might, for it so clearly teaches that baptism and the washing away of sins are inseparably connected in the Bible.

Yes, the importance of baptism is seen in the conversions in the book of Acts.

III. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From What It Symbolizes.

A. *Baptism Pictures Those Events That Actually Save Us.*

Paul outlined the central facts of the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:1-4). Without those, there would be no hope for any of us. One of the finest sections in the Bible on the meaning of

baptism is to be found in Rom. 6. The death, burial, and resurrection are all three referred to in discussing the matter of baptism in Rom. 6:3,4. When a sinner closes his eyes, as he goes under the water, he appears as a lifeless form--a picture of death. As Jesus was buried, so is he in the watery grave. As Jesus emerged from the tomb in His resurrection, even so is the convert raised out of the water as in a resurrection. Later in the chapter, this is also referred to. Rom. 6:17 says:

"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

It can be readily shown that the apostle is referring to their baptism. First of all, that is the subject he has been discussing. Also, the doctrine delivered to them was the gospel, the central facts of which are the death, burial, and resurrection. Now, that verse (Rom. 6:17) says they had been obedient to that form of the doctrine. What would be the form of the doctrine to which they could have been obedient? Baptism! Shall we then say that that which symbolizes those important facts of the gospel is unimportant? Of course, not.

B. *Baptism Pictures The Change Taking Place In The One Being Baptized.*

Conversion is to bring an end to the old life and the beginning of the new life in Christ. Anybody recognizing the truth of this statement just stated should not eliminate the matter of baptism when it comes to the subject of conversion. In baptism, (properly preceded by faith, repentance, and confession), one meets his real death to sin and arises from its waters to walk in the newness of life. Listen to Rom. 6:4:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

What Scripture could be plainer than the above one? Is it important that a sinner die to sin? Is it important that one walk in the newness of life? Well, it is baptism that pictures the end of the old man and the beginning of the new man which is taking place simultaneously.

IV. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Fact That We Get Into Christ By Being Baptized.

A. *Salvation Is In Christ--Not Out Of Him.*

I know no statement that ought to be more universally accepted than this; namely, salvation is to be found in Christ--not out of Him. Of the many Scriptures that we could cite on this subject, notice the following ones:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

Who is not condemned? The one who is "in Christ Jesus" and who is "walking after the Spirit". Notice another passage:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

Who is a new creature? Who has the old things of sin

passed away? To whom are all things new? To the man who is "in Christ".

The truth is preached by preachers from one end of this land to the other. It is emphasized in sermons; it is mentioned at the invitation service; it is embodied in tracts; it is urged in personal work. I say, by all who believe that Christ is the Savior, the fact that salvation is found "in Christ" instead of out of Him is preached and emphasized. But, if I were out in the world of sin and had become convinced from the Bible that I needed to be "in Christ", I would logically want to know how I could get into Christ. The pity of it is that those who state the necessity of being in Christ may not actually tell from the Bible how one can get into Him. But, the Bible is equally clear upon this point. It shows that men are *baptized* into Christ. You may say, "I don't like the sound of that. That emphasizes baptism too much." Well, simply because the religious world has minimized baptism is why we are having this study to show that baptism is divinely important. If the Bible teaches that a sinner must be "in Christ" in order to be saved, we shall believe it, and if the same Bible teaches that one is baptized into Christ, then we shall believe that also. Won't we? You may ask, "Where does the Bible teach that people are baptized into Christ?" In at least two different places. Listen to Rom. 6:3:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

Notice what Paul wrote--"baptized into Jesus Christ". How had Paul gotten into Christ? By being baptized into Him. How had the Roman Christians gotten into Christ? By being baptized into Him. That is what Rom. 6:3 says. How must we get into Christ? By being baptized into Him!

But, listen to another passage:

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

How had the Galatians gotten into Christ? They had been baptized into Him. What was the result of their having been baptized into Christ? They had put on Christ! How can people today who have never been Scripturally baptized rightfully say they are "in Christ"? How can they say they have put on Christ? Isn't a preacher guilty of preaching another "gospel" when he doesn't teach that sinners are to be baptized into Christ? Of course!

Surely, you can see--maybe as never before--that the religious world is minimizing the importance of Biblical baptism. In so many cases, it is not only being minimized, but it is actually being mistaught, which is serious too. Did you know that the position held by churches of Christ upon the subject of baptism is right according to the Greek language (the language in which the New Testament was originally written)? Did you know that their position is right according to encyclopedias and church history when it comes to stating what the original form of baptism was? Did you know that their position is in harmony with what those who have written extensive commentaries have written? Did you know that their position is according to what the Reformers (Luther, Calvin, and Wesley) taught. They all affirmed these truths now neglected by the de-

nominal groups that have sprung from them.

I believe that people minimize baptism for the same reason they minimize the Lord's Supper. For the Christian, the Lord's supper is a communion in the blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), and for the sinner coming to Christ, baptism brings him into contact with the blood of Christ, for he is baptized into the death of Christ:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3).

If I had never been baptized Scripturally, I can truthfully say that I would feel fully obligated to after reading a message like this in which important Bible verses have pointed out its necessity. If I had been misled upon this important subject, I would turn away from those teachers who had mistaught me and stand with those people who have upheld this great Bible doctrine through the years. I would become obedient to the form of doctrine delivered unto me. Will you not, then, at this time make that decision and act upon it without further delay?

The New Life a Product of Conversion

Gal. 3:27 says that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ--automatically so. In other words, when we came into Christ, we automatically put on Christ--just as much as when one gets into his coat, he has automatically "put on" his coat. When one thus puts on Christ, a new life is bound to result. In conversion, the entire person is remade from the inside out, and that is bound to show up in a new life. Jesus said:

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (Matt. 12:35).

In conversion, the heart is remade. It is made into a good heart. The man himself becomes a good man. The result? *He bringeth forth good things!* That is our very proposition in this study; namely, that the Christian life is an automatic result of conversion. That is why a conversion is necessary before one can live a Christian life. Furthermore, that is why one who is truly converted enters immediately upon a life of fruit-bearing for God.

We are sorry to say that far too many today know little or nothing about the new life in Christ. To them, a public acceptance of Christ is becoming identified with some church in the community or merely doing the right thing. After their public acceptance, little or nothing follows by way of a marked change of life and all-out service for

Christ. In this connection, many preachers have failed. They have taught the *order* of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, but they have not really taught what each of these *means* and what is *involved* in faith, in repentance, in confession, and in baptism. Consequently, people today--oh so many--do not know what it means to live by faith...do not know what it means to repent...do not understand the significance of confession...do not understand what it means to be baptized and as a result do not walk in the newness of life.

I have stated many times in sermons that if a person would come to be baptized, but would indicate that he had not genuinely repented and that he did not intend to walk in newness of life after his baptism, I wouldn't baptize him even if he asked to be baptized. I have seen people startled by this statement, looking as if a preacher is duty-bound to baptize anybody who asks to be baptized regardless of whether the person is prepared to be baptized or not. Incidentally, when the eunuch wanted to know if he could be baptized, what did Philip tell him?

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"
(Acts 8:37).

Suppose the eunuch had indicated that he did not believe with all his heart. Would Philip have baptized him? Of course not. Why wouldn't he? Because he was not authorized to baptize people who didn't believe. Furthermore, he knew that it would do no good to baptize a man who was not automatically ushered into a new walk with God by his baptism! That is why I would not baptize a man whom I knew to be impenitent. He has no business being baptized! He is no more ready to be baptized than a helpless baby who can't repent. And if he has no business being baptized, then God help me and all others who intend to please God to see that we have no business baptizing such! A little sensible reasoning would put an end to people's hollering about baptizing a few dear people who have come to realize they never were baptized Scripturally. Some adults have no more been Scripturally baptized than infants! And where that sad condition exists, shame on the preacher who denies Scriptural baptism to an adult who needs it and is now prepared for it!

In the points of the study that follow, we shall be taking the various elements of conversion (man's part in conversion) and showing how each one leads to and produces the new life in Christ for the one who has been converted.

1. Faith Leads To A New Life.

A. People Out Of Christ Know Nothing Of Living By Faith.

Christians live for a world that cannot be seen with the naked eye. They are busy laying up treasures in heaven where Christ is, but where they have never been. They are not so much concerned about the things of this life. But, the man of the world is very much a part of this world. He is not merely *in* it (as a Christian is); he is truly a part of it (which a Christian is not--John 17:14-16). Therefore, we can expect the man of the world to be earthly-minded, to think as a man of the world thinks, to look at things as a man of the world does, and to value all things from an

earthly standpoint. Therefore, he is consumed in his heart and efforts for earth's necessities, earth's possessions, and earth's pleasures.

Furthermore, his lack of faith is seen in the fact that he tries to solve his own problems independent of God. He has his own ideas of morality--what is right and wrong. He is not convinced, possibly, that there is any life to come, but if there is, he says, "I think I will make it through all right, for I am a good moral man." Thus, he trusts his own morality to save him.

Let us look at him again. If bills pile up and cares come (and they surely do to us all), the man of the world is torn with worry, fretting, and fear. He lacks the calmness that belongs to those in Christ who believe that God will take care of His own.

B. In Contrast, The Christian Life Is A Life Of Faith.

Listen to these clear passages which show that the Christian life is a life of faith:

*"Now the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38);
"We walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7); "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).*

A person cannot be saved without believing in God (Heb. 11:6), without believing in Jesus Christ as God's Son (John 8:24), without believing in the truth delivered through inspired men (II Thess. 2:12), and without believing in the goodness of God to reward those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Neither can a person live the Christian life without faith, for it is a life of faith. Peter failed in his walking on the water when his faith failed, and the same thing happens to us in Christian living when our faith fails. The disciples failed to cast out a demon one time when their faith failed, and we lose our victory in Christian living when our faith fails. This faith is bound to mark the Christian's life as different, and when people cannot notice a difference between your life and that of a person of the world, we have a right to question your faith as much as Paul questioned the baptism of the twelve men of Ephesus when they said they knew nothing of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to the earthly-mindedness of the man of the world, the Christian's heavenly-mindedness is reflected in Col. 3:1-3:

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Again, in contrast to the worldly man who trusts his own wisdom to work out everything, the Christian because of his faith depends upon the Lord. This is why he prays to God. Realizing that he cannot bear his burdens alone, he accepts the invitation of I Pet. 5:7 and finds it sweet to trust in Jesus:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

The world may laugh at the faith of the Christian, saying, "He prays about everything. He thinks God hears

him." But, the Christian is assured of definite answers to prayer, and he continues both to pray and to thank God for the answers to prayer. Whether it be in the matter of finances, health, or any other need, he has learned that his sufficiency is of Christ whom he accepted in his conversion, and he knows the good Lord has not failed him. Verses such as Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5; Rom. 8:28; and many others are well known to him. He can sing with all the meaning that words can carry: "I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend; And I know that Thou art with me, Wilt be with me to the end. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, Oh for grace to trust Him more."

The Christian realizes that he is no match for the devil and his temptations. He knows that the "arm of flesh" will fail him; he dares not trust his own. Instead, therefore, of trusting his own strength, he prays for grace in the time of need (Heb. 4:15,16). He prays for divine deliverance (Matt. 6:13). He puts on the armor that God has provided for him (Eph. 6:10,11). This again makes him a man of prayer--something that the faithless man of the world sees no sense in, but something that has always characterized men of God!

Furthermore, the Christian realizes that his faith is in Christ as his Savior. He does not believe that he is good enough in his own right to deserve salvation. He is a believer in mercy because he is a believer in God's Savior from sin. He is like the humble publican who prayed for mercy (Luke 18:11-14) while the man of the world who sees no need for Christ is like the proud Pharisee. His faith, then, in the matter of salvation causes him to live for Christ in whom he believes. It causes him to shun the evil and to choose the good. It causes him to confess his sins to God and to pray to God for forgiveness. It causes him to be faithful to the Lord in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup that he might commune with the blood and body of Christ that his faith teaches him he must not miss.

II. Repentance Leads To A New Life.

A. Pre-Conversion Conduct.

Surely, no Christian can be happy about many of the things that he used to do while in the world. Though it did not appear to us at that time as such, we can now see the truth of Tit. 3:3:

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Being fleshly-minded, we busied ourselves seeking the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5). Not all commit the same sins, but lying, stealing, cheating for gain, cursing, drinking, fighting, quarreling, smoking, gambling, adultery, dishonesty, and many other such things all too often enter into people's conduct before their conversions. The apostle John recognized the following concerning the unconverted world:

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

B. Repentance Brings A Mighty Change Into One's Life.

Recognizing the great difference in the way a Christian lives and the way a sinner lives, John wrote:

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous...He that committeth sin is of the devil...In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil" (1 John 3:7,8,10).

The difference between the way a Christian lives and the way he lived before conversion is noticed in 1 Pet. 1:14-16:

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (conduct); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

They who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections (Gal. 5:24). They now seek to keep themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27). This, according to Jas. 1:27, is essential to having a pure religion before God.

A person who repents must *repent* of his sins. Why do I say this? Simply because people claim to have repented, yet continue to do the things which they did before they supposedly repented. To repent of something wrong means to quit doing it. If one continues in his sin, he has not repented of that sin! People may be looked upon by some people as church members who drink, live a fast night life, dance, smoke, pull shady or downright crooked business deals, tell dirty stories, attend the degrading theatres, and watch about everything that is shown on television, but that doesn't mean that God looks upon them as saints. How can He? They aren't sanctified from sin and to God! Yes, if one has repented of his life of sin, it thrusts him forth into a new life--the life of holiness. Let us notice some key verses from Rom. 6:

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life...Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin...Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you...Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (verses 1-4,6,11-14,18).

III. Confession Of Christ Leads To A New Life.

A. Before Conversion, One Failed To Recognize Jesus As Christ And Lord.

All belong to God by right of creation, but before conversion, that ownership is not recognized. Jesus Christ was God's Son, but before conversion, if one accepted that

fact, he said and did nothing about it. As Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus has a rightful claim upon the life of every individual, but before conversion, men do not recognize that claim upon them.

B. In The Confession, One Declares Himself Publicly For Christ.

Nicodemus went out to Jesus "by night" (John 3:2). The fact that he came by night might have been a mere circumstance, but two later references made to that fact (John 7:50 and John 19:39) possibly point to the fact that it was not merely circumstantial. Nicodemus seemed to be convinced as to who Jesus was, but he lacked the boldness to declare himself openly in behalf of Jesus. This seems fully confirmed by John 7:48 where his colleagues knew nothing about him or any of the other rulers believing on Jesus. We do not know whether Nicodemus accepted Jesus after the gospel began to be preached. He may have, for even among the leaders of the Jews, there were many who became obedient to the faith. But, one thing we do know: if he became a Christian, he had to come out into the open for Jesus, for Jesus has no secret disciples! The plan of salvation has included confession in the primary part of obedience and letting one's light shine before men after lining up with Jesus, which eliminate any possibility of secret discipleship. Whoever would be ashamed of Jesus and refuse to confess Him before men is bound to be excluded from the realm of the saints (Mark 8:38 and Matt. 10:32,33).

There are many spiritual values that accrue to the individual from making this confession before men in addition to the fact that it is one of those things that leads to salvation (Rom. 10:9,10). It is a solemn public committal to the will of Christ before witnesses (I Tim. 6:12) to which he may ever look thereafter as indication of his having pledged allegiance to the will of Christ. There will be times when he will need the force of this public committal. As a result, he can thereafter say for sure:

"It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

Having named the name of Christ, he is naturally called upon to depart from all iniquity (II Tim. 2:19). What would be the force of this injunction if in the naming of Jesus' name, he had not pledged himself to a life of holiness? Furthermore, this initial step of courage will test one's love for Jesus (whether he seeks the praise of God more than the praise of man) and will also embolden one for the weightier matters of the Christian life to follow in which he is bound to fail if he does not have the courage of conviction strengthened.

Confession, then, leads to a new life in the same way that pledging allegiance to the flag by him who is becoming a citizen of our nation is bound to procure a faithful citizenship thereafter.

IV. Baptism Leads To A New Life.

A. The World In General Has Overlooked The Importance Of Baptism.

Baptism is not to be exalted above what is written, but that would be hard to do, for much has been written in the Bible about it in very important connections. One possibly could exalt baptism above that which is written by treating it ceremonially; that is, saying that great blessings come from being baptized regardless of whether a person had love and faith in his heart or not, or whether he had repented and confessed Christ in preparation for it. So many in the religious world have stripped baptism of any connection with salvation and have put it as a part of the new life rather than that which leads to the new life.

B. How Baptism Leads To A New Life.

One cannot have the peace of God until he is forgiven of his old life of sin, for peace follows pardon. But, according to the Scriptures, one must be baptized before pardon comes (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; and others). Furthermore, one cannot live the new life until he has come into new life. This, according to the Scriptures, is brought about by Scriptural baptism (Rom. 6:3,4). As we pointed out in our last study, the very form of baptism pictures the death and burial of one's old man of sin and the resurrection of one's spirit into the new life in Christ. As a result of this, he is thus divorced from the old life of sin and is thereby reminded that he is no longer to live in sin (Rom. 6:1,2). Furthermore, the blood of Christ (which is applied in baptism--Heb. 10:22) not only purges us from our old way of life, but sanctifies us to the service of God (Heb. 9:14).

Needless to say, much could be written upon each of the above points, but surely sufficient has been included to show that each element of what man must do to be saved has been included in the plan of salvation by God not only for a test of our obedience with reference to salvation, but to fit us to living the new life in Christ which has been involved in our acceptance of Christ.

Continuing Steadfastly

Religious teachers, except modernists, are in agreement that it is necessary to accept Christ in order to be saved. They may not all agree exactly in their teaching as to what one does in order to accept Christ, but they do agree as to the necessity of such a decision and step. As we launch forth into this study, we cannot refrain from saying we would that they not only taught the Scriptural requirements for accepting Christ, but also that they taught the absolute necessity for continuing steadfastly after conversion. But, some don't.

Did you know that the first thing affirmed of the first converts in the present dispensation was their faithfulness?

"And they continued stedfastly..." (Acts 2:42).

Have you not observed how frequently throughout the epistles addressed to Christian people the exhortation to continued faithfulness is sounded? A sample of such exhortations:

"Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (1 Cor. 15:58).

Is it not noteworthy that one of the last promises in the Bible is given to those who live the overcoming life following their acceptance of Christ?

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7).

In these days when many accept Christ, but do not continue in Him year in and year out, we are led to inquire of them as follows: Why turn to Christ if you do not intend to continue with Him? Will accepting Him without continuing with Him get you any farther toward the goal of salvation than traveling the first mile of a long trip and then quitting would get you to a trip's destination? Why become a Christian in the first place if it is not your desire and intention to remain one? Would a person marry in all sincerity if he intended to quit the one he was marrying in just a matter of time?

In view of both Scripture and common sense, it seems ridiculous that anyone would teach it is necessary to become a Christian and then turn around and teach it is not necessary to remain one. Yet, some are teaching it, and we might add, many are acting that way. With so many acting the role just described, they need to cry out to their teachers like the drunk infidel did to Bob Ingersol in the midst of one of his lectures: "Make it strong, Bob; a lot of us are counting on you." If the many "has-beens" have any chance, it surely would have to be on the basis of "once saved always saved"!

I remember a revival meeting we were having a number of years ago in Indiana. The man doing the preaching during the meeting and I were calling upon a woman who was a zealous advocate of "once saved always saved". We reasoned with her from the Scriptures upon the matter for an hour or more before we took our leave. She contended that she knew she was saved and that there was no possibility that she could ever be lost, and though we gave her straight Bible teaching upon it, we got about as far as an ant trying to eat a hole through pavement. After we left, the brother said to me, "I have never been so glad to get out of a place in my life. That woman tried to flirt with me every time she could get my eye." Is it any wonder she couldn't get her husband to go to a religious service anywhere? She might act that way believing about salvation as she did, but accepting God's truth upon the subject that one has to walk in the pathway of faithfulness after conversion would have dealt with her soul in such a way that she would have repented of her fleshly ways if there was any honesty or conscientiousness about her.

There is much to be said upon this subject. What we propose bringing out in this present study will be brought out under two headings: (1) "Once saved always saved" is unscriptural; and (2) "Once saved always saved" is ridiculous. Let us look at them in the above order.

I. "Once Saved Always Saved" Is Unscriptural.

A. Heb. 10:28-30 Shows It Is Unscriptural.

Concerning the people under the Old Testament who did not abide by the law they were under, verse 28 says:

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."

They were dealt with for their unfaithfulness. Adulterers, murderers, sabbath-breakers, unruly children, idolaters and many others were to be stoned with stones for their unfaithfulness to their covenant-law. Verse 29 speaks concerning people in this dispensation who are unfaithful to Christ after having accepted him:

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace."

To be punished? Yes! How? In a sorer way than those unfaithful in Old Testament days! Verse 30 quotes two passages from the Old Testament to show that God will take vengeance even upon His people when they turn from Him:

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

No one can read or study this passage and get anything else out of it but the fact that God will punish His children today who become disobedient just as readily as He did His children of Israel in Old Testament times--only He will give them a "sorer punishment", which, of course, will be punishment in hell.

B. Heb. 10:38,39 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

God has certainly willed that all His children (the "just" or "justified") continue to live the life of faith, but not all so continue. Both of these truths are borne out in verse 38:

"The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Then, a person *can* draw back instead of continue! And if he does, God is not pleased with him! Now notice verse 39 with reference to what those receive who continue in faith and what those receive who don't:

"We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul."

Those who continue in the way of faith will receive the salvation of their souls, according to the above verse, and those who draw back instead of continuing in faithfulness do so "unto perdition". "Perdition" means "perishing". Here is a contrast in this verse: the faithful receive salvation; the unfaithful perish. How could language be clearer?

C. II Pet. 2:20 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

Here is a passage that advocates of "once saved always saved" have tried their best to explain away. They have to if their theory is to stand! They have piled up effort upon effort trying to do so, for they cannot let it stand. You will see why when you read it:

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

False teachers try to say this isn't talking about somebody who has become a Christian. But, it surely is. The epistle was written to Christian people as is evident from the very first verse of the book and many other such statements throughout the book. It is talking to Christian people who have escaped the pollutions of the world through knowing Christ. False teachers try to say that if these had been God's children, He wouldn't call them "hogs" and "dogs" as He does in the verses that follow the above verse. Oh? But, why wouldn't He? If He did, He did, whether we would have it that way or not! People once cleansed from sin who return to it are likened by *God's Word* to a washed sow returning to her wallowing in the mire and to a dog going back to feed on what he formerly rejected. It's Bible whether we would have it that way or not. Are we going to bend the Bible to fit our likes, or are we going to bend and change our ideas to fit the Bible? On this question, many need to change their ideas and take what the Bible says. It says that one is in a worse condition after starting with Christ and then quitting Him than the man who has never known the way of righteousness. False teachers have no explanation for that statement in the verse under consideration. If one was lost before becoming a Christian, how could he be worse off through his backsliding if he still had his salvation (something he didn't have before becoming a Christian)? But, if one is lost through backsliding, then he is back in his lost condition, and his case is worse off than before inasmuch as he has once tried and failed--a solid strike against him ever coming back and really sticking for God, for when men do not succeed the first time, they seldom ever try again, and if they do try again, it is hard for them to have the faith they need to succeed.

D. John 15:4,6 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

In John 15, Jesus pictured Himself as a vine and His disciples as branches. In verse 4, we have this instruction:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Is it necessary for a branch to abide in the vine in order to bear fruit? Of course. The branch depends upon the vine to provide the food for it from the earth. How else could a branch produce fruit? In like manner, Jesus said that no disciple could bear fruit without abiding in Him. The verse itself opened, as you noticed, with the words: "Abide in me." When Jesus said, "Abide in me," it showed what He *desired* concerning us. When He spoke the words contained in verse 6, He told what would *become* of the disciple who did not abide in Him:

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Does this sound like salvation? Or do "cast into the fire" and "they are burned" sound like condemnation?

I believe that we have seen from the foregoing passages (many more could be given) that the teaching of "once saved always saved" is an unscriptural doctrine. Jesus expects His followers to be true to Him. Yes, He *demand*s that they "abide in Him" as definitely as He does the sinner to accept Him! If the sinner cannot be saved without accepting Christ, neither can the Christian be saved without continuing steadfastly!

II. "Once Saved Always Saved" Is Ridiculous.

A. Such A Doctrine Promotes Unfaithfulness.

Recently, I taught a young man upon the very subject of this study. He was of the belief that one did not have to be faithful to Christ after conversion in order to be saved. He claimed to be saved, yet he did not even attend religious services. Why didn't he? He didn't have to, according to his belief. I asked him, "If you believed you had to be faithful in carrying out the commandments of the Bible in order to be saved, would you assume a more responsible attitude toward Christ's commandments than you do now?" Reluctantly, he admitted that he would, I then showed him from the Scriptures that Christ *demand*s faithfulness in order to be saved. I told Him that Christ wanted a faithful church, a holy church, a working church, a growing church. In the face of the Scriptures given him, he admitted, "I can see where the position you are setting forth would cause those who believed it to be faithful." I said, "Well, isn't that the kind of a church the Lord wants? Doesn't He want a people who leave sin alone? Doesn't He want a church that will get out and work for Him? Doesn't He want a growing church?" The answer was (and is) obvious. "Then," I said, "Christ gave the church the kind of teaching that would make it what He wanted it to be! Teaching "once saved always saved" will not produce the kind of church that Christ wants. But, teaching that one must be steadfast after conversion will! Wouldn't it be ridiculous for Jesus to want a faithful, holy, working, growing church and then give it a doctrine like "once saved always saved" that would promote unfaithfulness, ungodliness in people, and indifference to Christian service? I have read and heard a number of times that the religious body best known for teaching "once saved always saved" actually has a larger representation of persons in penal institutions than any other religious body. Well, that is understandable! The doctrine is ridiculous!

B. Such A Doctrine Would Fill Heaven With People Who Do Not Love God, Who Do Not Have A Living Faith In Jesus Christ, And Who Do Not Serve Him.

The above statement is evident. More will accept Christ than will live for Him till death. At least one out of every two (possibly much higher even) of those who one-time accepted Christ have drifted from Him. Most of them die in that very backslidden condition. Those who have drifted from Christ have not loved Him enough to obey Him when He commands them how to live; they have not had a living faith in Him, or they would have lived the life of faith; they have not cared enough about Him even to serve Him. Instead, they have shamed Him with their inconsistent and sinful lives. They have walked in their own stubborn ways. They have done as they have pleased. Now, if

everyone who has one-time accepted Christ is going to be in heaven, heaven is going to be filled with people who have not loved Christ enough to live for Him, who have not believed Him enough to do as He said. Do you mean to tell me that God is preparing heaven for spiritual fellowship throughout eternity with such people who are *unspiritual*? Such an unthinkable, outlandish teaching! To what folly it brings all the work of God! I don't believe a word of it. It isn't Bible. It's ridiculous!

C. Such A Doctrine Would Actually Destroy The Right Of Human Choice After Conversion.

I have always believed as I studied the Bible that man had the power of choice. God tells him what to do, but He doesn't force him to do it. He tells him what not to do, but He doesn't keep him from doing it. God wants all men to be saved, but He doesn't force anybody into becoming a Christian. He wants them to, but if they desire not to be, then they don't have to be Christians. Of course, they will be judged in the end for their disobedience to the will of God. When people become Christians, of course, they want to go to heaven; they want to do the will of God; they want to be Christians; they want to live apart from the sin of the world; they want to be in fellowship with God's people; they mind the spiritual things of life. Bear in mind, they do the above through choice--God does not force them to become Christians. Now, with the passing of time, what can happen? The person can lose his love for God; he can get so he doesn't care for worship services; spiritual things are boring to him; sin is alluring; he would rather be with worldly people than with Christian people; he isn't interested in heaven any more; he doesn't care about God. Now, here is what I want to know: does that man still have the power of choice? or has the fact that he was one-time converted destroyed that trait peculiar to mankind? Friends, man still has the power of choice. He became a Christian because he chose to, and the grace of God would have given him salvation--not because he deserved it, but because Jesus Christ purchased it for those who would love Him enough and believe Him enough to choose to be saved. Now that he has allowed sin to change his choice from God to sin, from spiritual things to worldly things, he still has the power of choice. Christ doesn't force a man to abide in Him. If He did, all would abide in Him. But, He has said even to His people that a man must reap what he has sown; he must accept what he has chosen; he must remain true and not grow weary in sowing to the Spirit if he will ever reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7-9). I say that this teaching of "once saved always saved" actually destroys man's power of choice after conversion, and surely such a teaching is thereby judged ridiculous!

D. Such A Doctrine Would Make The Promises Of God To The Overcomers Apply To Those Who Don't Overcome.

Many promises are made to God's obedient children. In the Book of Revelation, for instance, there are a good many such promises made to the faithful, and those promises relate to salvation. But, "once saved always saved" would make those promises apply to people who don't overcome when they are promises to an altogether different group of people--the overcomers. Let us notice. Rev. 2:7 says that Christ will give to eat of the tree of life in the midst

of God's paradise "to him that overcometh", but "once saved always saved" says that He will give them to eat of that tree whether they overcome or not. Again, Rev. 2:11 says that "he that overcometh" shall not be hurt of the second death (hell). But, "once saved always saved" says they won't go to hell even if they don't overcome. What does that do to Christ's promise? It is no promise at all, according to that. Rev. 2:17 says Christ will give to eat of the hidden manna as well as the white stone "to him that overcometh". But, "once saved always saved" promises the hidden manna and the stone to people whether they are overcomers or not. They are promising something that Jesus didn't. Rev. 2:26-28; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 3:21; and Rev. 21:7 all contain other promises to those who overcome. They are not made to those who do not overcome. I say that any doctrine that makes God's promises to the overcomers apply to those who do not overcome is guilty of giving people a ridiculous doctrine! And I believe you can see it.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion? Simply that God commands and demands faithfulness of His people. No one will be saved who does not come to Christ for salvation, and no one will have that salvation unless he abides in Christ. The Scriptures are very clear upon this subject, and only by twisting certain clear passages and disregarding the passages dealt with in this study can people believe and teach to the contrary. I can't understand why preachers will try to get people to be faithful in their religious life and then turn around and teach them a doctrine that will promote unfaithfulness. I know that my Lord has not done it. May God help every Christian reading and studying these lines to believe in the absolute necessity of faithfulness enough to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And may every alien sinner reading these lines not get interested in being baptized unless he is willing to abide in Christ until death afterwards.

The Shepherds of the Flock

In our last study, we discussed the necessity of continuing steadfastly following baptism. That such faithfulness is necessary cannot be questioned. The Scriptures are very clear concerning it. In bringing about such faithfulness, we know that the individual himself is charged with the responsibility of seeing that he continues in faithfulness. To each one of us, the Bible would say:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

This does not mean that each one is to make up his own plan of salvation, but to busy himself carrying out the requirements that God has laid upon the Christian for salvation. But, in addition to each convert bearing the

certain obligation to keep himself faithful, the concerned Lord has made each Christian responsible to the extent of his ability to aid, protect, and help in whatever way he can every other Christian. The next study concerning fellowship will treat this more fully.

But, "everybody's business is nobody's business." We have all heard that old, familiar statement many times, and we know there is a lot of truth in it. Therefore, though God has charged the individual to be faithful and each Christian to help him be faithful, divine wisdom has proceeded to create an office in the church with the express purpose of seeing that each individual in the church is particularly helped and overseen in the matters of spiritual growth and faithfulness. That office, the office of the shepherd, is to be the subject of this present study.

I. The Elders Are The Shepherds Of The Flock Of God.

A. By Title.

In Eph. 4:11, we read:

"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

The Greek word translated "pastors" in the above verse is "poimane", which means to shepherd, to feed. It is evident that the above passage is setting forth given offices in the church. "Apostles" and "prophets" were inspired offices in the early church. The men filling those offices had their actual service to Christ channeled through either the office of an "evangelist" or a "pastor". However, today, since the days of inspiration, there are no "apostles" and "prophets" living among men. But, the work of "evangelists" and the work of "pastors" still go on and will go on by living men as long as the church exists upon the earth.

Who are these men "pastors"? They are distinct from "evangelists" as is seen from the verse last quoted. Bible scholars are quite generally agreed that "pastors" are "elders". I think this is evident when we read I Pet. 5:1,2,4:

"The elders which are among you I exhort...Feed the flock of God which is among you...And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Notice four things: (1) Peter was addressing the "elders" (2) He exhorted them to "feed" the flock of God. Remember that the word "pastor" in the Greek was "poimane". The Greek word translated "feed" in the above passage is "poimane"--this shows that the "elders" are to "pastor" the flock. They are the "shepherds" among the sheep. (3) Notice that it is the "flock" of God which the elders are exhorted to feed. This word fits the picture--that of a shepherd. (4) Christ is referred to as the "chief Shepherd" in the above passage. The Greek word translated "chief Shepherd" is "arki-poimane", which breaks down into "arki" (higher) and "poimane" (pastor or shepherd). "Chief Shepherd" is a relative expression signifying that there were "under shepherds". In the setting, it is evident that the elders are the under shepherds.

So, the elders are the shepherds of the flock from the

standpoint of one of their titles.

B. By Work.

By the work left for them to do, the elders are the shepherds of the flock. What did Paul tell the elders of Ephesus to do? Listen to it:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

It is not hard to see to whom the Holy Spirit has committed the work of shepherding the flock of God. The above passage shows that that work has been committed to the elders. They are the pastors (the shepherds)! But, another look at I Pet. 5:1,2 in this regard will not hurt:

"The elders which are among you I exhort...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."

Let me say that no more responsible task has been committed to anybody than has been committed to the elders of the church. I would hate to go to the judgment bar of God having been unfaithful to the work of an evangelist, but were I an elder, I would fear facing my Lord on the day of judgment if I had not been faithful to my work as an elder! To them has been committed the work of shepherding the sheep of God's flock.

C. By Fact.

Without going into detail to consider who all might be included under the expression "them that have the rule over you", I think it will be conceded by all with any amount of Bible knowledge at all that the elders would be included in it. Let us notice how Heb. 13:17 reads:

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief."

Here is a fact stated: the elders (those who rule) must give an account to God. They are responsible for those under them! They are "stewards over God's heritage" (I Pet. 5:3), and stewards must give an account of their stewardship. Yes, the elders are to be God's shepherds over His flock. It is an office and a work fraught with both joyous satisfaction and fearful responsibility. A crown of glory that fadeth not away is reserved for those who do their work well (I Pet. 5:4), but the bitterest of condemnation will await those who have shirked their holy responsibilities toward those who have accepted Christ.

II. The Sad Condition Existing Too Commonly Today.

A. Some Desire No Elders.

There are actually some who desire to have no elders over them at all. This is nothing short of a spirit of re-

bellion. It is trifling with divine wisdom. It is setting aside the Lord's plan. I am not saying that unqualified men should be put into office in order to have elders, but I am saying that every congregation ought to have elders or be looking forward to the day when some in their midst will be qualified to accept that responsibility. But, that is not the way that some would have it. I remember a lady approaching seventy years of age who, when admonished to respect the oversight of her elders, said, "I don't intend to take orders from any man!" She never married, and with such an attitude, it is a good thing she hadn't. She represents that group that would rather the church have no elders, for they want no restraining hand upon their actions and no rebuking and counseling when they have done wrong. But, that is not the way the Lord would have it. When a sheep gets sick, the shepherd is quick to try to help it. So must elders care for the spiritual health and well-being of the sheep of God's flock. But, some do not want it that way.

B. Too Many Congregations Have Disqualified Men Filling The Office Of The Eldership.

Many congregations have elders who have several living wives. Others have elders whose children are not living right and whose wives are not in subjection. Others have elders who cannot even teach a class, much less exhort and convince the false teacher as elders are supposed to do (Tit. 1:9-11). Still others have elders who drink, others who smoke and chew, others who have an impure speech, others who are "hot-headed", others who are not fully honest in their business, and others who have anything but a good report of them that are without. I am sorry these conditions exist, but I cannot deny them, for they do exist! I do not see how that preachers can preach "loyalty to the Word of God" and then go along with such conditions in the church. How can they go out and call on outsiders and tell them, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent"? Doesn't the Bible lay down positive qualifications as to the qualifications of elders? Yes, just as plainly as it does the qualifications for becoming a Christian! But, so many people today say, "Well, it doesn't have to be just like the Bible says about those qualifications." And I ask, "If it doesn't have to be just like the Bible says about the qualifications of elders, how do you know that it has to be just like the Bible says about the plan of salvation?" I look out, and the denominational world is busy scrapping the plan of salvation that our blessed Lord gave, and I look out again, and I see congregations scrapping the qualifications for the elders that the same Lord gave. How can people rightfully claim to be following the Bible when they do things like that?

I believe those qualifications. They are found in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:5-11. I know this, if men are not qualified for the office of God's shepherds, they will be unable to do the work of His shepherds. God wants His flock shepherded. It takes the right kind of men to do that work. That is why God demands the qualifications that He does.

C. Few Elders Are Actually Shepherding The Flock Today.

Come into a congregational gathering on Sunday morning as a stranger and say to one of the members that you would like to see one of the pastors, and he would in all probability say to you, "We have only one--I'll get him (a preacher);" or, "Just a minute--I'll get Brother Smith (a preacher)." How many members would know enough about the Bible to get one of the elders for the stranger? Come into either of the Sunday services, and who brings the message in ninety-nine out of one hundred congregations? A preacher whom the people call "the pastor"--not one of the elders. Seldom in the average congregation have the members ever heard a message from the lips of any of the elders. They have a hired substitute year in and year out to do their "feeding", and then they bawl the Methodists out for adopting a substitute for immersion! That is just another one of the many inconsistencies to be found among some who holler long and loud about "No book but the Bible, no creed but Christ, no name but the divine." Who is prepared to deny these things?

Seldom in the average congregation have the members ever been called on by any of the elders. Seldom have they been encouraged by them personally to do right. Seldom have they been warned by them when about to do wrong. If there is any of that to do, they trot the preacher down to see the people, or it never gets done. And you know this to be a fact!

If Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist, and he was (II Tim. 4:5), then elders are to do the work of elders. That work is to shepherd the sheep of God's flock. Praise the Lord for those relatively few elders across the country who are busy at the work given them by the master. They are dear men in Israel. They have as hard a work to do as any evangelist--possibly harder! May the Lord help them to do it and to do it well. Theirs will be a blessed reward--an everlasting crown of glory given them when the chief Shepherd returns (I Pet. 5:4)! But, what will happen to men who pose as elders, but do not do the work? Possibly the same thing that will happen to evangelists who do not evangelize and to members who are not actually Christians. I say, according to the Word of God, it is a fearful responsibility to be an elder in the Lord's church.

By way of conclusion, let me say that Sheep need a shepherd. If sheep were turned loose permanently to shift for themselves, how many of them would survive the obstacles? Possibly a few would be left after a few years, but very few. Under the present-day way of little or no shepherding of those converted to Christ, some do survive (at least to a degree), but if the Lord's plan of shepherding the flock were followed, how many more would survive, and how much stronger would even those be who are now surviving!

If I were an elder, I would want to give myself to the work of pastoring as much as I now give myself to the work of an evangelist. I would expect the Lord to be with me in my work. I would expect to see some hard times as I did my best to serve the Lord in that capacity. I would expect to see much good accomplished through my consecrated efforts. I would seek to improve myself so that I could do my work better. I believe I would seek as much

preparation for my work as an elder as the average preacher today seeks for his work, The sheep needs just such shepherds, and may God help each man now filling that office who reads these words to take these words seriously. And may every Christian man reading these words who might qualify for that work actually desire that work enough to seek that holy office.

The Fellowship of the Church

When one becomes a Christian, he becomes a part of a spiritual fellowship. Birds of a feather flock together, for they that have something in common with each other that makes them alike and that similarly distinguishes them from other birds. Even so do Christians have that "togetherness" because of those things which they have in common and because of those things which distinguish them from the world about them. Christians know what it is to sing together, pray together, study together, work together, weep together, rejoice together, and hope together. Certainly one's Christianity ought to be questioned who does not desire to be in fellowship with those who are God's people. Such is actually a violation of a number of essential elements of Christianity.

In this study, we wish to discuss two things: (1) we should seek the fellowship of the saints; and (2) we must be careful not to get in with wrong fellowship.

I. We Should Seek The Fellowship Of The Saints.

Here are a number of reasons why:

A. The Example Of The First Converts:

One of the four things affirmed of the very first converts to Christianity was their faithful continuance in the fellowship:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

To those of us interested in the pattern left for us by the apostolic church, the above means much. If we would follow that example today, we must emphasize the fellowship as it is in the Bible.

B. The Example Of Saul Of Tarsus.

Saul of Tarsus was a marked contrast to many today who claim to be Christians. That was even true of the question under consideration. He had been such a bitter enemy against the church. How the church should have desired his conversion! Even the dying Stephen had prayed for him. But, when he was converted, it was hard to convince some of the church that he had actually become a Christian. When he came to Jerusalem, he had an experience that would have dampened many people's interest in the church. Acts 9:26-28 says:

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him unto the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."

Prior to this, he had narrowly escaped with his life from Damascus. At such a time, he certainly needed the comfort of God's people. But; instead, they snubbed him, though in all good intentions. But, nevertheless, had he been put together on the sensitive pattern of a lot of present-day people, he would never have had any desire to have been a part of their fellowship in the future. But, when Barnabas took him to the apostles and vouched for his conversion to Christ, they welcomed him into their midst, and he was a blessing to them, and they were a blessing to him. Saul, then, is a Biblical example of a man who sought church fellowship and would not be denied it. What an example for all today to desire the fellowship of God's people!

C. We Need The Fellowship Of The Saints.

I appreciate that good song whose words go: "I need the prayers of those I love." Those words are so true, and I need the strengthening fellowship of those dear saints with whose life mine can be associated in the way that God intended when He made the church into a fellowship. There is genuine encouragement to live for Christ in the worthy lives around us with whom ours can be associated. When one is thrown out into the world to make a living for himself and his family, he is cast alongside those who know not our Christ and who display a spirit foreign to ours. We would have to go out of this world to be rid of the sinful element, according to Paul (I Cor. 5:9,10). How good it is to gather in on prayer meeting night to pray with those whose spirit seeks God as does ours! One reason, in my judgment, why some who claim to be Christians do not search out the fellowship of Christians is that sin is not as abhorrent to them as it ought to be. When one does personal work, he gets so weary of hearing people express their loose ideas of religion and their broad ideas as to Christian living. Patiently, he may teach them what the Scriptures say only to have them counter with such statements as: "If that's right, then there are going to be mighty few saved"--not meaning to say that you are right, but to indicate that you are badly mistaken even though you have shown them what the Bible teaches. How good, I say, after such experiences to come to the assembly of those of like precious faith and hear the blessed gospel preached that confirms one's faith and strengthens him in the way that he knows is right. Yes, we need the fellowship of God's people, and he who does not avail himself of that which is available to him is not only slighting his spiritual life, but he is in open violation of God's plan for our lives, for He has willed that we continue in the fellowship of His people.

D. Others Need Our Fellowship Also.

Don't get the idea that the church is composed of inept weaklings simply because we are saying that we need the

fellowship of other Christians and they need our fellowship. Let me say that the church is composed of the strongest people on earth, but let us not overlook the fact that we have a great adversary in the devil, and he works through the weakness of our mortal flesh. Why do we say that others need our fellowship? Because the Bible gives us great responsibilities toward our brethren in Christ. It tells us to exhort one another lest some be led away from God (Heb. 3:12,13). It tells us to pray for one another (Eph. 6:18). It tells us to take from our lives all things that might prove a stumblingblock to our brethren (Rom. 14:21). It tells us to help one another in times of financial need (I John 3:17). It tells us to restore our brethren when they have been overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1,2). It tells us to provoke one another to greater love and to greater works for Christ (Heb. 10:24). These instructions are based upon the fact that our brethren need us, and we ought to thank God that there is something that we can do to help our brethren along the way that leads to life. But, if we are not in fellowship with them, we can do no more for them than a doctor who resides upon a foreign continent when we have some physical malady that he could help eradicate.

E. Brotherly Love Should Constrain Us.

When young people love each other, you can't keep them apart. You don't have to command them to be together. Their love for each other has a way of just drawing them together. Men who love their homes find themselves at their homes as much as possible. This matter of brotherly love is a vital part of every Christian's life. Without it, one is not a Christian any more than he is a Christian without faith in Christ. This is the teaching of a number of passages, particularly of the book of I John. I say that if we love the brethren, we will be in fellowship with the brethren. Love for them will see to that. Therefore, if you have the problem of not desiring regular attendance with the brethren, you might well know that your love for the brethren is not what it ought to be. I believe this with all my heart. In this connection, I like that song that goes: "Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above. Before our Father's throne We pour our ardent prayers; Our fears, our hopes, our arms are one, Our comforts and our cares. We share our mutual woes, Our mutual burdens bear; And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear." And let's not overlook that last stanza that pictures the brethren as they depart from each other until they get to meet again: "When we asunder part, It gives us inward pain; But we shall still be joined in heart And hope to meet again." Yes, our love for each other will constrain us to be steadfast in our fellowship with each other.

F. For A More Effective Ministry To The Unsaved.

Christ could have turned us loose to win souls single-handed. But, he gave us brethren to work with us. He could have told us to go out to convert souls, but have given us no fellowship into which to bring them. That would not have been so easily accomplished. But, as it is, we can go out and deal with people and then bring them to the place of public assembly where they can hear the gospel de-

clared unto them. As the brother preaches and we sit by the side of those whom we have brought in, we can pray for their hearts to be open and honest. Thus, we work together to win souls to Christ. Besides, Paul usually had helpers with him in his evangelistic labors. Sometimes it was Barnabas; sometimes it was Silas; sometimes it was Timothy; and sometimes it was others. But, they labored together for the cause of Christ. And I am sure that a more effective ministry of the church to the unsaved can be accomplished where we are faithful in the fellowship of the church than can ever be accomplished by remaining at home aloof from Christians and at the same time trying to win another to Christ. He might well challenge our right to deal with him, seeing that we ourselves are not faithful to one of the simplest and most basic things of Christianity--the assembly of the saints.

G. That God May Be Glorified Through A Greater Church.

God would have all men to be saved (I Tim. 2:4). He desires such first for their sakes, for He does love men (John 3:16). But, the more who are saved from sin and become the people of God, the more that God is glorified. If all men were Christians, letting their lights shine for God, how He would be glorified in the eyes of men (Matt. 5:16)! Part of the power of sin is its popularity. People do some of the things they do because it seems that everybody else is doing it, and how people do hate to be unpopular and out-of-step. When souls are converted, God is glorified (John 15:8), and the more souls that are actually won to Christ, the more that God is glorified. But, it is the "togetherness" of Christians that shows the world the actual numerical strength of those who have pledged themselves to Christ. What a joy it is to see a church lot full of cars where the gospel is being preached. The world sits up and begins to take notice. The work of God in such a place is bringing glory to God.

H. The Whole Plan Of God Is Set Up On The Fellowship Basis.

For instance there is the assembly of the saints to which the Bible bids us to be faithful in attending (Heb. 10:25). This certainly involves the church in fellowship. Then, as we discussed in our last study, God has placed elders in the church. They are the spiritual overseers into whose custody God has entrusted the Christians in their respective communities. They are to feed the flock (I Pet. 5:2). Surely they must know who is included in that flock, or they can never know whom to feed. This necessarily involves knowing who is in that fellowship. Again, the Bible speaks of Christians as "brethren" (Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 1:10; and many others). This is a term of relationship that involves both affection and responsibility. Where people are brethren, they are necessarily in fellowship, or something is wrong. Along this line, it is noteworthy that Peter speaks of the church as the "brotherhood" (I Pet. 2:17). If any word suggests fellowship, it is "brotherhood". We may not belong to any brotherhood with headquarters here on earth (like Boston, Salt Lake City, or Indianapolis), but if we are true Christians, we do belong to that brotherhood whose headquarters is in heaven.

We are come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:22, 23) if we are Christians. Then consider the fact that God has placed disfellowship in His plan for the church (I Cor. 5:1-13; II Thess. 3:6-15; and others). One cannot be disfellowshipped for doing wrong if there is no such thing as the fellowship of the church. "Disfellowship" means to be denied fellowship. Surely, then, there is a fellowship from which the wicked is to be banned. Each one in that fellowship must personally commit himself or herself to it. The actual details as to how one goes about identifying himself with a local congregation is not set forth in the Scriptures, but such an action is necessarily involved. Otherwise, there could be no known circle of individuals from which the wicked could be banned in a disfellowship action. Some people today claim to be Christians, but they have not identified themselves with the people with whom they gather for public worship services. Such, in some ways, is evading a part of the plan of God. They want to be fellowshipped, yet they do not want to commit themselves to the fellowship. A congregation of people fit to worship with is fit to take fellowship with. If such a congregation is not fit to be in fellowship with, it is unfit to worship with. By thus acting, some people are able to shirk their financial responsibility. If they do wrong, they can say: "We are not under the elders of this congregation," and indeed they aren't, for they haven't placed themselves under their jurisdiction. In some ways, claiming to be Christians, they are at least violating something somewhere, and this cannot be denied. Yes, these and other matters of fellowship show the whole plan of God for the church involves the matter of fellowship.

1. The Sad Results Of 'Tramp' Religion.

As indicated above, some people choose to remain detached from the fellowship of any congregation. This Lord's day, they may attend services in one place, next Lord's day in another place, the following Lord's day in a third place, and the next Lord's day in no place at all, for they will be attending a birthday dinner of some relative. As such, they appear to people to be stronger than they are. All three of the above congregations were pleased to have them in their services and felt that they were fine people to be in their services when they were not members locally and when they drove considerable distances to be in their services. But, were they as strong as they are credited with being, they would be lined up locally in some given place if there were some local place worthy of being lined up with. "Tramp" religion may have a variety about it that is different, but aside from that, nothing can be said for it. It is much better to be in the harness for Christ in some given place and go to work--to have some definite local responsibilities, to be one that the brethren can count on, to be a part of some Bible class regularly, to be systematically fed by the same spiritual leaders who watch for one's soul, etc. "Tramp" religion has no more really to commend it than "tramp" living. People need the fellowship of the church, and while "tramp" religion might appear to be in fellowship with many Christians in many places, the truth of the matter is, such people are hardly

in actual fellowship anywhere. They are rolling stones that gather no moss. They are birds that flock with nobody. They are trees that are bringing little or no fruit to perfection.

II. We Must Be Careful Not To Get In With Wrong Fellowship.

What we have pointed out in the foregoing section of this study is in no way to suggest that we be in fellowship with just any local group that calls itself a church. But, remember that if we cannot conscientiously count ourselves in fellowship with some local church because of its unfitness, we should not consider it a fit people with whom to meet in religious services either. We do have a responsibility to investigate any people where we may be to determine whether we would want the Lord to come and find us religiously identified with them. If there is no people with whom we can conscientiously be identified, then our responsibility is to be detached from all such and to labor individually for Christ where we are to convert the nucleus of a true congregation of Christian people with whom we can be in fellowship.

Why do we say that we must be careful not to get in with wrong fellowship? Because:

A. We Are Corrupted By Evil Companionships.

The Revised Version plainly renders I Cor. 15:33 as follows:

"Evil companionships corrupt good morals."

And we know that that is true. We are affected by those with whom we are in fellowship, or we are deriving nothing from our fellowship with them. Therefore, we need to be careful about the fellowship of which we are a part. Along this line, one of the reasons why Paul called upon the Corinthian congregation to disfellowship the sinning brother was that a little leaven would in time leaven the whole lump (I Cor. 5:6). Many people have fallen from their steadfastness to Christ by the wrong kind of fellowship. That is what is wrong with having fellowship with the world, and that is what is wrong with having a wrong religious fellowship.

B. We Are Counted Partners By God With False Teachers Whom We Financially Support And Religiously Befriend.

Anything with which a person associates himself religiously will have some teaching or preaching. What is taught and preached will either be the truth of God's Word, or it will be untrue to the Scriptures. Sinners will either be told to do what the Bible says in order to become Christians, or they will be given a false way. The pattern of the church set forth in the Scriptures will either be upheld and followed, or it will be spoken against and transgressed in practice. In the days of the early church, Paul said there were many vain and unruly talkers and deceivers (Tit. 1:10). Would Paul have had the Christians of his day be fed Sunday after Sunday by such teachers? Would he have had them support such teaching with their offerings? Of course not. Back in Old Testament days, Peter reminded his readers, there were false prophets among the people,

and he went on to say that there would be false teachers come among the people of God (II Pet. 2:1). Would Peter have us go along with such false teachers? Would he have us treat them as true servants of God? Of course not. When Paul left Ephesus he foretold the coming of false teachers to that place (Acts 20:29). What attitude did he take concerning them? He had spent much time warning the people against them (Acts 20:31). What is a warning for? To be heeded. Should we heed the warnings of the inspired apostle? If we do, then it is plain to be seen that we will be on guard not to be taken in by false teachers and false teaching. But, some people say: "We are grounded in the faith. When the preacher brings out something that we know is wrong we don't let what he says affect us." But, you put your offerings in, don't you? Your silence gives sanction to what is being preached. Your religious befriending of such teachers actually involves you with them, according to the Bible. II John 10,11 says:

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house (as you would a true teacher), neither bid him God speed (as you would a true teacher): for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Be identified, therefore, with no people where the truth of your Christ is not being faithfully upheld.

C. We Are Subject To Divine Punishment For A Wrong Religious Affiliation.

In Old Testament times the people of God were taken captive by Babylon. Being separated from their temple, where their altar was and where God had recorded His name and to which the various tribes came for their annual feasts, they were unable to carry out the religion that God had given them by reason of the bondage brought upon them by Babylon. In time, the Persians replaced the Babylonians in power. They were friendly to God's people and permitted as many of them as desired to go back to Jerusalem to do so. But, some had become so accustomed to living in Babylon and Babylonish ways that they didn't desire to go to Jerusalem. This, of course, was not pleasing to God. Now with this in mind, let us go to the book of Revelation where we see a likeness to the above. Christ established His church, but in time, there arose another religious system and power that very much took over the scene. This false religion called "Babylon" in the book of Revelation enslaved those who would be and who looked upon themselves as the children of God. By introducing false religious practices, Babylon kept those in ward within her from worshipping God according to His true plan. When that spell was broken, God had this to say to those who would be His people:

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

In olden days, if the Israelites refused to leave Babylon they would be counted a part of Babylon and as such would be punished right along with her. When people today affiliate themselves with some wrong religious group, they must share the fate of that group. This is what is wrong with being a part of any religious group that has been started by some man or group of men regardless of how sincere

those men might have been. Christ established His church in 30 A.D., but Catholicism grew up at a later date, and Protestantism came at a much later date, and most of the cult groups have a very recent origin. If I read in the Bible of God's condemnation upon lying or drunkenness, I want to be sure I am not guilty of such, and if I continue my reading and find that He likewise condemns false religion, I want to be just as sure that I am not connected with such in any way for that would involve me in the condemnation.

These things are so clear to those who read and believe the Bible in all of its teachings. Both parts of this study are very important: (1) be faithful in your fellowship with those who are the saints of God indeed; and (2) refuse to be in fellowship with anything that is displeasing to God.

Evangelism... the Work of the Whole Church

Were we to entitle this study, "Evangelism...the Work of the Church," it would be a Scriptural study showing that the work of the church is the evangelizing of the lost. Entitling it, "Evangelism...the Work of the Whole Church," we have the idea of evangelism being the church's work included, but we have included and emphasized the idea that this work falls upon the *whole* church--not merely a part of the church. That there is a need for the application of this subject, there can be no doubt in the minds of any who are spiritually-minded and know the facts of the case.

The whole plan of God, which we have been discussing for more than forty studies already, necessarily looks to the conversion of lost men, women, and young people. But, how shall these be converted? Will they get so tired of sin that they will of their own accord turn to God? Will they become so interested in God and eternity that they look into these matters by themselves? Or do they need help?

It is obvious that they need help. Just as God sent the Savior into the world to die for men that salvation might be provided, even so has Christ dispatched His church to the ends of the earth to proclaim salvation through His death, burial, and resurrection to every creature. It was necessary for Jesus to die if men were to be saved, and it is necessary for us who know Christ as our Savior to work in the winning of souls if they are to be saved. The evangelization of the lost of the whole world is a tremendous task, and Jesus rightly and wisely included every Christian in His plan to see that the job is accomplished. "To the law and to the testimony," then, to find out what He has called upon each of us to do.

I. Every Christian Has His Place In The Evangelization Of The World.

It almost seems wrong--at least, unnecessary--to have to convince those who have named the name of Christ that they have to help in the work of winning souls. Have you ever walked down the corridor of a hospital and heard the agonizing moans and groans of those who are suffering? You might not know them personally, but it is hard to imagine a man who if he knew how to relieve their suffering and permit them to go to their homes in sound health would not be glad to do so. That is why I say it almost seems wrong to spend time trying to convince people that it is their duty to win souls. They should be glad they have the privilege!

Let us now look at what each Christian is to do.

A. Evangelists.

When we speak of "evangelists", we are not using that term in the sense which it is commonly used today, but in the sense that it is used in the Bible. In modern usage, the term "evangelist" designates a preacher who merely conducts evangelistic meetings of a few nights or a few weeks' duration. If he ceases conducting such meetings to work with some weak church that needs his help, he is no longer engaged in evangelistic work, according to modern usage. In the Bible, the term "evangelist" was used to designate those preachers who were charged with carrying the gospel to the lost world and to establish and strengthen churches. They are distinguished from "pastors" or "elders", who were charged to care for the local work of which they themselves are a part.

It is obvious from the very term "evangelists" that their work is evangelism. There is a definite work that evangelists are supposed to do, for Paul wrote to Timothy:

"Do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5)

A study of the books I and II Timothy and Titus (which were written to evangelists) and a study of the life of Paul (who was an evangelist) as set forth in Acts and his epistles will furnish one with authentic Biblical material as to what the work of evangelists is. They pushed the gospel into new places (such as Paul on his various journeys). They led sinners to Christ (such as Philip's work accomplished). They set congregations into order by working with them until they were ready to carry on under the oversight of qualified local men set over them as elders (see Paul's instructions to Titus in Tit. 1:5 and other similar passages). They kept up contact with various congregations, even ministering the Word to them from time to time (see Paul's connection with the church at Antioch). They committed the Word to faithful men who would be able to teach and preach it to others (see Paul's instruction to Timothy in II Tim. 2:2).

There was a great need for the office of the evangelist in the beginning of Christianity, and because there were those who faithfully filled that office, Christianity spread far and wide across the Roman Empire. Today, there is likewise a great need for faithful men to fill that office to the glory of God and the outreach of the gospel. But, with

so many elders all over the country sitting down on the job, nearly all the preachers have settled down to the point of being nothing but one-man pastors over the churches so that new fields are not being entered with any degree of rapidity, for there is nobody free to go into those fields. Not until the concept of the Biblical evangelist is again incorporated into the thought of those who desire to be a Biblical people will evangelism again march.

B. Elders.

A former study was devoted to the subject of the elders, so no detailed study of that subject will be entered into here. But, one who studied that lesson may ask: "I thought the work of the elders had to do with caring for those converted--not with bringing in the lost." Basically, that is true--they are the shepherds of the flock--but don't overlook this fact: they are actually busy building up each convert in Christ who in turn will become a soul winner for Jesus. In this way, the more faithfully and successfully they do their work, the more workers Christ will have in each field to go forth winning men, women, and young people to Christ. In this way, the work of the elders does have to do with the work of evangelism.

C. Members.

Members of the church are just as important to the accomplishment of the work of the church as soldiers are to the winning of a war. They are just as necessary to the church's work as laborers are to a construction company's job. And the Bible so recognizes their responsibilities. Writing to members of the body of Christ living at Ephesus, Paul wrote:

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:11-17).

Any concept of Christianity that does not have each Christian a soldier in the Lord's army is not a true-to-the-Bible concept. Oh so many today have the erroneous concept, and that accounts for the fact that so little is being accomplished compared to what could be accomplished with the actual participation of the great group now stored away in "moth-balls". Jesus when here on earth said, "Come," to those who needed His help (Matt. 11:28). Now that He has gone back to heaven, He is saying, "Come," through others. In this connection, Rev. 22:17 says:

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

To those of us who value the precedent of the early

church as an expression of what Christ would have the church always to be, there is a lesson in soul winning to be learned from the dispersed Jerusalem church. Persecution, which arose following the martyrdom of Stephen, scattered the Jerusalem congregation except the apostles (the preachers) (Acts 8:1). Now, notice what verse 4 of that chapter says concerning these dispersed or scattered members:

"And they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

The plan of Christ includes personal work on the part of the members. The love for unsaved people prompts that work. The will of Christ demands it. If we would be Christians, we have the matter already settled for us as to whether we are going to be soul winners. Yet, it is one of the most neglected fields of Christian living today. If you do not think so, stand back and watch how few do anything in the course of a week to win anybody to Christ. If you don't think so, turn preacher and preach upon soul winning. People will show during the message and will tell their delinquency after the message is over. They will say: "There's one place that I really fall down;" or, "Personal work has always been hard for me," which is about tantamount to saying the person has not been doing it; or, "A sermon like that always convicts me;" or, "I'd like to learn how to do personal work," which again is a dead give away that the person has been doing nothing in that field for the Master. Seldom do I preach on that subject in revival meetings but what people come forward to ask the prayers of the saints in their behalf and to seek personal counsel as to how to work for Christ, and those who come are usually among the best members. This is revealing!

Yes, if many preachers are failing to evangelize, and if many elders are failing to pastor, it is equally true that many members are failing to soul win.

II. These Also Relate To Evangelism.

In no way to detract from what has just been said and surely in no way to ease the sting of those who have been failing to soul win, we wish to discuss a few additional things which also enter into the whole church's work of evangelism. In addition to preaching the gospel, shepherding the church and developing the members into soul winners, and actually doing personal work, consider the following as they relate to the salvation of souls.

A. Rearing Children The Right Way Relates To Evangelism.

Children reared right will accept Christ as Savior. In a sense, this is long-range evangelism from the standpoint of the time involved on the part of the parents. But, what could possibly be more rewarding? But, parents may be disappointed in the outcome of their children religiously if they themselves do not put the church before everything else, if they do not show a consistent Christian life before their children everyday, and if they do not exercise that carefulness so necessary in rearing them.

I care not how good a sermon a preacher may preach, if

he has failed to bring his own children to Christ, he has failed. Giving attention to everybody else and their needs, he has neglected his own children and their needs. Parents who cannot get their children to attend all the church services willingly are or have failed somewhere, and they are bound to have heart-ache after heart-ache over them. In our concern, then, for souls, let us not neglect the field that is so close to us--that of our own children.

B. Giving Relates To Evangelism.

Someone has said, "Salvation is free, but it costs money to pipe it to others," and it does. In the divine program, those lives that are set apart from earthly pursuits and vocational jobs to preach the gospel are to have their living provided:

"Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:13).

More than once with reference to those giving their lives to preaching and teaching does the Bible say:

"The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7; Matt. 10:10; 1 Tim. 5:17,18).

In all dispensations, men of God have brought their tithes and offerings to God, which in turn have been given to those who have devoted themselves to the special service of God to the extent that they did not have time to provide their own living without neglecting the spiritual work they were doing. There are those who argue that God does not demand tithes and offerings today, and there are surely plenty of people who do not bring them. But, 1 Cor. 9, Heb. 7, and other sections of the Scripture make it evident that God does expect us to be faithful in our tithes and offerings.

Those who do not bring their finances in God's way are certainly guilty of hindering evangelism today. People who are earning good money feel relieved that their abilities may be lacking from the preaching standpoint, but what about their financial abilities? Where men would steal their lives from God's service if they were so gifted, you can be reasonably sure that they will also steal financially from God. Yes, every member can help with the evangelistic program of the church by being a Bible giver. When one contributes his money, he is actually helping the church carry out its program of evangelism if the church is busy at the Lord's program of evangelism.

C. Prayer Relates To Evangelism.

Prayer can help in evangelism at least three ways: (1) Christians can pray for those who are preaching the gospel (Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3,4; II Thess. 3:1,2); (2) Christians can pray for more laborers to be raised up for the gospel harvest (Matt. 9:37,38); and (3) Christians can pray for those whom they are laboring to win to Christ (Rom. 10:1). When we read the New Testament story of early evangelism, we notice that preaching the Word and praying went right together (Acts 6:4). Wherever there is real evangelistic effort and a true compassion for the lost, I do not believe that you can keep the workers from praying! Honest, sincere prayer will lead people to work for the salvation of

the lost, and laboring to win the lost will cause them to pray more and more. This is the universal experience of those now busy in the work of Christ,

D. Living The Right Kind Of Life Relates To Evangelism.

There are a number of passages that show this to be true. I Pet. 3:1,2 shows that wives may be instrumental in leading their husbands to Christ by the lives they live before them. If this would be true of wives and husbands, the same thing would be true in other realms and relationships. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed that if His followers let their lights shine before men by doing good, it would have a spiritual effect upon others (Matt. 5:16). We do know that people form their opinion of Christianity by the lives of those who claim to be a part of it, and they make up their minds whether they want to be a part of it on the same basis. The world watches the lives of those in the church very carefully. If their lives are good, it will have an effect upon the world for good, but if they are bad, it will be a direct barrier to evangelizing the lost. A person doesn't work even one full day in contacting people for Christ but what the inconsistent life of someone in the church is thrown up to him. It is no wonder that Paul said to the Philippians to let their lives be only as it was becoming to the gospel (Phil. 1:27). It is noteworthy that Paul connected letting their lights shine with their holding forth the Word:

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 1:14-16).

The lives of the early converts met the approval of the onlookers, and that fact is connected in Acts 2:47 with the daily additions to the church:

"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

So, the good lives of the saints is an evangelistic factor, and the importance of it cannot be overlooked nor over-emphasized.

As we bring this study to a close, there are a number of thoughts that should be pointed out. Nothing is so dear to the heart of God as the winning of the lost. That is why He sent Jesus into the world. That is why He has sent forth the church with the orders found in the great commission. That is why He gave evangelists and why He has called every Christian to be a soul winner. There is a great need today for us to pray for more evangelists of the gospel to be raised up. There is a great need for evangelists to commit the Word to many more faithful men who will be able to teach others also. There is a great need for the elders to develop every member into a soul winner. There is surely a great need for the individual members to do the work committed to them and for the prevailing practice of letting one man (a preacher) do all the personal work and all the shepherding of the flock that gets done to be abandoned and replaced by a whole church

on fire for God going forth to win the lost to their Christ. If our thoughts direct our lives--and they do--then we can well "Think on these things"!

The Lord's Supper is Divinely Important

I can think of no better way to begin this study than to ask you this question: "What do you think of the Lord's supper?" While some have divergent thoughts about it and some unscriptural views of it, one of the great tragedies is that the average religious person has no particular thoughts or view concerning it. If sectarianism has failed to instruct those who look to it for teaching, it has failed to give certainty of understanding on the subject under consideration. It is a subject enshrouded by both ignorance and mystery to far too many. Because they do not understand it and suppose it to be too sacred to talk about, many never ask questions to become informed concerning it.

I have long appreciated studying and preaching upon this subject, and to partake of it is a sacred privilege that I do not intend to neglect for anything else from now until the time that I die or Jesus comes (whichever happens first). It is my intention to share with you the benefit of some of my studies upon this subject.

I. The Importance Of The Lord's Supper Is Seen In Its Symbolic Commemoration.

A. God Is A God Who Commemorates Great Events With Observances And Memorials.

That is a noteworthy fact concerning our God. After sparing the firstborn among the Hebrews when visiting the twelfth plague upon the Egyptians, God saw to it that His mercy upon them and His sparing of the firstborn be remembered from generation to generation. Hence, the feast of Passover. For a discussion of the Passover, you are referred to study 19 in this series, "The Three Great Jewish Feasts." A pot of manna from the Wilderness Period of Old Testament history was preserved in the ark of the covenant so that all succeeding generations might know of God's daily goodness upon their forefathers. Aaron's rod that budded when a rebellion was made against his authority as the high priest of God was likewise placed in the ark of covenant as a reminder that God had chosen Aaron and his offspring to offer the sacrifices and perform the other priestly duties. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, God had twelve stones from the river bed where the priests stood who held the ark of the covenant erected on the western side of the Jordan so that in times to come when the children would ask the meaning of those

stones, the parents could tell them of God's mighty hand which gave them entrance to the land of Canaan. Baptism, in its form of immersion into and emersion from the water, not only has its all-important saving aspect, but it also has a symbolic function--that of depicting to the world the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

B. The Lord's Supper Commemorates The Crucifixion.

In I Cor. 11:23-26, we read:

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Three facts in the above quotation show that the Lord's supper commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus: (1) Notice that He said, "This do in remembrance of me." This could not be clearer. Christ who gave this ordinance had in mind the commemorative element. To eat of the bread and drink of the cup without having the death of Jesus in our minds is to partake of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner, which amounts to our being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (I Cor. 11:27). (2) Proof that the particular thing that we are to remember about Jesus when partaking is His crucifixion. This is seen from the fact that He selected bread (emblematic of His body) and the cup (emblematic of His blood) as the elements of the Lord's supper. In the above passage, He included the comment that these were involved in His death for our sins. (3) Just as a monument proclaims important facts concerning the one whom it commemorates, so our spreading the table and partaking of the emblems proclaims week by week the death of Christ. This is also set forth in the above passage.

Our subject is: "The Lord's supper is Divinely Important." I ask you this: Is the death of Christ divinely important? And the answer comes back immediately: "Yes, for He died for our sins, and apart from that death, there could be no salvation." Then, whatever Jesus chose to commemorate that death, and whatever proclaims that death is not to be counted unimportant by men. In other words, what God has made important, let not man count unimportant!

Remembering His death and sufferings for us should renew our love for Christ each time that we partake of it. Such communion with Him should tend to keep us from sin and help us with power to live the overcoming life. And if humility is an important virtue--and it is--surely bowing humbly at the feet of Christ as we partake of the bread and cup should take every vestige of proud and self-righteousness out of us. Such blessings that come into our lives through this solemn commemoration also contribute to make the Lord's supper divinely important.

II. The Importance Of The Lord's Supper Is Seen From The Standpoint Of Communion.

A. It Is A Communion Of The Body And Blood Of Christ.

I Cor. 10:16 says:

"The cup of blessing which we bless (referring to the Lord's supper), is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we brake, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

This verse plainly shows that the Lord's supper is a communion of the body and blood of Jesus. It is a commemoration yes, but it is not confined to the commemorative aspect. In the Lord's supper, one communes, shares in, partakes of, fellowships with and in the body and blood of Jesus. This is the plain teaching of I Cor. 10:16, and I am neither able nor desirous of denying it. This is one of the reasons why I don't want to miss the Lord's supper at anytime. This is one of the reasons why it is dangerous to partake of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner. Some may contend that there is absolutely no connection between the Lord's supper and the forgiveness of sins and salvation, but the Bible does not uphold that idea. The Bible shows that the Lord's supper brings us again and again in contact with the blood of Christ, and what do we receive through the blood of Christ but the forgiveness of sins and salvation? If we may rightly show from Rom. 6:3 that a sinner contacts the blood of Christ in baptism because he is baptized into Christ's death (where His blood was shed), then we can surely show that a Christian enjoys contact with the blood of Christ through the Lord's supper, for it is a communion of the body and the blood of Christ.

While there are those who deny that John 6:53,54 has anything to do with the Lord's supper, I do not see how language could be much clearer. Notice that passage:

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

In the above passage, Jesus talks about people eating His flesh and drinking His blood. This is *exactly* the language of the Lord's supper:

"Take, eat; this is my body...Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood" (Matt. 26:26-28).

If one doesn't eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood in the Lord's supper, then he never does. But, all who would have life must do that according to Jesus' teaching in John 6:53. I do not believe that the Lord's supper alone brings remission of a Christian's sins any more than baptism alone brings remission of an alien sinner's sins, yet I do not believe that a Christian has the forgiveness of his sins without the Lord's supper any more than I believe a sinner has the remission of his sins without baptism! Brethren, this is safe ground to take, for it is Biblical ground! That's why people should not minimize the importance of the Lord's supper. That's why they should always be present for it. That's why they should partake

in a self-examining, confessing, penitent, Christ-remembering way.

Has the devil attacked the ordinance of baptism? Indeed, he has. He wants to keep unsuspecting sinners away from the blood of baptism to be found when one is baptized. Has the devil attacked the ordinance of the Lord's supper? Indeed, he has. He wants to keep those who have started out to be God's people away from the blood of Christ shed for their sins. We could expect the devil to fight both baptism and the Lord's supper, and he has done it through the years. Denominationalism belittles baptism, keeps people ignorant of the Bible teaching concerning it, and misteaches it, and it is equally clear that denominationalism has not given the Lord's supper the place that it had in the early church.

Yes, the Lord's supper is divinely important.

B. It Is A Communion With Christ Himself.

In Matt. 26:29, Jesus said:

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Jesus was present with His disciples when He instituted the Lord's supper. He took His own cup from which He had drunk during the supper and told them all to drink of it. No doubt, the bread was likewise. In other words, both they and He had eaten and drunk of the bread and the cup upon that occasion. But, He said He would not do this with them any more until it became fulfilled in the kingdom. It became fulfilled in the kingdom in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. Notice from the above passage that when it became fulfilled in the kingdom, Jesus would be there with His followers drinking with them. This is why it is so often referred to as "communion". It is a personal communion with Jesus as we go to Him and He comes to us and we commune together as Redeemer and redeemed. The fact that all who love Christ want the closest possible walk with Him and communion with Him argues for the importance of the Lord's supper that brings us into spiritual communion with Him.

III. The Importance Of The Lord's Supper Is Seen In The Great Place It Occupies In The Bible.

A. Consider Luke 22:29,30.

Jesus speaking, that passage reads:

"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Here we have three things: (1) the kingdom, the church; (2) the apostles exercising apostolic authority over that kingdom, which is going on right now; and (3) there would be a table in Christ's kingdom where they would eat and drink. What table would that be? The Lord's table, of course. When Jesus said He was appointing them a kingdom where they would get to eat and drink at His table, does it not suggest itself to your mind that the Lord's supper must have been much more important (and to be

observed with a good bit more frequency) than it is now considered by many people? Had Jesus said, "I appoint unto you a kingdom that ye may preach in my kingdom," or, "I appoint unto you a kingdom that ye may pray in my kingdom," we would have understood that preaching or praying would be important. Well, when Jesus said He was appointing unto them a kingdom that they might eat and drink at His table in His kingdom, let us conclude as we should that the Lord's supper is divinely important!

B. Consider Its Prefigurement By The Table Of Shewbread.

According to Heb. 9, the Old Testament tabernacle prefigured the religion of Christ. The holy of holies was a type of heaven--the place into which the high priest went for atonement. The holy place was the place in which the common priests served day by day, and since we Christians are the priesthood under Christ (our high priest), the holy place was a type of the church in which we now serve. This position is held generally among Bible students. As you possibly recall, there were but three pieces of furniture in the holy place of the tabernacle: (1) the table of shewbread, (2) the altar of incense, and (3) the golden candlestick. There is little doubt in anybody's mind but what the table of shewbread prefigured the Lord's supper. If that be true, who can say that the Lord's supper is not divinely important when it was one of the three things prefigured about all of Christianity?

C. Consider Acts 2:42.

That verse which describes the earliest activities of the first converts in this dispensation reads:

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

This verse says the early converts continued steadfastly in four things: (1) the apostles' doctrine, (2) fellowship, (3) the breaking of bread, and (4) prayers. Is preaching important? Is fellowship? Is prayer? Well, then so is the breaking of bread (the Lord's supper). But, Sunday after Sunday, Protestant bodies come together and have preaching, fellowship, and prayer, but only once a month or once a quarter or once a year do they break bread (some do it with one frequency, and some with another frequency). But, the point is, they do not give the Lord's supper the important place in their programs that the early church did. When I read the Lord's supper cast right alongside preaching, fellowship and prayer in Acts 2:42, I am made to realize that the Lord's supper is divinely important.

D. Consider Acts 20:7.

Paul had been in Troas for several days. What he did on the days preceding the first day of the week, we are not told. But, he met with the brethren upon the first day of the week, for it was upon that day that they customarily assembled for the breaking of bread. While thus congregated, he took the opportunity to preach to them. Listen to that passage:

"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them."

Grammatically speaking, the main clause of that verse says that Paul preached unto them on the first day of the week. The dependent or subordinate clause of that verse is thrown in to tell us something about the first day of the week. What does it tell us about that day? That the disciples came together upon that day of the week to break bread! And to this, all the history (both secular and ecclesiastical) of the first century and first centuries of Christianity agree that the early church came together to partake of the Lord's supper every Lord's day. But, I would have you notice that Acts 20:7 does not say that the disciples came together on that day to hear Paul preach, but to break bread, and since he was present, they had him preach. Grammatically, the language of Acts 20:7 demands that we accept the fact that the central purpose of their Lord's day assembly was to break bread.

Several years ago, a sectarian preacher called at the place where an evangelist was staying while in town conducting a revival meeting. He went over in an attitude of belligerence to contend with the evangelist for some of the things he was preaching. Being a stocky-built man, he rapped vigorously on the door of the house trailer. Calmly, the evangelist came to the door. With robust feeling, the caller identified himself. Undisturbed, the evangelist said, "Fine, come right on in." Before the caller could start anything, the evangelist asked him how often they took up the offering. "Every week," the calling preacher replied. "And how often do you have the Lord's supper?" the evangelist asked. "Once a month," he said. "Why do you take up the offering every week, but serve the Lord's supper only once a month?" he continued. The caller had been using I Cor. 16:2 for his authority for weekly offering, but was disregarding Acts 20:7 which teaches weekly communion. With this beginning, the evangelist continued to show his caller many other things from the Bible, which resulted in the caller abandoning his sectarian ministry and lining up with the evangelist whom he had come to work over.

Here is a statement I want you to get. Hear it. Examine it. Check to see if it is correct. You will find that it is. Here it is: There is not one Scripture that argues for a weekly gathering of the church that does not also argue for a weekly observance of the Lord's supper. We know that the early church did gather every week. History abounds with references to that fact. Two passages of Scripture indicate it: Acts 20:7 and I Cor. 16:2. But, both of them show that the Lord's supper was served every Lord's day. If Acts 20:7 argues for church attendance, it surely argues for observing the Lord's supper when assembled. I Cor. 16:2 shows that the Corinthian church came together upon the first day of the week, and I Cor. 11 shows that they came together to observe the Lord's supper, though the way they had perverted it, it was hardly right to call it the Lord's supper. Paul, in that chapter, set about to tell them again how to observe the Lord's supper, and he closed by telling them when they came together to eat what to do. Remember that there are only two passages that bear directly upon the matter of weekly assembly, but both of them argue for weekly communion.

There are so many things that can be said upon the subject of the Lord's supper, but I believe we have presented enough to prove our proposition; namely, that the Lord's supper is divinely important. Let us then value the Lord's supper. Let us be present each week for it. Let us partake of it in a worthy manner. And let us receive the blessings through it that Christ intended for us to receive when He instituted it.

Praise and Prayer

I hope you will find this one of the most profitable studies in this entire series. If it isn't, it isn't the subject's fault, for it is a wonderful subject. It is a subject that should be dear to the heart of every saint, and it is one with which the pages of the Bible abound. May the Lord bless the study to your heart and life. Stop and pray for a blessing from the study ahead before proceeding.

Let us first of all clear the ground by distinguishing between praise and prayer. Both are utterances of the lips, but praise of the Lord may be directed to the people as well as to God while prayer is directed to God alone. Furthermore, praise is speaking of the goodness of the Lord while prayer is petitioning God for our needs. In praise, we either thank the Lord or speak of His goodness upon us to our fellowmen. In prayer, we call upon the name of the Lord for the things we desire of Him. Praise and prayer rightly go together, and while they are to be distinguished from each other, they are not to be separated. We should call upon God in prayer, but we should express our thanksgiving to Him while doing it:

"In everything by prayer and supplication WITH THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

I. A Consideration Of Praise.

A. The Bible Shows That All Blessings Come From God.

Since the goodness of God is the foundation for praising God, let us notice what the Bible says about the source of our blessings. Jas. 1:17 says:

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

In harmony with this verse, the Doxology begins: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Another well known song speaks of God as "Thou fount of every blessing", and truly, He is!

B. God Has Been Very Good To Mankind.

It is wicked for people to talk as if they were not blest. God has not dealt with us according to our deservings. God loves, though His love is not always recognized and returned. God blesses materially and with the privilege of

salvation even though men do not deserve such treatment:

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

Psa. 33:5 says:

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

Truly, it is. Everywhere we cast our eyes, we behold the goodness of God in some way in behalf of man. Every day is another day of many blessings from Him. Psa. 68:19 says:

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation."

Again, the Psalmist said:

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

C. Man Should Be Thankful For All These Blessings.

God has a right to expect man to recognize Him as the source of his blessings. Psa. 29:2 says:

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name."

Yes, it is *due* Him! When David thought of the goodness of God upon him, he said:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psa. 103:1-5).

Paul after bidding the Colossian Christians to let the peace of God rule in their hearts, added this brief but meaningful instruction:

"And be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15).

People sing, "God bless America." This He has surely done, but it is time that many living in America turn to Him and thank Him for all the blessings that He has given. so many today are like nine-tenths of that group of lepers whom Jesus healed! Nine of the ten healed did not return to give God the glory (Luke 17:12-18). The blessings of God are to be received with thanksgiving (I Tim. 4:4)--not just received!

D. Our Thankfulness Should Be Expressed.

A dog will many times bark for his food. When he sees you bringing it, he will frisk around, showing how glad he is to see you. As you pour the food into his pan, he will stand there wagging his tail in appreciation. And he will be very faithful to you, doing whatever he can for you. For all the blessings that God gives us, we should do more than partake of them--we should express our thankfulness for them:

"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all the

people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth!" (Psa. 96:1-9).

No less than four times in the single chapter of Psa. 107 do we read these touching words of exclamation:

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (verses 8, 15, 21, and 31).

An Old Testament prophecy that looked toward the earthly life of Jesus showed that He would not neglect praising the Father:

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Psa. 22:22 and Heb. 2:12).

The Psalmist also said:

"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings" (Psa. 77:11,12).

We have a song that says: "Praise Him, praise Him, Jesus our blessed redeemer. Sing, O earth, His wonderful love proclaim." And the words of the chorus go: "Tell of His excellent greatness." This is exactly what the apostles were doing on the day of Pentecost when they confounded the multitudes with their speaking in so many different languages:

"We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

These are the words of the confounded multitude.

Man's gratitude to God can be expressed in a number of ways. It can be done by singing. In spite of the miseries in which they were found, Paul and Silas sang praises to God in the darkness of the midnight hour in that old jail in Philippi (Acts 16:25). So, one can praise God in song. But, man can also express his thankfulness by telling God about it. Heb. 13:15 says that we should offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually and explains by saying that it is talking about the fruit of our lips that rises in thanksgiving to His holy name. In every prayer we pray, intersperse statements of thanksgiving to God. But, we also express our praise of God by praising Him to our fellowmen. Psa. 107:2 says that the redeemed of the Lord should say so. We should not be ashamed to speak for Christ. There is a song in the Stamps-Baxter hymnal that says: "I'm not ashamed to own that Jesus came and died on Calvary, That by his blessed, free atonement He prepared a way for me; And fixed it so that I from bondage might be free. O praise the Lord, I'm not ashamed." And the chorus reads: "I'm not ashamed to speak for Jesus; I'm not ashamed to praise His name; I'm not ashamed to own His blessings. O praise the Lord, I'm not ashamed." And we had better not be ashamed of Him either! But, let us not overlook the fact that we can show our gratitude through the lives that we live and the deeds of devotion that we do. Luke 7 tells us of a woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her

hair, kissed them, and anointed them with ointment. Why did she do that? Because she was grateful for Christ's mercy upon her many sins. This was an act of devotion upon her part. It goes to show again that if we are grateful, we will show it as well as talk it.

II. A Consideration Of Prayer.

A. Prayer Is Not Limited To New Testament Times.

In Old Testament times, they had no Lord's supper nor did they have baptism. But, they did have prayer. David and Daniel were both great men of prayer. The praying of Elijah is recalled, and Hannah is famous for her prayer for a son. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the men of God of the Old Testament were men of prayer. We can profitably study their lives with reference to prayer and be taught better how to pray, why pray, and the assurances that God will answer prayer.

B. Prayer Is Based Upon Man's Need And The Goodness Of God To Supply That Need.

Man is not as independent as he may act at times. Though it is in God that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28), you would not think so by observing the way many go along without acknowledging Him in their lives. Men may sometimes act like they owned the whole world when the truth of the matter is they brought nothing when they came into the world, and they will carry nothing out when they depart. Man does have needs. "I need Thee ev'ry hour" is so true. This is one part of the foundation of prayer. But, what good would it do to pray even out of a desperate feeling of need if God was not good to hear and to answer? Would we be heard for our much speaking? Would words to a heartless God help? But, God is good, and He has promised to answer the believing prayers of His children:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:7-11).

Other wonderful promises concerning prayer are:

"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22); "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14,15); "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

C. Prayer Should Be A Part Of Every Day Of Life.

David took time to pray. *Psa. 55:17* says:

"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray."

Daniel did likewise. You will remember how his enemies conspired against him by getting the king to sign a decree that no person should petition any person or god for thirty

days except the king himself. What did Daniel do? He proceed with life as usual, praying three times a day:

"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, AS HE DID AFORETIME" (Dan. 6:10).

Some people might have quit praying when such a decree was signed. Others who had not been faithful in praying previously might have even dared to pray to prove their loyalty to God. But, the Scripture says that Daniel went right ahead praying three times a day "as he did aforetime". In other words, the decree had not affected him one way or another. It is said of the early church that the members continued steadfastly in prayer (Acts 2:42). Christians are exhorted to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), to continue instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12), and to pray always (Eph. 6:18). Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their "daily"--not "weekly", not "monthly"--bread (Matt. 6:11). And by the time that one prays the life of prayer set forth in the Bible--not only for himself, but for rulers, for evangelists of the gospel, for more laborers to be raised up, for the lost, for brethren in Christ, and for enemies--it must be something that he work into every day of his life, or he will not carry out the Bible instructions with reference to prayer. Many today are failing in prayer because they do not make prayer a part of their daily lives. Prayer is a great divider. It draws a line between those who are really Christians and those who aren't. A person may attend church services without being a Christian, but if he isn't trying earnestly to serve the Lord, he won't pray!

D. Jas. 5:16 Is A Good Digest Of God's Promises With Reference To Prayer.

That verse reads:

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Notice several things:

(1) God has not promised to answer everybody's prayer--just the righteous man's prayer.

This is taught elsewhere in the Bible also. *1 Pet. 3:12* says:

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

Psa. 66:18 says:

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

Isa. 59:1,2 says:

"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

(2) God has not promised to answer every prayer--just the fervent prayer.

Jesus prayed earnestly (Luke 22:44). So did Elijah

(Jas. 5:17). So did Epaphras (Col. 4:12). So did Hannah (I Sam. 1:10). And so should we. Fervent prayer is sincere prayer. It is that which arises out of the heart. It is that which God is pleased to answer. It is that which He knows represents our sincere desires. That is the kind of prayer He has promised to answer.

(3) *God has not promised that prayer will do everything--He said it will avail much.*

And it will! Read the Bible record of men who prayed. See the wonderful results of prayer. Consider the fact that we do not have many things because we have not asked for them (Jas. 4:2). Prayer will not do everything--even as baptisms will not do everything. But, it is essential--even as baptism is. No one can be well pleasing to God who does not believe that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6), and if we believe God rewards such, we are going to be found among that number who diligently seeks Him in prayer! Prayer availeth much!

E. Prayer Should Bring Us Joy.

Jesus said to His disciples:

"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

What a joy it is to take our loved ones to the Lord in prayer! What a joy it is to remember those in prayer from whom we may be separated by many hundreds of miles! What a joy it is to go to God in prayer, believing that we shall receive the things we ask of Him! People enjoy sitting down with a Sears and Roebuck catalog picking out what they want, filling out the order blank, and mailing it in. Why? Because they expect the order to be filled. In the same way, it is a joy to express our desires to God in prayer with the assurance that they will be granted if they ought to be. The song writer has called the time of prayer "sweet hour of prayer". Another song joins in pointing out the joy of prayer: "Oh the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend!" And truly it is a joy. Another song writer has stated it like this: "O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day. So, when life seems dark and dreary, don't forget to pray."

F. Jesus Has Set Us A Fine Example Of Prayer.

God was pleased with everything Jesus did. And He will surely be pleased with us if we do as He did. Prayer is no exception. He prayed, and so are we to pray. He excluded Himself from the multitude (and even from His disciples) in order to pray (Matt. 14:22,23), and so should we (Matt. 6:6). A full run-down of the gospel records would reveal the great place that prayer played in the life of Jesus and what prayer meant to Him, and if the record of our lives were made known to the people, it should show the same things of us who are Christians.

It is truly hard to find a quitting place when discussing the subjects of praise and prayer. But, let us say briefly, but emphatically, in closing: let us all do more of both. We should! We need to! And God will bless us if we will!

Christianity's Distinguishing Characteristic

Love is surely Christianity's distinguishing characteristic. Remove from the Bible the fact of God's love for us, and there would be no Old Testament recording God's dealings with and working through a chosen people to bring a Savior into the world. Remove the idea that Christians are to love one another and a lost, unevangelized world as well as God, and there would be no New Testament outlining the various items of Christian living, for without love, they would not be carried out. The importance of love, then, is very evident.

But, our title suggests that love is a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity, and it is. All the other religions of the world seemingly knew only of a wrathful, vengeful God, who did not love them, but who might be appeased by their various sacrifices--sometimes even using their children as sacrifices. Christianity does not destroy the idea of a wrathful, vengeful God, but it does show that He is such a God only to those who refuse to obey and serve Him, and going beyond that single notion about God, Christianity revealed another side of God--that of love for lost, fallen mankind, who delights in mercy. While it is true that some of those polytheistic religions included a god of love in their many gods, he was more of a god of sensual lust than anything else. If we might so say, he was more "Hollywood" than "holy". Furthermore, Christianity came into a cruel world of torturings, hatred, distrust, selfishness, and war, and taught a different standard--that of love for each other. Though Christianity has not triumphed over every attitude and sin in people's lives, wherever Christianity has gone, civilization has become the by-product among even those who have not personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. Relatively speaking, savagery and cruelties have disappeared in civilized lands. Love for the other person removes selfishness, and being loved by another truly causes us to trust him. Surely, if the love of God were in men's hearts, there could be no such thing as war disgracing the world, for if men loved their neighbors as themselves, they could not start a war against them, and if they did, if those whom they opposed loved their enemies, they wouldn't fight back. Confucius might have said, "Don't do unto others what you would not have them do to you," but it took Christ to give the higher law--the new commandment of an active, fervent, sincere love that would do unto others as we would have them do to us (Matt. 7:12), a love that would lay down our lives for others (John 15:12,13). Jesus could truly say that His followers would be known by the great love that they would show for each other (John 13:35). It has been re-

corded for us in profane history of the first century of Christianity concerning the Christians' love for each other: "Behold, how they love one another!"

Surely, Christianity was unique in its teachings of loving even one's enemies. Revenge and retaliation were all that was known until Jesus came. Jesus taught to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:44). This is still hard for many to grasp and accept, but Christ taught it, and those who follow Him practice it. Wherever this has been practiced, those beholding it have been astonished. The Romans, who so bitterly persecuted and martyred the early Christians, could not understand why Christians accepted their torturings and martyrdoms without retaliations. This devotion to their Master and their strict obedience to His teachings were in time going to make inroads into Rome that preaching alone never did.

Love is a great subject, but like all other subjects, it has received its share of abuse. Some preachers and people do nothing but "mouth" love all the time. They make it an insipid, sissified sounding thing that it has little appeal and no power in it. Some interpret love as meaning compromise. They never oppose anything or anybody no matter how evil under the guise of love. But, such is not love, according to the Bible. By tolerating every kind of falsehood in the name of religion and soft-pedaling concerning every sin of man, they think they really love people. But, according to the Bible, that is not love. Love rejoices in the truth; love rejoices not in iniquity (I Cor. 13:6). Bible love stands for the way of God and opposes every false way (Psa. 119:127,128). Their misconception of love is noticed in their criticism of gospel preachers as having no love in their hearts for their forthright preaching of God's Word. But, one Bible characteristic or virtue is not at war or variance with another Bible characteristic. Preaching the Word is not a violation of true love, for God has commanded both the preaching and love. We speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). In contrast to those who are forever mouthing love, there are some who do not preach on love and as a result do not get people to love God nor one another.

Without, then, any further introductory remarks, let us go directly to the Bible study of the subject of love, not that we can consider everything the Bible says about it, but that we might have a fuller grasp of the subject and be better prepared to increase that virtue within our hearts.

I. There Is God's Love For The Human Race.

A. The Bible Affirms It Many Times--Especially With Reference To His Sending Christ To Die For Us.

Let us notice just a few:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (I John 3:16).

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

B. His Love For The Human Race Was A Love For

Sinners, Rebels, Enemies.

When God loved us, it was not because we loved Him. I John 4:10 says:

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Yes, today as Christians, we love Him, but let us not forget:

"He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

It was people who were dead in trespasses and sins that God loved (Eph. 2:1). It was people who had sinned and come short of the glory of God that God loved (Rom. 3:23). It was a hold-out for rebels, this earth into which Jesus came and who was hated by them because of his exposing their wickedness (John 7:7). It was for enemies of God that Jesus died upon Calvary (Rom. 5:10).

II. There Is Man's Love For God Also Taught In The Bible.

A. Man Once Sold Out To Sin Is Now To Love God With His Whole Being.

Conversion is one of the great doctrines of Christianity. It is a subject that takes into consideration both man's wickedness and his guilt. It is a subject rooted in the mercy of God to forgive and the love of God to lead to repentance. It is a subject that involves an entering a new life as a new creature. We know man's past--sold out to sin and selfishness. What is life now that he is converted? He is to love God. Mark 12:30 says:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

B. Man's Love For God Involves Loving The Truth Of God.

Some want only a religion of *doing*. But, Christianity involves a *belief* of the truth as much as it does a practice of righteousness. II Thess. 2:10-12 condemns those who do not love and believe the truth. He who loves God can join the Psalmist in saying:

"O how love I thy law!" (Psa. 119:97).

If you do not love the preaching of God's Word; if you want preaching done on a milder plane; if the Bible is unattractive and boring to you, you might well question your love for God.

C. Man's Love For God Likewise Involves Obedience And Service To God.

"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (I John 2:5).

Love and obedience are connected together as far back as the giving of the Ten Commandments. In commenting on one of the commandments, God said that He was a merciful God to those who loved Him and kept His commandments (Exo. 20:6). The disciples claimed to love Jesus. He challenged their love in the following words:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Each time that Peter stated his love for Jesus, He gave him work to do (John 21:15-17). How else could He love God with his "strength" than to do something for God? You recall, do you not, that man is to love God with his strength as well as his mind or heart? How meaningless, how formal, how untrue must people's songs both appear and be when they sing: "Oh, how I love Jesus," but do not live for Him nor serve Him. Thus, if a person claiming to be a Christian is not a generous giver, a thorough church worker for Christ, a real all-around servant of God, there is something wrong with his love. If he finds it not in his heart to carry out the commandments of the Lord, love is surely lacking.

D. Man's Love For God Also Involves His Love For Righteousness.

The child of God is addressed as follows in Rom, 12:9:

"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good".

The Israelities of Amos's day were so guilty of social injustices. For this, he upbraided them in the sternest of ways. To them, he preached the same thing:

"Hate the evil, and love the good" (Amos 5:15).

We know that those who would follow Christ are those seeking after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). To his followers, Jesus said:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Whoever thinks of himself as one who loves God, but does not live as he ought does not truly love God. Whoever loves the world and its sin has not the love of God in his heart (1 John 2:15). Rather, instead of loving God, he has made himself an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

III. There Is Also The Matter Of Love For Our Fellowmen.

A. We Are To Love Our Neighbor.

Rom. 13:8-10 says:

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

If we love our neighbor as ourselves, he won't be given too much trouble from us. Christians do not have a narrow concept of who is included in the term "neighbor" as the Pharisee tried when Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan; which teaches that it is not particularly the fellow who lives next to us, but whoever needs our help (Luke 10:25-37). When the Bible tells us to love our neighbor, it involves loving those who are not Christians as well as loving those who may be Christians.

In addition to our love for them showing up in the good things that we do for them and the bad things that we refrain from doing against them, there is the matter of soul winning that relates to the matter of love. Paul is a good

example of one who truly loved those whom he was seeking to win to Christ. A study of Rom. 10:1 and Rom. 9:1-3 shows his great feeling for them. Such a love should dwell within each of our hearts and should move us forth in a greater soul winning service for Christ.

B. We Are To Love Our Brethren In Christ.

Jesus started this off by saying to those who would be the charter members of the church:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

For some time, the disciples were not doing so well on the matter of love. They had been arguing among themselves as to which one was going to be the greatest (Mark 9:33,34). James and John had even asked for the right and left hand seats when He inaugurated His kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). Jesus used a small child as an object lesson to get this notion out of their heads. He had even washed their feet in an effort to show them what true greatness was. Then, in that great seventeenth chapter of John he prayed several things concerning them--the principle one was the matter of their being harmonious and united. How did that great prayer close? With words relating to their having the love in their hearts that they should have:

"I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in thee" (John 17:26).

In writing the Ephesians, Paul had this to say with reference to the love and treatment of one another:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31,32).

In writing the Philippians, he had this to say:

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:2-4).

In writing the Colossians, he had this to say:

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12-14).

In writing to the Hebrews, he had this to say:

"Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1).

C. We are To Love Those Within Our Own Household.

The following Scriptures are very pointed upon this question:

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19).

"That they (the older women) teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their

children" (Tit. 2:4).

"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (Prov. 15:17).

It seems odd that an institution founded on the basis of love, such as the home is, should ever need instructions concerning love. But, many homes are torn by strife, selfishness, thoughtlessness, and scenes of bitterness. The Bible's teaching along this line, then, is very timely.

D. We Are To Love Our Enemies.

We are to do nothing wrong to make enemies. But, if because of the stand we take for Christ, some people turn against us, we cannot help that. Or if someone is of a nasty disposition, who is always on the "outs" with about everybody, we should not be surprised if we are numbered among those whom they oppose. What should be our attitude toward those who do not love us? The Scripture answers very plainly:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you... For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" (Matt. 5:43-47).

There are surely many things that could be discussed profitably upon this subject of love. It is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22). People could see that Jesus greatly loved Lazarus as He stood weeping at his tomb (John 11:35,36). Love is to be without hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9). The King James version uses the word "dissimulation", which means "hypocrisy". I Pet. 1:22 speaks of "unfeigned love of the brethren" and loving one another with a "pure heart fervently". Heb. 10:24 shows that we are to provoke each other to love and good works. I Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10; and Gal. 5:6 all connect love and labor. I Cor. 13:13 links faith, hope, and love together and declares that the greatest of the three is love.

The Scriptures show the blessedness of our loving God. Rom. 8:28 says that all things work together for good to them who love the Lord, while I Cor. 2:9 shows that it for those who love Him, God has prepared and revealed the things concerning salvation. Jas. 2:5 shows that God has promised heavenly inheritance to those who love Him, while Jas. 1:12 says He has promised the crown of life to those who love Him.

Don't conclude from this study that God does not have His "hates" as well as His "loves". Prov. 6:16-19 includes seven things that He hates: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness, and the person who sows discord among brethren. Hypocritical worship, Isa. 1:10-15 and Amos 5:21-24 show, God hates. Whatever God hates, it is godliness for us to hate also. Just as we set our watch with another's watch that we esteem to be right,

even so we should set our "loves" and our "hates" according to God's "loves" and "hates", for we esteem Him to be right in all things.

We cannot conclude without showing that there are some things the Christian is not to love, such as: money (I Tim. 6:10), religious show (Matt. 6:5; Matt. 23:5-7), the praise of men inordinately (John 12:42,43), or any sin of the world (I John 2:15, 16; II Tim. 4:10).

Finally, notice the terrible state of any who does not love as he should:

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema (cut off)" (I Cor. 16:22).

"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now... But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:9,11).

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15).

In view, then, of the greatness and importance of this matter of love, let us examine ourselves to see how we appear before God in this matter. If others fail in their love, let us not fail and take comfort in their failure. Let us heed these timely words in I John 3:18:

"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Primitive Christianity

Christ began His new covenant religion in the city of Jerusalem in the year 30 A.D. according to our present calendar. That was the same year He died, was buried, arose from the tomb, and returned to heaven. Its first converts were from among those Jews from different parts of the Roman Empire who were in Jerusalem at the time attending their annual Feast of Pentecost. It was a religion planned to include all nations of the earth and to continue its important mission until the second coming of Christ. That religion was launched 1,925 or 19 1/4 centuries ago. During that extended period of time, the experiences through which that religion has passed have been many, as would be naturally expected.

By "primitive Christianity" (the title of this study), we mean Christianity as it was in the beginning in the days of the apostles. According to the dictionary, "primitive" means "pertaining to the beginning, origin, or early times of a thing." What primitive Christianity was like is recorded for us in the book of Acts in particular, ably supplemented by various items of information from the epistles of the

New Testament.

We are sorry to say, but many are but little concerned about what primitive Christianity was like. The modernists see in primitive Christianity only a record of first-century people's ideas of worshipping God, for they deny Biblical inspiration to the apostles. Therefore, to them, what the early church did as guided by the apostles was nothing more than human as far as the authority behind their beliefs and practices was concerned. Naturally, then, modernists feel no necessity of carrying out religion today after the model of primitive Christianity. The so-called fundamental wing of present-day denominationalism has not included the pattern of primitive Christianity among those things which they count as the essentials. Therefore, it is no wonder that they continue defending the deity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible, but avoid all doctrinal controversies on baptism, the Lord's supper, church organization, divine names, etc.

Therefore, a study like this should be of particular interest to those who have not as yet made such a study. Your writer has found that there is nothing like a good series of sermons on primitive Christianity, with an application of that subject to religion today, to inject new life into a drifting, dozing, dying congregation.

I. Why We Should Be Interested In Primitive Christianity.

A. The Early Church Was Under The Guidance Of A Message Delivered Through Holy Spirit Inspired Men.

Jesus not only commissioned His apostles with reference to their evangelizing the lost, but He gave them much teaching as to what they were to teach the converts:

"Teaching them (the baptized) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20).

Humanly, they would have forgotten some of the things Jesus had told them. But, they were promised divine aid in the coming of the Holy Spirit so they would forget nothing:

"The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and the church had its beginning, the apostles preached the message of Christ, and their every utterance was Holy Spirit inspired:

"And they (the apostles) were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

The multitude that believed responded to the inspired preaching of Peter and the other apostles, and following their baptism, they were guided by the inspired instruction of the same apostles:

"And they (those baptized) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

When problems arose as to what the church should believe, as in the case of whether or not the Gentiles should be circumcised, the matters were referred to these very

apostles (Acts 15:1,2). They handed down their decision, which was prompted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28ff), and the decision was carried from congregation to congregation to abide by (Acts 16:4).

B. We Today Live In The Same Dispensation That Began In 30 A.D.

When Jesus commissioned His apostles concerning their work, He promised to be with them always, even to the end of the world (or "age" as the Revised Version renders it) (Matt. 28:20). Neither the end of the world nor the age that began on Pentecost has yet come. That religion so long predicted by the Old Testament prophets finally came, and it came to stay until the end of time. The Old Testament religion included within its divine records the prophecy of a religion that would come and take its place. Christianity's sacred records look not to the coming of another earthly religion, but to the second coming of Christ that will consummate all things of earth.

The Bible shows that Christianity is a "once for all" religion. That phrase means "once for all time" or that which is "perpetually valid". Instead of looking for some new revelation or compromising the message delivered through the apostles, Jude 3 beckons us to maintain the faith through contending for it, and notice how that faith is spoken of in that verse:

"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once ('once for all' in the Revised Version) delivered unto the saints."

It is a faith delivered unto the saints once for all time. If it is, then we are still in the same dispensation that began with the delivering of that message. Those elements comprising Christianity are to be done until Jesus comes as is seen in this statement relative to the Lord's supper:

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

C. God's Laws For A Dispensation Are In Force Throughout The Dispensation.

This is easily proven by the Bible. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the return of the Jews to their native land after their years of Babylonian Captivity. Though the law of Moses had been given about 1,000 years before their time and though Moses through whom that law had been given had been dead more than 900 years, the law of Moses was still in effect in their day. Ezra and Nehemiah instituted mighty reforms among the people, reinstating the feasts and other matters of the law according to the law of Moses. The law of Moses did not end until Jesus died upon the cross. Therefore, His days of earthly ministry were lived during the last years and months that the law was in effect. But, though that law had been given about 1,500 years before His ministry, and though its authority was about to pass away, Jesus taught men to do as it said:

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat (teaching the law): all therefore they bid you observe, that observe and do" (Matt. 23:1,2).

"Shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded" (Matt. 8:4).

Since, then, we are under the laws given for this dispensation through the apostles, we are expected of God to abide by the teaching that characterized primitive Christianity. All who do not bring the same message about Jesus, the plan of salvation, the way of Christian living, the pattern for the church, etc. that was delivered to the primitive church by the apostles is not to be received as from God (II John 10, 11), but is to be avoided instead of fellowshiped (Rom. 16:17, 18).

Yes, we should be interested in primitive Christianity.

II. How Primitive Christianity Functioned As Contrasted With Much Of Religion Today.

A. Primitive Christianity Had A Real Respect For The All-Authority Of Christ.

The Scripture says concerning the authority of Christ:

"He is the head of the body, the church...that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

"He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:20-22).

In the apostolic day, it was believed that Christ was the head of the church, governing the body. But, in much of religion today, maybe through ignorance, maybe through unbelief, little is done with an eye to doing what Jesus said in the way He said to do it. People maintain their own opinions about a subject even after hearing what the Bible teaches to the contrary upon it. People put into the eldership men whom they think would be good to fill the office whether they have the qualifications for that office laid down by Christ through His apostle Paul. There are those quick to tell you that it is the attitude of the heart and not the form of baptism that matters even when the Bible prescribes both the attitude and the form.

B. It Emphasized Preaching And Personal Testimony.

Christ's representatives to establish His religion (the apostles) were all preachers. There were no specialists who served as the Administrators, Social Workers, Governmental Lobbyists, or Public Relations men. All the apostles were preachers, and they who did the preaching took care of any work of administration that became necessary for them to take care of. None of them took time out from their preaching to devote themselves to social work. They didn't meddle in governmental matters, and they had no specialists devoting their time to public relations.

Christianity is a preaching religion. It has a message to be declared. Primitive Christianity was a preaching religion. Her leaders preached publicly, and all the disciples bore personal testimony to those whom they met. But, in this day and age, the swing is away from preaching, and almost no personal testimony is done any more. Special "Decision Days" have replaced day-to-day teaching and night-by-night preaching to win the lost. Programs, big dinners, parties, and contests are used to "up" attendance rather than gospel preaching and personal testimony. Anything over thirty

or forty minutes is frowned upon as too long by way of a sermon. If we may so say, "sermonettes" are making "Christianettes".

C. It Was Simple In Its Organization.

Elders, Deacons, and Evangelists--these comprised the functioning officers in primitive Christianity. Phil. 1:1 includes all three:

"Paul and Timotheus (evangelists), the servants of Jesus Christ; to all the saints in Christ Jesus (the membership) which are at Philippi, with the bishops (elders) and deacons."

In modern-day religion, one beholds the most elaborate of organizations--so complex, so unnecessary as far as doing what Jesus actually told the church to do, and unfounded by the Scriptures. Early congregations were not weighted down with all kinds of organizations either within the local congregation or over the local congregation. They had no ladies aid to supplement the treasury, no state secretary or presiding elder or district superintendent to oversee the congregations, no ecumenical councils or delegate conventions to decide the doctrine, and no pope to bless the whole church. Christ put the offices He wanted into the church, and those offices He put in are adequate to do what He has told the church to do. Evangelists had their work, and they were to do it; elders had theirs, and they were to do it; deacons had theirs, and they were to do it.

D. It Did Not Employ Human Names For Either The Members Or The Church.

In the religious world, one comes across Mennonites, Catholics, Lutherans, Adventists, Methodists, Dunkards, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists, Christian Scientists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, and many other humanly devised and humanly adopted names. Some honor the men who founded them; others are names related to something originally emphasized by said groups; some are nick-names that "stuck"; two of them (Baptists and Nazarenes) are both found in the Scriptures, but not as names for God's people. John was called "John the Baptist" not because there was such a religious body in existence in his day, but because he baptized. Just as there was "Simon the tanner", "Alexander the coppersmith," so was there "John the Baptist". Jesus was called a Nazarene not because He belonged to a religious group wearing that name, but because He was from Nazareth--just as people from Missouri are called "Missourians" and people from Iowa "Iowans". With so many different names afloat in the religious world that are not found in the Bible, is it any wonder that we hear on every hand that there is nothing in a religious name? But, when God gives a name for His people, it is not faith or reverence to say that one can disregard that name and use some humanly devised name. Jas. 2:7 shows that God's people were called by some name which was spoken of as a "worthy name":

"Do not they (the rich) blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?"

But, that verse does not tell what that name was. Other passages, however, make it plain as to what it was. Acts

11:26 says:

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

And Peter later wrote:

"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this name."

Therefore, those who regard the pattern of primitive Christianity have not joined the chorus that says there is nothing in a name. They have sought to bear the name "Christian" in faith and conduct to the glory of God. They recognize that such a great man as the apostle Paul refused to sanction people wearing his name (I Cor. 1:12,13). It were to wear the name of a man, whose would be better to wear than that of the great apostle Paul? I know of none that I would rather wear than his. But, it would be wrong to wear his. And if it would be wrong to wear his, it would be wrong to wear the name of any other human when that honor and distinction belongs to Christ who was crucified for us and by whose authority we have been baptized--two things related to this question (I Cor. 1:12,13).

Neither were human names fastened onto congregations in primitive Christianity nor should they be today as is the case throughout the sectarian world.

E. It Held That Immersion Was Necessary To Salvation.

A former study has been devoted to this question. People in the apostles' days were baptized with the idea of obtaining the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:20,21 and other blessings connected with salvation. But, today, the general attitude toward baptism is different. Many have had nothing done to them called baptism. Most people who have, have submitted to sprinkling (a substitute) for immersion taught in the Bible. Among those who do immerse, there are those who rob it of its saving aspect. How the devil has induced people to kick around that sacred ordinance by which a penitent sinner contacts the saving blood of Christ! It was never so done in primitive Christianity.

F. It Gave An Important Place To The Lord's Supper.

A recent study has also been devoted to this subject, making it unnecessary to elaborate here. But, the frequent place the Lord's supper occupied in the weekly assembly of the church as contrasted with the infrequency of present-day observances must be stated. Many disregard the Biblical frequency of weekly observance, having it only once a month, others but once a quarter (4 times a year), and still others but once a year. Some members are absent those Sundays when they do serve it, so there are long lapses of time between observances for them. Some are present when it is passed, but do not partake of it. Still others never do serve the Lord's supper. Many others who do have it teach that it is simply commemorative, having no connection with forgiveness. It is commemorative all right (Luke 22:19), but those in primitive Christianity were taught that it was a communion of the body and blood of Christ also (I Cor. 10:16). But, what is the purpose of the blood of Christ other than the remission of our sins? People can get the connection between baptism and forgiveness from Rom. 6:3, where it says we are baptized into His death. Why can they

not also get the connection between the Lord's supper and forgiveness from I Cor. 10:16, where it says we have a communion of his body and blood? But, you can be sure the devil will fight the Lord's supper for the Christian as well as baptism for the sinner.

G. It Did Not Compromise With The Religions About Them.

Did God have a people in Old Testament times? Yes, the Israelites. Did He allow them to compromise with and to go in with the religions about them? No. Read Deut. 7:2-6:

"Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

Does God have a people in New Testament times? Yes, the Christians (those who have become obedient to the gospel--not just everybody claiming to be a Christian). Does he allow us to compromise with and go in with the religions about us? No. Read the following passages:

"Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Cor. 6:14-18).

There are only two groups before God--His people and those who aren't. Those who aren't God's people may be religious as well as irreligious. But, He calls His people to separation from them whether they are religious or otherwise as far as compromising with and going in with them is concerned. His people live in the same world as those who aren't; they see them from day to day; they befriend them in every way possible, but they do not believe as others do, nor do they do as others do. They believe what God says, and they do what He says. Christianity's intolerance toward other religions accounted for the great persecution waged against it in its beginning days, and the same results today. But, compromise is a characteristic of our times. Divine lines of fellowship religiously and otherwise are totally disregarded by the mass of people claiming to be Christian, and instead of actually changing what God has said, they are only cutting themselves off from God (Acts 3:22,23).

H. It Opposed The Sin Of The World.

The early Christians were forbidden to love the world and its sin (I John 2:15,16) or to conform to the standards of the world (Rom. 12:2). Rather than partaking of the wickedness around them, they were to stand against it (Eph. 5:11 being told that one item of an acceptable religion before God was to keep themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27). This also brought on persecutions even as it did for Jesus (John 7:7). But, religion today falls far short of demanding that inner and outer purity characteristic of primitive Christianity. Instead of the church triumphing over sin, sin has often invaded religion itself. You can hardly name a sin that is not being openly practiced by those who claim to be religious. Such were put out of the fellowship of primitive Christianity by divine commandment (I Cor. 5:1-13).

I. It Truly Lived For Heaven And Looked For The Return Of Jesus.

The early Christians were called upon to consecrate themselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1). They were told to serve God in the same way they had formerly served sin (Rom. 6:11-14,17-33). They were told to lay up their treasures in heaven rather than upon the earth (Matt. 6:19-21). They were told to set their affection on spiritual things rather than upon earthly things (Col. 3:1-3). They suffered the loss of earthly things for the sake of Christ in their persecutions (Heb. 10:34). They served the Lord in soul winning work (Acts 8:1,4). They were people of prayer; they sang praises to God even in the midst of earthly difficulties; they brought their tithes and offerings for the work of God and even sold their properties in order to to feed the needy in times of emergency--plus many other things that could be mentioned had we space to do so. The return of Jesus was their hope (Tit. 2:11-14), and many passages indicated their anticipation for it. But, alas! today it is vastly different in many religious quarters. Frankly, few indeed today believe in the consecrated life of the Christian. Few there be who daily anticipate the return of Jesus. Worldliness and materialism alike are consuming great multitudes of individuals who think of themselves as Christians.

Had we space, we would like to tell you how the Bible foresaw a great falling away from primitive Christianity, which has taken place in denominationalism. We would like to tell you of those who are seeking the old paths of God's word and who are rejoicing in that way. To all who have not had a conscience upon primitive Christianity, let me close by quoting to you the fitting words of Jeremiah to the people of His day, who needed to return to the way of God:

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

Our delight in and our profit from any particular study rises and improves in proportion to the application which we bestow upon it.

Things Connected with the Return of Jesus

The Son of God has already made one trip to the earth. He stayed here about thirty-three years. After accomplishing His purpose in coming to earth, He returned to heaven, where He has been ever since. But, according to the Bible, He is yet to make another trip here. He Himself said while on trial before the high priest:

"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

Today, He is on God's right hand in heaven, fulfilling the first part of that promise. But, the second part--that concerning His coming in the clouds--will as assuredly take place as did the first part. Possibly the first recorded instance of Jesus concerning a second coming was made to His apostles at the same time He broke the news to them of His coming crucifixion. It took place up near Caesarea Philippi. His words to them were:

"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

When He vanished from their sight at the time of His ascension, two angels appeared to them and reassured them of His return. They said:

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

So the return of Jesus has been and remains a part of the faith of the church. If there were many predictions in Old Testament days of His first coming, there are also many predictions in the New Testament of His second coming. It is, therefore, obligatory upon all who would accept the Bible as God's Word to believe in the return of Jesus. While modernism rejects the idea of His return, just as they reject so many other things taught in the Bible, those who have pledged themselves to believe in the Bible's inspiration hold to the teaching of His personal and visible return in the clouds.

Any human sitting down to a typewriter feels his descriptive limitations as well as his knowledge limitations to do justice to such a great subject as "Things Connected With the Return of Jesus". The Bible has told us enough to impress us with the greatness of that day and the unprecedented happenings of that day, but it has not explained everything for us concerning those things. The human mind appreciates what God has revealed to us upon

that subject, but the human heart would know even more upon it than has been revealed. No doubt, many things connected with that day will not be understood by us until that day arrives.

Having preached often upon this subject to interested and appreciative audiences, we come at this time to share some of the things most surely taught in the Scriptures upon it. We sincerely hope you will receive a blessing from searching into these things and pondering upon them. Let the truth of these things sink down into your hearts in such a way that you will derive whatever lessons God has for us in telling us ahead of time of these coming events. Otherwise, a knowledge of these things will profit you nothing.

I. The Resurrection Of The Dead.

A. The Bible Connects The Resurrection Of The Dead With The Return Of Jesus.

Notice first of all I Thess. 4:16:

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:16).

The above passage points out that when Jesus comes, He will descend with a shout. That shout, accompanied by the voice of the archangel and the sounding of the trump of God, will awaken the dead. If one is not careful, he might conclude from the above passage that the dead in Christ are to be resurrected prior to the resurrection of the wicked, who are also to be resurrected, but if one reads the 17th verse (the verse following the above passage), he will see that "the dead in Christ shall rise first" means that the departed saints will be brought back to life before the living saints are caught up to meet the Lord. They will both be caught up "together". John 5:28, definitely shows that both the righteous and unrighteous dead will be raised when the voice of Jesus sounds at His second coming:

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation".

Yes, all the dead--both righteous and unrighteous--will be raised. The righteous will want to be, and the unrighteous won't, but what people want will not be the governing principle on that day. That will be the day of the Lord, as it is so often called in the Bible. He will be the one who will have the "say-so" on that day, and He has told us ahead of time that His voice will bring all the dead--both good and bad--forth in resurrection.

B. The Resurrection Of The Body Relates To The Eternal States.

Heaven will not be a place of disembodied spirits who once lived upon the earth in physical forms or physical bodies. Those who will dwell therein will abide in immortal, incorruptible bodies given them at the return of Jesus. Paul spoke of this body in II Cor. 5:1,2,4:

"For we know that if our earthly house of this taber-

nacle (the human body) were dissolved (through physical death), we have a building of God (a new body), an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this (this body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven...For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

I Cor. 15:37 compares death to sowing grain and the resurrection to the coming forth of the plant afterwards. That verse shows that the resurrection body will be different from the first body, just as the stalk that grows is different from the kernel that was sown:

"That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain."

A few verses later, Paul returns to the contrast:

"It (the body) is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (I Cor. 15:42-44).

We have never seen such a body as that with which the dead shall come forth. Consequently, John wrote that it has not yet appeared what we shall be, but that we know we shall be like Christ at His coming (I John 3:2). Phil. 3:20,21 shows that the Lord, at His coming, will change our vile or physical bodies so as to be like His glorious body. No doubt, this is what John had in mind in I John 3:2. Paul definitely says:

"As we have borne the image of the earthy (a physical body), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (like Christ has)" (I Cor. 15:49).

The purpose of bestowing such a body upon the saints is that they might go to that incorruptible place with Jesus (I Cor. 15:50). That body, being incorruptible will know no pain and being immortal will know no death. That is what Rev. 21:4 promises those who get to inhabit the new heaven and new earth.

The Bible does not give a description of the resurrection body of the condemned, but it is evident that the body God will give them will be one prepared for the eternal fate to befall them in hell. God who made a bush in Moses' day that could be on fire without being consumed (Exo. 3:2, 3) is fully capable of making bodies for the wicked that can suffer in the lake of fire without end.

Yes, the resurrection of the dead is connected with the return of Jesus.

II. The Bodily Transformation Of The Living Saints.

A. The Bible Connects The Bodily Transformation Of The Living Saints With The Return Of Jesus.

There will be people living upon the earth when Jesus comes. Some of them will be saints of God. They will never experience death. Paul said:

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (I Cor. 15:51).

When? At the same time the dead are raised:

"We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor. 15:51,52)

B. This Change Is Necessary.

Even though they have not died, they cannot go to heaven in their corruptible and mortal physical bodies. Speaking of that change, Paul wrote:

"This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53).

Why? For the very reason that the dead will be raised with incorruptible, immortal bodies (already discussed).

How hard it is to bid one another goodbye here in death! The unutterable pain that so often precedes one's passing! What a joy from every standpoint to be one of Christ's living ones at His coming! How heartily I agree with the words of that beautiful song "Christ Returneth" that say: "Oh, joy! oh, delight! should we go without dying: no sickness, no sadness, no dread, and no crying."

Yes, the bodily transformation of the living saints is connected with the return of Jesus, and it is a blessed part of our faith.

III. The Great Judgment Day.

A. The Bible Connects The Great Judgment Day With The Return Of Jesus.

As far back as the book of Daniel, we can see the resurrection of the dead (which will take place when Jesus returns) connected with judgment:

"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

That passage in John 5:28,29 will bear quoting from this standpoint also:

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

One of the last statements in the Bible concerning the coming of Christ is that of the judgment connected with it:

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

B. The Bible Represents That All Will Be There On The Day Of Judgment.

Consider these statements:

"EVERY ONE of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

"We must ALL appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10).

"He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge THE WORLD in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31).

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all

the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered ALL NATIONS: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31,32).

Both the great man of the earth and the common man will be there:

"I saw the dead, SMALL and GREAT, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

Even people who lived long ago will be there:

"The MEN OF NINEVEH shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas: and, behold a greater than Jonas is here. The QUEEN OF THE SOUTH shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12:40-42).

"Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of SODOM and GOMORRHA in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:14,15).

While the saints will greet the Lord with open arms, admiring Him on whom they had believed and hoped, though they had not previously seen Him (I Pet. 1:8), the wicked will mourn when they see Him coming (Rev. 1:7). Oh that men would realize they will someday reap on an eternal basis what they sow while abiding here on the earth so short a time! No doubt, multitudes would live differently.

Yes, the great day of judgment is connected with the return of Jesus.

IV. The Casting Of The Wicked Into Hell.

A. The Bible Connects The Casting Of The Wicked Into Hell With The Return Of Jesus.

II Thess. 1:7-9 says:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

In Matt. 25:31,32, we saw that Jesus, at His coming, would divide the people like a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. That passage continues:

"He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:33,41).

Notice in the II Thess. 1:7-9 passage quoted above that the angels will accompany Jesus here to help in the judgment and punishment of the wicked. Jesus interpreted His parable of the wheat and tares for His disciples, and His interpretation shows the connection of the angels with the punishment of the wicked at His coming:

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:37-42).

He told and interpreted His parable of the drag net similarly:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:47-50).

B. The Punishment Of The Wicked Will Be Terrible, But Every Bit Deserved.

The Bible describes the suffering of the wicked in hell as a terrible experience, as we would well imagine. Some of the verses quoted above indicate it as do many other passages. But, don't forget this: God will judge righteously and punish justly. The sufferings of the wicked in hell will but reflect the awfulness of the sins that men have committed that sent them there. No man in hell will cry out for justice, but mercy. He will be receiving justice, but the day of mercy will have passed. Because the next study in this series will be devoted to the punishment of the wicked, we shall not go into the matter fuller here.

Yes, the casting of the wicked into hell is connected with the return of Jesus.

V. The Taking Of The Saints To Heaven.

A. The Bible Connects The Taking Of The Saints To Heaven With The Return Of Jesus.

This is clear from several passages:

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2,3).

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16,17).

In the John passage quoted, Jesus is like a young man who goes to get a home prepared for his bride. He gets it prepared and returns for her. The apostles hated to see Him depart, as would any bride, but they were comforted in the purpose of His going and with the thought that He would return to take them to that place forever. This passage corrects some people's notion that heaven will be right here on this earth. No, Jesus is not coming to stay with His people. Rather, He is coming to get His people and to take them to that place in God's presence that He

has been preparing.

The I Thessalonian passage quoted shows that the resurrected saints and the living saints will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and that eternity will be theirs with Jesus.

B. What A Wonderful Time That Will Be For The Saints!

The Bible pictures His people as looking for His coming with great anticipation. Listen to these passages:

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13).

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).

"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

In that day, the saints will admire and glorify the Lord and will also themselves be glorified by His coming. Notice the above statements borne out by the following passages:

"...when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (II Thess. 1:10).

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4).

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18).

There are surely many things to be said concerning the rewarding of the saints, but inasmuch as we have a study coming up on that subject, we shall not go into the matter fuller at this time.

Yes, the taking of the saints to heaven is connected with the return of Jesus.

VI. The Destruction Of The Present Universe.

A. The Bible Connects The Destruction Of The Present Universe With The Return Of Jesus.

As far back as the time of Isaiah, God had made this prediction:

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17).

But, when will the present heaven and earth pass away? When will the new heavens and new earth come into existence? Isaiah does not answer, but Peter does:

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:10,13).

The day of the Lord when all these things will happen is the coming of Jesus. Study the entire chapter, and it will be clear to your mind.

B. This Destruction Will Take Place By Fire.

The above passage indicates that fact. Some try to see in this a prediction of atomic destruction of which the world is so fearful today. I believe this universe and its future is God's. It will not pass away until He gets ready for it to do so. Men cannot terminate that which God does not want terminated! If the present universe goes up in smoke through atomic power, remember that it will be because God has so planned it from a long time back. He will have the new heavens and new earth where the saints will abide all ready.

What a terrible destruction! Huge heavenly bodies crashing into each other, igniting, and burning. The earth splits wide open, and the molten mass of fire from its center envelops it as it goes up in smoke. What noise and what heat! And that which had been the scene of men's sins will be gone, to be remembered no more. That which men had lived for dissolved by fire. In view of these things, I address you in the words of Peter:

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (II Pet. 3:11).

Yes, the destruction of the present universe is connected with the return of Jesus.

Now do you not say that the return of Jesus will be a great day? We have been given but a few brief glances into those things in the Scriptures, but enough has been given us to stir us to preparation for that day. When these things are to take place without the shadow of a doubt, how can men stand day after day without obeying the gospel? How can some who have named the name of Jesus live in sin and backslidden ways? The call goes forth today to watch and be ready for His coming (Matt. 24:42-44). Yes, "There's a great day coming, A great day coming; There's a great day coming by and by, When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left. Are you ready for that day to come?" When I study these things right out of the Bible and am made to know what all is yet to come, I am made to say, "Lord, I want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in!"

The Punishment of the Wicked

We know that every well regulated government rewards the law-abiding citizens with liberty and enjoyments that come through the government, and every well regulated government also punishes those who disobey its laws.

For instance, in our nation, we are all given the opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These are for the law-abiding citizens. But, through violating the law, one may lose his life (capital punishment), or his liberty (being jailed), or his pursuit of happiness (in jail, he will be deprived of everything except that which the institution may allow him).

Don't overlook the fact that God in His government is as wise and as just as any earthly government ever thought of being. God does reward the obedient, but He punishes the wicked. The final two studies in this year-long series will deal with the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the saints.

Though the Bible continues to say what it has always said about God's punishment of the wicked, there are those who have come to accept their own theories on this question rather than the Bible's teaching. Such theories boil down to the following: God loves everybody. He has prepared a heaven, but no hell. The idea of hell, they say, is out-of-date and out-moded. It is not geared, they say, for twentieth-century thinking and living. Modern religion emphasizes the love of God and eliminates the thought of the wrath of God. A couple of years ago, I wrote a rather lengthy review and exposure of a magazine article that took the above position. That magazine article was shot through and through with plain denials of Bible teaching and substituted mere human reasoning.

Having accepted the position that the Bible is God's Word, we are pleased to abide by its teaching upon this as well as any other subject. To the Bible, then, we turn for a consideration of God's punishment of the wicked.

That God is a God who punishes the wicked is evident from two standpoints: (1) what He has done, and (2) what He has said.

I. What God Has Done.

What God has done in the past should serve as an index as to what He will do in the future, for He is a constant, steadfast, faithful God, who is governed by truth and righteousness and is not ever changing from time to time. He has many times punished the wicked and had those punishments recorded in the Bible to warn us of what to expect should we not live as He has commanded. Let us look at some of His recorded punishments.

A. Adam And Eve.

When Adam and Eve had sinned, in addition to pronouncing upon them the various penalties found in Gen. 3:16-19, God punished them as follows:

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24).

B. Cain

When Cain had killed his righteous brother Abel, God came to him and said:

"The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the

earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Gen. 4:10-12).

When Cain heard this sentence, he exclaimed that his punishment was greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13). No doubt, this represents the response of all who are brought face to face with the punishment of God. But, notice that he did not say his punishment was greater than he deserved. God is righteous in all His judgments.

C. The Old World.

When God saw the wickedness of man upon the earth, it grieved Him and brought a regret to Him that He had ever made man, so corrupt had he become and so antagonistic to the way of God. Because of man's sinfulness, God pronounced this judgment:

"Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Gen. 6:17).

Only the righteous family of Noah and a few of all the animals and birds, taken into the ark to preserve life upon the earth, were spared the world's greatest destruction to date.

D. Sodom And Gomorrha.

From the standpoint of immorality, Sodom and Gomorrha must be listed as the world's most corrupt cities. How the will of God was trampled underfoot in those two cities of the fertile valley of the Jordan! But, great sin is so often found in the very midst of prosperity. Because of their sins, God destroyed them with a terrible destruction described as follows:

"The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrha brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (Gen. 19:24,25).

The New Testament recalls this destruction and says that it (as well as other punishments from God) should warn all who would live ungodly (II Pet. 2:4-6).

E. The Idolaters At Mt. Sinai.

Just a short time after God brought the Israelites out of Egypt with a mighty hand, He led them to the foot of Mt. Sinai, an unusually rugged peak on our Arabian peninsula. There, He summoned them about the mount and in a fashion calculated to strike the fear of God into every heart, He spoke unto them the words of the ten commandments. He, then, called Moses up into the mount to get the two tables of stone upon which the words of the ten commandments were written and to receive other laws, which Moses was to write in a book. Because Moses was in the mount what seemed to them an endless amount of time (forty days), they took their jewelry, melted it in a fire, and fashioned a golden calf before which they fell down in worship. This was a direct violation of the first part of the ten commandments which God had just spoken. Only the tribe of Levi took their stand with Moses and God against this idolatry.

To them, God gave this commandment:

"Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour" (Exo. 32:27).

The result was that three thousand fell by the sword of the Levites (Gen. 32:28). Surely, the Israelites should have realized that God meant what He said when He gave commandments to be obeyed!

F. Nadab And Abihu.

God gave strict instructions to the priests who served in the tabernacle. Nadab and Abihu, sons of the high priest Aaron, disobeyed God in using strange fire in offering incense one day. The following punishment from God fell upon them:

"There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2).

G. The Israelites In The Wilderness.

God was in the process of leading them toward that good land of Canaan, which He had promised to give them. Thus far on the journey, God had been adequate for every need they had had. He had brought them through the Red Sea miraculously. He had destroyed Pharaoh and his men, who pursued them. He had fed them with manna. He had made bitter water sweet for them to drink. He had led them in a mighty defeat of the Amalekites, who came out against them. He had led them by His pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He had told them He would likewise give them the good land west of the Jordan River. Twelve spies were sent into the land ahead of time. What a wonderful land it was! They brought back a specimen of some of the fruit that grew there--a cluster of grapes that was carried on a staff between two of them, some pomegranates, and some figs. But, ten of the twelve men feared that they would not be able to conquer the land because of the giant-sized inhabitants and their walled cities. Their report, though a direct thrust at the ability of God to do for them what He had said He would do, convinced the mass of the people. God was enraged against them, and well might He have been. He pronounced the following punishment upon them, which was fulfilled to the letter:

"Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning what I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun (the two faithful spies). But your little ones (who were too young to be partakers in their sins), which we said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness" (Num. 14:29-33).

H. The Captivities Of Israel And Judah.

Both the northern and southern kingdoms fell away from God into idolatry. The northern kingdom of Israel was the first to fall into idolatry, and it was the first of the two to

go into captivity. God said concerning the kingdom:

"Samaria (the capital) shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up" (Hos. 13:16).

The Assyrians came, according to the above prediction, and ended them with a terrible slaughter, carrying the balance of them back to Nineveh, where they were made slaves. In time, God had to pronounce a similar punishment upon Judah:

"Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem (the capital) shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest" (Mic. 3:12).

The Babylonians came in fulfillment of the above prophecy, and Judah was made to know that God is a God of punishment upon the wicked as well as a God of blessing upon the righteous.

There are so many things that could be brought from the Bible that would show that God has many times risen in punishment against wickedness. People who have read the Bible know this. I ask: has God changed that He will not punish wickedness any longer? Of course, not! God is an unchangeable God, and He will punish the wicked as He has said He will do as much as He has punished the wicked in the past.

II. What God Has Said.

What has God said concerning His punishment of the wicked? Whatever He has said, we should surely believe. Let us look at what He has said concerning the punishment of the wicked.

A. As Delivered Through John The Baptist.

Concerning Jesus, John preached:

"Now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire...He that cometh after me is mightier than I...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:10-12).

B. As Delivered Through Jesus.

While Jesus was here, He had much to say about the punishment of the wicked. Listen to some of Jesus' pronouncements upon this subject:

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 7:19).

"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4,5).

"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30).

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand,

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41).

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33).

"If thy hand offend thee ('cause thee to sin'), cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-48).

C. As Delivered Through Paul.

Here are some words from his inspired pen upon a divine punishment:

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5:11).

"To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:28-31).

"Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

D. As Delivered Through Peter And Jude.

Peter wrote:

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (II Pet. 2:9).

Jude wrote:

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 5-7).

E. As Revealed Through John In Revelation.

The book of Revelation has many references. Here are a few:

"The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Rev. 14:10).

"Whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

"The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

"I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18).

If space were unlimited, we could go on and on presenting actual quotations right from the Bible on the question of God's punishment of the wicked. We have employed the method followed in this study to show that the Bible teaches divine punishment of the wicked in a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is called hell fire, where the fire is unquenchable and the suffering unending. If one accepts the authority of the Scriptures, this should be sufficient to establish the fact of God's coming punishment of the wicked. If one doesn't accept the authority of the Scriptures, it would do little good to employ mere human reasoning to convince one of that coming fact. The question is not whether God is going to punish the wicked--He will--but how many are ready to meet the Lord when He comes and be found upon His right hand in judgment rather than His left hand. Let me close by saying:

"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Pet. 1:10).

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

The Reward of the Saints

"The Plan of God!" What a wonderful theme to think upon, to fill our minds with, and to learn more about! For fifty-one studies, we have been thinking together upon it. We have learned from what has been set before us. We have had other things recalled to our minds. But, all the foregoing fifty-one studies would end in incompleteness should we not bring you the fifty-second study--this study on the reward of the saints. All the plan of God looks forward to the final rewarding of the saints throughout all eternity.

When quoting what the Bible says about the after-life of happiness for God's children, we have been told by disbelievers to question the Bible upon this point. We have

been told that the Bible merely borrowed the idea of immortality from pagan religions. We are told of the Indian buried with his bow and arrow and his dog so he would have them when he arrived at the "Happy Hunting Ground". We have been told of the Egyptians burying treasures and personal possessions with their dead, who likewise believed in another life in which these things would be used. They say the Bible writers borrowed the idea of an after-life. Did they borrow the idea and write it in the Bible, or are all of these existing ideas among the pagans corruptions of the original idea given the human race by God Himself? No doubt, the latter is true. Therefore, the Bible gives us the true elaboration of the original idea, which pagan religions have corrupted very naturally by the passing of many centuries of time.

Yes, there is a reward for the saints in the great beyond. Why should Christians suffer persecution for righteousness' sake if there is no reward hereafter. This is the question that Paul raised:

"If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die" (I Cor. 15:32).

Jesus taught that there is a "pay day" coming for the righteous, if we may use that expression:

"When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12-14).

Paul likewise taught a coming day or reward for faithfulness to Christ. When he neared the hour of death, he said:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:7,8).

The truth of the matter is, we are now busy planting seeds that will mature at the coming of Christ. Just as Jesus' parables of the talents (Matt. 25) and the pounds (Luke 19) might be divided into three parts: (1) the committing to the servants, (2) the administration by the servants, and (3) the reckoning afterwards, even so are we now in the process of administering that which has been committed to us. If we prove faithful, we shall hear those welcome words:

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21).

I. Saints Are Only Partly Rewarded In This Life.

A. We Do Receive Many Special Blessings Right Here In This Life.

Spiritually, we are the sons of God right here in this life (I John 3:2). This is a great honor, and it brings with it many blessings. As a Father, God hears our prayers and

gives us the good things which we ask of Him (Matt. 7:7-11). Who can calculate all the blessings received by a Christian through the answer to his prayers? In our acceptance of Christ, our sins of the past were washed away in His blood (Rev. 1:5). Being thus justified before God, we have come into the possession of peace of heart and mind (Rom. 5:1 and Matt. 11:28,29). This is a peace that the world does not have nor can it give it to us (John 14:27). While the world enjoys the pleasures that last but for a season, saints have joy that is unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:8). We have found the pleasures that are forevermore at God's right hand (Psa. 16:11). While God has not promised to make any of His children earthly rich, He has promised to provide their earthly necessities (Matt. 6:33) a promise which He has not particularly made to the unsaved. It is recognized that Christianity pays with reference to the life to come, but many fail to realize the blessings that come even in the present life. 1 Tim. 4:8 says:

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

B. The Main Part Of The Saints' Reward Is Yet To Come.

(1) We have been told of an inheritance that is to be given.

Notice some of these interesting passages:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16,17).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3,4).

"For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7).

What a wonderful time is ahead for all the saints as they are granted their eternal inheritances from God made possible through Jesus!

(2) We have been told of crowns that will be given us.

Crowns are signs of victory. The saints have been promised crowns:

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they (people of earth) do it (their earthly striving) to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:24).

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (1 Tim. 4:8).

Crowns are also signs of ruling. Though our rule has not been defined, the Scriptures indicate that we shall rule:

"They shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 22:5).

"He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:26,27).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (1 Tim. 2:12).

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:20).

Surely, those who have humbled themselves here will be highly exalted then. Those who have served here will possess there. Those who have suffered here will reign there.

(3) We have been told of a rest that awaits us.

After God had completed His creative work, He rested. Heb. 4:4 makes reference to this fact, and that section of Scripture goes on to show that after a Christian's work here on earth is done, there is a rest that awaits him. Heb. 4:9-11 says:

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

While the wicked in hell will have no rest day nor night (Rev. 14:11), the saints will be enjoying the rest that God has promised them. "The toils of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the way."

II. The Bible's Description Of The Saints' Home In Glory.

A. It Will Be Beautiful

The glory of our heavenly home will make the finest mansion here on earth look as drab as a shack by the side of the road. If homes were available here on earth like the heavenly home will be, people would work their fingers to the bone trying to obtain them. If such homes were available, real estate men would rise to ecstasy in their newspaper listings of them. Listen to the Bible's description of its beauty:

"He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal" (Rev. 22:1).

"He shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the lamb... And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the

seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth a chrysopterus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Rev. 19:11-14, 19-21).

"I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

Surely, no earthly beauty and no beautiful structures of earth are worthy to be compared with the beauty that will be on every hand in heaven.

B. It Will Be Desirable.

Listen to these things concerning heaven:

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things (the things of earth) are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

"He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1,2).

Earth's joys are marred by sorrow. We see sickness, pain, and death about us. We see tears, sorrows, and disappointments here. Were it not for these, earth would be a most desirable place to remain in. But, in addition to heaven being the beautiful place that it will be, it will exclude these blighting curses of earth. Health and happiness, peace and prosperity will reign over there. Yes, it will be desirable.

C. It Will Be Holy.

Here, the saint sees sin on every hand, for the whole world lies in wickedness, according to the apostle John (I John 5:19). Such is not the environment in which the saint enjoys living. How many times he has remarked how wonderful it would be to live in a place where there were no crimes, no dishonesty, and no impurity--a place where all loved each other, helped each other, and were honest, upright, Christian people. Well, heaven will be just such a place. Only God and His people will be there. Notice these passages telling of the holy company who will be there and of their spiritual activity:

"There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

"We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

"I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).

"There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3,4).

When I think of the holiness of heaven, I can see the mistake of those who rush into religion, but do not really live for Christ. It will do them no good. I see the folly of those who go through the outward forms of Christianity while not really possessing the Spirit of God in their hearts. It will not suffice to gain them heavenly admittance. Those poor people who have not loved the Lord enough to open their mouths and sing His praises, to be regular in their attendance at all services of the church, and to engage themselves in the spiritual work of the church, they will find themselves barred from heaven's land, for here the lukewarm and unconsecrated cannot enter. Backsliders will not make it. Unconverted people will not make it. Heaven has been prepared for those preparing themselves for it.

III. Questions That People Ask About Heaven.

Children are known for asking questions. How they can bombard their parents with them! We can sympathize with the woman who had a child after her regular family had grown up. She found herself more easily worn down by the little fellow than she had with her former children. It seemed to her that he came well equipped with questions. One day when she was near the breaking point, she said to him, "Son, you really are full of questions." She about had to sit down when the little fellow shot back, "Mamma, what's a question?" Well, grown-ups turn children when it comes to asking questions about the great beyond. Here are three commonly asked questions that we would like to deal with before bringing this study to a close.

A. Will There Be Differences Of Reward In Heaven?

There are some passages that might seem to indicate that there will be, such as Luke 19:15-19 and I Cor. 3:12-15. Then, there are other passages that seem to say there won't be, such as Matt. 20:8-12. We know all will either be rewarded alike, or they will be rewarded differently. It would have to be one or the other. From my studies, I personally favor the idea that there will not be differences of rewards in heaven. I very much appreciated the material Brother Barber set forth upon this point on one of his "Querists' Pages" in Volume 1 of "The Voice of Evangelism" (November 30, 1946). But, let me say that if God sees fit to reward differently, that is up to Him, and it will be all right with me. I believe that whatever He might do, He will have a just reason for doing whether I understand it ahead of time or not. I know I can say without fear of contradiction that if the Bible teaches a difference in heavenly rewards, the Bible does not emphasize that teaching. Rather, it emphasizes the matter of getting to heaven and missing hell. The older one gets in the faith and the more he or she does for God, I have noticed a less concern about special rewards and a greater concern to make sure of heaven and to see that others get there too.

I have detected time and time again a dangerous thought among some who hold the idea that there will be differences of rewards in heaven. I have known people to say concerning the fact that they weren't as faithful as others and weren't doing as much as others: "Well, I'll just settle for a smaller reward." Yes, quite a little less! The Bible doesn't say that anybody unfaithful will even get to

heaven. If a person thinks he or she can do less than what one is able to do and at the same time still reach heaven, that person has another think coming! Such a person could be no better classed than lukewarm--not cold, but surely not hot either (Rev. 3:16)--and the lukewarm are to be rejected and not saved.

B. Will We Know Each Other In Heaven?

Though the Bible does not treat this at length, I believe it gives us enough material by which to draw a definite conclusion. I believe we shall know each other there. I Thess. 4:13-18 is a fine passage upon this point. The Thessalonian Christians had somehow gotten it into their heads that the living saints would go to heaven before those saints who had passed on. Thus, they would miss seeing their dead loved ones. But, Paul corrected the idea by telling them the dead saints would be resurrected first of all, and then they with the living saints would be caught up together to meet the Lord. He closed by saying to comfort one another with these words. How would they be comforted? By knowing they would be reunited with their dead at the time of Jesus' return. What comfort would that be if they would not know each other at that time? There are other considerations in the Scriptures, but this has always been one of the best in my judgment.

C. How Can I Be Happy When I Know Some Of My Loved Ones Aren't There?

Here is a problem that bothers many people. All of us have some loved ones who are not Christians. In some cases, it may be a husband; in others, a wife; in others, parents; in still others, children, or brothers, or sisters, or very close friends. People say: "I know I couldn't enjoy one moment of heaven if I knew any of my loved ones were in hell."

Whether we can understand how we can be without tears in heaven when some of our loved ones are in hell, we can know that God has said there will be no tears in heaven (Rev. 21:4), and I believe it. Notice that it says *God* will wipe away all tears. He can do wonderful things. He will have His way of doing it. He may have to blot the knowledge of unsaved loved ones clear out of our memories in order to wipe tears from our eyes. I know He will have His way of doing it, and I know it will be done. The grandeur and glory of heaven may so fascinate us as to cause us to forget all about the earth, too.

As we bring this study toward a close, let us remember that Jesus is coming, and when He does, He is coming to reward His people. Rev. 21:12 says:

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me."

It is natural for heat to rise. It is natural for a thirsty horse to drink. It is natural for a sleepy man to go to bed. Have you ever thought that there is law and order with God? What He sees men desiring, He will give them an eternity of it. If they love sin, He will give them eternal death (the wages of sin). If they prefer the devil to God, He will cast them into hell forever with the devil. If they desire the fellowship of sinners, He will let them have an eternity with them. If they have despised spiritual things and the

company of spiritual people, they will never be bothered with them again, for in hell, there will be no spirituality (no Bible reading, no preaching, no urging to live right), and there will be no spiritual people there. If they have preferred the devil's words to God's Word, they will get to be with their master. But, if men have hated sin, loved God, sought righteousness, obeyed God, and lived for God, then He will give them an eternity of their own choosing. No sin will harass them in heaven, God, whom they love, obey, and live for will be there with them. Righteousness, which has been their law of life, will be the rule of heaven. Notice how all this is borne out in Rom. 2:6-9:

"(God) who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

Yes, God is watching what you are desiring, what you are living for. He is letting you pick out your own eternity. And whatever you choose, you will have to accept. Be deeper, then, in your life than merely trying to fool a preacher or the people. Live for God if you would miss hell and inherit heaven. If you have not turned from sin in an acceptance of Christ, why do you not do so without delay? Immediately, turn from your sins in repentance, confess your faith in Jesus Christ before men, be immersed in obedience to Christ that your sins might be blotted out and that you might enter into the Christian life in which you continue steadfastly until death calls you home. You will never regret, either in time or eternity, that you have pursued such a course. The ways of the world may be alluring, but remember where those ways lead, and you will find them as abhorrent to you as bitter poison. The apostle John called upon the people of his day not to love the world, and he told them why. I use his statement as a fitting conclusion to this entire series of studies, asking that you give his statement due consideration in the light of eternity. He said:

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).

When a king asked Euclid whether he could not explain his art to him in a more compendious manner, he was answered that there was no royal road to geometry.

Other things may be seized by might or purchased with money, but knowledge is to be gained only by study and personal application. This is why many are content with a very meager knowledge of the Bible.

Questions Over The Unfolded Plan of God

THE GOD BEHIND THE PLAN

1. List the three characteristics of God that were considered in this lesson.
2. How do we know that God has bestowed His mercy upon man?
3. How do earthly provisions for sinner and saint alike show the mercy of God?
4. Give another proof of God's mercy by completing I Jn. 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, _____."
5. What Bible book speaks much of the virtues of wisdom?
6. Where do we find God's wisdom manifested?
7. Give one reason for God's supreme wisdom.
8. Why has God not revealed to man all that He could have?
9. What would happen to mercy if it were not combined with justice?
10. How was God's justice upheld at Calvary?
11. What must of necessity be done at Judgment to maintain the justice of God?
12. What does Rom. 2:6 reveal as an attribute of God as a result of His justice?
13. Memorize Isa. 55:7.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED

1. Prove the participation of all the Godhead in creation from Gen. 1:1.
2. Who are the "us" and "our" in Gen. 1:26?
3. What are three possible views of creation?
4. What does the Hebrew word translated "create" mean?
5. Why does the evolution theory fail?
6. Can you reconcile creation and evolution? Why or why not?
7. What do modernists contend as to the writing of Genesis 1 and 2?
8. What is true of the writing of Gen. 1 and 2?
9. What argument is used to prove a "second creation" account beginning with Gen. 1:2?
10. Deal with the Isa. 45:18 argument using your Bible.
11. What argument is involved in the use of the word "replenish" (Gen. 1:28)?
12. Answer the argument by defining "replenish".
13. Give at least two reasons to refute a "day" of creation extending over a long period of time.
14. How could three "days" have passed before the creation of the sun when time is actually marked out by the sun?
15. What three attributes of God are demonstrated in creation?
16. Memorize Psa. 33:8.

MAN AS HE WAS IN THE BEGINNING

1. How long has man been in existence according to Ussher?
2. How does man differ from all other things of creation?

3. How is man made in "the image of God"?
4. Why did God make man?
5. Is it wrong for man to use modern medicine, machines, and an education?
6. List at least four blessings that man gained when God placed him upon the earth.
7. Why has man failed to subdue all things?
8. What further help has God given to man in the task of subduing all things?
9. How can the redeemed gain dominion?
10. Memorize Gen. 1:27.

THE FIRST SIN

1. What one prohibition did God place upon Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden?
2. What caused them to sin?
3. How is the devil pictured throughout God's Word?
4. Where did the devil come from?
5. How does all humanity suffer because of Adam's sin?
6. Has his sin been passed on to us?
7. What present-day church doctrines have been formed because of the "inherited sin" theory?
8. How did Eve's deception reflect on her character?
9. How did Adam's sin reflect upon him?
10. What did Adam and Eve do that is characteristic of every sinner today?
11. Designate the two ways that one might sin.
12. Analyze the nature of man's first sin.
13. Memorize II Cor. 11:3

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FIRST SIN

1. Upon whom did the consequences of the first sin fall?
2. What five personal consequences of their sin came upon Adam and Eve?
3. How did God curse the ground?
4. How did the sin of Adam and Eve affect successive generations?
5. How did the sin of Adam and Eve affect the devil and his program?
6. Explain the meaning of "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:16).
7. Explain "It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).
8. Memorize II Cor. 5:10.

PATRIARCHAL RELIGION

1. Divide the era of Biblical history into the three dispensations commonly accepted.
2. List the beginning and closing event of each dispensation.
3. What were some of the elements which constituted Patriarchal religion?
4. What was probably man's very first religious act unto God?
5. What was the first religious rite given to any one portion of humanity?
6. What was the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals before the flood?
7. How do we conclude that God must have given laws before Sinai though they are not recorded?
8. What part did the father have in the Patriarchal religion?

9. How did the Patriarchs learn God's will concerning their manner of worship?
10. Memorize Gen. 6:5

THE GREAT FLOOD

1. How does it happen that every nation (whether heathen or Christian) seems to have an account of a great flood in its history?
2. How bad was the condition of men's hearts just preceding the flood?
3. How long, after creating the earth, did God destroy it?
4. Describe the character of Noah and his standing before God.
5. What light is thrown upon the character of Noah through New Testament Scriptures?
6. Describe the real import of the flood upon the earth.
7. What is the ark of safety provided for men today?
8. Compare the salvation of the eight souls then with the salvation of souls today. (I Pet. 3:21).
9. Memorize Gal. 6:7,8.

POST-FLOOD HAPPENINGS

1. What was the first thing that Noah did after the flood?
2. How does the Bible describe a pleasing offering?
3. How does the Bible describe an unacceptable sacrifice?
4. What was God's covenant with Noah?
5. How did God establish it?
6. Why did God decide against so purging the earth again?
7. List some of God's special post-flood instructions which still pertain to mankind today.
8. What was the devil's first act upon the earth's population after the time of the flood?
9. What other things occurred that brought the displeasure of God upon men?
10. Where do we read of the conditions that prevailed in the Gentile world?
11. What was the prophecy of Noah concerning his sons?
12. How have these prophecies been fulfilled?
13. Memorize Rom. 1:21,22

ABRAHAM'S PLACE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

1. Of what special significance is the call of Abraham?
2. Describe the outstanding characteristic of Abraham.
3. What were some proofs of this characteristic?
4. List some of the promises which God made to Abraham.
5. List some of Abraham's descendants who fulfill God's promise of his becoming a great nation.
6. Who are the spiritual descendants of Abraham?
7. When was it that Abraham became approved of God?
8. Memorize Rom. 2:28,29.

ISAAC'S PLACE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

1. Why is Isaac's place in Bible history so important?
2. What incident in Isaac's life was used as an allegory to teach a great Bible truth?
3. What did Paul teach by use of this incident?
4. List a few of the interesting incidents in Isaac's life.

5. What significance does the deliverance of Isaac (at the time he was to be sacrificed) hold for us?
6. What can we know of Isaac's character from these incidents in his life?
7. Memorize Gal. 4:30,31.

JACOB'S PLACE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

1. Give instances proving God's choice of Jacob to be the one through whom the Abrahamic promises were fulfilled.
2. Who were the twelve patriarchs?
3. What place of importance do they occupy in Bible history?
4. What were the two names given to Jacob and what is each's meaning?
5. How did Jacob's prophecies concerning his sons weed out all but Judah?
6. In what way did the blessing of pre-eminence come to be fulfilled in Judah?
7. What is the accepted meaning of "shiloh" (Gen. 49:10)?
8. What reason could be given as to why Jacob was chosen rather than Esau?
9. Give reasons as to whether Jacob's life was or was not altogether righteous.
10. Memorize Gen. 49:10.

THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

1. What prophecy was given to Abraham as he slept which had reference to his descendants?
2. How did the Israelites happen to be in Egypt?
3. Enumerate events in Joseph's life which promoted him to a position of authority in Egypt.
4. Enumerate events in Jacob's life which brought about the move to Egypt.
5. How did the Israelites come to be in bondage to the Egyptians?
6. What measures were employed by the Egyptians against the Israelites?
7. Why did these fail?
8. Memorize Gen. 15:13.

DELIVERED FROM EGYPTIAN BONDAGE

1. Who was God's agent of deliverance for His people?
2. Tell something of his family.
3. How was he brought into the position of receiving such a good education?
4. Where did Moses go at the age of forty?
5. What did this involve as a serious decision in his life?
6. Tell of the events which took place in Midian.
7. What were the plagues that God sent upon the Israelites?
8. What was the prophecy of Joseph that was fulfilled at this time?
9. Narrate the exodus.
10. After the Israelites had crossed the sea, what happened to the Egyptians?
11. Tell of the effect of this incident among surrounding nations.
12. How does Israel's deliverance compare with our deliverance from sin?
13. Memorize Heb. 11:24-26.

THE LAW GIVEN AT SINAI

1. What was it that guided the children of Israel on their journey from Egypt to Canaan?

2. What did God command Moses to do to make the bitter waters of Marah sweet again?
3. What food was given to the Israelites in the wilderness?
4. What was the significance of its name?
5. What two important events took place at Rephidim?
6. How long had the Israelites been in their journey from Egypt to Sinai?
7. List the circumstances which surrounded the giving of the Law.
8. What happened during the time that Moses was on the mount?
9. What was the outcome of this act?
10. At what date was the Law given?
11. For how long did it last?
12. Prove its duration.
13. List some of its principles which have been legislated against in the New Testament.
14. Memorize Col. 2:14.

THE CONTENTS OF THE LAW

1. Where do we find the ten commandments listed in the Scriptures?
2. Write the shortened form of all ten.
3. What is the position of the Seventh Day Adventists on the ten commandments?
4. What New Testament passage confirms that the laws on the tables of stone passed away?
5. Will the ten commandments save us?
6. What reason could there have been for two tables of stone being used to record the ten commandments?
7. List the various kinds of laws contained in the laws given to the Israelites.
8. Give one example of each kind of law included.
9. What did Jesus give in answer to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?"
10. Give examples of those faithful and those not faithful to keep the Law.
11. Memorize Matt. 22:37-40

THE TABERNACLE

1. Where do we read of the pattern, construction, erection, and dedication of the tabernacle?
2. Why is the study of the tabernacle important?
3. Discuss the pattern of the tabernacle.
4. How were the materials of the tabernacle secured?
5. Who helped construct the tabernacle?
6. Where in the New Testament do we read concerning the tabernacle and that which it foreshadowed?
7. Show the fulfillment of the high priest and other priests.
8. List each piece of furniture in the tabernacle and give the fulfillment of that which each typified.
9. Memorize Heb. 10:22

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

1. How did it happen that the tribe of Levi was chosen to be the priestly tribe?
2. What three groups besides the family of Aaron had places of responsibility in the religious life of the Israelites?
3. Distinguish between "priests" and

"Levites".

4. What might the garments of the priests prefigure as to the New Testament priesthood?
5. What was done with the blood of the "ram of consecration" and why was it done?
6. Who challenged the priesthood of Aaron and what resulted?
7. List three qualifications of a priest.
8. What were some specific instructions to the priests regarding their duties?
9. What happened when these special instructions were violated?
10. How did God care for the Levites since they had been given no inheritance of land?
11. How has the priesthood been changed today?
12. Memorize Heb. 4:14-16.

OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES

1. List the principle sacrifices for the Mosaic dispensation.
2. Explain the burnt offering.
3. Explain the meal offering.
4. How were proper sacrifices chosen?
5. Why would God want people to go to so much "bother" as the sacrifices demanded?
6. Why could these sacrifices not take away sin?
7. What did these sacrifices accomplish?
8. How, then, can those who lived in Old Testament times ever be saved from their sins?
9. Memorize Heb. 9:15.

THE THREE GREAT JEWISH FEASTS

1. Name the three great feasts and their dates.
2. Where were they to be observed?
3. Discuss the names and manner of observing the other feasts.
4. Where was the first Passover Feast observed?
5. By what other names is this feast known?
6. What exceptions were made as to its observance?
7. List three ways in which the term "passover" is used.
8. How does the Greek word for Pentecost explain the time when it was observed?
9. List other names for this feast.
10. What was the purpose of the feast of Pentecost?
11. What was the double purpose in the feast of Tabernacles?
12. What is its other name?
13. Name various events in the life of Jesus which occurred at the time of the Passover Feast.
14. Memorize Lk. 22:29,30.

ISRAEL CONDEMNED IN THE WILDERNESS

1. From what place did Moses send the spies into Canaan?
2. How many spies were sent?
3. How were they chosen?
4. Why were they sent?
5. For how long did they remain in the land?
6. What did they report upon their return?
7. Describe the reaction of the people when they heard the report of the spies?
8. What did Caleb and Joshua reply to the people?

9. Give the gist of God's penalty imposed because of the unbelief of His people.
10. What caused the concern exhibited by Moses?
11. What was God's answer to Moses' prayer?
12. Which people were to go on into Canaan?
13. How did God determine the time appointed for His people to wander in the wilderness?
14. What happened to the ten unfaithful spies?
15. What did the people do after this that again brought God's hand of wrath against them?
16. Give New Testament references relating to the possibility of our falling from God's grace as Israel did.
17. Memorize Heb. 3:12,13.

THE CONQUEST UNDER JOSHUA

1. Why is the book of Numbers so named?
2. Why was a new leader chosen for God's people?
3. Who was chosen?
4. Tell something of his previous associations with the Israelites and Moses.
5. Break down the word, "Deuteronomy" to give its meaning.
6. What is included in the book of Deuteronomy in addition to laws?
7. List Moses' final instructions to the people.
8. Where did he die?
9. Briefly relate the entrance of the two spies into Jericho.
10. Describe the crossing of the Jordan.
11. What important provision of God was cut off after the people crossed Jordan? Why?
12. Give proof against unbeliever's arguments as to the impossibility of the fall of Jericho.
13. Give archaeologists' account of the ruin of the walls and the fire after they fell.
14. What evidence do we have proving God's authority as to the rebuilding of Jericho?
15. Why did Israel fail to capture Ai?
16. How was the land divided in Joshua's old age?
17. How old was Joshua when he died?

THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

1. What commandment did Israel fail to obey?
2. When did their rebellion toward this commandment begin?
3. What did God do to punish the people?
4. How did the rule of the judges come to have a place in God's plan?
5. How many judges were there?
6. What type of men were they?
7. For what length of time did they rule?
8. What important request was made at the end of this period?
9. Why did this happen?
10. What did the request indicate?
11. What did God do?
12. How did it bring sorrow?

ISRAEL'S FIRST THREE KINGS

1. Name the first three kings of Israel.
2. For how long did each reign?
3. Of what tribe was Saul?

4. What good characteristic was evidenced in his early life?
5. What was his first battle?
6. What things led to his downfall?
7. What do we know of David's early life?
8. List some outstanding things about his reign.
9. Tell of his terrible sin and the evil brought to him by it.
10. Why was Solomon not in line for the throne?
11. What was his famous choice?
12. List important things concerning his reign--both good and bad.

THE KINGDOM AFTER IT DIVIDED

1. Who was Jeroboam?
2. What "object lesson" was presented to Jeroboam?
3. What did Jeroboam do that brought trouble to the kingdom?
4. How did Jeroboam come to be king?
5. Why did Jeroboam set up the idolatrous worship of the north?
6. What became of it?
7. Who else brought a rapid decline in the kingdom of Israel? How?
8. What servant of God was sent to rebuke these things?
9. What prophet actually destroyed Baal worship?
10. How was this accomplished?
11. What two men prophesied that the northern kingdom would fall?
12. What happened to the southern kingdom after the fall of the northern kingdom?
13. What prophet lamented the death of Josiah?
14. What king ruled when the south fell?
15. List those who prophesied to the southern kingdom before its fall.
16. Describe the fall of the South.
17. How long had it been in existence?

THE RESTORATION PERIOD

1. Name some of the captives from the southern tribes who were slaves in Babylon.
2. Why were the later years of captivity better for the Jews than the first?
3. What lesson did the captivity bring to the Jews?
4. What probably cured them of idolatry?
5. Give two accounts of prophecy relating to the Jews' return to their own land.
6. How many Bible books deal with the return?
7. Name them.
8. List three important characters of the return and their work.
9. Why did God allow them to return? (Give two reasons).
10. What specific things pertaining to the Mosaic ordinances were reinstated in the religious life of the people who returned?
11. How long had it been since these ordinances were first given?
12. What one very evident fact is pointed out to us by the restoration period?

THE PROPHETS FORESAW THE MESSIANIC AGE

1. To what period do the Messianic prophecies actually relate?
2. What one fact is especially important to our study and understanding of prophecy?

3. How many times is there a prediction of Christ's coming in the Old Testament Scriptures?
4. List some specific things foreseen by the Old Testament prophets relating to Christ's coming.
5. Give two familiar passages which predict Christ's crucifixion.
6. What are some of the things which the prophets foresaw concerning the Christian dispensation?
7. What prophet told of Jesus' being crowned?
8. What prophet told of the day of Pentecost?
9. What prophet spoke of a new covenant?
10. What prophet vividly predicted Gentile conversions?
11. How can we relate Zech. 6:14 and Eph. 2:11-13? (Use your Bible).
12. What Old Testament prophet is quoted many times in the New Testament concerning his teaching justification by faith?
13. What prophet predicted the coming of the "day of the Lord"?
14. What does that expression mean?
15. Who prophesied of a future resurrection of all?

THE MESSIAH IS BORN

1. What was the event from which everything was dated prior to the system of our present calendar?
2. From what event does our present calendar date?
3. Name the trend of thought that denies the virgin birth of Christ.
4. Explain "virgin" birth.
5. Why is the virgin birth so important?
6. What is significant about the humble parentage of Jesus?
7. What design was in God's plan as He gave to us a record of Jesus' first visitors?
8. Who gave the first prophecy of opposition against Jesus?
9. When was it given?
10. To whom was it given?
11. Of what significance was the prophecy to Mary?
12. When did the opposition actually begin?
13. What date do we have given to us as Jesus' birthdate?
14. Why is December twenty-fifth given to us as the correct date?
15. What do we have recorded in the Scriptures as to the observance of this as the date of His birth?

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

1. Where do we find the genealogy of Jesus recorded?
2. Why did Matthew trace Jesus' ancestry through David?
3. Why did Luke trace the line all the way back to Adam?
4. Why does Matthew trace the lineage through Joseph?
5. Why does Luke trace the lineage through Mary?
6. Why were certain omissions made in the genealogy of Matthew?
7. List at least five good people in the line of Christ.
8. List some of the bad people in the line.
9. What two Gentiles are in the lineage?
10. What does this indicate?
11. What good argument for the Messiah's having already come is evi-

denced by the Jewish records of genealogy?

12. Why could a Messiah to come not be identified?

THE FORERUNNING MINISTRY OF JOHN

1. Why do all the writers except John refer to the forerunner of Christ as "John the Baptist"?
2. Why was he called "the Baptist"?
3. How was John related to Jesus?
4. What association could there have been between the two during boyhood days?
5. What were some of the ways that John was unusual?
6. How did the ministry of John parallel that of Elijah?
7. Why did he not perform miracles during his ministry?
8. What was his message?
9. What was his chief mission?
10. What was the response to his ministry?
11. Why did his preaching gain such a response from the people?
12. What statement did Jesus make concerning the leaders' rejection of John's message?
13. What happened to John because of his rebuke against Herod?
14. What temptation came into John's life?
15. What was his final fate?
16. What was the duration of his life?

JESUS' BAPTISM AND TEMPTATIONS

1. Where did John do his baptizing?
2. Locate the place as being Southern by the reasons given in the lesson.
3. How far did Jesus walk to be baptized?
4. Why did Jesus wait until John had preached for a while to be baptized?
5. How do we know that Jesus was immersed?
6. What does Luke record concerning Jesus' coming out of the water?
7. What event immediately followed Jesus' baptism?
8. Why did this happen?
9. How was this a sign to John?
10. Define "Messiah".
11. What other important thing that happened at Jesus' baptism?
12. What was the devil's purpose in tempting Jesus?
13. What was God's purpose in Jesus' temptations?
14. List the three temptations in the wilderness.
15. How did Jesus combat the devil's temptations?
16. Name other temptations which Jesus had to face.
17. How was He strengthened for them?
18. Memorize James 1:7 and James 4:8.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

1. What was the length of the ministry of Jesus?
2. For how long was Jesus on earth after His resurrection?
3. Where did He preach?
4. Was He ever preaching at any other place outside this area?
5. Why?
6. What were some of Jesus' claims?
7. What did His miracles prove?
8. Give three reasons as to why Jesus was a master teacher.
9. What one phase of Jesus' teachings especially showed wisdom in getting

the "point across".

10. How were the teachings of Jesus so different from those of an ordinary teacher?
11. List at least five things that Jesus taught about the kingdom.
12. What one thing did Jesus teach to be an impossibility?

JESUS AS JUDGED BY OTHERS

1. What was one of the most frequent charges thrown against Jesus by the enemy?
2. List at least four other charges which were brought against Jesus.
3. What were two occasions of His being criticized by friends?
4. Give at least five of those people who testified to His deity.
5. List five of those who declared the innocence of Jesus.

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

1. What were men commanded to preach? (Mk. 16:15).
2. Why is it so important that nothing but the gospel is preached? (Rom. 1:16).
3. Summarize the gospel as Paul does in I Cor. 15:3,4.
4. What does the word "gospel" mean?
5. If God had planned Jesus' death, why were the men who crucified Him held guilty?
6. Give evidence of the fact that when Jesus died He bore the guilt of our sins.
7. Who all profited by the death of Christ?
8. What two important ordinances commemorate Christ's death?
9. How do we figure the approximate time of Jesus' burial?
10. What Old Testament book contains a prediction of His burial?
11. Where was He buried?
12. What Scripture reveals to us that baptism is a burial?
13. Give one reason against the substitution of sprinkling for immersion.
14. List at least three important facts relating to the resurrection of Jesus.
15. What early Christian writers stated that Sunday was the day of Jesus' resurrection?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASCENSION

1. How were the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension spent?
2. How do we know that Jesus no longer has a fleshly body?
3. Give three arguments against the thought that the change in Jesus' body took place at the resurrection.
4. How did the ascension of Jesus relate to His priesthood?
5. How can He help us in the time of temptations?
6. When was God's Kingdom to be set up?
7. Who was promised the throne?
8. When did He receive the glory?
9. What passage of New Testament Scripture tells us these things?
10. What is the denominational idea of Jesus' coronation?
11. How is our justification related to the ascension?
12. Memorize Dan. 2:44.

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST

1. Define "disciple".
2. Define "apostle".
3. How many apostles were there?
4. Name as many as you can.
5. How did Jesus contact those who became His apostles?
6. How did Jesus prepare the apostles for their work?
7. How important was the office of apostleship?
8. What was the scope and duration of their ministry?
9. Explain John 20:23.
10. Give two reasons for the apostles' need of supernatural help.
11. What help was given to them?
12. What special help was given to confirm their preaching?
13. Where did their work begin?
14. What was the message given to the people through the apostle Peter?
15. What was the result?
16. How were the apostles' exhortations to various congregations preserved for us?
17. How does the work Jesus had planned for them go on yet today?
18. Memorize Matt. 28:18-20.

THE "CHURCH-AND-KINGDOM" QUESTION

1. What is the "church-kingdom" position taken by denominationalism?
2. In what two ways is the "kingdom" referred to in the Scriptures?
3. Give one proof that Mk. 14:25 relates "the kingdom" and the "church".
4. Prove that the church is the kingdom on earth from Mk. 9:1.
5. Use Old Testament prophecy to prove that the kingdom has already come.
6. How do we know that Jn. 3:5 speaks of the church?
7. What passage in Matthew uses Jesus' own words to link the church and the kingdom?
8. When did Paul make mention of the kingdom?
9. When did John make mention of the kingdom?
10. Since the epistles were addressed to the Christians, (in the church) explain the passages referring to "the kingdom". (I Pet. 1:11, I Cor. 15:50, Matt. 8:11).
11. When will men inherit the kingdom?
12. Where does denominationalism teach this inheritance to be?
13. What does denominationalism do to the kingship of Christ?

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

1. What was the purpose of the law of Moses?
2. When did God abrogate the law?
3. Why is the law unable to save?
4. When did the gospel go into effect?
5. What is its duration?
6. What is the difference as to the authority of the law and the gospel?
7. What power lies in the gospel?
8. List four evidences from the New Testament which distinguish the gospel as having greater power than the law.

THE TWO SIDES OF SALVATION

1. What are the two sides of salvation?

2. What was God's view of man in the beginning?
3. What is modernism's description of man in the beginning?
4. How did Jesus find man when He came?
5. What fact proves that the devil did not succeed in damning all men, even though his power over man was very great?
6. Describe God's dealings with both Jew and Gentile.
7. What is man's part in partaking of salvation?
8. What will happen to those who do not obey the gospel?
9. What perfected Jesus as savior?
10. What must one do after the initial obedience to God's will has been performed?
11. Memorize Heb. 5:9.

THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

1. What is the meaning of the term "conversion"?
2. Why is "conversion" a necessary thing?
3. Distinguish between "Christians" and "sinners".
4. How is conversion brought about according to the Scriptures?
5. How are man's outlook and desires changed?
6. How can his will be changed?
7. How can he have his guilt removed to be changed to purity before God?
8. Memorize Gal. 2:20.

THE DIVINE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

1. What is there in the great commission to prove the importance of baptism?
2. How many conversions are recorded in the book of Acts?
3. How many of these mention baptism?
4. List as many of the recorded conversions as you can.
5. What significant statements are made concerning baptism in Acts 2?
6. When did Saul become a saved individual? Give scripture.
7. What does baptism symbolize?
8. How does baptism picture a change being wrought within as the outward act is performed?
9. How does one get into Christ? Give two Scriptures as proof of your answer.
10. Memorize II Cor. 5:17.

THE NEW LIFE A PRODUCT OF CONVERSION

1. What is the result of conversion in one's life?
2. How do many preachers fail in making conversion clear?
3. How does faith lead to a new life in Christ?
4. What does repentance do to bring a new life?
5. What are some of the spiritual values received when an individual confesses Christ?
6. How does baptism lead to a new life?
7. Memorize Rom. 6:1-4.

CONTINUING STEADFASTLY

What was the first thing affirmed about the early Christian converts? Give one Scripture and one "common-sense" reason for continuing steadfastly in the faith.

3. What doctrine is advocated in contrast to the need for remaining steadfast?
4. Prove by the Scriptures that the doctrine of eternal security is false. (Give at least two arguments.)
5. Give at least three reasons that would prove the "once saved, always saved" theory to be ridiculous.
6. Memorize I Cor. 15:58.

THE SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

1. Who is responsible for an individual's remaining faithful to Christ?
2. What title meaning "elder" shows him to be a shepherd?
3. What is the work designated to the elders that would cause them to be known as shepherds?
4. What prevailing attitude today concerning the eldership shows a rebellious spirit among the churches?
5. Why does the office of the elder suffer today?
6. Where are the qualifications for elders found in the Scriptures?
7. Memorize Heb. 13:17.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

1. Give five reasons why we should seek the fellowship of the saints.
2. Why did Saul suffer hardship when he sought comfort from God's people?
3. List five reasons why others need our fellowship.
4. Why must the church practice disfellowship?
5. Use three proofs against too much freedom in fellowshipping others.
6. What should we do if we cannot find a group with whom we can conscientiously be identified?
7. Give examples of some who were punished for having fellowship with those who were not God's people.
8. Memorize II Jn. 10,11.

EVANGELISM, THE WORK OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

1. Who is responsible for the evangelization of the world?
2. Who is an "evangelist" in the Bible sense?
3. List four duties of the evangelist.
4. How has the method of evangelization in our present day changed from past methods?
5. How does an elder participate in the program of evangelism?
6. List five various responsibilities laid upon church members who are commanded to be evangelistic.
7. Why is evangelism so important?
8. Memorize Matt. 9:36-38.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS DIVINELY IMPORTANT

1. How is the importance of the Lord's supper shown to us?
2. What does the Lord's supper commemorate?
3. How is the Lord's supper a communion?
4. Does partaking of the Lord's supper have anything to do with the remission of sins?
5. What is the reference made by Jesus concerning eating and drinking the Lord's supper?
6. How was the Lord's supper prefigured?
7. What New Testament passage declar-

ing the faithfulness of early Christians shows to us the importance of the Lord's supper?

8. What New Testament passage shows the Lord's supper to be the center of the early Christians' assembly?
9. Prove a weekly observance of the Lord's supper from Acts 20:7, I Cor. 16:2, and I Cor. 11.
10. Memorize I Cor. 10:16.

PRAISE AND PRAYER

1. Distinguish between "praise" and "prayer".
2. What is our reason for praising God?
3. How can our praise be expressed to God? (List at least three ways).
4. What profit is there in a study of Old Testament men who prayed?
5. What is the basis for prayer?
6. Give three examples of and exhortations to steadfastness in prayer.
7. Give examples of three persons who were fervent in prayer.
8. Memorize James 5:16.

CHRISTIANITY'S DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC

1. Contrast heathen ideas of God and Christianity's view.
2. What unique teaching did Christianity bring concerning love?
3. What is one prevalent misconception of love?
4. List three phases of Bible love.
5. What was God's standard of love?
6. What was man's standard of love?
7. What does man's love for God involve?
8. Who must we include in the commandment, "Love thy neighbor"?
9. Give Jesus' standard of love for our fellowmen.
10. What are some things that Christians are not to love?
11. What is the condition of those who do not love as they should?
12. Memorize I Jn. 3:18.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

1. Define "primitive Christianity".
2. Give three reasons for our interest in primitive Christianity.
3. When did the Holy Spirit inspire men to guide the early church?
4. How has the respect for the authority of Christ in religion changed?
5. Contrast the preaching of the early church with today's method.
6. What was the simple organization of the early church?
7. What was the determining factor as to the naming of early Christianity?
8. How were baptism and the Lord's supper observed in the beginning days of Christianity?
9. What was the outlook of early Christianity toward other religions and sin?
10. Elaborate upon the way of life known to the early Christians.
11. Memorize Jude 3.

THINGS CONNECTED WITH THE RETURN OF JESUS

1. How long did Jesus stay on the earth after His first coming?
2. How will Jesus come to earth a second time?
3. What does the Bible have to reveal concerning the relation of

Jesus coming with the resurrection of the dead?

4. What will heaven be like after the resurrection?
5. What will happen to the people yet alive when Jesus comes?
6. What will be another great event that is prophesied to take place at Jesus' return?
7. Who will accompany Jesus to help in the judgment and punishment of the wicked?
8. Prove that the eternal home of the righteous is not to be upon this earth.
9. What will become of this present earth?
10. Memorize II Pet. 3:11.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

1. Give at least five examples of God's punishment of the wicked in days past.
2. What did Jesus say about God's punishment of the wicked?
3. What did God's servants have to say about His punishment of the wicked? (John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, and Jude).
4. Name some, listed by John, who will face the second death. (Rev. 21:8).
5. Memorize Rev. 20:15.

THE REWARD OF THE SAINTS

1. What is the reward of the saints in this life as Sons of God?

2. What are the possessions brought by justification with God?
3. What has God promised to supply for all His children?
4. Describe the inheritance promised the saints in the future.
5. Designate the "crowns" to be given to the saints.
6. Describe the beautiful picture of heaven.
7. Why should we desire heaven?
8. If there were a difference of rewards in heaven, what classification must be given to those who say, "I'll just settle for a smaller reward"?
9. What passage indicates that we will know each other in heaven?
10. Memorize Rev. 3:20.