

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES:

The Gospels and Acts

By Chester K. Lehman

A Bible Survey Course in Five Units

FOURTH UNIT

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

The Gospels and Acts

*Fourth Unit of a Bible Survey Course
in Five Units*

THIRD EDITION

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Foreword to Third Edition

This Bible Survey Course was conceived by the forerunner of the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education, the General Sunday School Committee of General Conference. This committee sensed the urgency of teacher training in the Mennonite Church and adopted a plan of action known as the "Elementary Teacher Training Course." This course led to the preparation of Bible survey manuals, three volumes of twelve lessons each: **Old Testament Law and History**, by H. S. Bender; **Old Testament Poetry and Prophets**, by Paul Erb; and **New Testament Studies**, by C. K. Lehman. These books appeared in January, 1936.

The Bible Survey Course manuals were well received. Within four years the first edition was exhausted. In September, 1940, under the direction of the Commission Secretary of Teacher Training the second edition appeared. In this edition a few changes were made to make the materials more adaptable to training classes. A few corrections of fact were also included.

The Bible Survey Course manuals continue to enjoy widespread use. However, changing needs and requirements have led to this third edition. Requirements for teacher-training courses have been changed from twelve to ten sessions of 45 minutes each. This necessitated the rearrangement of materials which resulted in five volumes of ten lessons each: **Old Testament Studies: Early History and Law**; **Old Testament Studies: Later History and Poetry**; **Old Testament Studies: The Prophets**; **New Testament Studies: The Gospels and Acts**; and **New Testament Studies: The Epistles and Revelation**.

The content has remained much the same except for reorganization, new study questions, addition of maps, and corrections of fact in the light of more recent studies and discoveries.

The revision has been done by C. Norman Kraus of Goshen College under the direction of the Christian Education Department of the Editorial Division of the Mennonite Publishing House and the Curriculum Committee of the Mennonite Commission for Christian Education.

With the new format and with a renewed emphasis upon training for Christian service we hope these volumes will continue to provide the church with a means to more and better Bible knowledge and will prepare men and women to teach the inspired Word of God to His glory.

Paul M. Lederach

Field Secretary

Mennonite Commission for Christian
Education

Lesson I

Historical Backgrounds

With Malachi the prophetic gift ceased, and not again until the Baptist appeared in the desert did a prophet arise to give messages to the people of God. The significance of this fact will be appreciated when it is seen that from Moses to Malachi there was not a generation in which there was not a prophet in Israel. When we recall that within these same limits of time the books of the Old Testament were written, it becomes clear that the prophetic gift is bound up warp and woof with the giving of the Scriptures. The possession of this gift was the proof that God was giving a revelation to His people. To the people living during these four centuries the Scriptures (the Old Testament) were a completed book. If they understood their Book, however, they had reasons for believing that in the fullness of time prophets should again arise, especially the great Prophet concerning whom Moses and the prophets wrote.

This does not mean that the years between Malachi and the New Testament are unimportant. In this period many developments took place which changed the character of the Jewish nation. For example, one does not read of Pharisees and Sadducees in the Old Testament, but they are important groups in the time of Jesus. Concepts concerning the resurrection, angels, heaven, and hell which are familiar to the readers of the New Testament seem to have undergone a good bit of development during this inter-testament period. Probably the most important development in belief took place in the area of Messianic expectations. Because of this it is important to spend a lesson reviewing this period.

II. Political History

During this entire period the Jews were under the control of foreign powers with the exception of the brief time in which the Maccabean priest-kings maintained independence. The Persians held control until they were defeated by Alexander of Macedon in 334 B.C. During this period the Samar-

itans set up their worship at Mount Gerizim which attracted a great number of priests and other Jews from Jerusalem. The rival worship thus established became a breach between Jew and Samaritan as is clearly manifest in the New Testament. John 4:9. Alexander treated the Jews with extraordinary favor, but his untimely death resulted in Palestine's passing over to Syrian rule. In 320 B.C. Ptolemy Soter of Egypt wrested the country from Syria and held sway, except for occasional brief periods, until 198 B.C. It was during the period of Egyptian domination, probably from 250 to 150 B.C., that the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from the Hebrew into the Greek language. This translation is known as the Septuagint, and became the commonly used Bible in Christ's day. One reason for the differences between New Testament quotations from the Old Testament and their renderings in the Old Testament is that many of them are from the Septuagint which does not always agree exactly with today's Hebrew text.

The cruelty of Ptolemy Philopator drove the Jews to seek the protection of Antiochus the Great of Syria, who wrested Palestine from Egypt in 198 B.C. At first the Syrian kings were well disposed toward the Jews but under Antiochus IV who called himself Epiphanes, meaning "the Illustrious One upon Earth," the Jews were compelled to undergo the greatest sufferings and religious insults. In fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (9:27) he plundered Jerusalem and the temple by means of every kind of cruelty and profanation, and slew or enslaved great numbers of the inhabitants (170 B.C.). The Jews called him Epimanes which meant "madman." For three and a half years the Jews were altogether deprived of their civil and religious liberties. The daily sacrifice was prohibited, and upon the great altar of burnt offering a small altar to Jupiter Capitolinus was erected. The worst desecration took place when a pig was offered upon the great altar. The observance of the law was forbidden under the severest penalties; every copy of the sacred writings which could be seized was burned; and the people were required, under pain of death, to join in heathen worship and to eat swine's flesh. Thus when Christ spoke of the coming abomination of desolation the disciples at once knew what it would bring upon the beloved city. Matt. 24:15; Luke 21:20-24.

Mattathias, an aged priest living in the hill country of Judah, refused to obey the orders of Antiochus and with his five sons raised the standard of revolt. His most notable son, Judas Maccabaeus, led a successful guerrilla campaign against the Syrian forces. After several years of fighting, he recaptured Jerusalem, purified the temple, and restored the sacrifice. He instituted the Feast of Dedication to commemorate this cleansing of the temple. The history of the small independent Jewish state is complex and we need not go into it in detail. It was during this period, however, that changes were made in the office and duty of the high priest. This explains why he did not hold office for life during the time of Jesus as he had in Old Testament times. It was during this time also that the Pharisees and Sadducees became distinct religious and cultural groups.

The independence thus gained lasted until Pompey took Jerusalem in 63 B.C. From this time on throughout the entire period of New Testament history Palestine was under Roman control. In 40 B.C. the Roman Senate appointed Herod king of Palestine. He was an exceedingly wicked man but at the same time highly talented. In 18 B.C., in order to gain the favor of the Jews, he began to rebuild the temple. In the early part of Christ's ministry, this temple had already been "forty and six years . . . in building" (John 2:20), and was not completed till A.D. 64. This is the Herod who slaughtered the babes of Bethlehem, from which atrocities Joseph and Mary escaped with the infant Jesus. Herod died during their sojourn in Egypt.

At the death of Herod the Great, the kingdom was divided among his sons. Archelaus was given Judea, and Herod Antipas was made king in Galilee. This is the Herod who commanded John the Baptist to be put to death. Archelaus was so cruel and unjust that the Roman government removed him. From A.D. 6 on to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Judea (including Samaria) was ruled by governors called procurators who were directly responsible to Caesar. Pilate was the fifth of these procurators. The bad administration of these officials kept the people in constant discontent. The land was overpopulated and there was a growing food shortage; further, the taxes were extremely heavy and unfair. The tax collectors

(publicans) were hated and were considered disloyal to their country. There was great disparity between the rich and the poor, and in some cases the poor were practically slaves of the rich. Men like Judas the Galilean claimed to be political messiahs and led revolts against Rome. One can sense in the pages of the New Testament how tense the situation was. In A.D. 66 open warfare broke out which raged until the fall of Jerusalem.

This history shows how sadly the Jews were mistaken when they argued with Christ that they "were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). It also helps us to understand a little more clearly the subdued passions of the Jews, who ordinarily did not risk to give expression to their feelings before the Roman authorities. However, these suppressed feelings broke forth at times and eventually led to one of the most horrible wars of history.

The origin of the Sanhedrin is not completely clear, but the term itself, which is a Greek word meaning senate, probably came into use during the time when Judah was an independent state. In the New Testament era the Sanhedrin was controlled by the high priest who belonged to the Sadducaic party, but most of its members were Pharisees. It functioned as a judicial and administrative body in the area of religious regulations, and under the procurators it exercised extensive political as well as religious authority in local affairs.

III. Religious History

The troublous political history was the outgrowth of a weakened spiritual condition among the Jews. With no prophets in their midst, genuine spirituality was at a low ebb.

Possibly the most outstanding religious effect of the captivity was the fact that the nation was purged of its idolatrous worship. Before their deportation to Babylon, in spite of all the efforts of fearless prophets and good kings, the people drifted from the worship of the true and living God to that of idols made of wood and stone. Possibly, on account of their being deprived of the temple and its worship, and the observation of the degrading heathen practices of the Babylonians they were led to recognize their sin. Whatever was the cause, from this time on there was no tendency to idolatry.

1. Hellenism and the Rise of the Pharisaic Party. New reli-

gious perils arose, however. Alexander had spread Grecian culture and religion far and wide in his conquest of the Persian empire. The fusion of Grecian and Asian culture which followed was called Hellenism, and was essentially materialistic and secularistic from the Jewish point of view. Great stress was laid on the glory of man, the cultivation of his body and mind. Egypt was dominated by this culture, and it was only natural that she would try to spread her own ideals and concepts into her territories. Through her economic and political contacts she sought to Hellenize Judea. Then under Antiochus IV, the Syrian despot, this policy of peaceful infiltration was changed to one of forceful aggression. During this period, many Jews changed their names so that they would be Grecian in form. One of the high priests, for example, called himself Jason. Gymnasiums were built in Judea and the young men from wealthy families trained themselves in the Greek sports. Greek drama and architecture became popular. All this presented a real threat to the purity of the Jewish religion, and it was in protest against this that the Pharisaic party had its rise. In its very earliest stages it was a protest of the common people against this cultural and religious adaptation of the oppressive aristocracy.

The word "Pharisee" itself probably meant Separatist, and represented a legitimate reaction against what we today would call worldliness. But over the years the Pharisees became a proud, legalistic, and self-righteous group of nationalists. Indeed, in the New Testament one finds very little that is praiseworthy in this group. In *The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible* the following characterization of the Pharisees is given:

"Separateness was in truth essential to the Pharisaic ideal of the religious life. The law as expounded by the scribes was so elaborate, that to keep it perfectly was beyond the power of the average Jew. The Pharisees were the men who gathered around the scribes, accepted their teaching, and made it the chief business of their lives to reduce it to practice. 'It was,' says Dean Stanley, 'a matter both of principle and policy to multiply the external signs by which they were distinguished from the Gentile world or from those of their own countrymen who approached towards it. Tassels on their dress; scrolls and small leather boxes fastened on forehead, head, and neck,

inscribed with texts of the law; long prayers offered as they stood in public places; rigorous abstinence; constant immersions—these were the sacramental badges by which they hedged themselves round.' Yet it must not be supposed that the thoughts and lives of the Pharisees were wholly devoted to external ordinances. It is important to remember that they did much to keep alive expectation of the approaching coming of the Messiah; that they emphasized, if they often distorted, the truth that God would reward obedience to the law, and comforted those who suffered in its vindication with the assurance of the recompense of the life eternal, while they warned the wicked of an eternity of retribution in the life to come. Of all the Jewish sects, the Pharisees, though not the most numerous, were the most prominent, the most popular, and the most truly national in spirit. Patriotism was the point from which they started; the restoration of the divine rule was their object, but since Pharisaism did not measure men by the heart, but only by external performance, it was sternly denounced by our Lord, and amongst its exponents were His bitterest enemies."

2. The Sadducees. The great rival party of the Pharisees was the Sadducees. They took a much more tolerant attitude toward Hellenistic culture. They claimed to be the true righteous ones and laid more stress on the moral than on the ceremonial law. They poked fun at the Pharisees saying that they would cleanse the sun if they could. The Cyclopedic Handbook comments as follows regarding the Sadducees: "They denied the authority of tradition, and regarded with suspicion all revelations made later than Moses. They objected to all development of divine truth, even of such truth as was plainly implied in the Pentateuch, so that they often misunderstood the very books they professed to receive. On this ground they denied the doctrines of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul." They also denied the existence of angels and spirits. o the Messianic hope they were profoundly indifferent. The Sadducees were mostly persons of high position and wealth."

3. The Scribes. We wish also to mention the scribes, who constituted a learned profession and not a sect, and whose duty it was to copy and explain the law. "Slavish dependence

on precedent and authority was the characteristic of their teaching; hence the marked contrast between their teaching and that of our Lord" (Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible). Religiously they favored the Pharisees, though all sects had their friends in the profession.

4. The Dispersion. There were more Jews living outside of Palestine than in Palestine. Many had remained in Babylon. Many thousands of others had migrated to Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, and Italy for one reason or another. The colonies in Babylon were old and prosperous. They had a long and scholarly tradition, and in many respects were considered socially and culturally equal with the Palestinian Jews. But the great dispersion into the West—Alexandria, Rome, Corinth, Antioch, Tarsus, etc.—was looked down upon as inferior to the "Hebrews." Most of the Jews in the western dispersion spoke Greek rather than Aramaic. They used the Greek translation of the Old Testament in their synagogues. But it was these Jews in the western part of the empire that had a great deal to do with the spread of Christianity. Paul himself was from one of the great cities of Asia Minor, and Apollos, the great evangelist, was a Jewish Christian from Alexandria in Egypt. It was a large group of these people who heard "everyone in his own tongue" on the day of Pentecost. And the books of James and I Peter are addressed to "the dispersion."

5. The Synagogue. Closely associated with the scribes, as an institution of instruction of the people in the law, was the synagogue. It seems to have had its origin in the time of the Babylonian captivity when the Jews were deprived of worship at the temple. After the exile, however, synagogues sprang up everywhere. Wherever ten heads of families could be found, a synagogue would be established. The synagogues were not designed to be places of sacrifice

Jerusalem with its magnificent temple remained the throbbing heart of Judaism. Every year thousands of pilgrims thronged its sacred precincts to keep the sacred feasts and sacrifice to Jehovah.

6. The Torah or Law. So much is said about the law in the Gospels and in the epistles that we do well to examine the historical background of this term. The Torah or law, of

course, referred first of all to the Pentateuch or the law of Moses. However, the rabbis had built up an elaborate interpretation of the written law which they claimed had been handed down from Moses himself in an oral tradition. This oral law is referred to in the Gospels as "the tradition of the elders." The Pharisees laid great stress upon the oral law, sometimes exalting it above the written law. Actually the oral tradition is the product of Babylonian Jewish rabbis and is an attempt to adapt and apply the Mosaic code to the many new conditions which the Jews faced in their new environment. For example, the rabbis tried to define what work on the Sabbath meant. In this case as in many others they went to such absurd lengths with their legalities that they even refused to allow a good deed such as healing on the Sabbath.

When Paul uses the term "law" in his epistles, he often has this legalistic, pharisaical interpretation of the law in mind. He saw that many of the Jews were trusting in their own ability to keep the six hundred plus commandments of the oral tradition for salvation. It is this law he refers to in Philippians 3 when he says, ". . . as to righteousness under the law [I was] blameless."

Questions

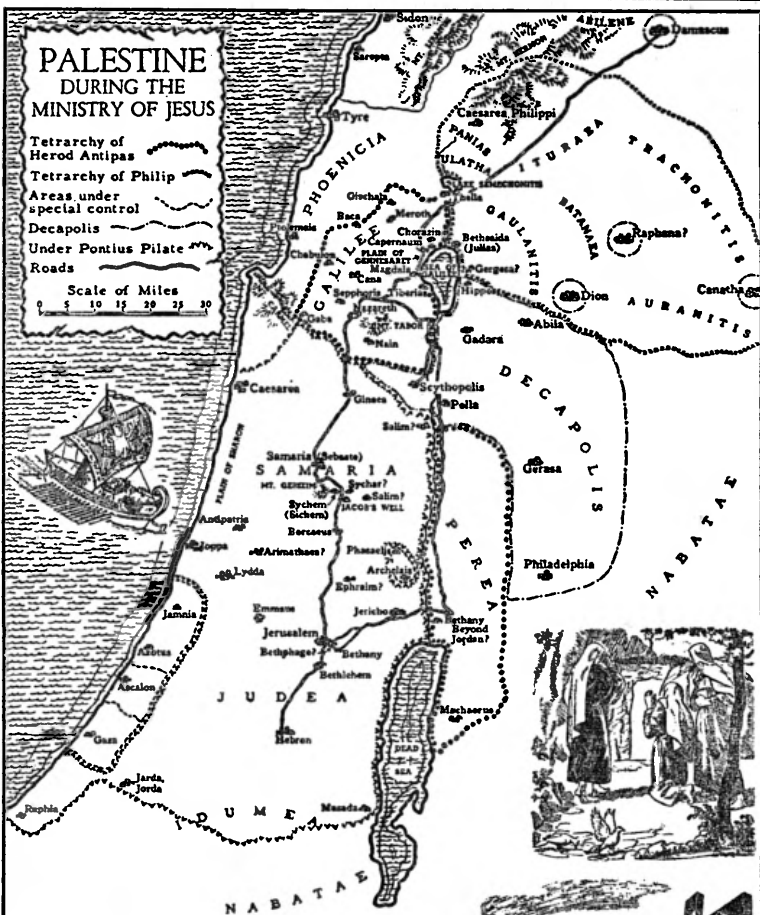
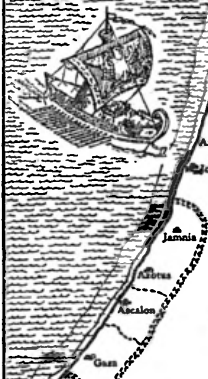
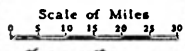
(For Review and Discussion)

1. What is the significance of the fact that for four hundred years there was no prophet among the Jews?
2. Name the countries to which the Jews were subject from the time of the return from captivity to the birth of Christ.
3. What important translation of the Old Testament was made during this period? From what language and into what language was this translation made?
4. Describe the awful period of Antiochus Epiphanes' reign.
5. Name one good act and one evil of King Herod.
6. What was probably the most outstanding religious effect of the Babylonian captivity upon the Jews?
7. Describe the Pharisees, noting their general attitude toward religion and stating some of the peculiarities of this sect.

8. Who were the Sadducees? How did they differ from the Pharisees?
9. When did the synagogues arise, and what was their purpose?
10. What is the relation of the Torah and the tradition of the elders?

PALESTINE DURING THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

- Tetrarchy of Herod Antipas
- Tetrarchy of Philip
- Areas under special control
- Decapolis
- Under Pontius Pilate
- Roads



Lesson II

How the New Testament Was Formed

I. Introduction

Our English word "testament" represents the Latin word **testamentum** which in turn is a translation of the Greek **diatheke**. **Diatheke** means covenant or agreement. In this case it is a covenant between God and man, and the **New Covenant** in Christ supersedes the Old Covenant which was given through Moses. However, the New Testament stands in the closest relationship to the Old. Jesus said that He had not come to destroy, but to fulfill the Old Covenant. He gave us its true interpretation, completed its meaning, and fulfilled its promises.

II. The New Prophetic Period. From John the Baptist to the Death of the Apostle John

With the Baptist began a new line of prophets or, as we might put it, the prophetic line which was broken with Malachi was again resumed in the forerunner of the Christ. Concerning his office, Christ said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John" (Luke 7:28). "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 11:13, 14). "Elias is come already, and they knew him not" (Matt. 17:12). Thus Christ not only places the Baptist in the class of the Old Testament prophets, but as the greatest among them. This reappearance of the prophetic gift prepared the people to believe that God was about to give a new, written revelation which should take its place with the old as an infallible and authoritative standard.

In Jesus Christ "the prophetic office reached its highest stage of development, as He stood in a more intimate relation than any other being to His heavenly Father and spoke His Word entirely at all times." He Himself claimed to be the prophet concerning whom Moses wrote in the law. He was designed and appointed by the Father. His intimate knowl-

edge of God, the qualities of His teaching, and His authority—these all peculiarly fitted Christ to be the Revealer of God.

In the New Testament church prophets were also found. Thus Agabus on two occasions prophesied respectively concerning a coming famine and of the sufferings that would befall Paul in Jerusalem. In the church at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers through whom the missionary labors of Paul and Barnabas were instigated. The daughters of Philip possessed the gift of prophecy. Paul himself had this gift, and makes mention of it in his epistles.

It does not surprise us then, that, when a new body of inspired writings appeared, there was no problem on the part of the early Christians to receive and accept them as being in every sense Scripture given by inspiration of God as was the Old Testament. When we pass from the age of the apostles to that immediately succeeding it, we find that the church experienced little difficulty in distinguishing between the inspired and authoritative writings of the New Testament, on the one hand, and those of other Christian writers, whose productions were profitable and instructive, yet not infallible and authoritative. The church was conscious that the prophetic gift in its technical sense had ceased at the close of the apostolic period.

III. General Survey of the Period

As contrasted with the time covered by the Old Testament books the New Testament era was very brief. The former covered a period of history measuring thousands of years and a period of writing extending about eight hundred years (a thousand if the Exodus is to be dated 1440 B.C.), while the history and period of writing in the New Testament is confined to a single century, the greater part having been written within two decades.

The history of the period naturally falls into two divisions: (1) the life of Christ; (2) the founding and early expansion of the church. Concerning the first the greater part of the record is concerned with the brief period of the three-year ministry of Christ, one third of the account being occupied with our Saviour's passion.

The second division easily falls into two parts. The first deals with the account of the founding of the church in Jeru-

salem, Judea, and Samaria; the second, with the record of Paul's missionary labors.

It should be noted that the time of the writing of the New Testament books, with the exception of the books of John, falls into the last-named subdivision, the time of Paul's missionary labors. This means that the great fundamental events of New Testament history, such as the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit, occurred before the books were written. This order, that is, the great supernatural workings of God in history preceding the explanation of them in written records, is very significant. God first acts in supernatural interventions in history and then He speaks, interpreting these events.

IV. The Appearance of the New Testament Literature

The order of the books in the New Testament is not that in which they were written. It would be advantageous to a thorough study of the New Testament to take up the books in the order of their appearance. This procedure may not be advisable in this course, but the lessons to be gained by such a method should not be ignored.

In the table on the following page, the books of the New Testament are arranged in chronological order. With this table before you, note what it suggests as to the relations of the books one to another. The writings of Paul are prominent throughout nearly the entire list. When Paul passes out of view at the close of the seventh decade, John fills the time to the end of the century.

With reference to the grouping of the books, observe the first light of the early dawn of New Testament literature in the Epistle of James. The atmosphere of this letter is that of the early days of the church. Following the Epistle of James is a long series of Paul's epistles—from Thessalonians to Romans. The first Gospels appear at the beginning of the seventh decade. Events in the church, such as the imprisonment of Paul, as well as the contents of these books, seem to justify classifying this group of books as belonging to the period of beginnings.

What may be called the central period of New Testament literature is now introduced with the central body of Paul's

epistles followed by a sequence of histories and epistles deeply imbued (with the exception of Jude) with the Pauline spirit.

With First Timothy the closing period of New Testament books is begun, having the common feature of being the leaving-taking of the apostles from the church. These writings form the legacy of Paul, of Peter, and of John, respectively, to the church.

A closer study will reveal lines of development running through the sequence of writings. Herein lies one of the chief values of the table. The first period deals with the problems of the primitive faith, when the church was grappling with the perplexing questions relating to the transition from Judaism to Christianity. With the foundations laid, the second period advances to the weightier problems of the doctrines of the person of Christ and His relation to the church. An account

Book	Year	Period	Literature	Church
James	45	Dawn	The Beginnings of Apostolic Literature	The Founding of the Church
I Thessalonians	52	First Pauline Period		
II Thessalonians	53			
Galatians	57			
I Corinthians	57			
II Corinthians	57			
Romans	58			
Matthew	c60	First	Central Pauline Period	The Establishing of the Church
Luke	c60	Gospels		
Colossians	62	Central Pauline Period	The Central Period of Apostolic Literature	
Ephesians	62			
Philemon	62			
Philippians	63			
Acts	c63	Paul's Legacy	The Closing of Apostolic Literature	The Leaving of the Church
Hebrews	c64			
I Peter	c64			
Jude	c66			
I Timothy	c66			
Titus	67	Peter's Legacy	The Closing of Apostolic Literature	The Leaving of the Church
II Timothy	67			
II Peter	68	John's Legacy	The Closing of Apostolic Literature	The Leaving of the Church
Mark	c68			
John	c90	John's Legacy	The Closing of Apostolic Literature	The Leaving of the Church
I John	c90			
II John	c90			
III John	c90			
Revelation	c96			

"c" stands for "about" or the approximate date. Hardly any of the remaining dates are absolutely fixed.
—Adapted.

of the history of the church is in order after the foundations are securely laid. The last period is marked by writings which recognize that the church is about to be bereft of her inspired leadership. Both Paul and Peter recognize that their end is near, while John writes out of the mature viewpoint of advanced years. His is the Gospel of the Spirit. The epistles breathe an atmosphere of love and assurance, while the Revelation uncovers to glad eyes the course of the great conflict through time until Christ puts all enemies under His feet and the glories of the final victory are seen. "Only with these is the deposit of faith made complete, the basis of hope impregnable, and the revelation of God's love perfect."

V. The Language of the New Testament

In the fourth century B.C. Alexander the Great from Macedonia made conquest of the world from Greece to India. Alexander had been trained in the Greek culture by the great philosopher, Aristotle, and as he conquered the nations of the Near East, he introduced the Greek language and culture. Thus Greek became a "universal language" and was spoken in every country alongside of the local dialects. When the Romans in turn conquered the world, they used the Greek language also except in the official work of the government. In Palestine where Jesus grew to manhood the local language was Aramaic, a language akin to Hebrew. This explains why they wrote the inscription on the cross in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.

Although Jesus likely knew the Greek, His mother tongue was Aramaic, and it was in Aramaic, not Greek, that He preached and taught. But the New Testament writers did not use the local language of Palestine when they wrote. They used the common language of the people all over the empire. Most if not all the documents included in our New Testament were written outside of Palestine and were meant for a more cosmopolitan audience. This shift from Aramaic to Greek accounts for words like "Talitha cumi" (Mark 5:41) and the words of Jesus from the cross (Matt. 27:46). In each of these cases the authors quote the words of Jesus as He spoke them and then give the interpretation or translation into Greek.

VI. The Text of the New Testament

You have probably wondered if we actually have the original writings of the New Testament today. If one goes to Washington, D.C., he can see in the Library of Congress the original draft of the Declaration of Independence. Does anyone have Paul's original draft of the Book of Romans, or any other book? The answer is no. These letters were written on a paperlike substance called papyrus, and they have long ago been lost. We have only copies of the originals. There are actually many thousands of the copies, but the very earliest ones do not go back beyond A.D. 350. It is possible, however, to know almost for certain what the originals said by making a careful, scientific study of all the copies. We can be sure that we truly have the Word of God today.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What does the word "testament" mean?
2. Name several of the New Testament prophets.
3. Describe Christ's work as a prophet.
4. What did the new prophetic period prepare the people of God for receiving?
5. Into what two periods does New Testament history divide itself? Give the two divisions of the second period.
6. What lessons have you gleaned from the table showing the periods of New Testament literature?
7. How can we tell that Jesus spoke Aramaic?
8. Explain why the New Testament was written in Greek.
9. How old are the earliest copies of the New Testament?

Lesson III

The Fourfold Gospel and Treatment of The Gospel According to Matthew

I. The Fourfold Gospel

The New Testament opens with a fourfold account of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the oldest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament now in existence there was a general heading, **The Gospel**, before the four records, while the separate headings to each ran **According to Matthew**, **According to Mark**, etc. This fact suggests the necessity of the four accounts to a full knowledge of the earthly life of our Lord. There is only one Gospel, but there are four accounts of this Gospel.

The word translated "Gospel" means "good tidings," or "good news." It is the good tidings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as Mark put it. Mark 1:1. The student in the reading of the Gospel records should never allow this all-absorbing thought of "good tidings" to fall into the background.

Dr. Griffith Thomas has set forth very beautifully the fourfold nature of the Gospel record. He says: "There are four records with one purpose, and four pictures of the one Person with four methods of recording impressions of that Person. Matthew may be said to demonstrate, Mark to depict, Luke to declare, John to describe. Matthew is concerned with the coming of a promised Saviour, Mark with the life of a powerful Saviour, Luke with the grace of a perfect Saviour, John with the possession of a personal Saviour. It is probable that no single Gospel could have set forth the fullness and glory of our Lord's person and work."

Each Gospel has a central theme or central purpose. Matthew writes of Christ's Messiahship, Mark is occupied with Christ as the Servant, Luke with the man Christ Jesus, and John with the God who was manifest in the flesh. This statement does not mean that any one of the writers does not comprehend the central themes of the others. In no sense is any one of these accounts one-sided or defective.

The distinctive purpose of each Gospel is quite in harmony with the testimony of tradition that Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jews; Mark, for the Romans; Luke, for the Greeks; and John, for Christians in general.

II. The Synoptic View of Christ Compared with That of the Gospel of John

It is evident upon a little investigation that the four Gospels separate into three and one. The Gospel of John stands alone. "The writer's purpose is not to tell the story of the earthly life of Jesus; it is to interpret Him as 'the Christ, the Son of God' (John 20:31). The discourses expound His relation to the Father and His mission to mankind. In place of teaching by parable and crisp, direct sayings, which all could understand, we find long discourses, mystical in character, and expounding the abstract ideas of life, light, witness, truth, and glory. Familiarity with the facts and persons of the first three Gospels is constantly assumed, and here and there the narratives coincide; but for the most part the incidents are new, selected for the writer's didactic purpose."*

An examination of the first three Gospels reveals a common plan in contrast to John's altogether different treatment. On this account they are known as the Synoptic Gospels, that is, Gospels having a common view. Let us note first the resemblances: (1) A common plan (infancy; the forerunner, baptism, and temptation; ministry in Galilee; passion). (2) A common selection of incidents. If we divide the substance of the synoptics into 89 sections, we find that

Of these there are:

Common to all three	42
Common to Matthew and Mark	12
Common to Mark and Luke	5
Common to Matthew and Luke	14
Peculiar to Matthew	5
Peculiar to Mark	2
Peculiar to Luke	9
	—
	89

* Angus-Green, *The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible*, p. 628.

(3) Similar groups of scenes. For instance, the death of John the Baptist is introduced parenthetically by all three to explain Herod's terror. (4) Verbal agreements, not only in sayings of Jesus, which might be due to tradition, but also in narrative passages. A splendid typical case is found in Matt. 9:2-8 and its parallels Mark 2:3-12 and Luke 5:18-26.

Observe then the differences: (1) Accounts of different events—about 16. (2) Differences in several accounts of the same events. For examples, the order of the temptations in Matthew and in Luke, the blind men at Jericho. (3) Verbal differences.*

The Gospel According to Matthew

Author.—Matthew, one of the twelve apostles. Before becoming a disciple, he was a publican or collector of customs at the important commercial center of Capernaum. In Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 he is called Levi, the name probably used before he became a disciple. The only incidents related of him concern his call and the feast which Jesus attended.

Destination.—The Jews.

Date.—Between A.D. 60 and 70. It seems clear that it was written before the fall of Jerusalem.

Theme and Purpose.—Jesus is the Messiah. "The great object of the apostle was to prove to Jewish readers, that the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament received their accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth; to demonstrate that Jesus had shown Himself by His doctrine and His deeds to be the seed of David, the Messiah long expected by the Jewish nation."** The book thus becomes an exposition of the person and work of the Messiah, and of the kingdom He came to establish.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Descent, Birth, and Infancy of Jesus, 1, 2,
- II. Beginning of His Messianic Work, 3:1—4:11.
- III. The Galilean Ministry, 4:12—15:20.
- IV. Christ's Retirement from Galilee, 15:21—18:35.
- V. His Work in Perea and Judea, 19:1—20:34.
- VI. His Work in Jerusalem, 21:1—25:46.
- VII. His Passion, 26:1—28:20.

Outline (1:1—15:20, for reference and study)

- I. Descent, Birth, and Infancy of Jesus, 1, 2.
- II. Introduction to the Messianic Work of Jesus, 3:1—4:11
 1. The work of John the Baptist, 3:1-12.
 2. The baptism and temptation of Jesus, 3:13—4:11.

* Adapted from Vollmer, *The Modern Student's Life of Christ*, pp. 40, 41.

** Davidson, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 1st Ed., p. 3.

III. The Galilean Ministry of Christ, 4:12—15:20.

1. Opening of the work in Galilee, 4:12-25.
2. The Sermon on the Mount, 5—7.
3. Works of healing, 8:1—9:34.
4. The mission of the apostles, 9:35—10:42.
5. Message of John the Baptist and Jesus' testimony to John, 11:1-30.
6. The opposition of the Pharisees, 12.
7. The parables of the kingdom, and the second rejection at Nazareth, 13.
8. The death of the Baptist, 14:1-12.
9. Feeding of the five thousand, 14:13-21.
10. Jesus retiring for prayer, and walking on water, 14:22-36.
11. The discourses on traditions, 15:1-20.

1. **The Descent, Birth, and Infancy of Jesus, 1, 2.** The genealogies bear strong testimony to the Messianic purpose of the book. By linking Jesus with David and Abraham, strong proof is given that He is the Christ of prophecy.

The account of the birth of Christ not only makes it clear that He is without human father but also that He is the Son of God. It is worth while to notice that the writer takes pains to safeguard the moral character of both Joseph and Mary so that no shadow is cast over the nature of His birth. In a very brief but fundamental way His mission is set forth in His name, Jesus; "for he shall save his people from their sins."

In the visit of the Wise Men we see the homage paid by Gentiles to Israel's King and their longing to appropriate the blessing that He can bestow.

2. **Introduction to the Messianic Work of Jesus, 3:1—4:11.** The forerunner of Christ appeared in the person of the Baptist. He declared that repentance, not birth, is the prerequisite to entrance into the kingdom. The author is careful to link John's work with Isaiah's prophecy concerning it so that Israel would know that their King had come. John stated that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Obedient to every demand of the law, Jesus was baptized. Very significant were the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ and the words from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The sonship of Jesus was thus unmistakably made clear by the Voice from heaven.

Jesus, the man, and new head of the race, must pass

through the same probation that was endured by our first parents. The threefold temptation tested Jesus as to His obedience, faith, and patience, respectively. Especially in the last temptation does the devil's ultimate purpose become clear. He would have Jesus become Satan's Messiah and thus defeat God's plan of redemption.

3. **The Galilean Ministry of Christ, 4:12—15:20.** The choice of disciples is the first step toward the organization of the kingdom of heaven. We gain the impression that its extension will not be through compulsion but through voluntary discipleship.

The Sermon on the Mount has been called the constitution of the kingdom. Study closely the following outline of this great discourse:

Outline of the Sermon on the Mount

Theme: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: ITS SUBJECTS, LAWS, AND PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT.

- I. The Subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven (5:3-16).
 1. Their character and privileges (vv. 3-12).
 2. Their mission in the world (vv. 13-16).
- II. The Relation of Christ's Law to the Old Testament Law (5:17-48).
 1. Christ's law, the fulfillment of the old law (vv. 17-20).
 2. Christ's law inward and spiritual; illustrated by the laws regarding murder, adultery, marriage, oaths, nonresistance, and neighborliness (vv. 21-48).
- III. The Righteousness of the Kingdom (6:1—7:12).
 1. The general principle—to be seen of God, not of men (6:1). Illustrated in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (vv. 2-18).
 2. Right conduct toward God (vv. 19-34).
 - a. Serving both God and mammon impossible (vv. 19-24).
 - b. Trusting God for all needed things a duty (vv. 25-34).
 3. Right conduct toward men (7:1-12).
 - a. Harsh judgments rebuked (vv. 1-6).

- b. Wisdom to judge aright obtained by prayer (vv. 7-11).
- c. Summary of right conduct toward men, the golden rule (v. 12).

IV. Admonitions to Members of the Kingdom (7:13-27).

- 1. To walk in the narrow way (vv. 13, 14).
- 2. Not to be deceived by false teachers (vv. 15-20).
- 3. To build on the rock of obedience to Christ (vv. 21-27).*

Inasmuch as the church is the visible assembly of the kingdom of heaven this sermon contains many foundation principles of the church. This exposes the error of the view that refers the application of this sermon to a future age instead of the present. In contrast with the old law Christ's law is written in the heart. One by one Christ overturns false interpretations of the law and establishes His perfect law. His law requires perfection as the standard for human attainment. It condemns not only sinful acts but also evil thoughts and motives. The incisive words of our Lord speak of two roads only, the broad and the narrow; but the tragedy is found in the fact that only a few find life.**

In the graphic illustration of the two foundations Christ places the responsibility for failure to be saved plainly upon the hearer of His words. It is possible for one to hear His words and not to do them. The spiritual state of such is like the man who built his house upon the sand which, when the rain, floods, and winds worked their devastations, fell in utter ruin.

Israel's Messiah is not only the Teacher; He is also the Healer (chapters 8, 9). In the miracles of healing, bodily cures are typical of spiritual cures. Each incident of healing is a story of the development of faith in Jesus. He leads those in need to put their trust in Him. The disciples' faith is increased, too, as they see even the winds and the sea obeying Him. That this world is the scene of a spiritual conflict is forcibly taught in Jesus' encounters with demons. The Pharisees stumbled at the work of Christ, not being willing to believe His credentials to Deity. Christ gives sufficient answer to their unwarranted charge (9:5, 6). He touches a sore spot in Phari-

* Adapted from Vollmer, *The Modern Student's Life of Christ*, pp. 118, 119.

** See also Lesson VIII, "The Teaching Ministry of Jesus."

saic ethics when He tells them to study the meaning of, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." If Jesus had narrowed Himself down to the Pharisaical interpretation of the law, no doubt the Pharisees would have been willing to receive Him; but when He put His teaching into new forms, and by so doing ignored their traditions, they rejected Him (9:16, 17).

It is noteworthy that the mission of the apostles at this time (10:5, 6) was not to the Gentiles or Samaritans, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This command, coupled with the message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and the authority "to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils," indicate clearly that this period was the time of God's visitation of Israel. The treatment they could expect at the hands of their fellow countrymen would prove the truth of what Christ said on a later occasion, "Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:44). The kingdom was offered to them here, but, alas, they did not receive it.

The differences between Jesus and the Pharisees lead to intense conflict (11-15). The long seclusion of the Baptist, and the failure of Christ to bring immediate judgment upon His enemies and to establish a temporal kingdom, cause problems to loom up in his mind. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus gently shows His forerunner that His conduct corresponds exactly with prophetic descriptions of His work, such as Isa. 29:18; 35: 4-6; 42:7. To the multitudes, on the other hand, Jesus declares, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come," and by these words makes claim to the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 4:5). So blinded do the Pharisees become in their unbelief that they accuse Christ of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Christ shows how ridiculous it is to think of Satan casting out Satan, and asserts the true explanation of His work. The fact that devils are being cast out is proof that the kingdom of God is come unto them. He had bound the strong man of the house, the devil, so He can spoil his house. In this language there seems to be a reference to Christ's conflict with the devil in the temptation. One supreme sign, His own death and resurrection, was to be given to that generation, and on account of this sign the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will condemn it.

This unbelief on the part of the Pharisees becomes the occasion for Christ to introduce a new method of teaching, one designed to reveal to believers the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to those who are unwilling to see and hear and turn from sin, this new method only intensifies their unbelief.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Why has the Holy Spirit given us a fourfold Gospel?
2. How does John's Gospel differ from the other three Gospels?
3. Point out some resemblances and some differences among the Synoptic Gospels.
4. State the theme and purpose of the Gospel of Matthew.
5. What part of this Gospel is devoted to the Galilean ministry? To the events of Passion Week?
6. Can you tell why Matthew begins Christ's genealogy with Abraham instead of with God as Luke did?
7. Name the major discourses of Jesus as recorded in this Gospel. What is the leading thought of each?
8. Into how many groups do the parables, recorded in this Gospel, fall? The miracles?
9. What lessons did Jesus aim to teach through the performance of miracles?

Lesson IV

The Gospel According to Matthew (Continued)

Outline, continued (15:21-28, for reference and study)

- IV. Christ's Retirement from the Work in Galilee, 15:21—18:35.
 - 1. Healing of the Syrophenician woman's daughter, 15:21-28.
 - 2. The return to Galilee and the feeding of the four thousand, 15:29-39.
 - 3. The Pharisees and Sadducees seek a sign, 16:1-12.
 - 4. Peter's confession and Christ's first announcement of His passion, 16:13-28.
 - 5. The transfiguration, healing of the demoniac boy, second announcement of His passion, and the temple tax, 17.
 - 6. Jesus' teaching concerning the spirit of discipleship, 18.
- V. Christ's Work in Perea and Judea, 19:1—20:34.
 - 1. The departure from Galilee and the question about divorce, 19:1-12.
 - 2. Jesus and the little children, the peril of riches, and the reward of self-sacrifice, 19:13-30.
 - 3. The laborers in the vineyard, 20:1-16.
 - 4. Third announcement of His passion, and the request of the mother of Zebedee's children, 20:17-28.
 - 5. The two blind men at Jericho healed, 20:29-34.
- VI. Christ's Work in Jerusalem, 21:1—25:46.
 - 1. The triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, and cursing the fig tree, 21:1-22.
 - 2. Jesus' last controversy with the rulers, 21:23—23:39.
 - 3. The Olivet discourse, 24, 25.
- VII. The Passion of Jesus, 26.
 - 1. The anointing at Bethany and the institution of the Lord's Supper, 26:1-35.
 - 2. The agony in the garden and the betrayal, 26:36-56.
 - 3. The trial and the crucifixion, 26:57—27:66.
- VIII. The Resurrection and the Appearances, 28.

In the last lesson we saw how Jesus' activities led Him into intense conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. They were so concerned about their traditions that they would not accept the teaching of Jesus even though He demonstrated the power of God in His miracles. Their stubbornness led Jesus to denounce them openly, but in order to avoid further in-

cidents He withdrew with His disciples from Galilee for the time being. We take up the story at this point.

4. Christ's Retirement from Work in Galilee, 15:21—18:35.

Once beyond the borders of Israel, Jesus responds to the faith of a Gentile woman. Matthew depicts the faith of this Canaanite, placing it in sharp contrast to the unbelief of the Pharisees who were considered the cream of Judaism. The act foreshadowed the participation of the Gentiles in the blessings of the kingdom. Also in contrast to the unbelief of the Jewish leaders, the needy multitudes still followed Jesus. Jesus' compassion for the multitudes on His return to the regions of Galilee is very evident.

After this, Jesus seems to turn His attention more and more to His disciples. In the context of His retirement with His disciples, Matthew initiates us into the mystery of Jesus' person and work. In answer to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter strikingly asserts his faith in the words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To this Christ replies, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." With these words Christ identifies Himself with the purpose of God to call a people unto Himself as it was enunciated in the Old Testament. The idea of the church was not a new one, for the Jews were familiar with the Old Testament church (cf. Acts 7:38). The word *ekklesia* which is here translated church was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *kahal*. *Kahal* designated the children of Israel as God's congregation, God's gathered people.

This context brings into close relationship two great concepts, the church and the kingdom of heaven. Though they are not identical, they bear a vital relationship the one to the other. Just as the church in the wilderness constituted the people of God under the Mosaic covenant in the Old Testament theocracy, so the New Testament church constitutes the body of Christ under the New Covenant in the kingdom. The church is the assembly of His people while the mode of His rule is that of a kingdom.

When the disciples thought of God's kingdom, they could think only of Jesus as the Messiah who would reign victoriously in that kingdom. They expected Him to lead a great revolt and vanquish the pagan hosts that ruled Jerusalem. But

immediately after Peter had confessed Him to be the Messiah, Jesus began to tell them that His was the way of suffering and a cross, not victory and a throne. This same pattern of revelation is seen also in the transfiguration. Jesus is manifested as the beloved Son of God, and in the very context of His glory He again announces His coming death. The cross comes nearer and nearer.

Valuable for the church is the teaching of chapter 18. When the disciples inquire, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus teaches a forcible lesson of humility as a prerequisite for entering this kingdom. Jesus also lays down a method of adjusting differences in the church and shows the necessity of the spirit of forgiveness on the part of His followers.

5. Christ's Work in Perea and Judea, 19:1—20:34. This Gospel gives very brief notice to a ministry which in Luke occupies almost ten chapters. Here Jesus places His stamp of approval on the original order of marriage (19:3-12). He takes the visit of the rich young ruler whose heart is tied to his material possessions and worldly values as a springboard for warning against the danger of putting riches ahead of the kingdom. Evidently Peter shared the popular concept of his day that material prosperity was the reward for serving God. Jesus assures His disciples that they will have not wealth, but persecutions in this life, but in the life to come they will reign with Him. The pattern of their life will be like His own. He left all to do the Father's will. They, too, must forsake all. He will sit upon a throne as judge in the life to come. They are assured of the right to share with Him the judgment of Israel in the "regeneration" (which means re-creation), and of inheriting eternal life.

6. Christ's Work in Jerusalem, 21:1—25:46. In the triumphal entry (Sunday) Christ lays public claim to being Israel's Messiah, and in harmony with this claim He again cleanses His house (Monday). Then ensues the final controversy with the Jews (Tuesday). They question His authority, and by three parables (21:28—22:14) He answers them. The Herodians, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, each in turn, attempt to ensnare Him, but in each case their mouths are stopped. Then Christ's question compels them either to acknowledge

Him as God or to reject their Scriptures. Never was more cutting language used than in Christ's denunciation of the Pharisees (23). Because of unbelief their house is left desolate. They shall not see Him henceforth till they shall say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

As Jesus left Jerusalem on Tuesday afternoon after His dispute with the unbelieving Jewish leaders, He paused on the Mount of Olives to tell His disciples of the coming judgments upon Israel because of unbelief. He told them also how men would continue to reject the Gospel and would persecute His disciples. The Discourse on the Last Things shows the course of the world until Christ's return, gives warnings to be ready for His coming, and describes the judgment that shall take place at His return.

7. The Passion of Jesus, 26, 27. The activities of Jesus on Wednesday of Passion Week seem to have been passed over by all of the Gospel writers. The Jewish authorities, however, can bear His perfect life no longer. Hence they plot to get rid of the life which condemns them. Judas, finding himself more in harmony with Christ's enemies than with his Master, stoops to the treachery of selling his Lord and makes an agreement to betray Him at some opportune time.

The Passover is eaten by Christ and His disciples (Thursday), at which time the symbol of the new covenant, the Lord's Supper, is given. Peter, on being warned of his denial, loudly acclaims fidelity to his Lord. Then follows the hours of agony in the garden where the greatest battle ever was fought and won. In rapid succession follow the betrayal and arrest. The trials before the Jewish court and the Roman tribunal could not save the Just One from being condemned. So wicked is the human heart that the God-man must die in the class with the worst criminals. The rending of the veil of the temple signifies the removal of the separation between God and the people. It marks the passing of the Old Covenant and the institution of the New. With a deep sense of guilt but an unrepentant heart they seal the tomb to make impossible any stealing of the body, but this very act gives validity to our belief in the resurrection because these same murderers must account for the empty tomb.

8. The Resurrection and Appearances, 28. "He is not here :

for he is risen." And then the words of the Lord, "All hail." Let those who have given themselves over to blind unbelief pay large sums to destroy the evidence so as to ease their smiting consciences, but let us rejoice in a risen Christ who is able to speak peace to the soul. If our Christian experience is real, then Christ is living.

A further revelation is given concerning Christ's authority. Before His passion He was a man among men with duties to the Father as other men in obedience, faith, and trust. Now He is clothed with all power (Greek, authority) in heaven and on earth (cf. Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9, 10). With this authority Christ sends forth the Twelve with the commission to make disciples of all nations. The specialized task of ministering to a chosen people, to which Abraham and his descendants were called, is now completed, and the Priest-king after the order of Melchizedek, like His noble predecessor, Melchizedek, ministers to mankind in general. This explains the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham, the former ministering to mankind in general, while the latter only to his own. And so Christ in His capacity as Priest-king (Zech. 6:13) now enters upon that work and gives the command to His own followers to evangelize the world, promising to them His personal presence until the end of the age.

Distinctive Characteristics of the Gospel of Matthew

Characteristic phrases and expressions.

1. **Kingdom of heaven**, occurring thirty-three times; **that it might be fulfilled**, occurring seventeen times; **our heavenly Father** or **Father in heaven**, occurring about twenty-two times; **son of David**, occurring eight times; **Lo! behold**, about sixty times; the particle of transition, **tote** (usually translated **then**), rare in the other Gospels but occurring ninety times in this.

2. Exclusive use of expression **kingdom of heaven** where other writers use **kingdom of God**, the latter occurring only four times (6:33; 12:28; 21:31, 43).

3. Frequency of quotation from the Old Testament, sixty-five references to it, of which forty-three are verbal citations.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Why did the leaders of the Jews reject Jesus?
2. What is Matthew's purpose in telling the story of the transfiguration?
3. What kind of Messiah did the disciples expect?
4. How did Jesus try to correct their ideas? And what kind of Messiah did He claim to be?
5. What is the purpose of the teaching of Jesus in chapter 24?
6. Make an outline of the events of Passion Week.
7. What are some of the leading lessons to be gained from a study of this Gospel?
8. What are some of the distinctive characteristics of this Gospel?

Lesson V

The Gospel According to Mark

Author.—John Mark.

John is his Jewish name, while Mark is his Roman name. He was the son of Mary (Acts 12:12) and a "cousin" to Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

Peter affectionately calls him his son, either as one converted through his personal influence or as an expression of endearment. The home of Mark's mother was a resort for Christians and offered Mark opportunity for acquaintance with the leaders of the apostolic church.

When Paul and Barnabas were sent on their first missionary tour, John Mark was chosen to accompany them as minister or teacher. For some unnamed reason Mark left the work at Perga; and two years later when Paul and Barnabas were leaving for the second missionary tour, the great apostle refused to take Mark along. After eleven years John Mark is found at Rome with Paul and considered by him a "fellow worker" and a comfort to Paul. Still later John Mark is found in Babylon with Peter, after which he returns to Asia Minor. On one occasion Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark with him. Paul's final tribute to John Mark is that he is useful to him for ministering.

Destination.—The Romans.

Date.—Between A.D. 62 and 68, probably A.D. 68.

The time of writing is a difficult matter to determine. Some authors, believing that Mark's is the first Gospel record, hold to an earlier date, possibly during the sixth decade. If, however, Mark wrote on the authority of Peter, and Peter's statement in II Pet. 1:15 is the promise of a Gospel, we may properly date the book after Peter's death, A.D. 67, and before the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

Theme and Purpose.—Jesus is the "Servant of the Lord," the worker of mighty wonders.

That Mark was associated with Peter in his work and wrote a Gospel is attested to by several of the church fathers. These testimonies show that the viewpoint of the Gospel is that of Peter. Mark had in mind the practical-minded Romans who were interested first of all in Christ as the mighty worker and then also in His teachings. A study of the book seems to show that this Gospel aims to present Christ as the fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction with reference to Jehovah's Servant, the "Branch" (Zech. 3:8).

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus, 1:1-13.
- II. Jesus' Work in Galilee, 1:14—7:23.

III. His Retirement from Galilee, 7:24—9:50.

IV. His Work in Perea and Judea, 10:1-52.

V. His Work in Jerusalem, 11:1—13:37.

VI. His Passion, 14:1—16:20.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus, 1:1-13.
 1. The work of John the Baptist, 1:1-8.
 2. The baptism and temptation of Jesus, 1:9-13.
- II. The Messianic Work of Jesus in Galilee, 1:14—7:23.
 1. Early ministry of preaching and healing, 1:14-45.
 - a. The Gospel message, 1:14, 15.
 - b. The first disciples, 1:16-20.
 - c. Works of healing, 1:21-34.
 - d. A preaching tour, 1:35-39.
 2. Early opposition, 2:1—3:6.
 - a. Healing of a paralytic, 2:1-12.
 - b. The call of Levi, 2:13-22.
 - c. The Sabbath controversy, 2:23—3:6.
 3. Extension of work and increasing opposition, 3:7—7:23.
 - a. Popular interest in Jesus' work, 3:7-12.
 - b. Appointment of the apostles, 3:13-19.
 - c. The Beelzebub charge, 3:20-30.
 - d. Interruption by family, 3:31-35.
 - e. The kingdom parables, 4:1-34.
 - f. The miracles, 4:35—5:43.
 - g. The rejection at Nazareth, 6:1-6.
 - h. The mission of the apostles, 6:7-13.
 - i. Herod's inquiry, and death of John the Baptist, 6:14-29.
 - j. Return of the apostles and feeding of the five thousand, 6:30-44.
 - k. Walking on the water, 6:45-56.
 - l. The denunciation of the Pharisees and scribes, 7:1-23.
- III. Jesus' Retirement from Work in Galilee, 7:24—9:50.
 1. Healing of the Syrophenician's daughter in the borders of Tyre and Sidon, 7:24-30.
 2. Return to Galilee and healing of a deaf-mute in Decapolis, 7:31-37.
 3. Feeding of the four thousand, 8:1-10.
 4. The Pharisees seek a sign, 8:11-21.
 5. Healing of a blind man near Bethsaida, 8:22-26.
 6. Incidents near Caesarea Philippi, 8:27—9:29.
 - a. Peter's confession and Jesus' first announcement of His passion, 8:27—9:1.
 - b. The transfiguration and second announcement of His passion, 9:2-13.
 - c. The healing of a demoniac boy, 9:14-29.
 7. Tour in Galilee and third announcement of His passion, 9:30-32.
 8. Return to Capernaum and teaching concerning the spirit of discipleship, 9:33-50.

IV. Jesus' Work in Perea and Judea, 10.

1. The question of the Pharisees concerning divorce, 10:1-12.
2. Jesus and the little children, 10:13-16.
3. Jesus and the rich young ruler, 10:17-31.
4. The journey to Jerusalem and the fourth announcement of His passion, 10:32-34.
5. The request of James and John, 10:35-45.
6. Healing of Bartimaeus in Jericho, 10:46-52.

V. Jesus' Work in Jerusalem, 11—13.

1. The triumphal entry, 11:1-11.
2. The fig tree, 11:12-14.
3. Cleansing of the temple, 11:15-19.
4. The teaching in the temple, 11:27—12:44.
 - a. The question concerning Jesus' authority and Jesus' inquiry concerning the baptism of John, 11:27-33.
 - b. The parable of the vineyard, 12:1-12.
 - c. Jesus' answers to:
 - (1) The Pharisees and Herodians concerning tribute, 12:13-17.
 - (2) The Sadducees concerning the resurrection, 12:18-27.
 - (3) The scribes concerning the greatest commandment, 12:28-34.
 - d. Jesus' inquiry concerning the Davidic Sonship of the Messiah, 12:35-37.
 - e. Jesus' warning against the scribes, 12:38-40.
 - f. The widow's mite, 12:41-44.
 - g. The discourse on the Mount of Olives, 13:1-37.

VI. The Passion of Jesus, 14—16.

1. The priests and scribes seek Jesus' death, 14:1, 2.
2. Anointing of Jesus in the home of Simon the leper, 14:3-9.
3. The treachery of Judas, 14:10, 11.
4. Preparation for the last Passover, 14:12-16.
5. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal, 14:17-21.
6. The institution of the Lord's Supper, 14:22-25.
7. Announcement of Peter's denial, 14:26-37.
8. The agony in Gethsemane, 14:34-42.
9. The arrest of Jesus and the flight of the disciples, 14:43-52.
10. The trial of Jesus, 14:53—15:15.
11. The suffering, death, and burial of Jesus, 15:16-47.
12. The resurrection and appearances, 16:1-18.
13. The ascension, 16:18, 19.

1. **Mark's Introduction to the Gospel of Jesus.** Unlike the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark does not present an account of the infancy of Jesus. It is remarkable that this evangelist represents the work of the Baptist as the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Only three verses are given to the account of the baptism of Jesus and two to the

temptation. In the latter incident one is struck with a distinctive feature of this writer, his gift as a vivid narrator of events. With but a few strokes he paints the picture of the temptation, but a detail is supplied, not found in Matthew or Luke, in the expression, "And was with the wild beasts" (1:13).

2. The Gospel and the Kingdom of God. In a very unique manner the Gospel and the kingdom of God are brought into relationship. Jesus came "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (1:14, 15). With this language the Gospel of the kingdom of God is represented as being the same as the Gospel. For entrance into the kingdom, repentance and faith are the conditions. Since the Gospel is preached in the present time and since it pertains to the kingdom, the kingdom of God pertains to the present time.

It should be noted in passing that where Matthew uses the expression, "kingdom of heaven," Mark uses the words, "kingdom of God." This should serve as a cue to the meaning of each expression. It leads to the identification of the two.

Mark links the preaching of the kingdom of God with the prophetic Scriptures, by the words, "The time is fulfilled." This leads us to the conclusion that the Gospel is not a detached part of God's Word but is bound up warp and woof with the whole fabric of God's revelation. The Gospel of the kingdom was foreseen and described by the prophets.

3. Details Peculiar to This Gospel. Mark gives many vivid word touches. In addition to that already mentioned in connection with the temptation, the following incidents picked almost at random illustrate the point. In 3:7-12 where Matthew in the parallel (12:15-21) merely states that many followed Christ as He withdrew to the sea, Mark adds that the multitudes came from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon; also that Christ requested "that a small ship wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him." While the parallel mentions only the fact that He healed them all, Mark supplies, "Insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, "Thou art the Son of

God." For other extended illustrations see 6:14-29; 6:30-44; 9:4-29; 12:28-34.

Observe yet some minute particulars: (1) **Names:** That Simon Jesus surnamed Peter (3:16); James and John, Boanerges (3:17); that Bartimaeus was the name of the blind beggar at Jericho (10:46). (2) **Number:** That the herd of swine numbered "about two thousand" (5:13); that the twelve apostles were sent forth, "two by two" (6:7); that before the cock crew twice Peter would thrice deny his Lord (14:30). (3) **Time:** "In the morning, . . . a great while before day" (1:35); "the same day, when evening was come" (4:35); the hour of crucifixion, "the third hour" (15:25). (4) **Place.** "By the sea side" (2:13); a place where two ways met (11:4); "over against the treasury" (12:41).*

4. **Material Peculiar to Mark.** Some more extended portions found only in this Gospel are as follows:

3:21, the fear of His kindred.

4:26-29, the seed growing secretly.

7:31-37, the healing of the deaf and dumb man.

8:22-26, the healing of the blind man.

13:33-37, the householder and the exhortation to watch.

14:51, 52, the young man who narrowly escaped arrest.

5. **Quotations.** In striking contrast with Matthew, who in parallel passages refers to the fulfillment of prophecy, Mark only once (1:2, 3) quotes from the Old Testament. It is a double quotation, however, reference being made to both Malachi and Isaiah while the other Gospels refer to Isaiah only. Mark does, however, represent Jesus as quoting frequently from the Old Testament.

6. **A Book of Mighty Works.** The deeds of Jesus receive greatest recognition in this Gospel. Jesus is a worker of mighty wonders. His life is one of strenuous activity. Mark carries the thread of the narrative on with haste. The words, *eutheos* and *euthus*, meaning *straightway*, are used forty-one times as compared with seven uses in Matthew and one in Luke. The evangelist records nineteen miracles, but only four parables. Of the longer discourses of Jesus, Mark either omits mention entirely, as in the case of the Sermon on the Mount, or ab-

* Adapted from *The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible*, by Angus-Green, p. 643.

breviates them, as in the cases of the kingdom parables (4) and of the Olivet discourse (13).

7. The Worker a Teacher. While Mark stresses the intense activity of Jesus, he is by no means silent about Him as a teacher. Jesus is introduced as He comes into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God. Very frequent mention is made of Him as teaching. In fact, the words for teaching and to teach occur more frequently in Mark's Gospel than in any other. "Striking references are made to His originality, methods, popularity, and peerlessness as a teacher (1:22; 4:11, 33; 11:27—12:37)," says J. H. Farmer. Christ's "works prepare for His words rather than His words for His works."

8. Explanation of Jewish Terms and Customs for Roman Readers. Among other words might be named **Boanerges**, the sons of thunder; **Talitha cumi**, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise; **Corban**, a gift; **Ephphatha**, be opened; and **Abba**, Father. Some Jewish customs that Mark explains are: the Pharisees eating with washed hands, and the "preparation" being the day before the Sabbath.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What is known of the author of the second Gospel?
2. State the theme and purpose of the Gospel of Mark.
3. How does the introduction of Mark's Gospel differ from that of Matthew?
4. Name some details peculiar to the Gospel of Mark.
5. Show how Mark's Gospel is a book of mighty works.
6. Enumerate some characteristics which indicate that the Gospel of Mark was written for people unfamiliar with Jewish terms and customs.

Lesson VI

The Gospel According to Luke

The Author.—Luke, “the beloved physician” and fellow laborer with Paul. His name appears three times in the New Testament: Col. 4:14; Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:11. He was a Gentile, having his home probably in Philippi. He appears first with Paul at Troas on the second missionary journey and accompanies him to Philippi. Paul leaves Luke here and is rejoined by him at this place on the third journey. From this time he is the more or less constant companion of the great apostle, accompanying him to Jerusalem, probably being with him during the two-year imprisonment at Caesarea, and traveling with him to Rome. He was with Paul when he wrote Colossians and Philemon, and his sole companion for a time during Paul’s second imprisonment. He is also the author of the Acts.

Destination.—While the Gospel was written primarily for Theophilus who was likely “a native of Italy and perhaps an inhabitant of Rome,” the appeal is to the Greek mind as representing the Gentile world and suited to commend Jesus as the Saviour of all mankind.

Date.—About A.D. 60, possibly during Paul’s imprisonment at Caesarea. It was written before the Book of Acts, which was written prior to Paul’s death in A.D. 67.

Theme and Purpose.—Jesus is the Saviour of the world. Luke specifically states the purpose “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (1:4). As a companion of the Apostle Paul, Luke sets forth the universal intent of the Gospel.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Preface, 1:1-4.
- II. Infancy and Childhood of John and Jesus, 1:5—2:52.
- III. Beginning of Christ’s Ministry, 3:1—4:13.
- IV. His Work in Galilee, 4:14—9:50.
- V. His Retirement from Galilee: the Perean Ministry, 9:51—19:28.
- VI. His Work in Jerusalem, 19:29—21:38.
- VII. His Passion, 22—24.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Historical Beginning of the Gospel, 1, 2.
 1. The preface, 1:1-4.
 2. Announcements of the birth of John and of Jesus, 1:5-38.
 3. Visit of Mary to Elisabeth and the birth of John, 1:39-80.
 4. Birth of Jesus and visit of the shepherds, 2:1-20.
 5. The circumcision and presentation of Jesus, 2:21-38.
 6. The return of Nazareth and the boyhood of Jesus, 2:39-52.
- II. The Beginning of Christ’s Ministry, 3:1—4:13.
 1. The work of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus, 3:1-22.

2. The genealogy of Jesus, 3:23-38.
 3. The temptation of Jesus, 4:1-13.
- III. The Galilean Ministry of Jesus, 4:14—9:50.
1. Early ministry of preaching and healing, 4:14—5:16.
 - a. Proclamation of the Gospel in Nazareth, 4:14-30.
 - b. Settlement at Capernaum and a preaching tour, 4:31-44.
 - c. A large catch of fish and call of four disciples, 5:1-11.
 - d. Healing of a leper, 5:12-16.
 2. Early opposition, 5:17—6:11.
 - a. Healing a paralytic, 5:17-26.
 - b. Call of Levi, 5:27-39.
 - c. The Sabbath controversy, 6:1-11.
 3. Extension of work and increasing opposition, 6:12—9:50.
 - a. Appointment of the twelve apostles and the sermon on the plain, 6:12-49.
 - b. Healing of a centurion's servant and the raising of the widow's son, 7:1-17.
 - c. Message of John and Jesus' testimony to him, 7:18-35.
 - d. Jesus dining with a Pharisee, 7:36-50.
 - e. A preaching tour and parables of the sower and the lighted candle, 8:1-18.
 - f. Interruption by family, 8:19-21.
 - g. The storm on the lake and the demoniac of Gadara, 8:22-39.
 - h. Healing woman with issue of blood and raising daughter of Jairus, 8:40-56.
 - i. Instruction and mission of the apostles, 9:1-6.
 - j. Herod's inquiry about Jesus, 9:7-9.
 - k. Return of the apostles and feeding of the five thousand, 9:10-17.
 - l. Caesarea Philippi: confession of Peter and first announcement of the passion, 9:18-27.
 - m. The transfiguration, 9:28-36.
 - n. Healing a demoniac boy and second announcement of passion, 9:37-45.
 - o. Spirit of discipleship, 9:46-50.
- IV. Jesus' Retirement from Galilee and Journey to Jerusalem: the Percean Ministry, 9:51—19:28.
1. First circuit, 9:51—13:21.
 - a. Visit to Samaria and teaching concerning the implications of discipleship, 9:51-62.
 - b. Mission and instruction of the seventy and their return, 10:1-24.
 - c. Parable of the Good Samaritan, 10:25-37.
 - d. Jesus in the home of Martha and Mary, 10:38-42.
 - e. The Lord's Prayer and teaching on the importunity of prayer, 11:1-13.
 - f. Healing a dumb demoniac, the Beelzebub charge, and demand for a sign, 11:14-26.
 - g. Concerning true blessedness, 11:27, 28.

- h. The sign of Jonah and parable of the lighted candle, 11:29-36.
- i. Denunciation of Pharisaism, 11:37—12:12.
- j. Parable of a rich man concerning inheritance, 12:13-21.
- k. Instruction of disciples, 12:22-59.
- l. Warning of calamities and parable of the fig tree, 13:1-9.
- m. Healing a woman with an infirmity on the Sabbath, 13:10-17.
- n. Parables of the mustard seed and leaven, 13:18-21.
- 2. Second circuit, 13:22—17:10.
 - a. The narrow door unto salvation, 13:22-30.
 - b. Jesus warned by the Pharisees against Herod, and Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, 13:31-35.
 - c. Healing a dropsical man on the Sabbath, 14:1-6.
 - d. Three parables, 14:7-24.
 - e. Cost of discipleship, 14:25-35.
 - f. Parables of lost sheep, lost coin, lost son, and unrighteous steward, 15:1—16:13.
 - g. Pharisees and the law of divorce, 16:14-18.
 - h. The rich man and Lazarus, 16:19-31.
 - i. Spirit of discipleship, 17:1-10.
- 3. Third circuit, 17:11—19:28.
 - a. Healing ten lepers, 17:11-19.
 - b. Coming of the kingdom, 17:20-37.
 - c. Parables of unjust judge, and Pharisee and publican, 18:1-14.
 - d. Jesus and little children, 18:15-17.
 - e. A rich young man and Jesus' teaching on the reward of discipleship, 18:18-30.
 - f. Third announcement of passion, 18:31-34.
 - g. Healing a blind man in Jericho, 18:35-43.
 - h. Jesus and the publican Zacchaeus, 19:1-10.
 - i. Parable of the ten pounds, 19:11-28.
- V. Jesus' Work in Jerusalem, 19:29—21:38.
 - 1. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem and cleansing the temple, 19:28-48.
 - 2. Teaching in the temple, 20:1—21:6.
 - a. Jesus' authority questioned, 20:1-8.
 - b. Parable of the vineyard, 20:9-18.
 - c. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and Sadducees, 20:21-40.
 - d. Jesus' inquiry concerning the Davidic Sonship of the Messiah, 20:41-44.
 - e. Denunciation of the scribes, 20:45-47.
 - f. Widow's mite, 21:1-4.
 - 3. The Olivet discourse, 21:5-38.
- VI. The Passion of Jesus, 22:1—24:53.
 - 1. Treachery of Judas, 22:1-6.
 - 2. The last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper, 22:7-38.

- a. The Passover and the Lord's Supper, 22:7-21.
 - b. Jesus' announcement of His betrayal, 22:22, 23.
 - c. The strife concerning who should be the greatest, 22:24-30.
 - d. Jesus' announcement of Peter's denial, 22:31-34.
 - e. The two swords, 22:35-38.
3. Jesus in Gethsemane, 22:39-46.
 4. The arrest of Jesus, 22:47-53.
 5. The trial of Jesus, 22:54—23:25.
 - a. Jesus before the high priest and Peter's denial, 22:54-65.
 - b. Jesus before the Sanhedrin, 22:66-71.
 - c. Jesus before Pilate and Herod, 23:1-25.
 6. The suffering, death, and burial of Jesus, 23:26-56.
 7. The resurrection, appearances, and ascension of Jesus, 24:1-53.

1. **The Preface of the Gospel, 1:1-4.** Luke notes the fact that many who were eyewitnesses of the life of Christ had written of His life those things that were most assuredly believed among them. It seemed good to Luke also to write because of his "having had perfect understanding of all things," or as the RV translates it, "having traced the course of all things accurately," from the very first. Through his careful investigations and orderly presentation Theophilus might know the certainty of the things he had been taught. Not to speak of inspiration Luke shows himself a historian of the first order, and the Christian is given assurance that the Christian religion is not based on folklore and tradition but on historical facts.

2. **The Infancy Narratives.** One is struck with the deep piety manifested in that small group of devout Jews associated with the births of John and of Jesus. Their devotion stands in strong contrast with the hypocritical religion of the Pharisees, against which Christ was forced to contend.

It is natural that this genuine piety should reveal the true spiritual conception of the Messiah and His work. The Baptist is His forerunner, going before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, making ready a people prepared for the Lord. Jesus is the Son of the highest to whom shall be given the throne of David. His work is that of redemption. Christ is God's salvation "prepared before the face of all people," and a "light to lighten the Gentiles."

In this portion of the Gospel appear also the holy songs, some real gems of hymnody. They are the song of Mary (the

Magnificat), the psalm of Zacharias (the **Benedictus**), the song of the angels (**Gloria in Excelsis**), and the death song of Simeon (**Nunc Dimittis**).

3. The Boyhood of Jesus. Here alone among the Gospels is found a record of the boyhood of Jesus. This gives us a very valuable bit of knowledge of the growth of the God-man from babyhood to manhood. "The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him" (2:40). "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (2:52). From this we learn that His growth was a natural one, not the fantastic picture presented in the ungenueine apocryphal gospels that have come down to us. His was a physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual growth, just as we should expect. Jesus' conduct in Jerusalem among the doctors, rabbis, and scribes, and toward His mother, reveals an awakening consciousness of His being in a unique way the Son of God.

4. The Genealogy. Comparison of Luke's genealogy with that given by Matthew shows a problem difficult of solution. Some believe that Matthew traces the descent to Joseph, while Luke gives the ancestry of Mary. Others hold that since Matthew is interested in Christ's Messiahship, he presents the lineage which proves Jesus the legal heir to the throne of David, while Luke, interested in showing the human life of Christ, the second Adam, who is also the Son of God, traces the natural ancestry back, not to Abraham alone, but to the first Adam and to God. In this way he "presents Christ as the Son of man, the partaker of a common humanity with man, and, therefore, the Kinsman-Redeemer of the human family, without respect to national distinctions or the ancient separation of Jews and Gentiles—the author of a common salvation for lost sinners everywhere—the Saviour of the world."

5. The Perean Ministry. This important period in the ministry of Jesus is given in fullness alone by Luke. The introduction of this period arrests the attention of the reader: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). The entire period is represented as a continuous journey to Jerusalem as is witnessed by 9:51, 53; 13:22; and 17:11; which verses mark off three divisions of this period.

Reference to the detailed outline given under IV above, or to the Gospel itself, will show the distinctive nature of this period. A number of miracles and parables together with a good deal of distinctive teaching are found here. See 7 and 8 below.

6. Numerous References to Contemporaneous History. To this Gospel more than to any other we are indebted for the data upon which it is possible to fix the dates of some of the more important events of Gospel history. Thus the time of the annunciation to Zacharias is placed in the days of Herod (1:5); the birth of Jesus in the days of Augustus Caesar, Emperor of Rome, and Cyrenius, Governor of Syria, during the time when "all the world" was taxed; and the beginning of the Baptist's ministry in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar together with other rulers (3:1, 2).

7. The Miracles and Parables Peculiar to This Gospel. Luke alone records the miraculous draught of fishes (5:4-11); raising the widow's son (7:11-18); four miracles of healing: the deformed woman (13:11-17); the man with the dropsy (14:1-6); the ten lepers (17:11-19); and the wounded ear of Malchus (22:50, 51).

Of the parables, three have reference to prayer, a prominent subject throughout the Gospel: the Friend at Midnight (11:5-8); the Pleading Widow (18:1-8); and the Pharisee and Publican (18:10-14). Illustrating the seeking love and free forgiveness are the twin parables of the Lost Coin and the Lost Son (15:8-32), prefaced by the Lost Sheep found also in Matthew's Gospel. Pertaining also to the forgiving love of God and divine forbearance are the parables of the Two Debtors (7:41-43), the Barren Fig Tree (13:6-9), and the open invitation, the Great Supper (14:12-24). Man's relation to his fellow men is set forth in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37). Concerning the future life and its relation to the present are the parables of the Rich Fool (12:16-21), the Dishonest Steward (16:1-13); and of reward according to labor, that of the Pounds (19:12-27).*

8. Discourses Peculiar to Luke. Of these mention should be made of Jesus' discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth (4:16-20), the instructions to the seventy (10:1-16), the dis-

* Adapted from *The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible*, by Angus-Green, pp. 652, 653.

courses to the disciples and others (12:1-59), the conversation with two disciples going to Emmaus (24:13-25), together with many other briefer messages.

9. The Angelic Appearances. The frequency of angelic appearances in this Gospel is worthy of notice. "The Gospel begins with the appearance of an angel to Zacharias as he ministered in the temple; then follows that of Gabriel to Mary of Nazareth; and of 'a multitude of the heavenly host' to the shepherds of Bethlehem. And as it begins, so the Gospel closes with the record of ministering angels: of one who in Gethsemane 'appeared unto Him, strengthening Him'; and of the two 'in shining garments,' who, on the morning of the resurrection triumph, inquired of the woman at the sepulcher, 'Why seek ye Him that liveth among the dead?'"*

10. Luke's Medical Language. Luke not only uses many technical terms common to the medical profession, but "he has the physician's interest in the sick and afflicted, as shown in the large number of miracles of healing narrated." The words in heavy-faced type in the following quotations are technical medical expressions in the original language: "When the devil **had thrown him**" (4:35); "**was taken with a great fever**" (4:38); "**taken with a palsy**" (5:18); "**healed them**" (6:19); "**her issue of blood stanch**" (8:44); "**bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine**" (10:34).

11. Key Words. The verb to preach good tidings, found frequently, expresses the evangelistic universalism of Luke's viewpoint. The words **Saviour** and **salvation** are used by Luke only among the first three Gospel writers. Each of these words occurs once only in John's Gospel. The verb to **glorify** used in the sense of ascribing glory and honor to God is also characteristic of this Gospel.

12. Luke's Style. Before leaving this study of Luke the grace and beauty of his literary style should be noted. The radical critic, Renan, who held that the Gospels in the main consist of myths, fiction, and legends, speaks of this Gospel as "the most beautiful book ever written." One lingers on the sublime accounts of the births of John and of Jesus, the matchless beauty of the story of the Lost Son, the touching con-

* Angus-Green, *op. cit.*, p. 653.

versation of Jesus with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus—all told with impressive simplicity and dignity, not to speak of the Holy Spirit's operation in the writer to produce just the kind of writing that the book actually is.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What is known of the author of the third Gospel?
2. State the theme and purpose of the Gospel of Luke.
3. What valuable information does Luke's preface contain? Of what concern is it to the Christian that the contents of Luke's Gospel are historical facts?
4. How does the piety of the Jews associated with the births of John and of Jesus stand in contrast with that of the Pharisees? What did these devout Jews think of the Messiah and His work?
5. How does Luke describe the growth of Jesus?
6. What two explanations have been given of the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke? Which one seems to accord best with the facts?
7. Name some of the parables that are peculiar to Luke's Gospel.
8. Describe the angel appearances in Luke's Gospel.
9. Give some key words of Luke's Gospel.
10. Comment on Luke's style of writing.

Lesson VII

The Gospel According to John

Author.—The Apostle John.

1. The Attack upon the Genuineness of the Gospel of John.

That the Apostle John wrote the Gospel that bears his name is vigorously and persistently denied by negative critics and liberalists. They maintain that the book is a product of the second century not earlier than A.D. 160. It is held to be a theology rather than the authentic record of the testimony of an eyewitness. It is, they say, too much the product of reflection to represent an accurate record of history.

These denials of Johannine authorship could be passed by without notice were it not for the fact that this view has been accepted so generally by liberalists. This denial constitutes one phase of the most serious heresy found in the world, the rejection of the deity of Christ. Space forbids even the barest sketch of the evidence that leads to the conclusion that the Apostle John wrote the Gospel that bears his name. Olshausen's conclusion could not be better put: "The Gospel of John possesses stronger testimony with respect to its genuineness than perhaps any other writing in the New Testament, or, we may say, of the whole of antiquity."

2. Sketch of the Life of the Apostle John.

The first glimpse of the Apostle John is evidently the time when John the Baptist points out the Messiah to two of his disciples, John being one of them (1:37). He and his brother James were called from their nets to become fishers of men, and later appointed among the twelve apostles. John was one of three favored disciples to witness the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration, and the agony in the garden. At the Last Supper, John occupied the place next to Jesus. He followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest and was perhaps the only disciple to witness the crucifixion. After the resurrection he outran Peter to the sepulcher, and was present on several occasions when Jesus appeared to the disciples. In the earliest period of the church he was Peter's colleague actively engaged in the affairs of the church. Later he resided at Ephesus, from which he was banished to the Isle of Patmos. Tradition affirms that he returned to Ephesus and died a natural death near the close of the first century. Five books are ascribed to him: the Gospel, three epistles, and the Revelation.

Destination.—Christians. No particular destination is stated, but the author has the church in mind.

Date.—About A.D. 90.

Theme and Purpose.—"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). The same verse gives a twofold purpose: "That ye might believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

John's Method of Treatment.

The purpose stated above determines his method. What he writes is designed to lead to a certain **belief**, and this belief issues in **life**. Three dominant ideas are thus set forth in the book: **testimony, faith, and life**. "This Gospel is the record of testimony and shows that faith is belief founded upon evidence." "Faith, however, becomes vital and active when it has brought one into personal contact with Christ"; it leads to life, eternal life. The outlines below and the development of the theme following them will serve to illustrate these three dominant ideas.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Jesus, the Word, 1:1-18.
- II. His Revelation to the World, 1:19—12:50.
 1. The first witnesses to Jesus, 1:19—2:12.
 2. His ministry in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, 2:13—4:54.
 3. His ministry in Jerusalem and Galilee, 5:1—10:42.
 4. The raising of Lazarus, 11.
 5. Close of His public ministry, 12.
- III. His Revelation to the Disciples, 13—17.
 1. Last discourses and parting words, 13—16.
 2. The Lord's Prayer, 17.
- IV. His Passion, 18—21.
 1. His trial and crucifixion, 18, 19.
 2. His resurrection and appearances, 20, 21.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Prologue: The Incarnation of the Word, 1:1-18.
 1. The eternal existence and activity of the Word, 1:1-5.
 2. The mission of the Baptist, 1:6-8.
 3. The revealing activity of the Word, 1:9-13.
 4. The incarnation of the Word, 1:14-18.
- II. The Revelation and Ministry of the Son of God to the World, 1:19—12:50.
 1. Testimonies borne to Christ, 1:19—2:12.
 - a. By the Baptist, 1:19-34.
 - b. By the disciples, 1:35-51.
 - c. By His miracles, 2:1-12.
 2. The ministry of Christ, 2:13—4:54.
 - a. In Jerusalem and Judea, 2:13—3:36.
 - (1) Cleansing the temple, 2:13-22.
 - (2) Signs in Jerusalem, 2:23-25.
 - (3) Conversation with Nicodemus, 3:1-21.
 - (4) Testimony in Judea and last testimony of the Baptist, 3:22-36.
 - b. In Samaria, 4:1-42.
 - (1) Withdrawal from Judea and journey through Samaria, 4:1-6.
 - (2) Jesus and the Samaritan woman, 4:7-42.

- c. In Galilee: Healing of nobleman's son, 4:43-54.
 - 3. Christ's self-revelation as the Son of God in Jerusalem and Galilee, 5:1—7:10.
 - a. In Jerusalem: Healing a man at the pool of Bethesda and teaching concerning His relation to God, 5:1-47.
 - b. In Galilee: Feeding the five thousand and teaching concerning the bread of life, 6:1—7:10.
 - 4. Christ's ministry in Jerusalem at the Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, 7:11—10:42.
 - a. At the Feast of Tabernacles, 7:11—8:59.
 - (1) Teaching in the temple concerning the law, 7:11-31.
 - (2) Chief priests and Pharisees seeking to seize Jesus, 7:32-36.
 - (3) Teaching concerning the water of life, 7:37-52.
 - (4) The woman taken in adultery, 7:53—8:11.
 - (5) Teaching concerning the light of the world, 8:12-20.
 - (6) Teaching concerning His departure, 8:21-59.
 - b. At the Feast of Dedication, 9, 10.
 - (1) Healing a blind man on the Sabbath, 9.
 - (2) Christ the door of the sheep and the good shepherd, 10:1-21.
 - (3) The witness of Jesus' works, 10:22-39.
 - (4) Jesus' retirement beyond Jordan, 10:40-42.
 - 5. Christ's glorification in the raising of Lazarus, 11.
 - a. Teaching concerning the resurrection and the raising of Lazarus, 11:1-46.
 - b. Decision of the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death, and Jesus' retirement to Ephraim, 11:47-57.
 - 6. Close of Christ's public ministry, 12.
 - a. The supper in Bethany, 12:1-11.
 - b. The triumphal entry, 12:12-19.
 - c. The Greeks seek Jesus and Jesus' answer, 12:20-36.
 - d. Faith and unbelief; the issues involved, 12:37-50.
- III. The Revelation and Ministry of the Son of God to the Disciples, 13—17.
- 1. The Last Supper, 13, 14.
 - a. Washing the disciples' feet, 13:1-20.
 - b. Announcement of betrayal, 13:21-30.
 - c. The new commandment of love, 13:31-35.
 - d. Announcement of Peter's denial, 13:36-38.
 - e. Going away of Jesus and the coming of the Comforter, 14.
 - 2. The parting words of Jesus, 15, 16.
 - a. The vine and the branches, 15:1-16.
 - b. Hatred of the world, 15:17—16:11.
 - c. The Spirit of truth, 16:12-16.
 - d. Approach of separation, 16:17-22.
 - e. Prayer in Jesus' name, 16:23-33.
 - 3. The Lord's high-priestly prayer, 17.

IV. The Revelation of the Son of God in His Suffering, Death, and Resurrection, 18—20.

1. The arrest of Jesus, 18:1-11.
2. The trial of Jesus before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, 18:12—19:16.
3. The crucifixion of Jesus, 19:17-37.
4. The burial of Jesus, 19:38-42.
5. The resurrection and appearances, 20, 21.
 - a. The empty tomb, 20:1-10.
 - b. Appearance to Mary Magdalene, 20:11-18.
 - c. Appearance to ten disciples, 20:19-23.
 - d. Doubt of Thomas and appearance to eleven disciples, 20:24-29.
 - e. Conclusion and purpose of the Gospel, 20:30, 31.
 - f. Appearance to seven disciples in Galilee and Peter's confession, 21:1-23.
 - g. Witness of the author, 21:24, 25.

1. Dominant Ideas of the Gospel: Testimony, Faith, and Life. Who is Jesus? Is He merely a good man, or is He also God? This is the first question with which this Gospel is concerned. John seeks to present the testimony of eyewitnesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Is the evidence sufficient for us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? This second question is also answered in this Gospel. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses," the law declares, "every word shall be established." John shows that not only two or three witnesses have given testimony to the deity of Christ but many have borne witness to this fact. There is ample evidence, yes, overwhelming evidence, upon which we may base our belief. We may with perfect confidence place trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

The third question with which the book is concerned leads to the issues involved in faith and unbelief. Does it matter how we regard Him? As Charles Erdman puts it: "Is it true that our attitude toward Him is a test of character, and that unbelief in Him affects life and determines destiny?"

Thus the first question concerns **testimony**, the second **faith**, and the third **life**. Around these three ideas the argument of this Gospel revolves.

2. John's Development of the Theme. a. The Word Revealed, 1:1-5. As in the Book of Genesis, John takes his start

"in the beginning." Before time began "the Word was." He was with God and He was God. In a single sentence the eternity, personality, and deity of Christ are all affirmed. In the third and fourth verses the Word is revealed as the Creator of the world and the Source of all life. Verse five declares that the spiritual light of the Son is shining in the world, but the world is not receiving it. Thus in the opening paragraph of this Gospel the tragedy of rejected testimony is introduced.

b. The Responses of Unbelief and of Faith, 1:6-13. The coming of the true Light into the world was witnessed to by an official witness, John the Baptist. He gave faithful testimony to the Light. In fact, the true Light Himself lights every man coming into the world. But in spite of official testimony and the manifestation of the Light itself, many refused to believe. They who received Him believed on Him and became sons of God.

The three ideas become plain. Testimony was borne by the Baptist and the Word Himself. This testimony was the adequate basis for faith. Faith issued in life: Believers became sons of God.

c. The Witnesses and Their Testimony, 1:14—21:25. In dramatic style the Apostle John presents the witnesses and allows them to speak and act. The central figure of each scene or the chief subject of conversation is Jesus. As each scene is played let the spectator in simple faith exclaim with Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

The Apostle John is the first to testify. He says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The glory that the Word manifested in His incarnation was divine glory. If His glory was divine, He Himself is divine.

The Baptist speaks, "Behold the Lamb of God." It was revealed to him that "upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The Baptist declares, "I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God."

Some of John's disciples testify. They declare, "We have found the Messias," "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." When they marvel at the supernatural knowledge of Jesus, He assures them of their seeing greater things, even of heaven opening and of the

angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

At Cana, without the direct utterance of even a word, water is turned into wine. A whole wedding group witnesses the act. The author of the Gospel interprets the miracle as a sign. It pointed to the supernatural power of one of the guests. It led to belief on the part of the disciples.

An unprecedented incident takes place in the temple. This Jesus who turned water into wine enters the temple at the Passover, orders out of its sacred precincts the buyers and sellers, overthrows the tables of the money-changers, drives out the sheep and the oxen, and makes the astounding claim that they were making **His Father's** house a house of merchandise. Who is this who claims that the God of the temple is His Father? The resurrection sign is given them, which they pretend to misunderstand, but after the resurrection the disciples remembered it and were led to faith.

A master of Israel is curious to know who this Jesus is. Under cover of night he plans to confer with this Teacher who came from God. With one stroke Jesus exposes the master's gross ignorance of spiritual things in which he should have been an expert. But Jesus leads him on to the sublimest heights of divine revelation: of God's love to a lost world; of the sacrifice of His only begotten Son for their salvation; of the appropriation of this salvation by believing on the Son; of the Son's mission not to condemn the world but to save it; of the condemnation that rests, not upon the publican and sinner as opposed to the Jew, but upon all those who do not believe in the Son; and of the basis of this condemnation—the Son has brought light into the world and men love darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil. The Son of God becomes the touchstone of their character. They who believe come to the Light; they who do not believe love sin and are unwilling to have their deeds reproved. Their character is revealed in their unwillingness to repent. Who is this Jesus with whom a master of Israel confers? Nicodemus' later conduct seems to show that the faith which was born in him by this interview was that the Teacher was divine.

The Baptist as a passing light gives one more testimony: Jesus must increase; but the Baptist must decrease. The following words, whether of the Baptist or of the apostle, again

disclose the dominant ideas of **testimony, faith, and life**: "What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God 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" (John 3:32-36).

A wicked woman living in Sychar is startled one day at Jacob's well by a request for water by a Jew. She is ready to keep alive a perpetual disagreement existing between Jews and Samaritans. But this particular Jew is unusual. He seems to promise a kind of water that may perchance relieve her of the drudgery of coming so far and drawing water from such a deep well. But this Jew intrudes religion in His talk. He gives an undesired command which compels her to uncover her sin. He knows more about her private life than she cares for others to know. In an effort to escape some ugly facts she attempts to change the subject and to argue religion, the place of worship in particular. This too is brushed aside by the Jew. She utters a faint hope of better days when the Messiah comes. In her amazement she learns that the tired Jew claims to be the Messiah. What! this Jew the Messiah? She does not stagger at the idea, but believes.

And so the apostle carries his reader through the dramatic scenes which lead to faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In the same manner John presents the case of a nobleman who besought Jesus to heal his son. Jesus makes a statement, inviting faith. The nobleman responds in absolute trust in the power of Jesus to heal. The healing of the son leads to the father's belief.

The healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath drew fire from the ardent defenders of the law. Christ's significant reply, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17), only made matters worse. The Jews did not misunderstand the import of Christ's answer. By making this claim He made Himself equal with God. Jesus supported His claim with a fivefold witness to His deity: the testimonies of John, of His works, of the Father, of the Scriptures, and of Moses. This was unanswerable, but it did not force belief. Did their rejection of the testimony, however, make the testimony invalid? No, it stands in spite of their unbelief.

In the same way we might consider the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Discourse on the Bread of Life, and the disputations at the Jerusalem feasts. In all of these the same ideas of **testimony, faith and life** stand out, while unbelief places itself in exceedingly ridiculous positions. The man born blind and given his sight could be brushed aside by the blind Jews, but the man continued to see nevertheless. Testimony failed to lead them to faith; for they understood clearly that faith in Jesus involved turning from sin. In their refusal to repent no change was wrought in their lives—their sin remained. As a final sign Lazarus was raised to life, almost under the shadow of Jerusalem. Being near Jerusalem many Jews were present to comfort the bereaved sisters, so that his being raised could not be gainsaid. Unbelief's only resort was to plan to put to death both the man who raised Lazarus from the dead as well as Lazarus himself. How absurd!

The issue is clearly drawn. Faith in Him affects life, and determines destiny. Jesus is come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not abide in darkness.

The tenderer scenes with the disciples lead as well to belief (13—17). Those intimate messages of love and comfort come from One who is more than man. In the midst of the Passover supper Jesus, their Lord and Master, performs an astounding act; He stoops to wash the disciples' feet. When this humble service is completed He shows them that what He had done was more than a mere act of hospitality; it was the institution of a Christian ordinance to be perpetuated in the church. But what raises this humble service to the place of an ordinance? First, it was instituted by divine authority. Second, like other Christian ordinances, the outward act symbolizes a spiritual truth. Third, the command was given for the act to be perpetuated. Fourth, a blessing is promised to those who fulfill it in loving obedience.

Jesus then discloses to the disciples His own departure and the coming of another Comforter, the Spirit. He shall abide with them forever. In a most vivid metaphor of the vine and branches Jesus depicts the mystical union between Himself and believers. This union is a vital one, but continuance in this life-giving union is maintained by abiding in Him. Unfruitful

branches are taken away, while fruitful ones are purged that they might bring forth more fruit.

Following this, additional teaching is given concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, chiefly as it pertains to the world. In tender love He prepares them for the coming ordeal, and then He lifts up His eyes to heaven in prayer to the Father in behalf of his own. When He prays, no one can doubt that the one addressed as Father is in a very unique way His Father, just as the Son was in a unique way the Son of God.

In His trial He is found sinless. His crucifixion is a blot on Jewish and Roman justice. The climax of testimony is found in the witnesses to the resurrection. In the first place the tomb was empty. In the second place Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and later to ten of the disciples. The case of Thomas is the most challenging. When permitted to place his finger in the nailprints and his hand into His side, he cries in adoring wonder: "My Lord and my God." "This confession," says Erdman, "is not only the culmination of belief; it is also the climax of the Gospel." John at once adds that his purpose in writing was to bring his readers to this faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they might have life through His name.

The Peculiarities of This Gospel

1. **Materials Peculiar to John.** Of the 62 sections in this Gospel, 32 contain matter not recorded in the other three. We are dependent on this Gospel for the full information given on the early Judean ministry, the ministry at the Feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication, and the parting message to the disciples. John gives none of the parables recorded in the other three Gospels. To this Gospel we are indebted for knowledge concerning the three, likely four, passovers of Christ's ministry (2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 13:1).

The prominence given in this Gospel to the discourses and certain personal interviews of Jesus is especially noteworthy: the interviews with Nicodemus (3:1-15) and the Samaritan woman (4:4-38), as well as a score of other briefer ones; and the discourses after the healing at Bethesda (5:19-47) on the bread of life (6:35-58) on the law (7:16-39) and the light of the world (8:12-58), on the good shepherd (10:1-38), on the way,

the truth and the life (14), on the true vine (15), and the mission of the Comforter (16).

2. The Miracles of This Gospel. Of the eight miracles recorded, six are peculiar to this Gospel: the water turned into wine (2:1-10); the nobleman's son healed (4:46-54); the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-15); the blind man at the pool of Siloam (9:1-7); the raising of Lazarus (11), and the miraculous draught of fishes (21:1-12).

3. The Remarkable Self-assertions.

- a. "I am" (4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5-8).
- b. "I am the bread of life" (6:35).
- c. "I am the light of the world" (9:5).
- d. "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7).
- e. "I am the good shepherd" (10:11, 14).
- f. "I am the resurrection, and the life" (11:25).
- g. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6).
- h. "I am the true vine" (15:1).

4. Key words: Light, glory and to be glorified, life and to live, testimony and to testify, to know, world, to believe, name, truth, sign, Comforter, and judgment and to judge. John alone uses the solemn, repeated verily, verily.

The key verse to 20:31, quoted under the Theme and Purpose.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Give a sketch of the life of the Apostle John.
2. What are the three dominant ideas of the Gospel of John? From an incident of the book, show how these ideas appear in clear light.
3. What is spoken concerning the deity of Christ in the prologue, 1:1-18?
4. From 3:17-21 show how Jesus is the touchstone of character.
5. Study the interview of Jesus with the woman of Samaria as an example of personal work.
6. Why did many of Jesus disciples go back and walk no more with Him (6:67) after His discourse on the bread of life?
7. Explain 9:39.

8. Into what ridiculous circumstances does unbelief place itself?
9. Give reasons for believing that in washing the disciples' feet Jesus instituted a Christian ordinance.
10. Relate the teachings Jesus gives with reference to the Holy Spirit.
11. Why is Jesus' prayer in chapter 17 sometimes called His high-priestly prayer?
12. Name some materials given by three Gospel writers that John does not give. Name some materials that he gives which are not given by the other three writers.
13. Name some materials given in all four Gospels.
14. What do the remarkable self-assertions of Jesus mean to you?

Lesson VIII

The Teaching Ministry of Jesus

I. Jesus as a Teacher

Luke tells us that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (4:14, 15). And Jesus Himself said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God . . . for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). It is clear from these passages that Jesus considered teaching a large part of His ministry. After the accepted pattern of the day, He chose disciples to be with Him and to learn from Him. The Greek word which is translated disciple means "learner." People in general seem to have thought of Him as a rabbi, that is, teacher. The rich young ruler addressed Him as "Good Teacher." Nicodemus said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God."

But Jesus was a teacher with a difference. The multitudes marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. And Matthew says, "The crowds were astonished at His teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29). The scribes' authority was their tradition which had been handed down by their teachers. They followed it slavishly even misspelling words where their teachers had made mistakes. Jesus' authority was the authority of truth and righteousness. He lived in such close communion with God that He could say, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (John 7:16, R.S.V.). He did not speak His own word, but God's word. And further, Jesus lived what He preached. He not only preached that the kingdom of God was at hand, He also demonstrated the power of God in healing and casting out demons. On the other hand, He could justly say of the scribes that they did not practice what they taught.

As far as method is concerned, Jesus' teaching was informal and oral. Much of His teaching grew spontaneously out of immediate situations. A quarrel among His disciples, a ques-

tion from the perplexed John, a young man's request to divide an inheritance, a woman's coming to draw water, etc., all became the occasion for teaching. He made great use of the commonplace for illustrations. The birds, flowers, children, sowing and reaping, lighting lamps, fishing—in His hands all these become superb illustrations of the new life in the kingdom.

His teaching was personal and direct. He spoke to the inner needs of the soul. He exposed the hidden motive. He was concerned with the great guiding principles of life, but He dealt with them in a concrete manner. Many of His sayings have the force of a proverb. For example, He taught, "And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it from you" (Matt. 18:8, R.S.V.), rather than to present some general principles on how to deal with temptation. This gives His teaching great pith and force and a quality of timelessness.

He made great use of parables to clarify the meaning of His teaching to His followers. And lastly, we should note that He adapted Himself to His audience. He began with the terminology and concepts which were current in His day and patiently led men on to higher concepts and deeper insights into truth. Among the great teachers of the world Jesus stands second to none. His teachings have a beauty that still excites admiration, and a directness and clarity that stab men suddenly awake.

II. Jesus' Use of Parables

James Stewart calls Jesus' parables "those matchless pictures which are not only creations of purest artistry but also living revelations of grace, windows opened suddenly upon life and destiny and God."^{*}

The Greek word *parabolé* itself means to place alongside. Thus the popular concept that a parable is the setting of an earthly experience or incident alongside of a spiritual or moral truth for illustration and comparison. This definition is adequate for many of the parables in the New Testament, but it does not cover all of the sayings called parables. For example, "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23) is called a parable. See

^{*} Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, p. 74.

also Mark 7:15. The Old Testament word for parable is *mashal* which has a broader connotation. In fact, it seldom means parable as defined above. More often it means proverb or oracle. This Old Testament usage throws further light on the New Testament concept of parables.

Each parable has one main truth to express. In some parables like the good Samaritan and the rich fool certain types of human conduct are sketched in vivid colors, and the hearers are allowed to make the application. The goal of these parables is to arouse conscience. In others, like the kingdom parables, principles of God's government and man's relation to God are presented. It is a good rule of interpretation not to try to find the meaning of each symbol in a parable, but to study it as a flash of insight into some great truth.

Jesus used parables in every period of His ministry, but there came a time when He seems to have given them a larger place in His teaching. Mark 4:34 suggests that He used them almost exclusively when He taught the multitudes. His disciples questioned Him about this, and His answer to them recorded in Matthew 13:10-17 and Mark 4:11 f. has been the cause of much discussion among Bible students since.

If we remember the historical context in which this answer was given, it will help us to understand Jesus' words. He had arrived at the point in His ministry where men were dividing into two classes of opinion concerning Himself and His teaching. The Pharisees said, "He has a demon." The multitudes still hailed Him as a great leader and prophet, but showed little understanding of His real character or mission. In this context, then, we should note that a parable can be understood on two levels. "It has," as T. W. Manson says, "its own meaning as a story and a further meaning—and this is the important thing—by application to persons or events or both together. It is possible for a hearer to follow and appreciate the former meaning without having the slightest inkling of the latter."* Thus different kinds of people might listen to them and make different applications. A true understanding of the parables required a faith response on the part of the hearer. Those who refused to accept Jesus as the Christ were left in their stubborn ignorance. This was not because the parables were obscure,

* T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, Cambridge, 1948, pp. 64, 65.

but because of their unwillingness to respond. The multitude might have made applications according to its varied spiritual comprehension. And those who were sincerely searching for truth in Christ found in Him the key to His parables. He was describing the kingdom of God as it was in fact already in existence among them, and if anyone would accept Him, then the parables became windows through which they might see the light.

The first and most well-defined group of parables is found in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. These are called the kingdom parables. The parable of the Sower pictures the different attitudes toward the Word of the kingdom, and shows that the Word will bear fruit as the individual is willing to receive it. The Parable of the Tares draws attention to the work of the devil in sowing bad seed in the world, the bad seed being the children of the wicked one. Both the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one are allowed to grow together until the end of the world, at which time 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." The wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire, while the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The Parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Leaven probably represent the external and internal growths respectively of the kingdom. The kingdom is secured through tremendous sacrifice; this may be the lesson of the Parables of the Hid Treasure and of the Pearl of Great Price. The Parable of the Dragnet shows that the kingdom will draw within its borders both good and bad, but the separation will take place at the end of the world.

III. Great Themes from Jesus' Teaching

1. **The Kingdom of God.** The whole message of Jesus and the apostles is one place characterized as the "gospel of the kingdom" (Acts 8:12). The Old Testament prophets had looked forward to the time when God would establish His kingdom among men. Now Jesus came announcing that this kingdom was at hand. Mark 1:15. The kingdom or rule of God was present among them, but only those who would repent could enter it. His own power was an actual demonstration of its

presence. Matt. 12:28. Again, the kingdom was a spiritual reality, and only those who were "born of the Spirit" could enter it. John 3:5 f. The kingdom demands total allegiance. No man can serve two masters. Indeed, it demands a complete re-evaluation of one's life. One must lose his life in order to save it. It was the common opinion in Jesus' day that the poor were unhappy and the rich were happy. But Jesus said that the poor were happy because theirs was the kingdom of heaven, and the rich were miserable because riches made it morally impossible to enter the kingdom.

All this was in contrast to rabbinic teaching. Most of the Jews, including Jesus disciples, were looking for a materialistic kingdom in which the righteous would have an abundance of worldly possessions and prestige. The Jews were looking for a messiah who would give them freedom from Rome and usher in a golden age with themselves dominating the political scene. When Jesus came as "the suffering servant" teaching that the kingdom was a spiritual reality which could be attained only by way of the cross, the Jews rejected Him. It should not be overlooked that Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom included both a present phase and a future eternal phase.

2. Discipleship. Many times Jesus spoke about the rewards and requirements for following Him. He promised rest to those who come to Him. "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). When Peter asked Him what the disciple's reward would be, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29, 30, R.S.V.). This answer makes it clear that the disciple can not expect material prosperity and ease as a reward for serving Christ. Christ's comforting presence and the security which he finds in the Christian brotherhood are the disciple's rewards in this life.

The requirements for discipleship are summed up in Jesus' words, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever

would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:34, 35 R.S.V.). Taking up the cross means that we are to accept gladly the persecution and opposition of the world which comes as a result of being Christ's followers. At other places Jesus says that the disciple must be willing to forsake all to follow Him.

3. Prayer. The "Lord's Prayer" is probably the best known excerpt from Jesus' teachings, but many do not understand its deep significance. In the first place, we must remember that it was given to His disciples, and not to everyone in general. Only disciples of Jesus can truly call God "Father." When we approach God as Father, we come to Him in confidence and trust. But we do not come in shallow or sentimental familiarity, for God is holy and to be revered. We offer Him our respect and adoration. "Hallowed be thy name." We then voice our willingness to submit to His rule and our desire for His reign not only in our lives but also in the whole world. The concern for physical sustenance follows the petition for the furtherance of God's kingdom and is secondary to it. Prayer for personal needs is not selfish when it is made in light of the priority of the kingdom. It is the will of God that we see our daily need and depend upon Him for its supply. The next element is confession of sin and prayer for strength to overcome temptation. We are reminded that we can not live one way and pray another! We must be forgiving if we want our prayer for forgiveness answered.

Jesus taught that prayer should be constant. (Luke 18:1), sincere—"not as the hypocrites" (Matt. 6:5 f), in His name (John 16:24, 26-28), and in faith (Mark 11:24). He assured His followers that the Father is more than ready to give good things to them that ask Him.

4. Sin and Forgiveness. James Stewart notes that "Jesus seems to have spoken but rarely of 'sin' in the singular, and nearly always of 'sins' in the plural. His interest, that is to say, was not abstract but concrete, not speculative but practical."* Jesus did not come primarily to teach men what sin was, nor to teach them how to live above it. He came to be their savior from sin. Nevertheless, He does show men what the true char-

* Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, p. 88.

acter of sin is, what its consequences are, and how it can be gotten rid of.

Jesus taught that sin is breaking the law of God (Matt. 5:19), but He did not stop with the outward act as the rabbis did. He said that sin is also in the thought and desire. Matt. 5:22, 28. The evil words that flow through the mouth come ultimately from the heart. Matt. 15:18 f. Further, He tells us that sin is not only breaking the law; it is breaking the Father's heart. It is lack of love for God. The sin of the prodigal was leaving his father's house and going his own selfish way. The consequences of sin are blindness (John 9:39), judgment, and finally eternal death (John 3:18, 19; Matt. 5:22b; 22:13).

But the good news of Jesus is that there is forgiveness and restoration. God waits like the father of the prodigal for his erring son's return. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Jesus Himself offers this forgiveness. Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:48. It is not, however, without cost. Jesus has come to give His life a ransom. Mark 10:45. Thus He connects His death with God's free forgiveness.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Name some differences between Jesus as a teacher and the scribes.
2. What are three characteristics of Jesus' method of teaching?
3. What is a parable?
4. Why did Jesus teach in parables?
5. What is the key to understanding the parables?
6. Name three things Jesus taught about the kingdom of God.
7. What are the rewards of discipleship? Requirements?
8. What is the relation of prayer for daily bread and prayer for the kingdom?
9. What is Jesus' teaching about the nature of sin?

Lesson IX

Spreading the Good News from Jerusalem to Antioch

(Acts of the Apostles 1—13)

Author.—Luke. For a brief sketch of his life see Lesson 6, "The Author."

Destination.—Theophilus.

Date.—About A.D. 63. Evidence seems to point to the writing of this book at the close of the two-year imprisonment of Paul at Rome.

Theme and Purpose.—"The church witnessing for Christ." Its purpose is "to show the establishment by the Spirit through the apostles of universal Christianity."

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Witness in Jerusalem, 1:1—8:3.
- II. The Witness in Samaria and Judea, 8:4—12:25.
- III. The Witness unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth, 13—28.

Outline (1—12, for reference and study)

- I. The Witness in Jerusalem, 1:1—8:3.
 1. Introduction—the resurrection ministry of Jesus, 1:1-11.
 2. The place of Judas filled, 1:12-26.
 3. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter's sermon, and the first converts, 2.
 4. The lame man healed and Peter's second sermon, 3.
 5. The first persecution and the prayer of the church, 4:1-31.
 6. The first discipline, 4:32—5:11.
 7. The power of the church, the second persecution, and Gamaliel's counsel, 5:12-42.
 8. Ordination of the seven, 6:1-7.
 9. Stephen's arrest, defense, and martyrdom, 6:8—7:60.
 10. Persecution continued, 8:1-3.
- II. The Witness in Samaria and Judea, 8:4—12:25.
 1. Samaria evangelized, 8:4-25.
 2. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, 8:26-40.
 3. The conversion of Saul, 9:1-31.
 4. Peter's labors in Lydda and Joppa, 9:32-43.
 5. The conversion of Cornelius, 10.
 6. Peter's defense of his ministry to the Gentiles, 11:1-18.
 7. Barnabas' mission in Antioch and his choice of Saul for helper, 11:19-26.

8. Relief sent to the Judean brethren, 11:27-30.
9. Martyrdom of James, imprisonment, release, and departure of Peter, Herod's death, and departure of Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem, 12.

1. **Luke the Historian.** Luke is the first church historian. In the Gospel his skill as a historian was demonstrated in his careful investigations of the events of Christ's life and ministry as well as in his intelligent grasp of the universal mission of Christ. These traits are characteristic of this book as well. He realizes the need of presenting the proper kind of evidence in support of Christ's resurrection. Christ "shewed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs," he observes.

This historical skill on the part of Luke is exceedingly important in view of the popular denials of the miraculous events of the Bible, and of Christ's resurrection in particular. A firm basis for belief is laid when a careful historian like Luke through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit presents this miracle of miracles as proved by many infallible proofs.

2. **Christ's Resurrection Ministry.** Christ takes up the thread of teaching where He left off in His closing discourses before His sufferings, i.e., with the theme of the coming of the Holy Spirit. A new epoch was inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit was still to come. The time foretold by the prophets when God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh was soon to come.

The disciples, still entertaining hopes of a political Messianic kingdom, thought that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would surely introduce the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Christ tells them that it is not for them to know "the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Some hold that the mistake of the disciples was due to a misinterpretation of the **time** of the Messianic kingdom. Others believe that their error was due to a wrong conception of the kingdom, and that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is proof of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

Christ commits to His followers the task of being witnesses of His resurrection to the world. The Greek word for witness is **martyrs** from which the English word "martyr" is derived. This suggests that many of those who witnessed for Christ were put to death for their testimony.

3. The Vacancy of Judas Filled. Christ had chosen twelve official witnesses of His work to whom was committed the responsibility of proclaiming to the world all the deeds and words of Jesus, especially of His resurrection. Judas having betrayed his Lord and ended his life, the disciples felt that his place needed to be filled so that Christ's purpose of a twelvefold testimony to the world should not fail. In Peter's introduction of the matter of filling the vacancy he states the qualification clearly: The person chosen must be one who had been with the disciples and Jesus from the days of the Baptist until the ascension. Two fulfilled this qualification. Of these, Matthias was chosen by lot and numbered with the eleven apostles. This is the only incident in the New Testament in which the lot was used to select personnel to serve the church. Pentecost was still a future event, and the implications of the common possession of the Holy Spirit were not understood as yet.

Some understand this ordination as being premature, and that God filled the vacancy in the choice of Paul. This interpretation fails to recognize: (1) the atmosphere of prayer out of which the action proceeded; (2) the impossibility of Paul's fulfilling the prerequisites stated by Peter; and (3) the clear fulfillment of Scripture in the ordination.

4. Pentecost. Two great events separated by thirty-three years constitute the proof in acts of the doctrine of the Trinity. The first is the incarnation of the Son of God, and the second, the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit. The description of the second act is given in 2:1-13. The fact of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the first thing to observe.

The Holy Spirit was at work in the Old Testament dispensation, but now through the new revelation of God in Christ He came into the believer's experience with new meaning and relevance. As to the prophets of old, He gives the gift of prophecy, but now His gifts are given without discrimination of social class, race, or sex. The Spirit is poured out upon **all flesh** (2:17). A second significant difference between this manifestation and the Spirit's work in the old dispensation is that this is the work of Christ. He has fulfilled His promise in thus sending the Spirit (2:33). Pentecost is the concluding act of

the new revelation which began with the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The accompanying gift of speaking with other tongues serves to magnify the importance of the event in light of the fact that there were Jews and proselytes present from many different countries and languages. It symbolizes the universal character of the Gospel. At Babel tongues were confused because of sin, but God is now, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, undoing the havoc of sin. While the speaking in tongues is a meaningful part of Pentecost, it is not the central fact. When Peter explained what was happening, he emphasized the prophetic element rather than the tongues.

Peter's interpretation of the event is significant. It is the fulfillment of Joel's prediction, and introduces the era when "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Peter proceeds to show that Jesus was approved of God among the Jews by miracles and wonders and signs. While His death was according to "the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God," the Jews were responsible for slaying the Messiah. The resurrection of Christ is God's rebuke of their foul deed. God has glorified Jesus, making Him both Lord and Christ.

This message brought conviction to the hearts of the people. Peter bids them repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins. Remission of sins through Jesus Christ is a new note in the history of redemption. Acts 13:38, 39. To the Jews who for hundreds of years trusted in the law for remission of sins this preaching was startling, especially so because it was accomplished through the One whom they crucified. Trust in the law must be replaced by faith in Christ.

5. The Life of the Early Christian Community. The initial brotherhood made no distinct break with Judaism. They continued to worship in the temple. They added to this, however, the distinctly Christian service of breaking bread (the Lord's Supper). This service was held in private homes. They were bound together as a distinct group within the Jewish framework by their common loyalty to Jesus the Messiah. The apostles were the spiritual and administrative leaders.

The striking characteristic of the group was its unity. This unity of faith and Spirit led them to feel a common responsibility for the material needs of each other. As a result they freely put their possessions at the disposal of the whole brotherhood. "No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (4:32, RSV). Note the following about this community of goods:

1. It was a direct outgrowth of spiritual unity.

2. It grew out of an immediate need in the local brotherhood.

3. It was a free response made as the need arose, and not an enforced communism of goods.

The picture is one of Christian generosity growing out of a deep piety and love. Here is vital spiritual brotherhood at its enthusiastic best. The result was favor among the common people and the bestowal of power by the Holy Spirit.

But the group was not without problems. There was hypocrisy and complaining among some of them. In response to the complaints which were at least partially justified the apostles provided for a more adequate and functional organization. The seven men chosen for the task of distributing provisions were not called deacons, neither is it clear that the office was permanent.

6. **Persecution in the Apostolic Church.** The infant church soon came into conflict with the established order of religion. Persecution arose chiefly on account of the preaching of the apostles, which brought to the Jews the sense of guilt for taking the life of Jesus. It was restricted to Jerusalem and its immediate environs. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the persecution became more intensive and extensive until Saul, who had been leading the persecution, was converted. This persecution was carried on by the Jews alone. The Romans considered the Christians to be a Jewish sect and paid little or no attention to them in the early years of the movement. At no time, however, was the Jerusalem church completely wiped out. The persecutions were sporadic and of varying degrees of intensity. After his conversion, Paul was constantly hounded by Jewish fanatics who sought to undermine his work and even to kill him. James, the leader of the Jerusalem church,

was martyred in A.D. 62. The Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem passed out of existence with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

7. The Miracles of the Apostolic Church. This is also a period of miracles. Through Peter the lame man was healed (3:1-11); also the palsied man at Lydda (9:32-34); and Dorcas was raised (9:39-41). Of the miracles wrought through Paul, mention is made of the judgment of blindness upon Elymas at Paphos (13:8-11); of the healing of the impotent man at Lystra (14:8-10); of the casting out of a demon from the damsel at Philippi (16:18); of himself being healed of the viper's bite (28:1-6); of the healing of Publius' father (28:8, 9), and many other miracles not specifically named.

The significance of these miracles should also be noted. Miracles serve as credentials to a messenger of God or of His message. The apostles were the accredited witnesses of the life of Christ and the authoritative founders of the church. God bore witness to them and their work instead of to the leaders of the Jewish religion, for Judaism in its rejection of Christ was now no longer the true religion. Another point of significance of the miracles of this period is found in the fact that it prepared the church for receiving a new body of authoritative writing which should be recognized as Scripture in the same sense as the Old Testament.

8. The Early Expansion of the Church. This expansion is traced by Luke in three phases: the work of Philip in Samaria including his ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch (8); Peter's tour in Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea (9:32—10:48); and the carrying of the Gospel by the scattered Christians to Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch.

The work of Philip is interesting as showing that the Samaritans are receptive to the Gospel. The care of the mother church for the new work serves to bind the new body of believers with the old and shows that they were considered a part of the church. It was not a new and separate organization that originated in Samaria but merely an extension of the church at Jerusalem. This was the first step in the extension of the church outside of the Jewish race.

The conversion of Cornelius constitutes the Pentecost for

the Gentiles. It was fitting that Peter should be the instrument through which the door of the Gospel should be opened to them. While he labored chiefly among the Jews, God revealed to him that Gentiles as well as Jews share in the blessings of the Gospel.

It is a sad fact that the Jerusalem church was never able to shake herself completely free from Judaism and work freely among the Gentiles. Antioch in Syria became the dominant center for the next wave of expansion. Christianity came to the Jews of Antioch probably through the Jewish Christians who were scattered in the Judean persecution, but the witness to the Gentiles in the city was made by Christians who came from Cyprus.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Show how Luke has fulfilled his purpose of tracing "the establishment by the Spirit through the apostles of universal Christianity."
- ~2. Why are we so much concerned as to whether or not Luke is a historian of the first order? *because so many denials of the*
- 3. Show how this book might well have the title, "Acts of the Holy Spirit." *he had*
- 4. What was the significance of Pentecost?
5. Trace the life and work of Peter as recorded in this book. *a*
- 6. What did the speaking in other tongues symbolize?
7. What were some distinctive characteristics of the Jerusalem church? *No Name* *reputa*
8. What reasons may be given for the appearance of prophets and the performance of miracles during the apostolic age? *John* *historia*

Lesson X

Spreading the Good News from Antioch to Rome

(Acts of the Apostles 13—28)

For introductory material see Chapter IX.

Outline, continued (13—28, for reference and study)

III. The Witness unto the Uttermost Part of the Earth, 13—28.

1. Paul's first missionary journey, 13, 14.
2. The council at Jerusalem, 15:1-35.
3. Paul's second missionary journey, 15:36—18:22.
4. Paul's third missionary journey, 18:23—21:17.
5. Paul's arrest and defense before the multitude, 21:18—22:30.
6. Paul before the Sanhedrin, 23:1-22.
7. Paul sent to Caesarea and trial before Felix, 23:23—24:27.
8. Paul's defenses before Festus and Agrippa, 25, 26.
9. Paul's journey to Rome, 27, 28.

1. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. If Peter is the leading figure of the inauguration of Christianity, Paul occupies the chief place in the expansion of the church. His conversion is striking in a number of ways. God granted to him a special revelation of Jesus Christ, to which he at once responded in repentance and faith. From birth he had been set apart for this great work as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

The period of preparation in his life is significant. Before conversion he received training at the feet of Gamaliel, a great teacher among the Jews. Immediately after his conversion three years were spent in Arabia in which time God was undoubtedly leading him to the full comprehension of the Gospel and to the realization of his lifework. Then follow the years of silence, probably eight or nine in extent, which also served to fit him for the work. This period was brought to a close when Barnabas sought him out for a helper at Antioch.

The Spirit, working through a group of earnest workers at Antioch, chose Barnabas and Paul for the great task of extending the Gospel. The first journey took them to Cyprus, laboring at two points, Salamis and Paphos; Perga in Pamphylia; Antioch in Pisidia; and to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe

in Lycaonia. This tour was attended with great success as well as considerable opposition. Christianity met raw paganism, and it soon learned that the progress of the Gospel would not be without opposition.

On the return to Antioch there arose an acute problem which required wise solution if the pure Gospel was to be preserved. Shall the Gentiles observe Jewish rites and ceremonies? This was the burning question, and the young church at Antioch looked to the mother church at Jerusalem for its solution. Paul, Barnabas, and others were sent as representatives of the Antioch church. In the larger conference of the apostles, elders, and other leaders the Spirit led to the decision that the Gentiles were free from the rites and ceremonies that pertained to the Mosaic covenant. This decision allowed Christianity to advance without the limitation that Judaism would impose upon it.

The second missionary journey of Paul took him through Syria and Cilicia to the churches established on the first journey in Lycaonia and Pisidia, and extended to Galatia, and thence to Macedonia and Greece. The leading points where the apostle labored were at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. At the last-named place quite extensive work was done during a period of eighteen months. From this city Paul wrote two epistles to the Thessalonians. In the work at Corinth one begins to see the greatness of the burdens that were falling upon the apostle. In the midst of the conflicts with corrupt paganism were added the care and oversight of the churches already established.

The third missionary journey also began at Antioch. It extended to the churches of Galatia and Phrygia, and from thence to Ephesus. The door to the work at this place, which was closed during the first journey, was now wide open. Three years were spent here, marked by intense activity on the part of the apostle. Paul's work here was characterized by special thoroughness of teaching, by extraordinary working of miracles, by widespread success both in the city and throughout all Asia, by fierce opposition on the part of the silversmiths, and finally by the attention that he had to give to difficulties in other churches. Trouble arose in the churches of Galatia,

which occasioned the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians. Also at Corinth serious problems arose, in answer to which the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written. Leaving Ephesus Paul made a brief visit to the churches in Macedonia (where the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written) and in Greece. Likely from Corinth Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans. On his return to Jerusalem he met the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, giving them an affectionate farewell.

The experiences of the apostle in Jerusalem are thrilling, and show that whether he speaks to Gentiles or Jews he is always able to proclaim the same Gospel. The two-year imprisonment at Caesarea terminated with his being sent to Rome. The voyage thither constitutes another thrilling episode in the career of the apostle.

2. The Prophets of the Apostolic Church. It should not escape notice that prophets were present in the church of the first century (11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; I Cor. 12:28; 14:29-32; Eph. 4:11). The prophet was not an ordinary church official. Prophecy was a spiritual gift, given directly by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:10, 11, 28; Eph. 4:11. The idea of the prophet and his work is fundamentally the same as that in the Old Testament. "He was one whom God made the organ of communication of truth to the church," says Purves, "one who spoke directly from God and whose words were the words of God."

The significance of the gift of prophecy in the apostolic age is similar to that of miracles—the possession of the gift testified that the period was an age of revelation, and prepared the church for receiving the new body of Scriptures.

Notice also how often teachers are mentioned in connection with the work of the prophets. The teaching ministry was an important one in the apostolic church.

3. The Extended Discourses of the Book. Luke preserves for us extended accounts of a number of significant discourses of the apostles. Notice has already been given to Peter's sermon at Pentecost. His second sermon (3:13-26) further unfolds the meaning of Christ's work. The coming of the times of refreshing is dependent on the repentance of men. At Christ's return He shall restore all things according to the words of prophets from the earliest times. The special appeal is made to

Israel by reason of their being children of the prophets and of the covenants.

Peter's appeal was to the prophecies, but Stephen in his defense (7:2-53) drew attention to the significance of history. Old Testament history is a record of God's dealings with His people. In all this history unbelievers opposed God's work. This is the key to the opposition of the Jews to Christianity. In their antagonism to the church they were opposing God's work. To them the law was the intended goal of Hebrew history.

Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (13:16-41) is the earliest recorded teaching of the apostle. It is valuable as illustrating the apostle's thought and method as a preacher. In this sermon Paul first reviews Israel's history for the purpose of showing that God's redemptive plan led up to the sending of a Saviour, Jesus. Paul then recounts the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, all of which is the fulfillment of prophecy. The last part of the sermon is most significant. In a winning appeal to the Jews as his brethren he declares that through Jesus is preached the forgiveness of sins. But Paul adds one more point: this justification which is possible through faith in Jesus Christ was impossible through the law of Moses. The sermon is brought to a close by a warning against rejecting this Gospel message.

The very brief account of Paul's discourse at Thessalonica (17:3) shows it to be a two-point sermon. He shows first "that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead"; and second "that this Jesus . . . is the Christ." It was eminently fitted for his Jewish audience and serves for all time as a model for an effective approach to that nation.

If Paul's sermon at Thessalonica is a model for approach to the Jews, his address on Mars' Hill (17:22-31) is a model for obtaining a hearing among Gentiles. Contrary to the opinion of some, Paul did not attempt to display his learning in this message nor did he leave the cross out of the message. The approach was most tactful. He at once pictures to his hearers the lofty conception of God which far transcended their polytheism. The true God is the Source of all life and Ruler of the earth. In opposition to their disdainful attitude toward other nations Paul declares that God has made of one blood all na-

tions. They should all seek the Lord. Since man is the offspring of God, the making of idols is an affront even to man's dignity. God has overlooked this ignorance of times past, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent. Judgment is coming upon the world. The man whom God raised from the dead is the judge. Such was the masterful message of Paul, but the self-sufficient intellectuals of Athens would not hear to this foolishness of a crucified and risen Christ.

Paul's message to the Ephesian elders (20:18-35) is a touching leave-taking of the apostle. In it the veteran missionary lays bare his methods and principles of work. His message to both Jews and Greeks was "repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." He had not shunned to declare to them the whole counsel of God. Aware of approaching enemies to the church, Paul warns them to take heed to themselves and to the flock in which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. In a beautiful benediction and with a few parting exhortations he parts from them, affirming that he would never see them again.

Two of Paul's defenses (22:1-21; 26:2-23) call for study. Both of them are brimming with interest as testimonies to his experience of conversion. Very plainly Paul was not previously inclined toward Christianity. Just as plainly Christ revealed Himself to him. Paul's absolute surrender to his Lord is equally clear. All this testifies to the genuineness of the change wrought in him. It is incumbent upon those who deny the reality of Paul's conversion to account for the origin of these narratives.

4. The Book of Acts a Great Textbook on Christian Missions. As showing the need of Holy Spirit baptism and power the opening verse give testimony. The book is full of instances of the manifestation of Holy Spirit power, such as the conversion of the three thousand at Pentecost, the performing of many signs and wonders, the labors of Paul which resulted either in revival or a riot. From this point of view the book could very properly be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

The dignity of the missionary's calling is also set forth in the opening verses. He is a witness unto Jesus. He wields Holy Spirit power, and is backed by the authority of Jesus.

This book gives inspired models of reaching to Jew and to Gentile. The use made of the Scriptures, the preaching of repentance and faith, the testimony to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the adaptation of the message to the hearers, and the fearlessness of the preachers in the presence of intense opposition, all are of service to the Christian missionary.

The first century methods of carrying on missionary work may well be those of the twentieth century. Paul uses genuine Christian strategy in his general plan of missionary work, evidence of which is found in his westward moves into the heart of the Roman empire, the opening of work in the larger cities which in turn become centers of Christian influence to the surrounding territory, the establishment in each city of an organized church, the offer of the Gospel to the Jews first, the large place given to evangelism, the constant care and attention given to the churches, and last but not least, the complete submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

5. The Book of Acts a Great Authority on the Church. The birthday of the church was on Pentecost. The church was founded by the Holy Spirit and made up of the body of the believers. In it Jew and Gentile are one. It is fundamentally a witnessing body. It is the redemptive instrument concerning which the prophets spoke in their predictions of the great day of grace for all mankind.

Apostolic worship and piety are models for all time. Most striking is the fundamental change that took place in the transition from the temple worship to that of the church. The former had its priests and sacrifices, while in the latter there is the universal priesthood of the believers. In this new experience of immediate access to God through Jesus Christ it is natural to find a strong emphasis upon the reality of Christian experience. Study the accounts of the conversions recorded in the book for rich illustrations of experimental religion. This leads to the large part played by prayer in the Apostolic Church. The deep piety of the believers led to the prominence of prayer in worship.

The book is rich also in lessons on church government. The ordination of officials, the nature of offices to be filled, church discipline, church councils, church organization, the

seat of authority are illustrated in the first century church.

6. The Liberation of the Church from Judaism. A Jewish convert to the preaching of the Gospel had a number of difficult problems to think through in his change from the rites and ceremonies of temple worship to the beliefs and practices of the Christian Church. Questions such as the following were bound to enter his mind: Is there actual forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ? Is the Gospel for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews? Do the Gentiles need to observe Jewish rites and ceremonies in order to become Christians? Do Jewish Christians need to continue to observe the law? It is seen that according as these questions are answered, Christianity becomes either a spiritual revival of Mosaic worship, or it is the culmination of Mosaic worship and supersedes it.

A study of the Book of Acts with these questions in mind will show that the Holy Spirit led the church step by step to the true solution of them. They were answered in the order that they are presented above. Let us trace briefly their answer.

a. In Jesus Christ there is remission of sins. This is the final point of Peter's message at Pentecost (2:38). Peter did not answer the remaining questions. The first step in the leading of the Holy Spirit was the fundamental truth that through Jesus Christ sins are actually forgiven.

b. Christianity is the goal of God's redemptive revelation. This is the lesson taught by Stephen (chapter 7). It led the Jews to see that the Mosaic covenant was only a step in God's revelation, not the goal. Hebrew history led to Christ; it did not culminate in the law and the temple.

c. The Gospel is for Samaritans and Gentiles as well as for Jews. This was taught by Philip's work in Samaria and with the Ethiopian eunuch (8), and in Peter's vision which led to the conversion of Cornelius (10). When the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his house, Peter could not refuse to administer water baptism, which is the symbol of Holy Spirit baptism. The problem as it actually existed among the Jewish Christians is seen when Peter returns to Jerusalem and is taken to task for his work with Cornelius. Peter's defense consisted of a rehearsal of the whole incident and led to the pointed question, "What was I, that I could withstand God" (Acts 11:17)?

d. It was impossible to be justified by the law of Moses. This is the climax of Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia (13:39). Paul repeats Peter's teaching that in Jesus there is remission of sins, but the additional statement that it was impossible to be justified by the law was an advance step. In it we see the beginning of the crumbling of the Mosaic economy.

e. The Gentiles in becoming Christians need not adopt Jewish rites and ceremonies. This is the leading lesson of the Jerusalem Council (15). That the matter was a question of the most serious dimensions is seen in the fact that a general conference was required to solve it.

f. The Jewish Christians need not continue to observe the Mosaic rites and ceremonies. This lesson lies outside of the Book of Acts but it is clearly implied there. It is taught, however, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the Mosaic economy is represented as decaying and waxing old, ready to vanish away. Heb. 8:13.

Through these six steps the Christian Church was liberated from the clutches of Judaism. It involved a tremendous struggle, but was solved through the clear leading of the Holy Spirit.

7. **The Rise of the New Testament Books.** While the Book of Acts makes no reference to the writing of any other of the New Testament books it should be remembered that all of the books, excepting I and II Timothy, Titus, the writings of John, and possibly some others, were written during the period of time covered by the history of Acts. By consulting again the table furnished in Lesson I the order of their appearance may be seen.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Trace the journeys of the Apostle Paul.
2. What were the texts of the sermons recorded in Acts?
3. What missionary lessons may be gained from this book?
4. What lessons may be gained from this book with reference to the church?
5. Trace the liberation of the church from Judaism. Show the Holy Spirit's leading in this liberation.

