

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

The Epistles and Revelation

By Chester K. Lehman

A Bible Survey Course in Five Units

FIFTH UNIT

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

The Epistles and Revelation

*Fifth 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

The Epistle to the Romans

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 58. Written from Corinth.

The Roman Church.—When the church was established at Rome is not known. It is possible that some of the “strangers of Rome,” present at Pentecost and converted through Peter’s preaching, formed its nucleus. During the first century A.D. there was much traveling in the Roman Empire so that it was possible for Christians converted in the East to journey westward to Rome, especially during the periods of persecution when they were scattered far and wide. Acts 8:1; 11:19.

Occasion.—The immediate occasion of the epistle is found in 1:8-13. Paul had a desire to visit the church that he might impart among them some spiritual gift to their strengthening, and that he might have some fruit among them as among other Gentiles. In 15:14-33 some additional reasons for writing are found. He planned to visit them. With his work completed in the East he looked to the West for new fields of labor. Their prayers were requested in his behalf as he journeyed to Jerusalem that he might be delivered from the Jews, that his ministration might be accepted of the saints, and that he might come unto them with joy.

Theme and Purpose.—The theme is clearly stated in 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

The purpose is not so easy to state. Four factors seem to enter into his purpose of writing. (1) There were certain conditions in the church at Rome with which he desired to deal, problems that concerned both Jew and Gentile. (2) As the Apostle to the Gentiles, he felt that his mission was not complete without the presentation of the Gospel to the church at Rome. (3) Paul’s journey to Jerusalem seems to be associated with his plans for going to Rome (Acts 19:21), which may indicate that his purpose in going to the former is similar to that of going to the latter. In Jerusalem he desired to vindicate himself against the attacks of the Judaizers, and this may well enter into his desire to write to this church before visiting it. (4) Possibly the most fundamental purpose of this epistle grows out of the issues involved in Paul’s severest conflict, a conflict not with Jewish Christians, nor even Judaizing teachers, but unbelieving Jews. A careful study of the letter, both to what it contains and what it does not include, seems to lead to this conclusion.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Introduction, 1:1-15.
- II. Doctrinal Exposition, 1:16—11:36.
 1. The theme, 1:16, 17.
 2. The doctrine of justification, 1:18—5:21.
 3. The doctrine of sanctification, 6—8.
 4. The problem of Israel's unbelief, 9—11.
- III. Practical Application, 12:1—15:13.
 1. General duties of the Christian life, 12, 13.
 2. Special duty of mutual forbearance and charity, 14:1—15:13.
- IV. Conclusion, 15:14—16:27.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Introduction, 1:1-15.
 1. The salutation, 1:1-7.
 2. Personal explanations, 1:8-15.
- II. Doctrinal Exposition, 1:16—11:36.
 1. The theme of the epistle, 1:16, 17.
 2. The doctrine of justification, 1:18—5:21.
 - a. The universal need of righteousness, 1:18—3:20.
 - (1) The guilt of the Gentile world, 1:18-32.
 - (2) The principles of divine judgment, 2:1-16.
 - (3) The guilt of the Jew, 2:17—3:8.
 - (4) The whole world guilty before God, 3:9-20.
 - b. God's method of attaining righteousness: Justification by faith, 3:21-31.
 - c. God's method of justification is not new: It is that set forth in the Old Testament, 4:1-25.
 - d. The blissful effects of righteousness, 5:1-21.
 3. The doctrine of sanctification, 6—8.
 - a. Illustrated in union with Christ, 6:1-14.
 - b. The Christian release, 6:15—7:6.
 - (1) Free from sin and servants of righteousness, 6:15-23.
 - (2) Free from the law and united with Christ, 7:1-6.
 - c. The powerlessness of the law, 7:7-25.
 - d. The effectiveness of the power of deliverance through the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, 8:1-39.
 - (1) Life in the Spirit, 8:1-17.
 - (2) Patience in suffering, 8:18-30.
 - (3) The assurance of salvation, 8:31-39.
 4. The problem of Israel's unbelief, 9—11.
 - a. The rejection of Israel and the justice of it, 9:1-29.
 - b. The cause of the rejection, 9:30—10:21.
 - c. God's covenant with Israel not disannulled, 11:1-36.
- III. Practical Application, 12:1—15:13.
 1. General duties of the Christian life, 12, 13.
 - a. As members of the church, 12.
 - b. As subject unto the higher powers, 13.

2. Special duty of mutual forbearance and charity, 14:1—15:13.

a. Do not judge others, 14:1-12.

b. Do not tempt others, 14:13-23.

c. Follow the example of Christ, 15:1-13.

IV. Conclusion, 15:14—16:27.

1. Paul's reasons for writing and personal plans, 15:14-33.

2. Commendation and greetings, 16:1-16.

3. Warnings against false teachers, 16:17-20.

4. Salutations from Paul's companions, 16:21-23.

5. Benediction and doxology, 16:24-27.

1. **The Introduction, 1:1-15.** The apostolic salutation contains three parts: the address, the readers addressed, and the greeting. Each part is distinctive.

In the address the writer calls himself the servant of Jesus Christ and gives his official position as an apostle, together with a few crisp statements which summarize the historical facts concerning the Gospel. His readers are "beloved of God," and "called to be saints." Two of Paul's great words, **grace** and **peace**, are put to duty in the greeting. It is significant that these gifts come from both the Father and the Son.

Paul longs to see his brethren at Rome that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift. He feels himself a debtor to all classes of mankind.

2. **The Theme, 1:16, 17.** In a word the theme is the Gospel. This Gospel provides a solution for man's greatest problem: "How can a man be just with God?" The answer is: (1) The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (2) It is appropriated by all who believe. (3) The Jew occupies the position of priority over the Greek in the opportunity of receiving it. (4) The Gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness.

3. **The Doctrine of Justification, 1:18—5:21.** The theme implies very clearly that there is a universal need of righteousness. The Gentile world has had a very sad history. Once the Gentiles had the knowledge of God, but they did not desire to retain God in their knowledge. The awful degradation to which Gentile humanity had fallen came as a result of their own departure from God and God's giving them up to follow the vile tendencies of the human heart. There is hardly a darker picture of sin anywhere to be found than in the latter part of Romans 1.

Of such a "flood of Gentile pollutions and iniquities" some-

one might set himself up as judge ready to offer just condemnation, not realizing that his own life, though not steeped in the abominable practices just described, is also subject to the righteous judgment of God. By reason of this attitude on the part of the self-appointed judge Paul describes the true nature of God's judgment which, it will be seen, condemns these judges. God's judgment is according to truth (2:2); it is according to works without respect of persons (2:6); it will concern the secrets of men and the standard of judgment shall be according to Paul's gospel (2:16).

All this bears heavily upon the Jew who is most likely to be the one sitting in judgment over the more wicked Gentiles (2:17-29). His superior position because of having been committed with oracles of God only increases his responsibility and hence his guilt (3:1-8). The Jew has no room for boasting. If his external obedience to the law was not accompanied with the proper spiritual attitude, he is no better than the Gentile who does not observe the law.

As a consequence both Jew and Gentile are under sin (3:9-20). "There is none righteous, no, not one." This is the testimony of Scripture. The law in its task of upholding the perfect standard of holiness stops every mouth and brings all the world under the judgment of God. The purpose of the law was not to make men just before God, but to bring to mankind the knowledge of sin. Through this terrible indictment Paul has made plain his first main objective of showing the universal need of righteousness.

Paul now proceeds to set forth God's method of attaining righteousness (3:21-31). In a word it is the doctrine of justification by faith. The very compact language of these verses contains the following points: (1) God's method is apart from the law, because the law could not justify the sinner. (2) God's method is a manifestation of His righteousness, i.e., it is a method whereby in His justifying men He is still just. (3) This method is not new; it was witnessed by the law and the prophets. (4) This righteousness is specifically shown in the following facts: (a) The blessings of it are appropriated by implicit faith. (b) The blessings of it are unto all who truly believe. (c) Justification consists of forgiveness freely given by God. (d) This forgiveness is an act of His grace. (e) That which

makes forgiveness possible is the redemptive work of Christ. (f) This redemption is a propitiation in Jesus' blood. (g) This method of justifying the sinner excludes all glorying. (h) This method does not make the law void; it reveals the real purpose of the law.

To the Jews who had thought that justification was possible through the law this doctrine seemed revolutionary and out of harmony with their Scriptures (the Old Testament). Paul, anticipating this feeling, now shows that this method of justification is not new; in a very real way it is the very method of justification found in the Scriptures (4:1-25). A better example could hardly be found than that of Abraham. How was he justified? The Scripture's answer is simple and plain: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (4:3). His faith is counted for righteousness. It is apart from the law, entirely a work of God's grace. David also experienced forgiveness of sins in the same manner. The reference to the forgiveness of David proves that Paul assumes the experience of repentance along with faith as a prerequisite to justification. Only on the basis of David's genuine repentance was he forgiven.

Paul is led to tarry on the faith of the great patriarch and its relation to God's grace. "It is of faith," Paul says, "that it might be by grace" (4:16). The skeptical Jew who held a shallow view of faith is allowed to look for a moment upon the sublime picture of Abraham's faith. This faith was an implicit trust in God. Abraham, against hope, believed in hope; and staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.

Whether or not the unbelieving Jew is willing to accept Paul's explanation, the apostle advances in his argument to the blissful effects of justification (5:1-21). This justification is real if we have peace with God and access into His presence. Our new standing revolutionizes our entire outlook on life. The hope of the glory of God enables us to rejoice in our tribulations. Tribulation serves as the stimulus to the Christian grace of patience, and patience leads to experience, and experience to hope. There is genuine joy in the heart because the love of God has been shed abroad there, a love manifested in Christ's death for us while we were sinners, and one that will continue after our reconciliation to Him to save us by His life.

The blissful effects of forgiveness are further seen in the contrast of the first and second Adam. It is a contrast of human sin and salvation. As sin had its origin in Adam with the consequence that death passed upon all men, so salvation has its origin in the second Adam, Christ, and its consequences pass upon all men. But then sin and salvation are unlike in that where the first Adam brought sin, condemnation, and death; the second Adam brought grace and life.

4. The Doctrine of Sanctification, 6—8. The Jew who is dissatisfied with Paul's gospel of justification by faith strenuously objects that such a method will surely lead to more sin (6:1, 2). It only gives license to throw away all restraint because of the abundance of grace. But this view misses entirely the meaning of faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Him is in reality a union with Him. Three illustrations are given to show the error of the Jew's contention.

The first illustration is drawn from Christ's death and resurrection (6:3-15). The believer is united with Christ in His death and burial, and is raised to newness of life. Our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be done away. On this account sin should no longer have dominion over us.

The second illustration is that of servitude and emancipation (6:16-23). We are either servants of sin or servants of righteousness. The third illustration is drawn from the marriage bond (7:1-6). A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. At his death she is free to marry another. From this illustration Paul shows that we are become dead unto the law that we might be joined unto Christ and, as a consequence, bring forth fruit unto God.

This idea of our becoming dead to the law does not mean that the law is sin (7:7-25). The law performed a worthy purpose in giving a knowledge of sin. But the law could do no more. It was powerless to deliver us from sin. The experience here described took place before Paul's conversion. He had come to know only too well the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. In his wretchedness he cried out for deliverance. He was a slave to sin.

Whence came deliverance to Paul? The answer is found in Romans 8. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit. What

a deliverance! On this account it is necessary for us to live after the Spirit in order to continue experiencing His saving power. A lifelong conflict is on between the flesh and Spirit. But let us remember that only those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. This high relationship makes possible our crying, "Abba, Father."

This fact of deliverance places suffering in a different light. Even nature suffers. Both we, as Christians, and nature look forward with fond anticipations to final deliverance. And in our sufferings the Spirit lends assistance. In view of His intercessory work we gain complete assurance that nothing befalls us contrary to His will. This fact delivers us from fatalism and lifts us to the high plane of complete submission to a great God who foreknew all things and on the basis of this foreknowledge foreordained us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Thus is found the sure basis to an inviolable security: the power of God. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. The security, however, is not found in the impossibility of our departing from God, but in His infinite keeping power, provided we remain faithful to Him.

5. **The Problem of Israel's Unbelief, 9—11.** Great heaviness and sorrow of heart rest upon the apostle on account of Israel's rejection of this great salvation. God has rejected them by reason of their unbelief, so that there is no unrighteousness with Him (9:1-29). The key to His dealings with man is found in the words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (9:15). The dependent clauses of this sentence are conditional, and indicate that there are reasons for mercy on the one hand and for judgment on the other. The reason for mercy is found in repentance and faith, while judgment follows after God has "endured with much longsuffering" vessels of wrath.

Two causes are found for Israel's rejection by God (9:30—10:21). In the first place Israel set about to establish their own righteousness by works of the law and stumbled at Christ. In the second place this salvation was and is within reach of all, Jew and Gentile alike.

In spite of Israel's rejection of God and His consequent rejection of them, God's covenant is not disannulled (11:1-36).

He has not cast off His people. A few who believe are appropriating the blessings while the rest are hardened.

God did not intend that they should fall, but He has, on account of their fall, admitted the Gentiles into their privileges. Through this God means to teach that as their fall brought untold blessings to the world, their repentance holds in store still greater outpourings of His grace. Since the stock of Israel is holy, God is able to restore His people if they do not continue in unbelief.

Some understand that Israel as a nation shall be converted at the coming of the Lord and during a thousand-year period to follow shall be instrumental in bringing the great mass of Gentiles to Christ. Others, believing that the return of Christ closes the day of grace, hold that if Israel in verse 26 refers to literal Israel their conversion takes place prior to Christ's return. If this verse does not refer to literal Israel, it means that the conversion of the Jews is not definitely predicted but is thought of as conditional: "if they abide not still in unbelief." The "all Israel" of verse 26 in this interpretation includes converted Jews and Gentiles, and constitutes spiritual Israel.

6. The Practical Application, 12:1—15:13. Paul now turns to the application of these doctrinal truths to the duties of the Christian life. In a word, these doctrines applied to our lives bring consecration, the presenting of our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God. The details of Christian conduct are elaborated: first, in general duties, including the proper use of spiritual gifts, the practice of love, nonresistance, submission and obedience to the higher powers, and neighborliness; and second, in the special duty of mutual forbearance and charity. This portion of the book is filled with intensely practical instructions, valuable for all time.

7. The Conclusion, 15:14—16:27. After stating his travel plans and enlisting their prayers in his behalf, Paul closes with greetings, warnings, salutations, benediction, and a doxology.

Key Words and Expressions

The key word is **Gospel**. The words, **righteous, righteousness, just, justified, justification**, come from the same root word. The words **faith** and **believe** also come from the same root. The word **law** is used very frequently. Sometimes it means the

Mosaic law, and sometimes it has a wider sense, law in general or law considered as a principle. When the word **the** occurs with **law**, reference is being made to the Mosaic law; without the word **the**, law in general is spoken of. The Revised Version is more accurate in this respect than the Authorized Version. Another expression, **the flesh**, is used frequently, having various shades of meaning which should be carefully distinguished. Other prominent words are **sin** and **death**.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What was the immediate occasion of Paul's writing this epistle?
2. State the purpose of this epistle.
3. What two prominent words used by the Apostle Paul are found in the introduction? Give the meaning of each.
4. How often in chapter 1 does Paul state with reference to Gentile sinners that God gave them up or over? What is the meaning of this expression?
5. How were the Jews inclined to look upon Gentile sinners? Were they justified in their attitude toward them?
6. What is the meaning of justification? What is the relation of faith to justification? What is the relation of God's grace to justification? What is the relation of Christ's blood to justification?
7. Does Paul give any license for a Christian to sin? What three illustrations does Paul give to prove his point?
8. Whence comes deliverance from the bondage of sin? Have you experienced this deliverance?
9. Was God just in rejecting Israel? How does Paul prove the answer?
10. What were the causes for Israel's rejection?
11. What does Paul mean by "a living sacrifice"?
12. What is Paul's teaching with reference to the Christian's duty to the state?
13. On what kind of matters are mutual forbearance and charity required? How does the example of Christ give light in solving the problem?
14. What are some of the important words and expressions in the Roman epistle?

Lesson II

The Epistles to the Corinthians

First Corinthians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 57. Written from Ephesus.

The Church at Corinth.—Corinth, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, was one of the most important cities of Paul's day. It was a great commercial center, with wealth and magnificence adorning it on every side. It was also a pleasure-loving city and had become infamous on account of its immorality. It is said to have been the most corrupt city in Greece.

Paul came to this city from Athens on the second missionary journey. From the account in Acts (18:1-18) we learn that the apostle, finding Aquila and Priscilla, who were Jews and tentmakers by trade, abode with them, working at his trade with them. On the Sabbaths he reasoned in the synagogue and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. On the arrival of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia, "Paul was pressed in the spirit and testified that Jesus was Christ." This increased zeal stirred up opposition on the part of the Jews, which forced Paul to leave the synagogue. Turning to the Gentiles, Paul continued his work. His efforts were rewarded with success, and after eighteen months of strenuous labor he departed for Ephesus, leaving behind him a flourishing church in the city.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Toward the close of Paul's three-year ministry at Ephesus on the third missionary journey the apostle received through Chloe and Apollos word of a very distressing state of affairs in Corinth. A committee from the Corinthian church also came bringing a letter in which some of their perplexing problems were submitted to him for solution.

The church was split up into factions. Judaizing teachers had come to Corinth and were undermining the authority of Paul. Disputes among brethren had arisen, resulting in their going to law one with another. Sins of uncleanness were prevalent; in fact they were not particularly grieved at the conduct of a most serious offender. There were disorders in worship, several prophesying at once and others speaking with tongues when there was no interpreter. The women also were disregarding the devotional covering, appearing in worship uncovered. The church was profaning the Lord's Supper by making it a time of feasting. Among them were those who abused their liberty by eating meat offered to idols. Finally, some were raising questions concerning the resurrection, either denying it entirely or offering problems concerning its nature.

Paul's object in writing was twofold: first, he desired to correct the disorders that had arisen; and second, he wished to answer the questions that were submitted to him.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-9.
- II. Divisions Rebuked, 1:10—4:21.
- III. Disorders in the Church, 5, 6.
- IV. Answers to Inquiries, 7—15.
- V. Collections for the Poor, and Closing Messages, 16.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-9.
- II. Divisions in the Church, 1:10—4:21.
 1. The factions named and rebuked, 1:10-31.
 2. Paul's preaching, spiritual and spiritually discerned, 2.
 3. The work of Paul and of Apollos both on the foundation, Jesus Christ, 3.
 4. Paul, as a minister of Christ and as an apostle, to be heeded as their spiritual father, 4.
- III. Disorders in the Church, 5, 6.
 1. The incestuous offender, 5.
 2. Their lawsuits, 6:1-8.
 3. Impurity, 6:9-20.
- IV. Answers to Inquiries, 7—15.
 1. Marriage, 7.
 2. The use of meat offered to idols, 8:1—11:1.
 - a. The problem, 8.
 - b. The example of Paul, 9.
 - c. Israel's example an illustration of self-indulgence, 10:1-14.
 - d. Prohibition from participation in idol feasts demanded by fellowship at the Lord's table, 10:15-22.
 - e. The essential principle: All to the glory of God, 10:23—11:1.
 3. The devotional covering, 11:2-16.
 4. The observance of the Lord's Supper, 11:17-34.
 5. The use of spiritual gifts, 12—14.
 - a. The test of speaking by the Spirit of God, 12:1-3.
 - b. Diversities of spiritual gifts, 12:4-11.
 - c. Spiritual gifts the unifying power in the church, the body of Christ, 12:12-31.
 - d. The way of love better than the desire for spiritual gifts, 13.
 - e. The gift of prophecy preferable to that of tongues, 14:1-25.
 - f. Rules for the exercise of spiritual gifts, 14:26-40.
 6. The resurrection, 15.
 - a. The fact of the resurrection, 15:1-34.
 - b. The nature of the resurrection, 15:35-58.

V. Conclusion, 16.

1. The collection for the poor at Jerusalem, 16:1-4.
2. The visits of Paul, Timothy, and Apollos, 16:5-12.
3. Final exhortations and greetings, 16:13-24.

1. An Intensely Practical Epistle. This book is an intensely practical epistle and should be carefully studied for the light it throws upon the many problems that arise in the Christian Church. There is hardly a matter with which the epistle deals that does not find application today. Problems relating to factions, carnality, immorality, lawsuits, marriage, separation from worldliness, the devotional covering, speaking with tongues, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection are no more first-century than twentieth-century problems.

2. Factions in the Church. The contentions among the Corinthians call for attention. Who made up the several factions? The Pauline group were evidently those who were in full sympathy with the liberty of the Gentile Christians, over against the restrictions that the Jewish Christians might impose upon them. The followers of Apollos may have been those who admired his philosophy and rhetoric. Those who claimed the leadership of Peter were likely the sympathizers of Jewish forms and ceremonies. The adherents of the Christ party may have included those who submitted to no human teachers, but built their creed on Christ Himself.

The grounds for these factions are to be found in their lack of discernment of spiritual things. Paul had presented to the Corinthians the crucified Christ in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that their faith should stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the manifested power of God. By reason of their carnality they were unable to receive the things of the Spirit of God. Factions can find no place in a church whose sole foundation is Jesus Christ.

3. Immorality in the Church, 5. The Gospel met a real challenge in the degrading immorality of Corinth. A most debasing form of it was reported among the members. And worse still the church did not feel humiliated on account of the sin. Paul required excommunication of the offending member. In a later connection (6:9-20) Paul shows the sinfulness of immorality; it is a sin against the body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

4. Marriage, 7. The marriage bond is indissoluble. The particular problem encountered at Corinth was the matter of the continuance of the marriage relation in case the wife or the husband was not converted. Paul teaches that people in such a state should not separate. If either party forsakes the other, let the innocent remain unmarried so that a reconciliation be possible.

By reason of the peculiar circumstances of distress in which they are living the single life is good. In no case, however, should husband and wife separate by reason of existing conditions. If a father, however, feels that he is doing his virgin daughter an injustice by prohibiting her from marrying, he should exercise his liberty in permitting her to marry (7:36).

5. The Proper Exercise of Christian Freedom, 8—10. The problem of eating meat offered to idols gives Paul the opportunity of setting forth a vital principle of the Christian life. He first of all observes that, to the Christian, the eating of meat that has been offered to idols is not wrong in itself, because the idol is nothing. There were those in the church, however, who were not able to see this point; they felt that the eating of this meat made them partakers of idolatrous worship. The principle that Paul sets forth is that a Christian should not exercise freedom in cases where to do so would cause a weak brother to be offended. To substantiate his argument Paul refers to his own example (9:12) of forbearing to require remuneration for spiritual services, which was a principle under the law, in order that he might not abuse his power in the Gospel. To have demanded what was specifically written in the law might have caused some weak Corinthian Christians to stumble. Self-sacrifice on the part of Paul was better than to give the weak Corinthian brethren an occasion to glory in supporting him.

Indulgence even in that which is right may lead to sin (chapter 10). Israel's experience in the wilderness illustrates the proneness of human nature to drift into idolatry. It is necessary to bear in mind in all exercise of freedom that we should flee from idolatry because a still more vital principle is involved. Eating and drinking, whether at the table of the Lord or at the table of devils, involves fellowship with one or the other. A Christian can have no fellowship with devils. On

this account fellowship at the Lord's table involves separation from the table of devils. Whether, then, we eat or drink all should be done to the glory of God.

6. The Veiling, 11:2-16. While the teaching of the apostle on this subject arises incidentally as he aims to correct abuses pertaining to its practice, at least two vital matters are given. First, it is made clear that the wearing of a veiling by Christian women in times of praying and prophesying bears all the credentials of a Christian ordinance: (a) The command has proper authority, that of an apostle. (b) The words indicating its institution are explicit. Study the entire section, but especially verse 5, "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." (c) The practice involves an act in the physical realm that carries a spiritual significance: The veiling is a sign of submission of woman to man and of recognition of the leadership of man. (d) The command was practiced literally in the apostolic church; the women of Corinth wore the veiling at the command of Paul. The second vital matter pertains to a profound underlying principle involved in this Christian ordinance: the principle of headship in the relation of woman to man, man to Christ, and Christ to God.

7. The Use of Spiritual Gifts, 12—14. The treatment of this problem leads Paul to give some matchless teaching with reference to the work of the Spirit in the church. There are diversities of gifts, differences, administrations, and diversities of operations, but the triune God is found in all of them. The manifold gifts are all from the Spirit, divided to every man severally as the Spirit wills. An instructive analogy is found between the human body and the body of Christ. In the perfect unity of the body each part performs its special function. So it is in the body of Christ. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers," and so on through all the spiritual offices (12:28-30).

There was an inclination on the part of the Corinthians to magnify the gift of tongues because it seemed to display the Spirit's operation the most vividly. Paul advises them to covet earnestly the best gifts. Rather than to seek the display of a spiritual gift the apostle shows a more excellent way, the display of love in their lives. This "Hymn of Love" is understood

best in its setting. The inner life of love it to be desired in preference to the manifestation of a spiritual gift for personal glory.

If we follow after love, we may properly desire spiritual gifts. The gift especially to be desired is that of prophecy.

8. The Resurrection, 15. Paul's emphasis of the fact of the resurrection is of inestimable value to the twentieth-century Christian. In proof of it he uses the same method found throughout the entire Bible, the appeal to the testimony of eyewitnesses. By reason of this scientific presentation of evidence the Christian is able to place perfect confidence in the fact of Christ's resurrection.

Christ's resurrection in turn becomes proof of our being raised. The nature of our resurrection is made clear by the analogy of seed that is sown. The seed must first die. The body of the plant is different from the body of the seed. So it shall be in the resurrection. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." A glorious mystery is then revealed. It is the Lord's return and the resurrection. On the basis of this hope Paul could well conclude, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Second Corinthians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 57. A few weeks or months after the First Epistle. Written from Macedonia, possibly from Philippi.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Shortly after writing the First Epistle Paul left Ephesus for Troas where he hoped to meet Titus whom he had sent to Corinth. Not finding him there, the apostle passed over to Macedonia where the two met. The great anxiety of the apostle was relieved in part by Titus' report. The majority of the church had submitted in genuine repentance. II Cor. 7:9-11. The chief offender had been excommunicated and had repented. But there was still a vigorous faction that refused to recognize the apostle's authority. According to Gloag: "Their animosity to the apostle was greater than when he wrote the First Epistle. They brought forward new charges. They accused Paul of lightness and irresolution—changing his mind, purposing at one time to come and at

another time resolving not to come, as if he were afraid. II Cor. 1:16-18. They charged him with pride and arrogance—seeking to exalt himself above them, and to exercise dominion over their faith. II Cor. 1:24. They insinuated that he was artful and cunning in his conduct. II Cor. 12:16. They openly denied his apostleship, and refused to acknowledge his authority. II Cor. 12:11, 12. And they contrasted the severity and boldness of his letters with the contemptible nature of his personal presence. II Cor. 10:10." From this it is seen that Paul's motives of service were attacked. The confidence of these opposers must be won.

With tremendous emotion the apostle writes. Two purposes are manifest: confirmation and commendation of the obedient portion of the church, and defense of himself against the charges and new insinuations of his enemies. It appears from 13:10 that he desired to put the church into a frame of mind that his work among them at his arrival need not take on the character of discipline but of edification.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-11.
- II. Paul's Principles of Action, 1:12—7:16.
- III. The Collections for the Poor at Jerusalem, 8, 9.
- IV. The Defense of His Apostleship, 10:1—13:10.
- V. Conclusion, 13:11-14.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-11.
- II. Paul's Principles of Action, 1:12—7:16.
 1. Reasons for the changes in his plans, 1:12-24.
 2. The penitent offender to be restored, 2:1-11.
 3. The nature of Paul's ministry, 2:12—6:10.
 - a. Triumphant, 2:12-17.
 - b. Accredited, 3:1-3.
 - c. Spiritual and glorious, 3:4-18.
 - d. Honest, 4:1-6.
 - e. Suffering, 4:7-18.
 - f. Hopeful, 5:1-9.
 - g. Solemn, 5:10-13.
 - h. Christ-impelled, 5:14-17.
 - i. Reconciling, 5:18-21.
 - j. Approved, 6:1-10.
 4. The appeal for separation and cleansing, 6:11—7:1.
 5. Paul's innermost motives laid bare, 7:2-16.
- III. The Collections for the Poor at Jerusalem, 8, 9.
 1. The example of the Macedonians, 8:1-5.
 2. The exhortation to abound in the grace of giving, 8:6-15.
 3. The mission of Titus in regard to this collection, 8:16-24.
 4. The encouragement to give liberally and cheerfully, 9.

IV. The Defense of His Apostleship, 10:1—13:10.

1. The divine authentication, 10.
2. His godly jealousy for the Corinthians, 11:1-15.
3. The apostle's glorying in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, 11:16—12:10.
4. Paul's signs of apostleship, 12:11-18.
5. Final warnings, 12:19—13:10.

V. Farewell Exhortation, Salutation, and Apostolic Benediction, 13:11-14.

1. **The Autobiography of Paul.** This epistle "was written with unusual emotion," says Purves. "It reflects the agony through which he (Paul) had been passing. It is an unequaled revelation of the personality of the apostle. In it he relates his religious experience, describes his actions and motives, justifies his authority, pours out his love, reviews his life, rebukes and pleads, chastises his traducers, and cheers his friends; and all with a rush of language and sudden transitions of thought which betray the highly wrought condition of his mind. No other of his letters is so autobiographical. In none are we permitted to approach so near to the personal life of the apostle."

2. **Paul's Principles of Action, 1:12—7:16.** The charges against the apostle impugned his motives. How shall he prove his honesty? This epistle is the answer to such a question. After he gives explanation for the changes of his plans and urges forgiveness of the penitent offender, he lays bare before his opponents the nature of his ministry. In spite of their attacks against his good name he could feel that God was causing him to triumph in Christ (2:14). No letters of commendation were needed for him; they were a living epistle known and read of all men (3:2). In contrast with the ministration of condemnation under the law, Paul's ministry was spiritual and glorious (3:6-18). Paul's ministry was marked by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God (4:1-6). He had suffered much for Christ's sake, and was bearing in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus (4:7-18). In his soul there flashes the hope of laying aside this earthly tabernacle, but since we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ it behooves him to labor that he "may be accepted of him" (5:1-10). Knowing the terror of the Lord in judgment he persuades men. He does this even

though he may be accused of being beside himself (5:11-13). But the driving motive of his life, that which impels the apostle to continue in the service of the Lord, is Christ's love for him. God had committed to him the ministry of reconciliation, and so his message as an ambassador for Christ is, "Be ye reconciled to God" (5:14-21). The persecutions and sufferings which he bore for Christ's sake approved him as a minister of God. What a ministry this is! It cost Paul all this suffering in order to show the Corinthians that his motives of service were honest.

On this account the appeal for separation and cleansing (6:11—7:1), and his claim to honesty (7:2-16), could not fail to produce the desired results.

3. The Defense of His Apostleship, 10:1—13:10. This defense of his apostleship is possibly the most vehement ever made by Paul. Even the fiery language of chapters one and two of Galatians hardly shows more indignation. His enemies might belittle him by reason of his weak bodily presence and contemptible speech, but God, nevertheless, had authenticated his authority (10). Paul demonstrates his godly jealousy over the Corinthians. Surely they could not accuse him of false motives in view of all his labors of love among them (11:1-12). And should they still be inclined to doubt the apostle's sincerity they should look at his record of stripes, stonings, perils, weariness, painfulness, hungerings, thirstings, fastings, cold, and nakedness, not to mention the care of all the churches (11:16-33). Even the thorn in the flesh should serve to commend his integrity of character. When in addition to all this the sign of an apostle in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds were wrought through him, it was needful that they should recognize God's approval of him (12:1-21).

Key Words and Peculiar Expressions

In the words of Farrar, "Tribulation is the one predominant word, and 'consolation under tribulation' the one predominant topic of the first great section. . . . This incessant recurrence of the same words—now 'tribulation,' now 'consolation,' now 'boasting,' now 'weakness,' now 'simplicity,' now 'manifest,' and 'manifestation,' now 'folly'—is characteristic of the extreme emotion of the mind in which the letter was writ-

ten." Peculiar to this epistle are the following words and phrases: veil and to unveil, tabernacle, to be clothed upon, to be absent, to be present, to supply, without or beyond measure, to be chargeable to, and to be a burden to.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Has the twentieth century outgrown the problems of the Corinthian church?
2. Show how the existence of factions in the Corinthian church was an index of their carnality.
3. State the principle of Christian freedom.
4. Give reasons for believing that the veiling is a Christian ordinance.
5. Why is the gift of prophecy to be preferred to that of tongues?
6. Compare Paul's emphasis of the fact of Christ's resurrection with that of the Gospel writers.
7. How does the resurrection of Christ become proof of our resurrection?
8. Show how the circumstances leading to the writing of Second Corinthians left their impress upon the book.
9. In what sense is this epistle autobiographical?
10. What purpose of sufferings have you observed in Second Corinthians?
11. Name the ten characteristics of Paul's ministry (see Outline for Study under Second Corinthians).
12. There are at least two Scriptural gems on giving found in chapter 8. Locate them.
13. Was Paul's bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible?
14. Quote the promise given to Paul when he asked the Lord to remove the thorn in the flesh. Also the closing benediction.

Lesson III

The Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians

Galatians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 57. Written from Ephesus.

The Churches of Galatia.—Two views are held with reference to the location of these churches, both appearing to have strong evidence in their support. Notice is given to both because they are recognized by many of the new Bible maps. On the older theory the churches of Galatia were established on the second missionary journey and were situated in Galatia proper, a section of country lying to the north of but not including the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They were revisited in the third journey, and the epistle written from Ephesus shortly afterwards. The other view, advanced by Sir William Ramsay, holds that the churches of Galatia were those of the Roman province of Galatia, a larger territory, including the cities named above and to which the epistle was addressed. On this view the churches were founded on the first journey, revisited on the second, and the epistle written some time before the third. While preference is given to the former view, the latter has very much to commend it.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Shortly after Paul arrived at Ephesus from his visit to the Galatian churches news came to him that Judaizing teachers had made their appearance among these churches, were attempting to undermine the apostolic authority of Paul, were preaching a Gospel that tended to re-establish the observance of the law, and that many of the Galatians were being turned away from the true Gospel.

Paul's authority was involved, but much more so his Gospel. The defense of both becomes the objective of the epistle. It is, therefore, the *magna charta* of Christian liberty.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Introduction, 1:1-10.
- II. Defense of Paul's Authority, 1:11—2:21.
- III. Defense of Paul's Gospel, 3, 4.
- IV. Practical Application, 5:1—6:10.
- V. Conclusion in Paul's Own Handwriting, 6:11-18.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Introduction, 1:1-10.
 1. Apostolic address and greeting, 1:1-5.
 2. The occasion for the epistle, 1:6-10.

II. Defense of Paul's Apostolic Authority, 1:11—2:21.

1. The claim to be proved: My Gospel received by revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:11, 12.
2. The proof from Paul's life, 1:13—2:21.
 - a. Before conversion, a zealous Jew, 1:13, 14.
 - b. The conversion resulting from the revelation of Christ to Paul, 1:15, 16.
 - c. After conversion, no dependence on the original apostles, 1:17-24.
 - d. Paul's apostolic authority recognized at the Jerusalem Council, 2:1-10.
 - e. Peter, an original apostle, withstood by Paul, 2:11-21.

III. Defense of Paul's Gospel: Justification by Faith and Not by the Works of the Law, 3, 4.

1. The experience of the Galatians: The Spirit received through faith and not through works of the law, 3:1-5.
2. Abraham justified by faith, 3:6-9.
3. A curse brought by the law, 3:10-14.
4. The law subordinate to the promise, 3:15-18.
5. The law temporary, designed to witness against sin and to bring us to Christ, 3:19-29.
6. The former bondage contrasted with present freedom, 4:1-11.
7. The former affection for Paul, 4:12-20.
8. The relation of the two covenants of law and grace typified by the history of Hagar and Sarah, 4:21-31.

IV. Practical Application, 5:1—6:10.

1. This liberty to be maintained, but not to degenerate into license to sin, 5:1-15.
2. License to sin prevented by the walk in the Spirit, 5:16-26.
3. The law fulfilled in forbearance and brotherly sympathy, and in sowing to the Spirit, 6:1-10.

V. Conclusion in Paul's Own Handwriting: The Motives of the Judaizers Exposed, the Proper Object of Glorifying, His Authority Not to Be Disputed, and Benediction.

The detailed outline serves to show that the epistle is argumentative from the beginning to the end. The first sentence is not completed before we learn that it was "written in the white-heat of inspired indignation."

The address of the epistle presents the two purposes of Paul's writing: defense of his apostleship, and the presentation of the Gospel as a deliverance from the present evil world by the atoning death of Jesus Christ (1:1-5). In Paul's statement of the occasion for writing, he marvels that so soon the Galatians are turning away from the Gospel of Jesus Christ to an-

other kind of Gospel which is not another (1:6-10). They are totally diverse. The former is a redemption from the bondage of sin by the power of God through faith in Jesus Christ, while the latter is a futile attempt to save one's self through keeping the law and a nominal faith in Jesus.

The defense of Paul's apostleship is a masterful one. In a few words the apostle points to the special revelation of Jesus Christ to him on the way to Damascus which led to his surrender to the Lord. During the seventeen years intervening his conversion and the Jerusalem council he had no contacts with the original apostles through which he could have gained his authority or Gospel. At this council he was recognized as an apostle, and later he could even rebuke the chief of the apostles.

The defense of his Gospel is the same as given in Romans, though much briefer, and by no means a mere condensation of it. It is a presentation of the same doctrine with the purpose, however, of meeting the attacks of the Judaizers. Among other points Paul emphasizes the impossibility of being justified through the works of the law (2:16). The apostle had died to the law that he might live unto God (2:19). He appeals to the Galatians' experience of conversion through the work of the Spirit as evidence of the efficacy of the Gospel (3:1-5). He shows that this principle of justification by faith was true in the case of Abraham and was not laid aside in the giving of the law. In fact the law is subordinate to the promise (3:6-18). In order to make clear that the law did serve an important function, he states that it was added because of transgression, designed to show the sinfulness of mankind and to lead us to Christ (3:19-29). A final point the apostle makes is the impossibility of placing trust in the law for justification and in Christ at the same time (4).

The practical portion (5, 6) of the epistle strikes the same note as that in Romans. It is in the Spirit that we should walk so as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh. In striking contrast Paul lists the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. No one has any ground for believing that the method of salvation taught by the apostles leaves any room for license to sin.

At verse 11 of chapter 6 Paul takes the pen from his secretary and finishes the letter in his own hand. Once more he

returns in thought to the Judaizers and uncovers their motives of self-glory. Against this Paul remonstrates, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Key Words and Expressions

Law, liberty, flesh, spirit, faith, to justify, to be justified, bondage, to be in bondage, the promise, the cross, beggarly elements, and the marks of Jesus.

Ephesians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 62. Written from Rome.

The Church at Ephesus.—"Ephesus was the capital of the Roman proconsular province of Asia. . . . It was a large and populous city, commanding a large share of the commercial interest of Asia Minor." It was famous for the great temple dedicated to the goddess Diana which attracted great multitudes of people to its religious ceremonies. A most flourishing business in the city was the manufacture and sale of silver images of the goddess. The inhabitants of the city were noted for "luxury and voluptuousness, and for the practice of magical arts."

Paul's work in this city was begun at the close of the second missionary journey, but his chief labors there occupied a later period of three years. Acts 19. A strong and prosperous church was established as a result of his very intensive work.

Destination, Occasion, and Object of the Epistle.—While the title of the epistle in the Authorized Version states that it was written to the Ephesians there are evidences to show that it was a circular letter for the churches in the Roman province of Asia. It appears that the occasion of the writing of this epistle was the prospective trip of Tychicus to the Colossian church, which made it possible for the bearer to deliver an epistle to the Ephesians as well. According to 1:15, Paul had heard, doubtless through Epaphras, of the faith and love of the churches in and around Ephesus. Unlike the Epistle to the Colossians Paul did not write to combat error, but rather to establish the truth. "He desired to strengthen the faith and encourage the hopes of the Christians" in the churches addressed.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Doctrinal—The Christian's Calling, 1—3.
- II. Practical—The Christian's Walk, 4—6.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Salutation, 1:1, 2.

II. Doctrinal—The Christian's Calling, 1:3—3:21.

1. Thanksgiving on account of the Christian's high calling, 1:3-14.
2. Prayer for knowledge of the hope of His calling, 1:15-23.
3. New creatures in Christ Jesus by the grace of God, 2:1-10.
4. Both Jew and Gentile partakers of this grace and built together into a holy temple, 2:11-22.
5. Paul the messenger of this grace, and of the mystery of the church, 3:1-12.
6. Paul's prayer for spiritual power, 3:13-21.

III. Practical—The Christian's Walk, 4:1—6:20.

1. Exhortations to Christian unity, 4:1-16.
2. Exhortations to holiness, 4:17—5:21.
 - a. The old life and the new, 4:17-24.
 - b. Heathen vices and Christian virtues, 4:25—5:2.
 - c. The walk as children of light, 5:3-21.
3. Exhortations to the Christian family, 5:22—6:9.
 - a. Wives and husbands, 5:22-33.
 - b. Children and parents, 6:1-4.
 - c. Servants and masters, 6:5-9.
4. The Christian warfare, 6:10-20.

IV. Conclusion, 6:21-24.

1. **The Theme of the Epistle.** The epistle is concerned with the church as a unified body of Jews and Gentiles in Christ Jesus. In developing this theme the apostle is occupied first of all with the high calling of the child of God, whether Jew or Gentile, a calling which makes all mankind one in Christ Jesus. The practical portion of the epistle shows how these called ones should walk. It is a walk in which an endeavor is made to keep the unity of the Spirit. His work in the believers has for its goal a spiritual body whose head is Christ.

2. **The Christian's Calling, 1, 2.** God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This high position unto which we have been predestined is that of adoption of sons, and its purpose is expressed in the words, "That we should be to the praise of his glory."

This calling is one that requires the quickening power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish, for in time past we "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" But now, having experienced by His grace this regeneration, we are made nigh by the blood of Christ and

have access unto the Father Now "we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

3. Paul's Teaching Concerning the Church, 3. With reference to the body of Christ, the church, Paul is led to give the profoundest truth found in all his writings. God from all eternity had a divine purpose in Christ of which the church, the whole body of Christ, is the result. The great mystery made known to the apostle was God's plan of making Gentiles fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel. The church, instead of being an after-thought in God's mind, is the perfected means for the salvation of mankind.

4. The Christian's Walk, 4:1—6:9. In this epistle Paul again shows the close relation between faith and life. In words of strong appeal he says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." By these words his readers are led to see that their high calling properly requires on their part a walk or manner of life consistent with it. Equally instructive is the key that the author furnishes for a worthy walk. It is the work of the Spirit through the church in the individuals as well as in the entire body. This work extends to the minute details of life and enters into the various relationships of life.

5. The Christian Warfare, 6:10-20. Paul enlightens the Ephesians with reference to the spiritual conflict in which the believer is engaged. For success in this warfare it is necessary to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." The whole armor of God must be worn in order to stand against the wiles of the devil. In the extended comparison made between the several parts of this armor and the spiritual means for defense and for the overthrow of the foe, the effectiveness of truth, of righteousness, of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, of faith, of salvation, of the Spirit, and of the Word of God, is clearly revealed.

Key Words and Characteristic Expressions

The key word is unity. Other characteristic expressions are: heavenly places, grace, riches (occurring in such phrases as riches of grace, riches of glory, and riches of Christ), and

mystery. The last word is used in the sense of a secret once hidden but now revealed.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Who were the Judaizers and what did they attempt to do?
2. What doctrine is discussed chiefly in the Epistle to the Galatians?
3. Compare Gal. 5:17-26 with Romans 8.
4. What is the central doctrine of the Epistle to the Ephesians? Discuss it.
5. What does Paul have to say about the Christian's walk?
6. Name the parts of the Christian's armor. Is this armor sufficient to cope with the foes of the Christian?

Lesson IV

The Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians

Philippians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 63. Written from Rome.

The Church at Philippi.—Philippi was a city of Macedonia founded by Philip of Macedon and given the privileges of a Roman colony by Caesar Augustus. It was situated at “the confluence of streams of European and Asiatic life,” and “was a Roman colony on Greek soil, with Grecian language, usages, and religion.”

It was thus an ideal place for Paul to open work in Europe. After he had come to the city in response to the Macedonian call, the apostle's labors resulted in the establishment of a flourishing church. It appears “to have been one of the most pure and generous of that age.” A strong affection grew up between Paul and this church.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—When Epaphroditus was about to return to Philippi from his visit to Paul, the opportunity presented itself to the apostle to address an epistle to this church, thanking the Philippians for their liberal offering to his necessities. The expression of thankfulness to the Philippians is the special object of the letter. It is accordingly a letter of gratitude, and at the same time he attempts to reconcile some differences that were existing among them as well as to warn them against error.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Thanksgiving and Prayer, 1:1-11.
- II. Account of His Own Experience, 1:12-30.
- III. Exhortation to Follow the Example of Christ, 2:1-18.
- IV. Reasons for Sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to Them, 2:19-30.
- V. Paul's Example, 3:1-21.
- VI. Exhortations Resumed, 4:1-9.
- VII. Thanks for the Gift of the Philippians, 4:10-20.
- VIII. Salutations and Benedictions, 4:21-23.

1. **A Fourfold Analysis.** Some see in the book four great themes, one to each chapter, which, while they may not serve as an accurate outline of the book, do suggest their rich contents. They are: (a) Christ, the Believer's Life, Rejoicing in Spite of Sufferings; (b) Christ, the Believer's Pattern, Rejoicing in Lowly Service; (c) Christ, the Object of the Believer's

Faith, Desire, and Expectation: and (d) Christ, the Believer's Strength, Rejoicing over Anxiety. The particular value of this analysis is that it shows how vitally Paul binds up his thanksgiving, prayers, experiences, exhortations, and warnings with Christ his Lord.

2. **Paul's Account of His Experience, 1:12-30.** The experiences of such a faithful servant of Christ are always worthy of study. Note the interpretation of his bonds and afflictions. Observe his determination to defend the Gospel of Christ. Meditate upon his thoughts of departing to be with Christ and his willingness to remain with the Philippians for their good.

3. **The Humiliation of the Son of God, 2:1-8.** From the point of view of doctrine this is one of the most important passages in the New Testament dealing with the incarnation of Jesus. In the first place, the absolute deity of Christ is clearly affirmed, "who, being in the form of God." In the second place, His true humanity is also stated, "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." In the third place, in His taking on Himself the form of a servant Christ did not cease to be God. The act of incarnation in brief is this: Christ who is true deity added to His divine nature a human nature. Jesus is at once all that God is and all that man is.

The application which Paul makes of this doctrinal truth is very instructive. It was the supreme example of humiliation, the perfect model for mankind. We should have in us the same mind as Christ had when he stooped to take upon Himself our human nature.

4. **The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, 3:7-14.** Paul might have gloried in the flesh, but if he had done so he would have failed to gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. The attainment of this knowledge is gained through being found in Him. Its full realization is found in the resurrection of the dead. On this account all purposes, all aims, and all aspirations are bent to the goal, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

5. **Think on These Things, 4:8.** The closing exhortations of the last chapter are all so precious that choice among them for comment is difficult. Observe the endearing terms (v. 1), the exhortation to rejoice (v. 4), the admonition in view of the Lord's being at hand (v. 5), and the peace that passeth all un-

derstanding (v. 7). How the apostle would have the Philippians fill their minds with good things! Think on the true, the honest, the just, the pure, the lovely, the things of good report. Finally, the gem of contentment, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (v. 11).

Key Words

Joy is the keynote. "I rejoice, 'ye rejoice,'" says Bengel, "is the sum of the epistle." Other words are love and unity.

Colossians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 62. Written from Rome.

The Church at Colossae.—Colossae, one of the chief cities of Phrygia, and situated near Laodicea and Hierapolis, formed the sphere of labor for Epaphras. It appears from 1:7 that Epaphras founded the church. Paul had never visited the city, but it is likely that the church was founded during his three-year residence at Ephesus.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The occasion for Paul's writing to the Colossians is found in the visit of Epaphras to Paul during his Roman imprisonment. A number of things reported by Epaphras concerning the Colossian church were in the form of commendation, but some other matters caused the apostle grave concern. An insidious and dangerous heresy had found its way into the church. The leaders of this heresy were evidently Jewish Christians who aimed to combine with Christianity the speculations of the philosophers. By their ascribing to angels the work of creation and of mediating in redemption between God and man, the supreme dignity of Christ was denied. Even the worship of angels was introduced into the churches. Certain ascetic and Judaizing practices were also being taught.

Paul's purpose in writing was to correct these errors. The epistle is a "full-length portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Son of Man (both deity and humanity)." In a word Paul's object is a presentation of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Introduction: Salutation, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, 1:1-13.
- II. Doctrinal Portion: The Person and Work of Christ, 1:14—2:23.
- III. Practical Exhortations, 3:1—4:6.
- IV. Personal Salutations, 4:7-18.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Introduction: Salutation, Thanksgiving, and Prayer, 1:1-13.
- II. Doctrinal Portion: The Person and Work of Christ, 1:14—2:23.

1. The pre-eminence of Christ in relation to God, the universe, and the church, 1:14-29.
 2. The pre-eminence of Christ as against the errorists, 2:1-23.
- III. Practical Exhortations, 3:1—4:6.
1. To show their union with the risen Christ, 3:1-4.
 2. To put off the old nature, 3:5-11.
 3. To put on the Christian graces, 3:12-17.
 4. Special injunctions to wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and master, 3:18—4:1.
 5. Special injunctions concerning prayer and thanksgiving, and concerning conduct and speech, 4:2-6.
- IV. Personal Salutations, 4:7-18.

1. **The Doctrinal Portion of Ephesians and Colossians Compared.** Great similarity may be observed between the doctrinal sections of these two epistles. The Epistle to the Colossians is polemical, and aims at the refutation of heresy; while the Epistle to the Ephesians is a positive presentation of doctrine, and aims to establish truth. Godet has expressed the contrast clearly: "The central idea of the Epistle to the Colossians is this: Christ the Head, from whom the body derives its nourishment; while the central idea of what we call the Epistle to the Ephesians is the Church, the body which Christ fills with His divine fullness, and raised to sit with Him in the heavenly places."

2. **The Pre-eminence of Christ, 1, 2.** The presentation of the deity of Christ in this epistle is not the first case in the Bible where the appearance of heresy in the church was the occasion in which the Spirit led a writer to give such sublime teaching as found in this part of the book. Christ is true deity; He is the image of the invisible God. Proofs of this fact are found in His work of creation and in His relation of headship to the church.

The pre-eminence of Christ is also proved in His work of redemption. In brief, His blood was efficacious to reconcile all things unto Himself. It is possible for every man to be perfect in Christ.

His pre-eminence is seen clearer still when comparison is made with the vain philosophy of men. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" and in Him we are complete. He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. The rudi-

mentary things to which the errorist would have the Colossians descend to observe are merely "a shadow of things to come." How then could they begin to worship angels and by so doing turn away from the worship of Christ?

3. **Risen with Christ, 3:1-17.** Paul uses the same illustration here as he used in Romans 6 to show the kind of life that the Christian should live. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The same conflict is also seen in the flesh. Here we are told to **mortify** our members, and to **put off** certain sins. Also we are told to **put on** the new man; **put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; and above all **put on** charity. What a clear ringing testimony that the life of the Christian is different from that of the worldling!

4. **Special Injunctions, 3:18—4:6.** As in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul shows that the new life in Christ has applications in all human relationships. Thus he instructs, in turn, wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants, and masters. The admonition to them turns on the phrase "in the Lord." Those who belong to Christ have a new kind of relationship to one another. In the pagan society the wife was a servant of her husband. She had few if any rights of her own. In Christ she was given new dignity, but her new standing was not to be interpreted so as to invalidate the principle of the headship of the husband which was established by creation. The difference in the relationship is made clear in the phrase, "as is fitting in the Lord." Husbands, on the other hand, were to take Christ's headship of the church as the pattern for their relationship to their wives. (Compare Eph. 5.) They were to love them as Christ loved the church. Just as the husband and the wife belong to one another in the Lord, so the children belong to the parents in the Lord. They are responsible to the Lord for their children.

The same relationship carries into other social and economic areas of life. Servants were to work for their masters as though they were working for the Lord. And masters were to deal with their servants as they would expect the Lord to deal with them. One should compare carefully this passage with the longer treatment in Eph. 5:22—6:9.

Paul concludes his admonition with three exhortations.

1. "Continue steadfastly in prayer."
2. "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders."
3. "Let your speech be always gracious."
5. **Closing Greetings, 4:7-18.** This greeting is typical of the others. Several interesting facts are brought to light here.
 1. Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon, is being sent back home along with the carrier of the letter. Compare Philemon.
 2. Paul's Jewish friends and co-workers are few by this time. He names Mark and Justus as the only ones.
 3. Luke, the author of Acts and the Gospel, is attending him in his imprisonment.
 4. He makes mention of a letter which he is sending to the Laodiceans and urges them to read it. As far as we know, this letter is completely lost, unless perchance it is the book we call Ephesians. It is only probable that there are other such letters which have been lost too, but we can thank God for the rich variety and adequacy of doctrine in the ones which have been preserved by His providence.

Key Words

Fulness, to fill, to fulfill, all, every, knowledge, mystery, and riches.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What precious lessons have you learned from a study of Paul's experiences as described in Phil. 1:12-20?
2. Describe the humiliation of Christ as found in Phil. 2:1-8. Have you caught the force of Paul's illustrations?
3. Study Paul's, "This one thing I do" (Phil. 3:13). What is the necessity of such a single aim in life?
4. What errors did the apostle have to refute in the Epistle to the Colossians?
5. Is Christ pre-eminent in your life?
6. Study the conflict of those who are risen with Christ. In what power is this conflict successfully waged?
7. What is the new factor in a Christian's social and economic relationships?

Lesson V

The Epistles to the Thessalonians

First Thessalonians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 52. Written from Corinth.

The Church at Thessalonica.—Thessalonica was situated in Macedonia and was the capital of one of the four districts of that province. Located at the head of the Thermaic Gulf and on the great Egnatian highway, the city was fitted to become one of the starting points of the Gospel in Europe, which explains the fact that from this city "sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place."

This city was visited by Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey, and after three weeks of work a church made up largely of Gentiles was established. Having been driven from the city by the intense oppositions of the Jews, the missionaries departed, leaving the church with difficulties which caused the apostle much anxiety. From Athens Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage and comfort the newly planted church in their persecutions. On Timothy's return from Thessalonica with news of their steadfastness, he having rejoined the apostle at Corinth, Paul desired to revisit them, but being hindered in this desire, he wrote the letter instead.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The immediate occasion for writing the letter was the coming of Timothy and Silas to Paul at Corinth. While Timothy was able to report favorably concerning the church, there were nevertheless conditions which needed the attention of the apostle. Heathen vices still ensnared some of their number. Others were holding to erroneous views of the return of Christ. Many were concerned about the death of their friends, fearing that they should not participate in the glories of Christ's coming. The object of the epistle was to encourage and comfort the church and also to correct the erroneous ideas afloat in the church.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Historical: Reminiscences of the Thessalonians' Experiences and Paul's Concern for Them, 1—3.
- II. Practical: Warnings and Exhortations Centering on the Second Coming of Christ, 4, 5.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Historical Portion, 1—3.
 1. Salutation, 1:1.

2. Gratefulness expressed with reference to their conversion and progress, 1:2-10.
3. The apostle's purity and blamelessness of life among them, 2:1-12.
4. Renewed expression of thankfulness, and reference to Timothy's work among them, 2:13—3:13.

II. The Practical Portion, 4, 5.

1. Warnings against impurity and exhortations to Christian love and earnestness of life, 4:1-12.
2. The second coming of Christ, 4:13—5:11.
3. Closing exhortations, injunction, and benediction, 5:12-28.

1. **Introduction.** First Thessalonians was probably the first of the Pauline epistles to be written. We notice immediately that it does not follow the pattern of doctrinal and practical which we have seen in most of Paul's letters. But we do find in it the same spirit and teaching that is amplified in later letters. He mentions, for example, their election (ch. Eph. 1), the power of the Gospel (I Cor. 2:1-5; Rom. 1:16, 17). He presents his own life as an example of piety to be imitated. He reminds them of his practice of working for a living, and his carefulness not to be a burden to them (cf. II Cor. 11:7-9). His concern over them reminds one of his letter to the Galatians.

2. **Reminiscence, 1—3.** In the first chapters Paul recalls for them his own period of labor with them, and how they had responded to the message of salvation. The commendations given to this church are worthy of study. A beautiful trilogy of grace is found among them: "work of faith," "labor of love," and "patience of hope." Their persecutions and afflictions, their testimony for the Lord, and their looking for the coming of Christ are all to be commended.

3. **Practical Exhortations, 4, 5.** The second part of the book consists of a series of exhortations interwoven with doctrinal teaching. The word "finally" marks a transition from the historical to the practical.

The first problem which he deals with is **purity in the marriage relationship**. In the pagan society promiscuous sexual relations were very prevalent, and marriage vows were taken quite lightly. Paul reminds these new Christians that the marriage relation is sacred—a part of their sanctification—and monogamous. Further, he says that physical passions must be kept under careful control. He follows this with a tactful exhor-

tation to more fervent love for each other, and more diligence in their everyday work and business. The word "study" in the Authorized Version (verse 11) means make earnest effort. He hints here at a condition which becomes more explicit in the Second Epistle, namely, that some were not working for a living, but were idle troublemakers and gossips. Study II Thess. 3:10-15 for more details. Evidently there were some at Thessalonica who were so confident that the Lord would return in a few days, or weeks at most, that they had decided to stop working and wait it out (cf. II Thess. 2.3).

The next two paragraphs (4:13—5:11) were evidently written in answer to questions which had come to him from the Thessalonians. The first question was concerning **the part that the dead saints would have in the Parousia** (second coming) of Christ. Paul assured them that the dead in Christ will not miss any of the glory of participating in Christ's coming. He says that those who are alive will not precede—the Old English word "prevent" meant precede—those who have died because the first great act in the final drama is the resurrection of the believing dead. The second question was concerning **the time of the second coming**. Paul does not discuss the time as such. He merely tells them that the coming will be sudden and unannounced. It will be when the unbelievers are not expecting it. This is what he means when he likens it to a thief's coming. Some have read a secret coming called a "rapture" from this passage. They teach that when Jesus comes for His saints, the world will not know it. But the thief is a symbol of unexpectedness, not of secrecy. Compare Peter's words in II Pet. 3:10 where he says that the Lord will come as a thief, at which time the heavens will pass away with a great noise. Such a cataclysmic catastrophe will hardly be a secret. The Christian need not be caught unawares. He is to be watching and sober. He is even now living continually in Christ's presence.

Paul closes with a series of exhortations:

1. To respect the local church leaders.
2. To live in peace with each other.
3. To encourage and admonish those who are weak, discouraged, or disorderly.
4. To practice nonresistance.
5. Some have seen in verses 16-22 a perfect octave of prac-

tical injunctions which, if put into practice, lead to holy Christian living. All of these exhortations from verse 12 on are vital to full-orbed Christianity.

Key Words

Coming and Gospel of God.

Second Thessalonians

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 53. Written from Corinth.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—A few months after the writing of the First Epistle information was brought to Paul of conditions among the Thessalonians. His epistle had brought comfort to those who were distressed over the death of their friends. The Thessalonians were making progress in faith and in love, and there was much to cause thanksgiving on the part of the apostle. New problems were arising, however. It seems that a forged letter as from Paul had been received by the Thessalonians, which gave the impression that "the day of Christ is at hand." On this account many were ceasing from their regular duties of work and were becoming busybodies, interfering with those who desired to work. In addition persecutions were still raging around the new church.

The object of the letter was to supply additional comfort to the Thessalonian Christians in their persecutions, to correct the errors that had arisen with reference to the time of Christ's coming, and to warn the idle and disorderly to return to the duties of work and settled living.

Outline

- I. Thanksgiving for Faithfulness, and Comfort in Persecution, 1.
- II. The Day of Christ and the Man of Sin, 2:1-12.
- III. Exhortations and Instructions, 2:13—3:18.

1. **Comfort in Persecution, 1:5-12.** A new view is given of persecutions and tribulations: they are the "manifest token of the righteous judgment of God." At the revelation of Jesus Christ the wicked shall meet judgment of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. It is then that He shall be "glorified in his saints."

2. **The Day of Christ and the Man of Sin, 2:1-12.** In order to correct the error "that the day of Christ is at hand," Paul teaches that "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." No antagonism exists between Paul's teaching pertaining to the time of Christ's return as found in the First Epistle and the Second.

Salmon's solution seems clear: "The one epistle presents our Lord's Second Coming as possibly soon, the other as not immediate—as needing that certain preliminary signs should first be fulfilled." Some attempt to solve the apparent difficulty by distinguishing between the coming (parousia) of Christ and His revelation, (apokalupsis), holding that Paul is speaking of the former in the First Epistle and of the latter in the Second Epistle. This is hardly tenable since he speaks of Christ's return as His coming also in the Second Epistle.

The prophecy concerning the man of sin has its origin in the Book of Daniel (7:8, 25; 8:9-14, 23-25; 11:21-45) and in our Lord's Discourse on the Last Things (Matt. 24:4-26). Paul teaches that the coming of the man of sin is preceded by a falling away. He is the great opponent of God, and claims to be God. The "mystery of iniquity" is already at work, but is being held in restraint. What or who the restrainer is, is not stated. This was known by the Thessalonians, but has not been disclosed in the epistle. Some understand the Restrainer to be law itself, while others feel that a person is referred to and understand the person to be the Holy Spirit. The work of the man of sin is after the working of Satan with all the devices of the devil at his disposal. Many shall be deceived by his work and led to reject the truth and to have pleasure in unrighteousness. The end of this arch-opponent and of all who follow him is destruction. The awful reality of the antagonism between the man of sin and God serves as the basis of fitting warnings to faithfulness and patient waiting for Christ.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What traits of a model church are found in the church at Thessalonica?
2. How does Paul's teaching concerning the second coming of Christ serve as a basis of true comfort?
3. Describe the effects of Christ's return upon the wicked.
4. What does Paul teach in these epistles with reference to the departure from the faith?
5. What does Paul teach concerning the man of sin and his evil work?
6. What are five practical exhortations which Paul gives?

Lesson VI

The Pastoral Epistles and Philemon

First Timothy

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—Difficult to determine, probably A.D. 66. Written during Paul's release from the Roman imprisonment recorded in the Book of Acts, probably from Macedonia.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—During the period of Paul's release and his labors at Ephesus he was suddenly called to Macedonia, and, being delayed in his plan of returning to that city, he felt the need of communicating with Timothy whom he had left in charge of the work there. The object of the epistle was twofold: first, to exhort Timothy to counteract the developing heresies found in the church; and second, to instruct him in the duties which pertained to his office as bishop of the Ephesian church.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Instructions Concerning the Church, 1—3.
- II. Personal Instructions to Timothy, 4—6.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Instructions Concerning the Church, 1—3.
 - 1. Salutation and warning against false teachers, 1.
 - 2. Instructions concerning worship, 2.
 - 3. Instructions concerning church officers, 3.
- II. Personal Instructions to Timothy, 4—6.
 - 1. With reference to false doctrines and practical errors, 4.
 - 2. With respect to the treatment of various classes in the church, 5:1—6:2.
 - 3. Concluding warnings against dangerous elements in the church, 6:3-21.

1. **Paul's Release from the Roman Imprisonment Recorded in Acts.** Since the date of the writing of this epistle depends upon whether or not Paul was released from prison, the evidence for belief in his release is briefly presented. First, Paul confidently expected to be released. Phil. 1:25; 2:24. Second, the treatment received previously by Roman officials makes his release probable. Third, tradition asserts his release, evidence being given to it by Clement of Rome, the Muratori Fragment, and Eusebius. Fourth, it is quite impossible to place First Tim-

othy and Titus in the narrative of Acts. Fifth, Second Timothy cannot be satisfactorily assigned to the imprisonment of Acts. Compare II Tim. 4:20 with Acts 20:15 and 21:29.

2. First Timothy a Pastoral Epistle. After studying a number of Paul's epistles pertaining to doctrine or the Christian life it will be seen that this and the two following are distinctive in nature. They are letters to bishops and deal with an overseer's work. It is necessary for the veteran apostle to warn young Timothy against false teachers, urging him to "war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience." Some matters pertaining to worship also needed attention, such as prayer for kings and governments, proper apparel for women, as well as their proper sphere in worship.

Especially valuable are the instructions with reference to the qualifications for bishops and deacons. With rapid strokes Paul states the necessary requirements of these offices which if faithfully adhered to would insure steadfastness and progress in the church.

Warning is given with reference to the departure from the faith in the "latter times." Whether Paul refers the "latter times" to the end of the world, or thinks of the entire day of grace as being this period as John states (I John 2:18), the practical import of the warning is the same. It is all the more to be heeded since the warning appears in one of the leave-taking epistles of the great apostle. Soon he shall lay down his armor, and with him the other of the remaining apostles, and then the church which Christ purchased with His own blood will have to face the enemy's assaults without their inspired guidance.

The instructions for dealing with the various classes in the church are words of wisdom, especially for the youthful Timothy. It should also be noted that Paul does not omit mention of the teaching with reference to support of the ministry (5:17, 18), as well as numerous other instructions pertaining to discipline in the church.

Key Words and Memorable Sayings of the Pastoral Epistles

Sound doctrine, faithful sayings, godliness, fables, genealogies, and vain babblings. Note also the memorable passages of I Timothy: 1:15; 2:5, 6; 3:16; 6:6, 10.

Second Timothy

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 67. Written from Rome shortly before his martyrdom.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The occasion for this letter is found in the apostle's desire to see Timothy before his death. Not knowing the issue of his impending trial, he writes urging Timothy to hasten to him before another winter (4:21). Paul also requests Timothy to bring Mark with him, also the cloak, books, and parchments left at Troas. "He writes this epistle," says Gloag, "with a view to stir up and encourage that Evangelist in his ministry; he exhorts him not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, to stand up boldly for the faith, and to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and he warns him against these false teachers, who were perverting the minds of the disciples, eating as a canker into the very heart of religion."

Outline

- I. The Greeting, Urging Courage and Faithfulness, 1.
- II. The Charge to Be Strong in Time of Apostasy, 2.
- III. The Coming of Perilous Times in "the Last Times," 3.
- IV. Paul's Last Charge: Preach the Word and Make Full Proof of the Ministry, 4.

1. **Paul's Legacy to the Church.**—This last epistle from the pen of the Apostle to the Gentiles is indeed a great legacy to the church. Considered as the parting message of the apostle it is significant that it is burdened with exhortations to courage and faithfulness in view of persecution, emphatic injunctions to be strong in time of apostasy, predictions of perilous times, and finally of a parting charge to preach the Word and to make full proof of the ministry in view of all these conditions.

Paul did not present to Timothy a hopeful outlook. Persecutions, apostasy, together with all the downward pull of the lusts of the flesh, must be confronted. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." "In the approaching corruption of Christianity, Paul directs Timothy to the true conservative principles of its purity; not new miracles nor a fresh revelation, but the doctrine in which Timothy had been instructed, and those Scriptures which make the man of God perfect, 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'"

Most precious of all are the words of his valedictory, which form an inspired estimate of his life and work. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2. **Faithful Sayings.**—These words occur, with slight variations, only in the Pastoral Epistles of Paul, in I Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; II Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8. They "were no doubt rehearsed constantly in the assemblies, till they became well-known watchwords in the various churches" established by Paul.

3. **Choice Gems.**—This last book of the apostle is rich in familiar and choice gems. Among others observe: 1:12, "For I know whom I have believed," etc.; 1:13, "Hold fast the form of sound words," etc.; 2:4, "No man that warreth entangleth himself," etc.; 2:11, 12, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him," etc.; 2:15, "Study to shew thyself," etc.; 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts," etc.; 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," etc.; 4:5, "But watch thou in all things," etc.; 4:18, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work," etc.; and 4:22, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."

Titus

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 67. Place of composition is doubtful, probably from Ephesus or en route to Macedonia.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Paul had placed Titus in charge of the churches of Crete. His purpose in addressing this epistle to the new bishop was "principally to give instruction in regard to the selection and appointment of office-bearers." He also desired to instruct and charge Titus with reference to dealing with false teachers. He "commands him to exhort and convince gainsayers, to stop the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers, to rebuke them sharply, and to reject heretics, if not brought to repentance after two admonitions."

Outline

I. Salutation and Instruction Regarding Ordination of Elders, 1.

- II. Pastoral Instructions, 2.
 III. Instructions Concerning Duties of Christians in Society, and Conclusion, 3.

1. Instruction with Reference to Ordination of Elders or Bishops, 1:5-9. Paul's use of the words **elder** and **bishop** is such that they are to be considered as referring to the same office. The word **elder** gave the idea of the office from the viewpoint of the age of the official who held it; while, on the other hand, the word **bishop** referred to the office from the viewpoint of the nature of the duties which pertained to the work of an overseer.

In the case of I Timothy Paul's instructions pertain to such matters as vitally affect the success of a bishop. It is noteworthy that the qualifications named pertain largely to matters of uprightness of character. Emphasis is laid upon faithfulness to God. It is through these qualifications alone that the unruly and vain can be effectively dealt with.

2. Pastoral Instructions, 2. In a well-ordered church every class must recognize certain duties. Thus aged men and women, young men and women, and servants, all should conduct themselves in a manner befitting their place.

3. Duties of Christians to the Civil Government, 3:1. Very briefly, Paul sets forth the fundamental principle of the Christian's relation to the civil government. It is that of subjection to principalities and powers, obedience to magistrates, and readiness to every good work. It should be observed that nowhere in Scripture are instructions given for the conduct of Christian civil officers. The reason for this fact is found in the principle of separation of church and state. Christians have no part in civil government.

4. The Christian's Conduct in the World, 3. The walk of the Christian is different from that of his former life. It is necessary that they who have believed in God should "be careful to maintain good works" (3:8).

Key Words and Special Phrases

Saviour is one of the leading words in the epistle. In an epistle which sounds warnings against unruly and vain talkers and deceivers it is natural to expect **sound doctrine** to be stressed. **Good works** as the practical issue of faith occurs frequently. Also **sober**, **soberminded**, and **soberly**.

Philemon

Author.—Paul.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 62. Written from Rome, and delivered to its destination by Onesimus and Tychicus who also carried the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Onesimus, a runaway slave from Philemon, had fled to Rome where in some way he came in contact with the apostle. He was converted through his preaching, and was returned to his master. Paul writes this private letter to Philemon in order that the latter might receive his runaway slave "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." Its purpose was to secure the freedom of Onesimus.

Outline

- I. Salutation, 1-3.
- II. Thanksgiving for the Character of Philemon, 4-7.
- III. Intercession for Onesimus, 8-21.
- IV. Closing Salutations and Benediction, 22-25.

1. **This Epistle an Example of True Christian Tact.** In every line of the letter the feelings that prompted its composition are seen. Davidson says, "Dignity, generosity, prudence, friendship, affection, politeness, skillful address, and purity are apparent. Hence it has been called with great propriety, **the polite epistle.** True delicacy, fine address, consummate courtesy, nice strokes of rhetoric, make it a unique specimen of the epistolary style. It shows the perfect Christian gentleman."

2. **Christianity and the Evils of Society.** This epistle shows the way in which Christianity grapples with the evils of society. It is noteworthy that Paul does not openly denounce slavery. The appeal is made, however, to principles, which if recognized by Philemon, would secure the freedom of Onesimus. When Paul advised the master to receive the slave as "above a servant, a brother beloved," the institution of slavery received its deathblow. This short letter from Christ's bondman at Rome has been called a divine act of emancipation.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Give reasons for believing that Paul was released from the Roman imprisonment recorded in Acts.
2. How do the Epistles to Timothy and Titus differ from the other epistles of Paul?
3. How does Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy constitute his legacy to the church?
4. What does Paul have to say with reference to the enemies of the church?
5. Memorize some of the choice gems from First and Second Timothy.
6. Study carefully the qualifications for the offices of bishop and deacon as given by Paul in First Timothy and Titus. Name the qualifications of each.
7. How does Paul in the Epistle to Titus describe the conduct of Christians among their fellow men?
8. Describe Paul's tactful approach to Philemon.
9. How does Paul's Epistle to Philemon give the deathblow to slavery?

Lesson VII

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Author.—Uncertain. So far as testimony outside the book is concerned Paul is the only person who receives enough support to receive consideration. A study of the internal evidence, that which the book itself gives, leads to no certain conclusion. The range of possibilities as to authorship seem to be limited to Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, and Luke. It should be clearly understood that doubt as to the authorship of this book involves in no way its canonicity. This has never been questioned.

Date and Place of Composition.—Date is uncertain, possibly A.D. 64. From 13:24 it has been inferred that the epistle was written from Italy.

To Whom Written.—Jewish Christians living in Palestine.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—"The Epistle to the Hebrews," says Lunemann, "was occasioned by the danger to which the Christians in Palestine, particularly in Jerusalem, were exposed, of renouncing again their faith in Christ, and wholly falling back into Judaism." See specially 6:4-6 and 10:26 ff. It appears that many had ceased to attend the Christian assemblies. The object of the epistle was to strengthen and comfort these Hebrew Christians in their persecutions, and to warn them against the danger of falling away to Judaism. In a positive way it aims to show Christianity as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types. The Old Testament revelation and institutions were preparatory to the New Testament revelation and institutions. The New Covenant, being far superior to the Old, supersedes it. Christianity is the final and perfected provision of God for the salvation of mankind.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Christ Superior to the Mediators of the Old Covenant, 1—7.
 1. Superior to angels, 1, 2.
 2. Superior to Moses, 3, 4.
 3. Superior to the Aaronic high priests, 5—7.
- II. The New Covenant Superior to the Old, 8:1—10:18.
- III. Practical Applications, 10:19—13:25.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Finality and Superiority of God's Revelation in His Son over That of the Prophets, 1:1-4.
- II. Christ Superior to the Mediators of the Old Covenant, 1:5—7:28.
 1. Christ as Son superior to angels as God's messengers, 1:5—2:18.
 - a. Testimony of the Scriptures to the superiority of Christ over angels, 1:5-14.

- b. Warning and exhortation, 2:1-4.
 - c. The voluntary humiliation of Christ a necessary step in the exaltation of humanity, 2:5-18.
 - 2. Christ as Son superior to Moses as servant in God's house, 3, 4.
 - a. Christ superior to Moses, 3:1-6.
 - b. Warning and exhortation, 3:7—4:16.
 - 3. Christ as Priest after the order of Melchizedek superior to the Aaronic priesthood, 5—7.
 - a. Qualifications of the high priest, 5:1-10.
 - b. Warning and exhortation, 5:11—6:20.
 - c. The Melchizedek priesthood, 7.
- III. The New Covenant Superior to the Old, 8:1—10:18.
- 1. The tabernacle under the Old Covenant merely a shadow of the true tabernacle, 8:1-5.
 - 2. The Old Covenant made old by the institution of the New, 8:6-13.
 - 3. The ordinances and sanctuary of the Old Covenant merely types of the better sanctuary and sacrifice of the New Covenant, 9.
 - 4. The impotence of the sacrifices of the Old Covenant compared with the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, 10:1-18.
- IV. Practical Applications, 10:19—13:25.
- 1. Warning against unbelief, and encouragement to faith, 10:19-39.
 - 2. The faith exercised by Old Testament saints, 11.
 - 3. Jesus the great example of faith and endurance, 12:1, 2.
 - 4. Trials of the Christian life and the necessity of peace and purity, 12:3-17.
 - 5. Warning against rejecting God's voice, 12:18-29.
 - 6. Duties of the Christian life, 13:1-9.
 - 7. Final comparison of the new and old dispensations, 13:10-15.
 - 8. Conclusion, 13:16-25.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a masterful presentation of the infinite superiority of Christianity over the Mosaic economy. Especially striking is the mode of argument. It is put into such form that the Jewish Christian who is falling away in unbelief to Judaism is led to place his faith again in Christ. The author moves through his superb argument without arousing the prejudices of the Jew. Whenever a point in the argument is proved, the author pauses to give appropriate warning and exhortation. Before the Jew is aware the magnificent structure of the law crumbles before his eyes and an infinitely superior structure takes its place.

The mode of argument used may be illustrated in this manner. Just as one has the right to admire the glory of the full

moon, so the Jewish Christian is allowed to behold the glories of the Mosaic dispensation. When, moreover, the sun rises in the East, and its glory outshines the glory of the setting moon, so the infinite glory of the Son of God outshines the glory of the Mosaic dispensation. The Jew is led to see the infinite superiority of the New Covenant to the Old.

1. Christ Superior to the Mediators of the Old Covenant, 1—7. The Epistle opens with a striking comparison between two stages of God's revelation: the one through the prophets, and the other through the Son. The superior place of the Son is seen in His being appointed heir of all things, in the unique dignity of His person as true deity, and in the finality of His atoning work. When the Jewish Christian compares the two, it presents no difficulty for him to see the infinite superiority of the revelation through the Son over that of the prophets.

The Son and angels are next held in contrast. The reason for the author's making this comparison is found in the fact that the Jews regarded angels as the mediators of the Old Covenant. The superiority of the Son is obvious. He is divine, exercises divine authority, performs divine work, and is eternal; while the angels, on the other hand, are God's messengers, sent forth to perform God's bidding. Then follows the first of a series of warnings (2:1-4) which is based on the point of the argument gained thus far. In a word the warning is: If the Son is superior to angels, the salvation proclaimed by Him dare not be neglected. If it is neglected, there is no escape from condemnation.

The humiliation of Christ, which was the stumbling block to the Jews and led them to regard Him less than angels, is next explained. He was made lower than the angels in order that the experience of suffering and death might be possible. The experience of death is necessary in order that He might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil. Christ's work is a high priestly one, and on this account it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren in order that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest. He must share with men their temptations in order to be able to sympathize with them in their temptations.

Having shown Christ to be superior to angels, the mediators of the Old Covenant, the author advances to a new compari-

son, this time between Christ and Moses. The great lawgiver was faithful in God's house, and so was Christ. The greatness of Moses is not to be minimized; it is to be seen in comparison with the greatness of Christ. The difference is that Moses was a servant while Christ was a Son in God's house. If Moses is worthy of great honor as a faithful servant, of how much more honor is Christ worthy as a Son? At this juncture another warning is inserted (3:7—4:16), having its basis in the strength of the argument proved thus far. The warning is this: If those who refused to believe Moses failed to enter into Canaan, what shall the loss of those be who refuse to believe Christ?

The priesthood of Christ and that of Aaron are now compared (5-7). This comparison is introduced by the presentation of two qualifications for that high office: first, the high priest must be able to sympathize with those for whom he ministers; and second, he must be appointed by God. Christ fulfilled both of these qualifications, and further, Christ, being a priest after the order of Melchizedek, has become the author of eternal salvation. A third time warning is given (5:11—6:20), and it seems that there is a progress in the intensity of these several warnings. Here it is shown that if there is a falling away, an actual apostasy from the faith, it is impossible to renew such to repentance. This severe warning is followed by an appropriate encouragement to place confidence in the promises of God who on the basis of two immutable things is unable to lie.

The author proceeds to carry out the comparison between Christ and Aaron. A number of times previously he had indicated that Christ is a priest after the order, not of Aaron as we might expect, but of Melchizedek. This significant fact is now explained. This Melchizedek was at once priest and king, and, so far as the Biblical record is concerned, he had no beginning nor end, he abides a priest continually. His greatness is grasped when it is recalled that Abraham paid him tithes and received a blessing from him. Both of these acts prove that Melchizedek is the greater of the two. But when Melchizedek is recognized as superior to Abraham, it follows that he is greater than Aaron as well, for Aaron paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham. Finally, since Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, He is superior to Aaron.

The inferiority of the Levitical priesthood becomes ap-

parent when it is hinted by David (Psalm 110:4) that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Aaron. A change of priesthood indicates the weakness of that which is removed. This is shown by the fact that the law made nothing perfect. The bringing in of a better hope, however, did prove effective, for by it "we draw nigh unto God."

2. The New Covenant Superior to the Old, 8:1—10:18.

The argument thus far has shown conclusively that Christ, who is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek, is by virtue of this order of priesthood a superior priest to Aaron. Christ need not offer sacrifices for His own sin and then for the people. Christ is a minister of the true sanctuary in heaven of which that on the earth is but a copy. The measure of Christ's more excellent ministry is found in the comparison of the Old and New Covenants of which the Levitical priests and Christ were ministers respectively. The superiority of the Second Covenant is seen in the fact that the first is removed to make room for the second. This superiority of the second to the first is proved in three respects: first, because the law of it should be written on the heart and not on stones; second, because it should be universal; and third, because it should be a covenant of forgiveness.

Once more the Jew is allowed to behold the ordinances of the old service. They are glorious indeed (9:1-10), but in spite of their magnificance he must be told that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." In sharp contrast with the blood of goats and calves Christ through His own blood entered into the holy place, "having obtained eternal redemption for us." His sacrifice did avail to the cleansing of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. On this account the covenant which He mediated is a better covenant.

And just as the Old Covenant was ratified with blood, so the New was ratified with the blood of Christ. It was His blood alone that availed to purify the heavenly things. Once in the end of the world He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9:26).

In one grand, final statement the author gathers up the strands of the argument into a powerful summary (10:1-18),

and shows that the law was only a shadow of good things to come. The temporary nature of the sacrifices is seen in the necessity of their being repeated, but Christ's work is permanent by reason of His perfect obedience. Herein is the value of Christ's sacrifice: He was the perfect sacrifice, God's own Son. When His sacrifice is made, God says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The climax of the author's argument is now reached as he says: "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

3. The Practical Applications, 10:19—13:25. With this conclusion reached, the author introduces a climactic warning (10:19-39). Sufficient grounds have been furnished for drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. To sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth there remains no more offering for sin. Those who despised Moses' law died without mercy. Of much sorer punishment shall those be worthy who tread underfoot the Son of God.

There is need of patience until our Lord comes. Now the just shall live by faith. This hope of eternal salvation, i.e., of heaven itself, is not a present realization, it rests on faith (11:1). None of the Old Testament saints realized the content of their hopes; by faith they lived, suffered, and died. With the company of witnesses who ran the race of faith let us also run with patience this race, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. A profound meaning is given to our present struggles; they are but the loving Father's chastisements, which, if we endure, will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

The last warning of the book is approached by the presentation of a glorious picture of the believer's access unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel (12:18-24). The words of warning are crushing to the unbeliever: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. . . . For our God is a consuming fire."

The last chapter of the book presents some beautiful duties of the Christian life. After a final comparison between the Old and the New Covenants and an admonition to go forth unto Christ without the camp bearing His reproach, the epistle is closed with an appropriate benediction and greetings.

Some Special Characteristics

The key word of the epistle is **better**. Two phrases constitute the keynotes: **by how much more, and a better covenant**. Other leading words are **priest, faith, and eternal**.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. State the occasion and object of the Epistle to the Hebrews.
2. Describe the mode of argument used in the Epistle to the Hebrews.
3. Why does the author compare Christ with the angels? In this contrast what is given with reference to the deity of Christ?
4. What reasons are given for Jesus' being made a little lower than the angels?
5. How is Jesus shown to be better than Moses?
6. How is Christ's priesthood shown to be superior to that of Aaron?
7. What is meant by Christ's being a priest after the order of Melchizedek?
8. In what respects is the New Covenant superior to the Old?
9. Wherein lies the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice?
10. Assemble the several warnings given throughout the book. Study them carefully. Can you give in one statement the substance of these warnings?
11. What relation does Heb. 11:1 establish between faith and hope?

Lesson VIII

The General Epistles

James

Author.—James the brother of our Lord.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 45. Written from Jerusalem.

To Whom Addressed.—The twelve tribes scattered abroad, by which Jewish Christians living outside of Palestine are likely meant.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—"The occasion of the epistle," says Kerr, "is to be found in the condition of those addressed. They were suffering persecutions; there was more or less strife and covetousness among them; and they were greatly disturbed by the experiences through which they were passing. These things led James to write the epistle." The object of the epistle is to set forth the principles of practical Christianity. It seeks to comfort these Christians in the trials through which they were passing, but especially to correct the errors of practice into which they had fallen, and to admonish them of the faults to which they were addicted.

Outline (for memory or study)*

- I. Trials and Temptations, 1:1-18.
- II. Hearing and Doing, 1:19-27.
- III. Respect of Persons, 2:1-13.
- IV. Faith and Works, 2:14-26.
- V. Control of the Tongue, 3:1-12.
- VI. False and True Wisdom, 3:13-18.
- VII. Worldly Lusts, 4:1-10.
- VIII. Censoriousness, 4:11, 12.
- IX. Self-confidence, 4:13-17.
- X. The Doom of the Oppressor, 5:1-6.
- XI. Patience in Suffering, 5:7-17.
- XII. Profanity, 5:12.
- XIII. Prayer for the Sick, 5:13-18.
- XIV. Saving Souls, 5:19, 20.

1. James Is the Earliest of the New Testament Writings. Like the Epistles to the Thessalonians this epistle bears a distinct flavor of primitiveness. "The Christian place of worship is still spoken of as a synagogue (2:2); Christians are not sharply discriminated from Jews (1:1); the sins rebuked and the errors corrected are such as would naturally spring up in a

Jewish soil; while there is not a trace of the controversies which already in the sixth decade of the first Christian century were distracting the whole church."

2. **The Theme of the Epistle.** To some the epistle does not reveal any logical order of method. Careful study will reveal a very definite and unified theme. Caldwell has put it like this: "Only that faith which controls the life and cleanses the heart and inspires deeds of love and mercy can save the soul." The same author says further: "Expressed in a single word, the theme of James is 'Consistency'; by which we mean that our walk must tally with our talk; that our manner of living must correspond with the faith which we profess." The epistle furnishes the key word *wisdom* (1:5—3:17), from which Erdman derives the theme **Christian Wisdom**. By this is meant "truth applied to life, creed resulting in character."

It will be profitable to study the outline given above with this theme in mind. It will be seen then how vitally faith enters into the practical matters of everyday living. Is one tempted? One who has faith will not yield to it. Consistency requires that one should do as one hears. There will be no respect of persons. A living faith will issue in good works; it will issue in control of the tongue; it will issue in keeping aloof from worldly lusts; it will rule out harsh judgments; it will manifest itself in real dependence upon God; it will keep one from oppressing the poor; it will lead to patience in suffering and the avoidance of profanity; it will prompt prayer for the sick; and finally it will lead one to convert him who has erred from the truth.

3. **Trials and Temptations, 1:1-18.** The word "temptation" is used in two senses in this context. The first sense is that of testing, while the second is that of temptation. God tests, but the devil makes of the test a temptation. This is the reason for the same word being used for the the two experiences.

James gives a keen insight into the nature of temptation. Its source is inward desire or lust. It is through lust that we are enticed and drawn into sin.

4. **No Conflict Between James and Paul.** Some have felt that James' teaching on the relation of faith and works is contradictory to that of Paul but the contradiction is only appar-

ent, not real. James is exposing a false idea of faith—a “belief that may exist without holiness of life, belief which may stop short at a verbal profession of orthodoxy, a barren, empty belief which fails to bring forth any fruit of goodness, mercy, love, compassion, holiness. Such a faith, says James, can not save the soul.” By faith Paul never meant a dead, inert faith. We have seen in our study of Romans and Galatians that faith to Paul meant one that “worketh by love.” The faith he speaks of is one that issues in holy living. See Rom. 6—8 and Gal. 5, 6.

5. **James and the Sermon on the Mount.** James presents the same picture of the ideal Christian life as Christ does in the Sermon on the Mount. Among other teachings observe the common teachings on the law, the danger and uncertainty of wealth, the futility of a mere profession of religion, the contrast between hearing and doing, prayer, forgiveness, swearing of oaths, censoriousness, etc.

Peculiar and Unusual Expressions

This epistle is rich in vivid expressions, many of which are drawn from natural phenomena. Among others note: “Driven by the wind and tossed,” “a double minded man,” “unstable,” “scorching wind,” “The Father of lights,” “shadow of turning,” “the course of nature,” “go to,” etc.

First Peter

Author.—Peter.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 64. Written from Babylon.

To Whom Addressed.—The strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The Revised Version translates the original more accurately as follows: “To the elect, who are sojourners of the Dispersion.” This would imply Jewish readers, as we have in James. There are evidences in the epistle which seem to indicate that there were also Gentile readers (4:3). It seems safe to conclude that it was addressed to all believers in the regions named, but especially to Jewish Christians.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Little is known as to the occasion for Peter’s writing this epistle. It is probable that Mark had brought information to Peter concerning the welfare of these churches which led the latter to address a letter to them by the hand of Sylvanus (Silas). The object of the epistle is expressed in the words: “Ex-

horting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (5:12). According to this statement its object is largely that of exhortation.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-12.
- II. Exhortations to Earnest Christian Living, 1:13—2:10.
- III. Exhortations in View of Special Relations, 2:11—4:6.
- IV. Special Exhortations and Conclusion, 4:7—5:14.

Outline (for reference and study)*

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving, 1:1-12.
- II. Exhortations to Earnest Christian Living, 1:13—2:10.
 - 1. To a holy walk in the fear of God, 1:13-21.
 - 2. To brotherly love, 1:22-25.
 - 3. To growth as the people of God, 2:1-10.
- III. Exhortations in View of Special Relations, 2:11—4:6.
 - 1. Sojourners and pilgrims, 2:11, 12.
 - 2. Citizens, 2:13-17.
 - 3. Servants, 2:18-25.
 - 4. Wives and husbands, 3:1-7.
 - 5. Innocent sufferers, 3:8-22.
 - 6. Opposed by sinners, 4:1-6.
- IV. Special Exhortations, 4:7—5:9.
 - 1. To the practice of Christian graces, 4:7-11.
 - 2. To joyful bearing of suffering as Christians, 4:12-19.
 - 3. To elders, 5:1-4.
 - 4. To the young, 5:5.
 - 5. To humility and watchfulness of life, 5:6-9.
- V. Conclusion, 5:10-14.
 - 1. Benediction, 5:10, 11.
 - 2. The bearer and object of the epistle, 5:12.
 - 3. Closing salutation, 5:13, 14.

1. The Theme of the Epistle. This epistle is pre-eminently the Epistle of Hope. Given to those suffering persecution, it inspires them to endure faithfully these sufferings in view of the Christian's hope of our Lord's return and of glory. Thus Christians have been begotten unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1:3). In this hope they greatly rejoice, though now for a season they are in heaviness through manifold temptations (1:6). But the trial of their faith will be found unto praise and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1:7). The end of their faith is the salvation of their souls (1:9).

Even Christ's sufferings preceded His entrance into glory, which order of experience was a problem to the prophets (1:10, 11). On this account Christians should gird up the loins of their minds and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:13).

2. The Duty of Patience Under Suffering and Trial. In view of this hope the trial of their faith is thought of as being more precious than gold that perishes (1:6, 7). It is acceptable with God to endure sufferings with patience, for Christ has left them an example that they should follow His steps (2:19-24). It is possible to be happy in suffering for righteousness' sake (3:13-18). They should not think it strange when fiery trials come upon them. Let them that suffer commit the keeping of their souls to God (4:12, 13, 19).

3. The Believer's Position in Christ, 2:9-11. Under the Old Covenant the people of God enjoyed a high position (Ex. 19:5, 6), but it was realized only in part. Peter uses the same language to describe the believer's position under the New Covenant: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," a position realized to a fuller extent than under the Old Covenant. To describe this high position Peter draws also from Hosea. Hos. 1:6-9; 2:1. His readers in times past were not a people of God (Loammi), but now are the people of God (Ammi); a people which had not obtained mercy (Loruhamah), but now have obtained mercy (Ruhamah). Yet another illustration from the Old Testament, drawn from the experience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as sojourners in the land of Canaan. They were not citizens, only strangers and pilgrims in that land. So Christians are strangers and pilgrims in this world; their citizenship is in heaven.

4. The Christian's Duty to the State, 2:13-17. This section is similar in thought to that expressed by Paul in I Tim. 2:1, 2 and Titus 3:1. It should be noted again that the Christian's duty to the state does not pertain to active participation in the affairs of government but to passive obedience to the powers that be. Peter supplies a worthy motive for obedience: "that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

5. Exhortations to Special Classes, 2:18—3:7. Again, in similar strain to the teaching of Paul, Peter gives instructions to servants, wives, and husbands. Servants are urged to be subject to their masters. Sarah is pointed out as a model to Christian women for adornment of a meek and quiet spirit, and of subjection to her husband. Husbands should give proper consideration to their wives, "giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel."

6. Instructions to Elders and to the Young, 5:1-5. Elders are instructed to feed the flock of God and to exercise the duties of their office willingly and of a ready mind. The younger of the congregation should submit themselves to the elder. On the other hand, all are to be "subject one to another," and to "be clothed with humility."

Leading Ideas

Hope, patience under suffering and trial, grace, and to do good.

Second Peter

Author.—Peter.

Date and Place of Composition.—A.D. 67, a short time before his martyrdom. Probably written on the way from Babylon to Rome.

To Whom Addressed.—It appears from 3:1 that it was addressed to the same readers as the First Epistle was.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—Peter had evidently heard of the outbreak of some new heresy among the Christians addressed in the First Epistle. It appears that the heretics were "denying the Lord that bought them," that is, His divinity (2:1), as well as the promise of His second coming (2:1 ff.). In their practice they were slandering God's mode of righteousness (2:2), and they denied the majesty of Christ. They threw disgrace on their profession of Christian liberty (2:19), and lived a degraded life (2:13). They also seduced the unstable with their own mode of life (2:14-18), and naturally enough were ripe for destruction (2:12, 19, 20).

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Knowledge of Christ, 1.
- II. The Teachers of Error, 2.
- III. The Coming of Christ, 3.

Outline (for reference and study)*

- I. The Knowledge of Christ, 1.
 1. The salutation: the gift of knowledge, 1:1-4.
 2. The exhortation: the growth of knowledge, 1:5-11.
 3. The promise: the grounds of knowledge, 1:12-21.
- II. The Teachers of Error, 2.
 1. Their punishment, 2:1-9.
 2. Their character and conduct, 2:10-16.
 3. Their evil influence, 2:17-22.
- III. The Coming of Christ, 3.
 1. The certainty, 3:1-7.
 2. The time and circumstances, 3:8-13.
 3. The consequent exhortations, 3:14-18.

1. The Knowledge of Christ, 1. The key word of the epistle is **knowledge**. The knowledge of Christ is not merely an intellectual but rather a spiritual attainment. It is gained through the practice of the beautiful graces of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. If "these things" are lacking, one's spiritual status must be held in question. On this account Peter admonishes, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," by doing "these things."

Some understand Peter in 1:15 to give a promise of a written record of the Gospel, which was fulfilled in Mark's writing of his Gospel under the authority of the apostle. This Gospel, being the record of the events of Christ's life, is the ground on which the knowledge of Christ rests. In other words, Christianity has its sure foundation in the facts of Christ's life. These facts are history, and are proved by the testimony of eyewitnesses. Peter saw the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, but more certain still than the testimony of eyewitnesses is the word of prophecy. It is more certain because prophecy has a divine origin while the testimony of eyewitnesses, certain as it is, possesses only human trustworthiness.

Incidentally it should be noted that when Peter thus describes the infinite trustworthiness of the word of prophecy, he gives us a profound clue to the origin of Scripture. In the first place, prophecy is not any person's private view of the future; the prophets did not give their own interpretation of

* Erdman.

events to come. It did not come by the will of man. In the second place, prophecy was given by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon men so that what they spoke came from God. The doctrine of inspiration is thus stated in a nutshell.

2. The Teachers of Error, 2. This chapter is a vigorous exposure of apostasy. There were false prophets in the past, there are false prophets in the present, and there shall be false prophets in the future, but all shall suffer the just judgment of God. By vivid illustration Peter uncovers their character, conduct, and influence. An exposure good for all time!

3. The Coming of Christ, 3. Already in the time of Peter men were raising questions with reference to the fact of our Lord's return, but such should not forget past judgments, notably the Flood. These scorners should also bear in mind that the delay in His coming is an expression of God's mercy. He is not willing that any should perish. The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which day this material world shall be destroyed and a new creation, the new heavens and the new earth, shall appear. In this new creation righteousness shall dwell. What a glorious outlook for the Christian! What an awful destruction for the wicked!

4. Peter's Legacy. This letter forms Peter's last message to the church. How noble are his last words: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Shortly after this, Christ's prediction concerning this apostle was fulfilled. John 21:18.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What is the theme of James? Show how this theme reveals a grand unity of thought in the book.
2. Show how trials and temptations are two sides of the same experience.
3. Reconcile the apparent conflict between Paul's teaching on faith and works with that of James.
4. Pick out similarities between James and the Sermon on the Mount.

5. What is the theme of First Peter? Why is this theme so fitting in a letter directed to Christians who are passing through severe persecutions?
6. Explain the high position of the believer as set forth in I Pet. 2:9-11.
7. What does Peter mean by the word **knowledge**? Memorize his addition table for attaining knowledge.
8. Compare II Peter 2 with the central section of Jude. What do these sections say with reference to the beliefs, character, conduct, influence, and punishment of false teachers?
9. How does Peter describe the Day of the Lord?

Lesson IX

The General Epistles

First John

Author.—John.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 90. Written from Ephesus.

To Whom Addressed.—Evidence seems to point to the destination of this epistle as being the same as the Gospel. Since we found that the Gospel of John was addressed to Christians in general, with the needs of the Christians in and around Asia specially in mind, it may safely be concluded that this was the destination of this epistle.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The specific occasion of the epistle may be difficult to discover. Reasoning backward from the evident purpose of the letter, it may be inferred that heresies were prevalent, in which the true deity and the true humanity of Christ were denied. These may have been Gnosticism and Ebionism. The object of the epistle is expressly stated by the author: "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (1:4), and again, "These things have I written unto you . . . that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13). Close study shows that John had several heretical beliefs in mind as he penned these lines.

It may be profitable to compare the object of the epistle with that of the Gospel. The latter was written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," while the former was written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." The Gospel leads to belief, while the epistle leads to assurance of salvation.

Outline (for memory or study)*

- I. Introduction: The Life Eternal Revealed in Christ, 1:1-4.
- II. The Life of Fellowship with God, 1:5—2:9.
 1. Tested by righteousness, 1:5—2:6.
 2. Tested by love, 2:7-17.
 3. Tested by belief, 2:18-29.
- III. The Life of the Children of God, 3:1—4:6.
 1. Tested by righteousness, 3:1-10.
 2. Tested by love, 3:11-24.
 3. Tested by belief, 4:1-6.
- IV. The Source of Love, 4:7-21.
- V. The Triumph of Righteousness, 5:1-5.
- VI. The Grounds of Belief, 5:6-12.
- VII. Conclusion: Christian Certainties, 5:13-21.

* Erdman.

1. The Life Eternal Revealed in Christ, 1:1-4. The opening of the epistle gives full proof that John had personal experience with the Word of life, Jesus. He was manifested in the world, and every test by which this manifestation may be verified has been made. According to John's testimony the presence of the Word of life is completely certified to his readers.

2. The Life of Fellowship with God, 1:5—2:29. The purpose of the incarnation is that we might have fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is a spiritual experience, and is possible only if we are like Him. God is light; hence if we would have fellowship with God, it is necessary that we walk in the light. This becomes the first test of our knowing whether or not we have fellowship with God. Do I walk in the light? Do I keep His commandments? If these can be answered in the affirmative, assurance is gained of being His child. This is the first test.

The second test pertains to one's affections (2:7-17). It has two aspects: (1) Do I love my brother? (2) Do I love the world? If in reply one is able to say that he has no hatred, malice, jealousy, and envy in his heart, he abides in the light. And also, if he can say that he does not love the world, the love of the Father is in him.

The third test has to do with belief. Do I believe that Jesus is the Christ? This question involves belief in all that Christ's deity includes, such as belief in His atoning work, belief in the Word of God, belief in the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, etc. If to this question an affirmative reply can be given, a third ground of assurance is gained.

It is seen in these three tests that a twofold result follows: (1) These tests lead to self-examination. (2) If they are faithfully applied, firm grounds of assurance that one is a child of God are gained.

3. The Life of the Children of God, 3:1—4:6. In somewhat the same fashion the apostle carries out the plan of the preceding section. It is by no means a mere repetition of the ground covered before. Here the center of thought is not that of fellowship but rather that of children of God. It is clearly shown that being called the children of God is a manifestation of His love. The children of God do not commit sin (the first test). The children of God love the brethren (the second test).

The children of God confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (the third test).

4. Interrelation of Love, Righteousness, and Belief, 4:7—5:12. A third time the apostle brings before the reader those three ideas of righteousness, love, and belief, but this time in a little different order. Here he shows the source of love. Love is of God. As to righteousness, we are made to see its triumph: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." As to belief, its grounds are set forth. The grounds of belief are found in the threefold witness from heaven and the threefold witness on the earth. In addition there is also the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

5. Christian Certainties, 5:13-21. We may know that we have eternal life. We know that He heareth us. We know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God is come. Christian certainties, indeed!

Key Words and Phrases

Truth, love, light, in the light, born of God, we know, ye know, keep His commandments, my children, little children, beloved, I write, and I wrote.

Second John

Author.—John.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 90. Written from Ephesus.

To Whom Addressed.—The elect lady and her children. Some have understood *elect lady* to refer to a particular church or else to the church in general, while others feel that the reference is to a certain Christian lady and her children. It may be that the word translated lady may be a proper name *Kyria*. It seems best to understand it as reference to a certain Christian lady and her children.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The occasion for John's writing to this lady arises out of her children being drawn away by the heretical teaching, possibly Gnosticism, that was sweeping over Asia Minor. The object of the epistle is that of warning to the mother and children of the danger to which they were exposed, and to exhort them to be steadfast and watchful.

I. Salutation, 1-3.

II. Counsel and Warning, 4-11.

III. Promised Visit and Greeting, 12, 13.

The epistle is a noble example of the vigilance of John in guarding a Christian mother in the conflicts of faith in a world of heretical beliefs. The warning is simple but fundamental. In a word it is this: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

It is remarkable that in this short epistle the word **love** occurs four times, **truth** five times, **Commandment** four times, and **walking** three times.

Third John

Author.—John.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 90. Written from Ephesus.

To Whom Addressed.—Gaius. It is probable though not certain that this is the person mentioned in Rom. 16:23 and I Cor. 1:14.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The occasion of this epistle is found in the fact that "Diotrephes had been using his authority in the church to resist the truth and protect heresy." Gaius, on the other hand, had received John's messengers and had treated them kindly. The purpose naturally follows. Diotrephes is to be condemned, and Gaius and Demetrius commended.

Outline (Erdman)

- I. Salutation and Writer's Joy, 1-4.
- II. Praise of Gaius, 5-8.
- III. Condemnation of Diotrephes, 9, 10.
- IV. Commendation of Demetrius, 11, 12.
- V. The Promised Visit and Greeting, 13, 14.

This brief epistle of praise, condemnation, and commendation is of special interest "from the insight it affords us of the Christian churches in the closing years of the first century." It should also be noted that even in their letters the apostles wrote as apostles, and in each they imparted "a savour of Christ."

Jude

Author.—Jude. Among the six Judes mentioned in the New Testament, the one upon whom most authorities agree is Jude, brother of the James who was bishop over the church of Jerusalem and the author of the Epistle of James. Thus he is a brother of our Lord.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 66. Written probably from Jerusalem.

To Whom Addressed.—The epistle is addressed to “Them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ and called.” While this address is general in form, it is probable that Jude had Jewish Christians of Palestine particularly in mind.

Occasion and Object of the Epistle.—The occasion of the epistle “was the growth of heretical opinions and the spread of immoral conduct, together with the desire of the writer to do something to check the progress of that which was threatening the purity of the church.” “The design of the epistle is clearly to guard the Christian Church against false teachers, who resolved religion into speculative belief and outward profession, and sought to allure the disciples into insubordination and licentiousness.”

Outline (adapted from Erdman)

- I. Salutation and Occasion of Writing, 1-4.
- II. The Sin and the Doom of the False Teachers, 5-16.
- III. Exhortation to the Faithful and Doxology, 17-25.

1. **Occasion of Writing, 3, 4.** It appears that Jude had contemplated writing along a different line, that pertaining to “our common salvation,” but existing conditions of apostasy led him to give exhortation that his readers should “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” The book becomes then a noble defense of the truth of the Gospel.

2. **The Sin and the Doom of the False Teachers, 5-16.** This section bears a close resemblance to II Peter 2. Whether or not Jude had Peter’s epistle before him when he wrote, does not concern us here. The exposure of the ungodly character of the false teachers is justly severe. Three examples of apostasy upon which God brought retribution are given by the author: (1) that of Israel for unbelief; (2) that of the fallen angels for pride; and (3) that of Sodom and Gomorrah for gross sensuality.

In the same manner these dreamers concerning which Jude writes “defile the flesh, despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities.” Their sin bears close resemblance to that of murderous Cain, greedy Balaam, and gainsaying Core. The picture of these evil teachers is made all the more abhorrent by the figures of speech which follow. These are spots (ARV, **hidden rocks**) in their (love) feasts, which cause shipwreck of souls, shepherds who feed themselves, caring nothing for the flock, clouds without water, trees withered and without fruit,

waves foaming out their own shame, and wandering stars, flashing light for a season but disappearing into eternal darkness. The punishment of these evil teachers is certain. When the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints, they shall meet just doom.

3. The Exhortation to the Faithful, 17-23. It is in the exhortation that Jude reaches the climax of his epistle. It is three-fold. First, they are reminded that the presence of these ungodly teachers is the fulfillment of what had been predicted by the apostles. Second, the exhortation is given: "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Third, Jude gives instructions for dealing with those in danger of being led astray. With some they should have compassion and others they should "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

In such a context the inspiring and challenging benediction of verse 24 and 25 is given. God is able to keep them from falling and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To such a God "be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Show how the teaching of First John revolves about three tests by which one's fellowship with God may be determined. Have you applied these tests to your own self?
2. How many things does John say that we know or may know?
3. What is the leading lesson by which you can remember the Second Epistle of John?
4. What is the leading lesson by which you can remember the Third Epistle of John?
5. From Jude's discussion of false teachers give reasons for earnestly contending for the faith
6. Show how Jude's exhortation in verses 20, 21 is sufficient for the safeguarding of the faithful.
7. Memorize the benediction given by Jude.

Lesson X

The Revelation of John

Author.—The Apostle John.

Date and Place of Composition.—About A.D. 96. Written from the isle of Patmos.

To Whom Addressed.—The seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Occasion and Purpose.—The book constitutes the revelation of Jesus Christ to John for the purpose of disclosing to him "the things which must shortly come to pass." This at once marks the book as prophetic.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. "The Things Which Thou Hast Seen," 1.
- II. "The Things Which Are," 2, 3.
- III. "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter," 4—22.

Outline (for reference and study, adapted from Orr)

- I. "The Things Which Thou Hast Seen," 1.
- II. "The Things Which Are," the Messages to the Seven Churches, 2, 3.
- III. "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter," 4—22.
 1. First series of visions: the seals and trumpets, 4—11.
 - a. The vision of the throne of God, 4, 5.
 - (1) Adoration of the Creator, 4.
 - (2) The seven-sealed book, 5.
 - b. Opening of six seals, 6.
 - c. The sealing of the 144,000 on earth and the vision of the triumphant multitude in heaven, 7.
 - d. Opening of the seventh seal: the seven trumpets, 8—11.
 - (1) Six trumpets sounded, 8, 9.
 - (2) The mighty angel with the little book, 10.
 - (3) Measuring of the temple and the altar, and the two witnesses, 11:1-14.
 - (4) The seventh trumpet sounded, 11:15-19.
 2. Second series of visions: the woman and the red dragon, the two beasts, and the seven vials, 12—16.
 - a. The woman and the red dragon, 12.
 - b. The beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth, 13.
 - c. Vision of the Lamb and the 144,000, 14:1-5.
 - d. Visions of the three angels, 14:6-12.
 - e. Blessedness of the dead in the Lord, 14:13.
 - f. The Son of man and the harvest of the earth, 14:14-20.

- g. Vision of the seven angels having the seven last plagues, 15.
- h. The seven vials poured out, 16.
- 3. The judgments, 17—20.
 - a. Judgment of the scarlet woman on the beast, and lament over her, 17, 18.
 - b. Announcement of the marriage of the Lamb, 19:1-10.
 - c. The Word of God and the final conflict: judgment of the beast, the false prophet, and their followers, 19:11-21.
 - d. The thousand-year reign: the devil bound, the first resurrection, and the reign of the saints with Christ, 20:1-6.
 - e. Judgment of Gog and Magog, 20:7-9.
 - f. Judgment of the devil, 20:10.
 - g. The second resurrection and the last judgment, 20:11-15.
- 4. The new heavens and the new earth, 21, 22.
 - a. The new Jerusalem, 21.
 - b. The paradise of God, 22:1-7.
 - c. Epilogue, 22:8-21.

1. **The First step toward the true interpretation of this book** lies in the recognition of its divine purpose. As stated above, it discloses "the things which must shortly come to pass." This marks the book as prophetic. One need not read far in the book to discover the reason for this disclosure. The churches to which it was addressed were passing through intense persecutions. The writer himself was their brother and companion in tribulation. The book is an expansion of Christ's words, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). It was designed to brace and fortify the Christians of the first century, as well as for all centuries until our Lord's return, for present and coming persecutions. Even though they are called upon to bend low in persecution, the Lord still reigns above. Their prayers are being heard, and they shall in due time be delivered from earth's conflicts. That interpretation which gives primary recognition to this purpose commends itself to acceptance.

2. **The second step toward the true interpretation of this book** lies in the recognition of the structure of this book. It will be seen that the book is built on the principle of seven. Thus there are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials, which are clearly marked. Some students feel that seven sevens may be found, but it may be best not to push this arrangement further than it is clearly indicated in the book.

Again, it is seen that there is a telescope arrangement i.e., one section develops out of the last part of the preceding section. Thus the seven trumpets are sounded in the opening of the seventh seal, the personages of chapters 12 and 13 appear in the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the judgments of chapters 17-20 grow out of the seventh vial.

In this connection it should be noted that history is carried forward a number of times to the second coming of Christ and judgment: 6:12-17; 11:15-19; 14:14-20; 16:12-21; and 19:11-21. Some feel that 20:7-15 is also a description of Christ's return and of judgment.

When the structure of the book is grasped, the second step toward the true interpretation is made.

3. The third step toward the true interpretation of the book lies in giving proper recognition to the special rules of interpretation that must be applied to a book abounding in figurative language. Bible students differ widely as to what is figurative and what is not, but all recognize that there is some figurative language in the book. It may be helpful to review briefly the several kinds of figures of speech which require special rules of interpretation. First, there is the **simile**, the direct comparison introduced by **like** or **as**, of which Psalm 1:3 is an illustration, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." The psalmist pictures the several aspects of the likeness in the remainder of the verse. Beyond this the comparison is not drawn. Not everything about the tree could serve as a comparison, only those that are given.

Second, the **metaphor** or implied comparison. Christ said on a certain occasion, "Go ye and tell that fox." Herod was not a fox, although certain traits of a fox were found in him. Third, the **parable**. It is a developed simile or metaphor. In the interpretation of the parable not every detail of the story is given a spiritual application. Fourth, the **vision**. A splendid example of the vision is found in the first chapter of Ezekiel. The details of what the prophet saw were not the reality of God, but "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." The usual clue to the language of vision is that which is **shown** by God and **seen** by man, as opposed to what God **says** and man **hears**. Rev. 1:1, 2.

The vision is the most complex, and consequently the most difficult to interpret. From the illustration of Ezekiel's vision of God it is clearly shown that to interpret the details of the vision as details of the reality, God, would lead to a ridiculous conception of God. On this account it is necessary for the student of the Book of Revelation to exercise exceeding care to discern what is vision and what is not, and when this is determined to remember that the details of the vision do not constitute the details of the reality lying back of the vision.

4. Systems of Interpretation. The interpretations of this book have been multitudinous in number, but they may be grouped under four heads. The preterist theory maintains that the predictive utterances of the book have had their fulfillment in the early ages of the church. The historical theory regards the book as a delineation of the great features of the history of the church from its beginning to its final consummation. The futurist theory holds that with the exception of the first three chapters, the book refers strictly to the last days, to the events following the "rapture" of the church. The spiritual theory regards the Revelation as the pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict in the development of the kingdom of God in relation to the kingdoms of the world.

A well-seasoned statement is given by Bishop Carpenter: "The Preterist may be right in finding early fulfillments, and the Futurist in expecting undeveloped ones, and the Historical Interpreter is unquestionably right in looking for them along the whole line of history; for the words of God mean more than one man, or one school of thought, can compass. . . . The visions of the book do find counterparts in the occurrences of human history. They have had these, and they will have these fulfillments, and these fulfillments belong neither wholly to the past nor wholly to the future. The prophecies of God are written in a language which can be read by more than one generation."

Exposition of the Book

1. "The Things Which Thou Hast Seen," 1. It should be borne in mind that the title of the book does not give the true idea of its contents. Although the book is an epistle written to

the seven churches of Asia it is not the Revelation of John, but of Jesus Christ. The blessing is pronounced not upon those who understood all that is contained in the book but upon those who read it, that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.

The benefits of Christ's atoning work are worthy of notice (1:5, 6). He "washes us from sin in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God."

The vision of Christ (1:9:18) is glorious indeed, and His relation to the seven candlesticks is instructive. Under the Old Covenant the symbolism of the candlesticks of the tabernacle was that of the people being lights in the world. Thus the seven churches with Christ in their midst were lights in the world. It is no wonder that warning forms an important part of the individual messages to the several churches, for some of them were failing to be light bearers to the world.

2. "The Things Which Are," 2, 3. The message to the seven churches of Asia, comprising this section of the book, show a common plan of instruction, commendation, and warning, and supply wholesome instructions to the church in general throughout the Christian era. In so far as the conditions found in those seven churches are representative of conditions throughout the entire Christian era, these messages are prophetic.

3. The Vision of the Throne of God, 4, 5. At the opening of this section John is called up to heaven to behold "things which must be hereafter." He is first granted a vision of the throne of God about which are gathered twenty-four elders. Four other creatures were also about the throne saying without ceasing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

4. The Seals Opened and the Trumpets Sounded, 6—11. The seven-sealed book is found in the hand of God, and "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" had prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals. One hears the music of the redeemed, the songs of praise to the Lamb that was slain. At the opening of five of the seals peace is taken from the earth, famine and death rage, and the martyrs are bidden to rest a little longer until their fellow servants and brethren should be killed. The

words to the martyrs (6:9-11) disclose a practical purpose of the book. Though many in the church from Pentecost until the return of Christ are called upon to lose their lives for Christ's sake, God will surely avenge their blood. In the opening of the sixth seal the day of wrath to the ungodly, the return of Christ, is come.

Before this vengeance takes place upon the wicked, the one hundred forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel are sealed. John is also allowed to behold an innumerable company of redeemed in glory, which he learns are those who have come out of great tribulation. Some, believing that John's being caught up to heaven symbolizes the "rapture" of the church, understand that these one hundred forty-four thousand of Israel and the innumerable company of every nation are the company of those who are converted after the church is taken from the earth, while others, holding that the return of Christ closes the day of grace for all mankind, regard them as the total company of the redeemed, the church itself.

Another comfort to persecuted Christians is found in John's vision of the disposition of the prayers of the saints. When crushed by the cruel arm of persecution, the saints may know that their prayers are being heard.

Six of the trumpets sound, each bringing upon the earth severe judgment. In all of these plagues the warning of God to sinful mankind is seen. They were allowed to come upon the world in order to lead men to repentance "that they should not worship devils, and idols" (9:20). The sad tragedy of it all is that they did not repent of their murders, their sorceries, their fornications, nor their thefts.

In chapter 10 the mighty angel declared that "there should be time no longer," and that "the mystery of God should be finished" at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, from which it appears that the consummation is again reached. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." It is the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that the righteous should be rewarded (11:15-19).

5. The Woman and the Red Dragon, the Two Beasts, and the Seven Vials, 12—16. The opposition of the devil to Christ and the people of God is pictured in chapter 12. This opposition is intensified in the two beasts described in chapter 13.

They blaspheme God and make war with the saints. A grim picture is presented: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword," but its practical message to the church that is enduring these cruelties is found in the words, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." The second beast demands worship and forbids buying or selling without his mark. For the roots of the prophecies concerning these two beasts the Book of Daniel, Christ's Olivet Discourse, and Paul's teaching concerning the Man of Sin should be consulted.

A third time we are granted a picture of the return of Christ and the judgment attending it (14:14-20). This time it is likened to the harvest of grain and of grapes.

Now the vials of God's wrath are poured out upon the earth. In the sixth and seventh of these (16:12-21) history is carried forward the fourth time to the judgment of Christ's return.

6. The Judgments, 17—20. The record of God's judgments continues. Babylon falls, and heaven rejoices. A fifth time the scenes of history are carried forward to the return of Christ, but just before this final conflict is described we are permitted to see the saints in glory, prepared for the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:1-10). In this account of the final conflict the Word of God is seen advancing and bringing the wrath of God upon all the ungodly.

Chapter 20 presents the vision of an angel binding the devil for a thousand years, of the first resurrection, of the reign of the saints with Christ, of the loosing of the devil, of the conflict of Gog and Magog, and of the final judgment. On the interpretation of this passage much earnest controversy has raged for many years. On the one hand, some are convinced that the true interpretation of many Old Testament prophecies requires a literal fulfillment: (1) in the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Hos. 3:3, 4; Ezek. 37:21-25; Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6, 7), with Christ sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:25-27; Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:3, 5, 9, 14-17; Luke 1:31-33), ruling in righteousness and peace over the entire world (Isa. 11:1-12; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 9:10); (2) in the rebuilding of the temple, with Mosaism re-established (Ezek. 40—48); and (3) in the entire world gathering to Jeru-

salem for worship through the Levitical priesthood in bloody sacrifices and feasts (Ezek. 43:19-27; Zech. 14:16-21). These hold that this thousand years is the Kingdom Age in which all these prophecies will be fulfilled. With reference to this passage in particular it is felt by the same interpreters that the language is literal and means accordingly that the devil shall be bound for a thousand years, that the saints only shall be raised at Christ's coming (cf. John 5:29; I Cor. 15:23; Phil. 3:11), that they shall reign with Christ for a thousand years, that the devil shall then be loosed for a short season again to work havoc in the world, culminating in the conflict of Gog and Magog, that the devil shall then be cast into the lake of fire, and that the wicked dead shall then be raised to be judged at the great white throne judgment.

On the other hand, there are those who believe: (1) that the Mosaic economy has forever passed away, having been fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 26:28; Gal. 4:19—5:15; Heb. 8:7-13); (2) that Christ established the Messianic kingdom in spite of the Jews' rejection of it (Matt. 21:43; Luke 12:32; Acts 2:30-36); (3) that this is the predicted day of grace for all men (Acts 2:21); (4) that when Christ returns to receive to Himself the church, the opportunity for salvation for all men closes (Matt. 13:40-43; 16:27; 24:36-51; I Thess. 5:1-9); and (5) that Christ's coming is for final judgment of the world (Matt. 25:31-46; II Thess. 1:7-9). With reference to this passage, it is held that its presence in a book abounding in figurative language gives grounds for believing that this is figurative also and that it should be interpreted in harmony with the unfigurative predictions of the future found elsewhere in the New Testament. The passage is understood to describe the reign of Christ which began when Christ said, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18; cf. Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20-23), and continues until Christ delivers the kingdom to the Father at His return (I Cor. 15:23-28). The binding of the devil is understood to be the effects of Christ's work upon the devil. Matt. 12:25-29; John 12:31; Heb. 2:14. The first resurrection is understood to be the spiritual resurrection. John 5:25; Rom. 6:4-6; Col. 3:1. The conflict of Gog and Magog is held to be identical with Armageddon.

The great white throne judgment is held to be the same as that described in Matt. 25:31-46; etc.

7. **The New Heavens and the New Earth, 21, 22.** Passing from the turmoil of this earth to the new creation we behold the glories of Paradise regained. If we have ever felt saddened at the loss of Eden, there is full reason to rejoice in its restoration, because there is clear indication that Eden is but the type of the glorious new creation. In a very real way "the former things are passed away." The long story of God's intervention to restore full fellowship with man reaches its culmination when the promise is realized that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Whether the Holy City is the abode of the people of God or redeemed humanity itself, may be difficult to determine; it is heaven for God is there. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

In the new Paradise the tree of life is again found, and the redeemed are privileged to partake of its fruits and to live eternally. The most sublime privilege granted to the redeemed shall be fulfilled when "they shall see his face" (22:4).

The Epilogue contains appropriate warning not to add to or take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, and the promise, "Surely I come quickly." Let every soul respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Explain the first step toward the true interpretation of the Book of Revelation.
2. Explain the second step toward its true interpretation.
3. Explain the third step.
4. What lessons that apply to present conditions in the church may be drawn from the messages to the seven churches?
5. What conditions in the world indicate that we are living in the times of judgment predicted by this book?
6. Describe the great white throne judgment.

7. Compare the glory of Paradise lost with that of Paradise regained.
8. What practical blessings have you gained from a study of this book?
9. Can you say from the heart, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

