

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES:

Early History and Law

By Harold S. Bender

A Bible Survey Course in Five Units

FIRST UNIT



OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

Early History and Law

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

THIRD EDITION

By

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction to the Study of the Bible	5
II. Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament	12
III. Primeval History	18
IV. Patriarchal History	28
V. From Egypt to Canaan	37
VI. The Moral and Civil Law	49
VII. The Religious Institutions and Ceremonies of Israel ..	55
VIII. Deuteronomy	64
IX. Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan	71
X. The Period of the Judges	80
Map of Palestine	79

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

Introduction to the Study of the Bible

The Purpose of the Bible

“The holy scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:15, 16). No merely human words can state more clearly and perfectly the purpose of God in giving mankind the Bible than these divinely inspired words written by Paul to Timothy nearly two thousand years ago. The great, supreme purpose of God’s revelation to man in His Word is to save men from sin through faith in Christ Jesus and to make them live perfectly the good life of righteousness, which is required of all who are the children of God. All use of the Scriptures should be in accord with this divine purpose. Bible study which does not lead sinners to salvation or which does not make saved men live holier lives is not spiritual. Whatever value such nonspiritual Bible study may have whether literary, historical, scientific, or moral, it is not the value which the child of God should seek. The Sunday-school worker who desires to fulfill satisfactorily his God-given task of teaching the Word should never surrender to the all too common temptation to deal superficially (though perhaps interestingly) with the Bible. He must deal spiritually with the Scriptures. He must bring forth treasures which the Holy Spirit may apply to the heart of the pupil or the listener. To do this he must first find spiritual food in the Word for himself.

In accord with this fundamental principle we approach the systematic study of the Bible with the prayer to God to be delivered from: (1) mere formal study without a heart desire for “the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9); (2) mere learning of facts about the

Bible or about the contents of the Bible without learning the application of the truth of Scripture to life; (3) mere memorizing of the words of Scripture without understanding the spiritual meaning of the words; (4) mere accumulation of knowledge without a willing obedience to the same.

A saving and sanctifying knowledge of the Word is possible only to those: (1) who give themselves to study with all diligence as desiring to be approved of God and not to please men; (2) who are willing to submit their minds in full obedience to the Word and bring every thought into captivity to Christ, surrendering all notions and opinions of their own or of any other Bible teacher if they conflict with the Word; and (3) who seek and secure by prayer and devotion the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is able to guide into all truth. To this end all the information which has been gathered by Bible students of all ages about the Bible as a whole, its transmission and translations, its interpretation and application, about the individual books and their authors, can and should be made use of. Every device for clearly presenting facts and truths and retaining the same in memory is legitimate. Mere sentimentality will avail nothing, and merely to go over the Bible in the same old "rut" of method or thinking will be unfruitful to a deeper knowledge of the truth. A person who does so may be one of those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

The Scripture as Revelation

"God, who . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son," said the writer of Hebrews, and again, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed." The important idea is that the Bible brings to man a message from God. The Bible is the record of what God has to say to man. In this record of God's great redemptive acts and the prophet's inspired interpretation of them both God's character and His will for us are revealed. This view of the Bible, which is that of Christ and the apostles, and which has been the view of the believing church of Christ in all ages and all lands, is in strict opposition to a common and widespread modern view which considers the Bible to be a record of man's attempt to find God, a product of

the religious experience of men—of great men, yes, but still men. The difference between these two views can be briefly stated thus: The Bible is the Word of God, or it is the word of men. If it is the word of men, it ceases to have final authority for the believer. If it is the Word of God, as we believe it is, then we must and will give to it the most earnest heed of which we are capable.

The Historical Nature of Revelation

The revelation of God in the Bible comes to us in historical rather than philosophical or theological garb. Its message begins with the beginning of history—"In the beginning God created"—and it ends with the consummation of history at Christ's coming—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Oftentimes students who are beginning their study of the Bible wonder why they must wade through so much seemingly unimportant historical material. A closer look, however, reveals that it is precisely here in this history that God is revealing His character and will to men.

A survey glance at the sweep of Biblical history will show its importance. In the story of the creation and fall the stage is set. Here we learn what man is and what his responsibility to God is. Here already the purpose of God to redeem mankind becomes evident. The great mid-point of Biblical history is the incarnation and death of Christ. All that precedes it—the call of Abraham, the formation of Israel and the giving of the law, the ministry of the prophets to a wayward, unfaithful people—is in preparation for it. God used the events of Israel's history to make known His purposes in Christ.

The writings of the New Testament cluster around the incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ, but they clearly point forward to the Parousia when history will be consummated, redemption completed, and God will be all in all. The writers of the Bible left out many events about which historians today would like to know. They say very little about cultural or political conditions. This is because they were not merely recording a chronicle of events in general; rather, they were portraying those particular events which reveal God's nature and plan for mankind.

The Bible as the Message of Redemption

The Bible is a book with one message, the message of redemption. There are many topics of interest, at least temporarily to mankind, on which the Bible is silent. The Bible is not an encyclopedia of all knowledge. It is not a textbook in all fields of learning. It is a textbook of final authority in the one thing which is needful, on the one topic of eternal interest to mankind, the topic of redemption. It teaches all that can be known and all that need be known about how sinful humanity may be restored to the image of its holy Creator. The whole of Scripture is focused on this theme; therefore all Scripture must be studied from this point of view. All Scripture history is the history of the unfolding, achievement, and completion of God's great redemptive work, which began with the first words of instruction, warning, judgment, and promise to our first parents in Eden, and which will close with the great act of God in completely redeeming both body and soul, in casting all iniquity into outer darkness, and in gathering the whole family of His precious redeemed sons and daughters from all kindreds, peoples, tongues, and nations to be forever in His presence throughout all eternity, enjoying His goodness and love.

Knowing the limited though all-important theme of the Scriptures, the Bible student will be content with the omissions of Scripture and will not criticize the Holy Spirit, nor will he seek to fill in the apparent gaps by his human speculation. He will rejoice that he is in full and complete possession of all needful truth and will see to it that this truth possesses him completely so that he will grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," to the praise of Him who hath redeemed us. Amen.

Methods of Bible Study

The Bible may be studied profitably in various ways.

1. **A topical study** goes through the Bible, selecting all the truth applying to a certain topic, to a doctrine, to an institution, to a character; as, for example, God, sin, the church, Paul.
2. **A historical study** traces the history of a man, a people, an institution, or a period of time, as it is presented in the Bible

in one or more books. Illustrations are: Moses, the Israelites, the temple, the period of the wilderness wanderings, the early church.

3. **A study of books** treats each book as a unit by itself, summarizing the contents of the book both historically and topically.

All three methods mentioned above require both analysis and synthesis. Both start with a careful, detailed study and conclude with a synthesis or combining of the details secured into a general, unified summary or whole.

The present manual will follow primarily the third method, treating each book by itself, but endeavoring to set forth both the history and the teaching contained in the book. Since the books of the Old Testament from Genesis to Esther are historical books which are filled primarily with narratives of the lives and experiences of men and peoples and present truth more by story, example, and analogy than by direct teaching of a doctrinal or practical nature, the primary emphasis in Unit I of the Bible Survey Course will be historical.

Rules of Interpretation for the Bible Student

A few common-sense, practical rules of interpretation should be adopted and honestly followed by every Bible student if he wishes to avoid wresting the Scripture to his own destruction, as some unlearned and unstable men had done already in Peter's time. Unless sound rules of interpretation are obeyed it is possible to prove almost any strange doctrine by Scripture. The best accepted rules of interpretation may be summarized as follows:

1. The plain literal meaning of words is to be followed unless the Scripture itself indicates a figurative meaning or unless recognized figures of speech and a figurative style of language are used. Figurative, obscure, or difficult language should be interpreted in the light of other clear Scriptures on the same subject that are not figurative, obscure, or difficult, and should never be used as the basis for the establishment of doctrines.

2. Scripture can best be interpreted in the light of the setting in which it was written. Hence a knowledge of the history, geography, customs, and general background of the time of the writing of a book, as well as an acquaintance with

the author's experiences and his purposes in writing will be of aid in interpretation.

3. The original meaning of Scripture as intended by the Holy Spirit is the one which Bible students should seek to find. Normally this is a single and not a double meaning, although there may be various applications of the original truth, and the passage may admit other interpretations which may in themselves be true. In case of certain prophecies the Holy Spirit in the New Testament indicates a second fulfillment, but great caution should be exercised by fallible human beings in suggesting second fulfillments where these are not indicated by Scripture itself.

4. No Christian doctrine can be established on the basis of Old Testament passages alone; it must be based on New Testament teaching. The New Testament must be used to interpret the Old Testament, but the Old Testament may not serve as a final guide to the interpretation of the New Testament.

5. Scripture interprets Scripture. The revelation of God in His Word is a harmonious unity without conflicting inconsistencies. Compare Scripture with Scripture to secure clear interpretation. A conflict between an interpretation of one Scripture passage and an interpretation of another Scripture passage is definite proof that one or both of the interpretations are in error and should be revised.

6. In case of difficulty in interpretation we should admit the difficulty and postpone decision about the meaning until more light has been secured rather than force an interpretation. As time goes on, and as we grow in grace and knowledge, we see deeper into the riches of God's truth. Yet there are depths and heights of revelation, as well as mysteries, in God's Word, which we will not fully understand until we see our Lord face to face, and "know even as we are known."

7. The final authority as to the meaning of a word or a passage is always the original language used by the author of the book, never a translation. The original language of all the New Testament books was Greek. The original language of all the Old Testament books was Hebrew, or, as in part of Daniel and a few verses of Ezra and Jeremiah, a modified Hebrew known as the Aramaic. Although a knowledge of the original

languages of Scripture is highly desirable, a number of reliable translations which are now available in various languages are quite satisfactory for the use of the average Bible student.

8. No Bible commentary, Bible dictionary, Bible help, Bible chart, or official creed, is inspired, nor is it final authority in the interpretation of a Scripture passage. All such aids are the product of fallible human minds, however devout and learned they may be, and are to be used with gratitude and caution. For this reason any type of Bible or printed form of Scripture which places comments or interpretations of human authors on the same page with the inspired Scripture itself, however useful the comments may be, may be a handicap to the Bible student for three reasons: (a) The student is inclined to transfer the authority of the inspired Word to the uninspired comments and therefore give undue weight to some one human author's interpretation; (b) the constant presence of human comments may obscure the direct testimony of the Scripture itself; (c) the student may do no thinking for himself. It is therefore recommended that the Bible student always use the text of the Word of God without comments or additions, both for his devotional reading and for his study. Interpreting Bibles should be considered as commentaries and used as such.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What is the purpose of the Bible? Quote II Tim. 3:15, 16.
2. Give four hindrances to, and three requirements for, effective Bible study.
3. What is the purpose of Biblical history?
4. Name and describe three methods of Bible study.
5. Give six rules of interpretation.
6. What is the central theme of the Bible message?

Lesson II

Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament

The Purpose of the Old Testament

“Now all these things happened unto them [i.e., to the people of the Old Testament] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition” (I Cor. 10:11). With these words Paul refers to the experiences of the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and gives the Corinthian Christians the divinely intended attitude toward the Old Testament writings; for certainly what applies to the experiences of the Old Testament church as recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, also applies with equal force to the experiences of the patriarchs before the entrance to Canaan, and to the people of God after their settlement in Canaan. We are to view the Old Testament history, therefore, as it is contained in the Old Testament books in divinely inspired narratives, as intended to contribute to the development of faith in Christ and to the promotion of righteousness in the believer. This purpose is stated clearly by Paul in the passage in his letter to Timothy, as quoted earlier. But the statement by Paul makes it clear that not only the historical narratives of the Old Testament but the whole of the Old Testament writings, including the poets and the prophets, were written for the profit of the man of God.

The spiritual profit of the Old Testament arises out of the fact that, as Jesus said to the Pharisees whom He found searching the Scriptures, they testify of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, the Son of God. Jesus demonstrated this fact in detail to the two disconsolate disciples walking to Emmaus on the resurrection day when, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). This does not mean that there is specific teaching about Christ on every page of the Old Testament, nor even in every single book, but that the theme of the Old Testament as a whole and throughout is the re-

demptive work of God with the Saviour Messiah as the center. The Old Testament should be studied, therefore, with the intent to discover the redemptive dealing of God with man as disclosed therein. It should be studied with the spiritual eyes of the believer fixed upon the coming One, who should be called "The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," and by whose stripes many should be healed. In this journey of spiritual discovery through the Old Testament every page will become alive with meaning as we behold the finger of God tracing history, and as we hear His voice speaking the Word of God through the prophets, seers, and poets to us of today as to the men of old.

The Relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament

How the apostles, and Christ Himself, delighted to tell their Jewish brethren of the Old Covenant that the law and the prophets were now being fulfilled! Matthew's whole Gospel was written to prove this fulfillment in an absolutely final and authoritative fashion. Peter's early sermons at Pentecost had fulfillment as their text. The writer of Hebrews set himself to the task of wiping out completely among Jewish believers any lingering thought that the Old Covenant was still not completely fulfilled. Truly in the concept of "fulfillment" lies the rightful understanding of the relation of the Old Covenant or Testament to the New. "Fulfillment" means literally "making full" or completing, bringing to a final conclusion. The idea taught is simply that the goal for which the Old Covenant was established, the objective for which the Old Testament law and institutions were given, is now fully accomplished. It was not accomplished before, but now the task is completed.

Sometimes the idea of fulfillment is thought of only as the correspondence of details of events in the life of Christ and the early history of the church with the written prophecies of the Old Testament. Such fulfillment is real and constitutes a powerful evidence of the reality of divine revelation and of the authenticity of the Scriptures, but it is not the kind of fulfillment which Jesus meant when He said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill (Matt. 5:17). Nor is it the kind of fulfillment that Paul meant when he said: "For all the law is fulfilled

in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14); and, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). The fulfillment to which Jesus and Paul referred was the completion of the plan of redemption.

We shall never read the Old Testament aright unless we see in it merely the first stage, the preparatory and premonitory stage, of revelation, adapted to the condition of mankind before the full light of the glorious Gospel of Christ was shed upon all men. The completion of the program of redemption was the original goal of God, and this completion in the New Covenant of Christ's blood, with the attendant, complete, and final revelation is the reality, is the substance, of which the preparatory Old Covenant and partial revelation was but "the shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:17).

From this point of view, and this only, a correct appreciation of the Old Testament can be obtained. Three consequences arise from the concept of fulfillment for our use of the Old Testament. (1) The Old Testament is necessary to an understanding of the New. (2) The preparatory elements of law, institutions, and prophecy are to be considered as abolished, "for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4), "for the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did" (Heb. 7:19), but Christ "is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). The whole religious system therefore of the Old Covenant has passed away and has no place in the new day of Christ. (3) The eternal, spiritual verities in the Old Testament remain. The underlying principle of the Old Testament is the attainment of the mercy of God through faith, and the attainment of obedience to God by trust in His grace, as Hebrews 11 proves quite clearly. This great principle, the eternal principle governing the relationship of God and man, together with all subsidiary truth which conforms to the new law of Christ, is permanently valid for the believer.

The Contents of the Old Testament

The Old Testament constitutes about two thirds in volume of the Bible in its complete form. Of the sixty-six separate volumes or writings in the Bible (according to the English

Bible) thirty-nine are in the Old Testament. In olden times the Jews divided the Old Testament into three types of writings, called Law, Prophets, and Writings. The Law included the first five books of the Bible; the Prophets included all the historical books (former prophets) except Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, and the prophets (latter prophets), while the writings included what we call the poetical books, the historical books just mentioned, and Daniel. This division was used by Christ and the apostles. However, a classification which accords better with the character of the various Old Testament books is the division into history, poets, and prophets; or history and didactic writings. The Bible Survey Course will use a twofold division. Unit I will deal with the law and the historical books, while Unit II will deal with the poetical and prophetic books.

The Scope, Nature, and Purpose of Old Testament History

Although some historical material is found in several of the prophetic books, in the main the historical narratives are found in the books of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, and Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Of these books, Ruth and Esther are personal narratives, and Chronicles is largely a duplication of Samuel and Kings, but as a whole the books named cover redemptive history from the creation down to the close of the Old Testament revelation, which is to about 400 B.C.

It is of course clear that out of the tremendous mass of historical experiences of all mankind from creation to 400 B.C., only a very small fraction has been recorded by the inspired writers of the historical books (whose names, by the way, are nowhere in the Old Testament mentioned as authors). It is important, therefore, to know the principle of selection which God used, in order to understand the nature of the historical writings of the Old Testament. As repeatedly stated before, redemption is the theme of the Old Testament as well as of the entire Bible. The principle of selection, therefore, may be stated as follows: That such historical material is preserved for our instruction as is necessary for an understanding of redemption, which means, such material as is necessary to understand

the nature of God and the nature of man, the will of God and the duty of man, the nature, cause, and effects of sin, the nature of the judgment, the method of redemption, and the person of the Redeemer.

The chronological arrangement of the historical material is as follows:

1. The creation.
2. The origin of sin and the fall of man.
3. The experience of men in sin, leading to the first great judgment in the flood.
4. The founding of human society.
5. The selection, call, establishment, and instruction of a redemptive family.
6. The preparation, instruction, establishment of a redemptive nation, and its equipment with a typically redemptive religious system.
7. The experience of this people with God, with the world, with sin, with judgment, and with redemption.
8. The gradual instruction of this people regarding the person of the Redeemer and the nature of the final redemption.

In studying the historical books of the Old Testament we will, therefore, keep in mind the nature of Old Testament history, and we will look for the revelation, through this history, of God's truth regarding sin and redemption. We shall treat the various historical narratives, interesting as they may be in themselves, as primary vehicles of spiritual truth, and in the religious system of the Israelites as it is set up in a preliminary, outline fashion by Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and as finally established in the law of Moses with the system of sacrifices, ceremonies, priesthood, tabernacle, and temple, tithes, and separation, we shall see the types which foreshadow Christ's glorious redemptive work and the blessed experiences which should be the possession of the church, the body of believers.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What value has the study of the Old Testament for Christians today?
2. What did Jesus expound "in all the scriptures" to the disciples on the road to Emmaus?
3. State the two meanings of fulfillment as applied to the Old Testament.
4. Why is a knowledge of the Old Testament necessary for an understanding of the New Testament?
5. Name the books of the Old Testament according to the three great divisions.
6. What is the principle of selection used by God in the writing of the historical books of the Old Testament?
7. Give a brief chronological outline of the history of the Old Testament in terms of the plan of redemption.

Lesson III

Primeval History (Genesis 1—11)

Introduction to the Book of Genesis

Author.—Moses.

Content.—Creation, Primeval History and Patriarchal History.

***Time.**—Creation to Exodus (c. 1320 B.C.), exact time is unknown.

Purpose.—To show man's need for redemption and to describe the beginnings of the plan of redemption.

Nature.—Historical narratives of the experiences of early men, except chapters 5, 10, most of 11, and 46, which are genealogical, and 49, which is chiefly a poem.

Divisions of Genesis (for general view and memory work)

I. Creation, 1.

1. The universe, 1:1-25.
2. Man, 1:25-31.

II. Primeval History, 2—11.

1. The establishment of human society, 2.
2. The origin of sin in the Fall, 3.
3. Society before the Flood, 4, 5.
4. The judgment by the Flood, 6—8.
5. Society after the Flood, 9—11.

III. Patriarchal History, 12—50.

1. Abraham, 12:1—25:18.
2. Isaac, 21—27; 35:27-29.
3. Jacob and his sons, 25:19-34; 27—50.
4. Joseph, 37—50.

Outline, Chapters 1—11 (for reference and study)

I. Creation, 1.

1. The physical universe, 1:1-8.
2. The earth (9, 10), its vegetation (11-13), its solar system (14-19), and its animal life (20-25), 1:9-25.
3. Man in God's image (26, 27), his dominant place in the creation (28-31), 1:26-31.

* Before the time of David it is difficult to be certain of the chronology of the Old Testament. Dates and time given in this manual are therefore approximate only. There is still some disagreement among conservative Bible scholars as to the date of the Exodus. Some Bible scholars date it as early as 1446 B.C., but the generally accepted date is later than that. The date adopted here is from the *Davis Dictionary of the Bible*.

II. Primeval History, 2—11.

1. The establishment of human society, 2.
 - a. The Sabbath, 2:1-3.
 - b. Man placed as a dweller in Eden, 2:4-15.
 - c. Man faced with a moral choice, 2:16, 17.
 - d. Man finds no companionship in animals, 2:18-20.
 - e. Marriage instituted, 2:21-23.
2. The origin of sin in the Fall, 3.
 - a. Satan the tempter, 3:1-5.
 - b. The disobedience and Fall, 3:6, 7.
 - c. The judgment by God upon the sinners, 3:8-24.
 - d. The promise of redemption and victory over Satan, 3:8-24.
3. Society before the Flood, 4, 5.
 - a. Godly Abel slain by ungodly Cain, 4:1-8.
 - b. God's judgment on sinful Cain, 4:9-15.
 - c. The development of social institutions, 4:16-24.
 - d. The godly line of Seth, 4:25, 26.
 - e. The genealogy of the ten patriarchal families from Adam to Noah, 5.
 - f. Reward of godly Enoch, 5:24.
4. The judgment of wicked society by the Flood, 6—8.
 - a. Wicked society, 6:1-7.
 - b. Godly Noah and his commission to build the ark of refuge, 6:8—7:6.
 - c. The Flood of judgment, 7:7-24.
 - d. The deliverance of godly Noah, 8:1-19.
 - e. The promise to Noah, the worshiper, 8:20-22.
5. Society after the Flood, 9—11.
 - a. The blessing of God conditioned upon Noah's keeping peace, 9:1-7.
 - b. The covenant of God with godly Noah, 9:8-17.
 - c. The curse on Canaan, and the blessing on godly Shem and Japheth, 9:18-29.
 - d. The genealogy of the descendants of Noah, 10.
 - e. The judgment upon sinful mankind at Babel, 11:1-9.
 - f. The genealogy of the descendants of Shem as the ancestors of Abraham, 11:10-28.
 - g. Removal of Abraham's family from heathen Mesopotamia, 11:29-32.

Selections for Reading: Gen. 1—11, omitting chapters 5 (except verse 24), 10, and 11:10-28. Also John 1:1-5; Heb. 11:1-7; II Pet. 2:4, 5; 3:5-7; Col. 1:16, 17; Eph. 3:9; Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:22, 45-49; Isa. 45:18; Psalm 19:1-4; 90:2; 24:1, 2; 100:3; Job 38:1—42:6.

Creation

Man, and God's dealings with him, is the theme of Genesis, and so the story begins with the origin of man and the universe in which he lives. In a brief but marvelously clear and beautiful passage the deeply spiritual account of the origin of man and the universe is given in the very first chapter of the book. The following facts are made clear by the story:

1. God existed as an eternal Divine Being before the foundation of the world.

2. God is the Creator of all things.

3. God is the Creator of the life and soul of man as well as of his body.

4. The universe was created in an orderly fashion out of nothing by the sheer fiat or immediate decree of God's will.

5. The universe was created good and perfect. It is a universe of law and order and purpose.

6. Man is the supreme product of God's creative work, and as its master is intended by God to use the universe for his sustenance and well being. In other words, the universe was created as a habitation for man, as the scene of his happiness and development.

7. Man was created unique in that he alone has a nature like God's nature and is capable of fellowship with and behavior like Him.

8. The universe and man were created to be pleasing to God, or, in other words, for His delight and glory.

9. From New Testament passages such as John 1:3; Col. 1:16, and Eph. 3:9 we know that Christ was the Being by whom the creative work of God was achieved.

Upon the basis of this account and through it the following truth regarding God and man is revealed:

1. God is the almighty, sovereign Lord of the universe and of man.

2. God has a purpose for the universe and man.

3. Man owes to God everything he is and may become.

4. Man is capable of knowing God and serving Him.

5. Man is responsible to God.

6. Man is not to be mastered by the universe, but by virtue of his spiritual nature is to be master of the universe.

Without this truth it is impossible to understand sin and salvation.

Primeval History

1. The Establishment of Human Society.

The story continues in chapter two with a more detailed account of the establishment by God of human society. In chapter two the following points about man are made clear:

a. God's creative activity and Sabbath rest are a pattern for man's life.

b. Man is to apply himself to a mastery of the material universe through his own activity and is to be a responsible, independent personality.

c. The permanent companionship of male and female, man and woman, in marriage and the family, is to be the basic human institution and the source of an abundant population of the earth.

d. Man is to have no fellowship with the animals.

e. In his earthly existence, man is to be subject to the will of God as his law, but is given the responsibility of choice and willing obedience.

2. The Origin of Sin Through the Fall.

The Israelites for whom Moses wrote the Book of Genesis were thoroughly acquainted with the awful fact of sin and its terrible effects upon man and its consequences in the wrath of God upon man. How came it that the man whom God created without sin, according to Genesis 1 and 2, became sinful and in need of redemption?

The answer to this question is given in the story of the Fall as found in the third chapter. The following facts are clearly brought out:

a. Satan is the author of evil and sin.

b. Sin is disobedience to the will of God.

c. Sin came into the heart of man by a free decision of man.

d. Sin brings guilt and shame and remorse.

e. Sin cannot be hidden from God.

f. God must and will judge the sinner.

g. The wages of sin is death.

h. The judgment of God upon sin and the sinner is an act of mercy and love.

i. The physical effects of sin cannot be escaped by man, even though the guilt of sin can be removed by the redemptive action of God and salvation is a blessing to the physical life of man.

j. The original, blessed state of man in Paradise has been lost, and the present state of the human race is a state of sin. Paradise can never be regained in this present world system, which is under the power of sin and death.

k. The promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15) was the basis of the hope of man's salvation.

The great truth in the story of the Fall is God's judgment upon the sinner. But embedded in the very heart of this dark cloud of judgment, is the star of redemptive promise contained in verse fifteen. He who punishes sin, at once also promises ultimate victory over sin. The fact that Almighty God is the author of this promise is a guarantee of its fulfillment, but we must wait long before we learn further details of the method by which the redemption is to be carried out. In the meantime, however, the only hope for man is trust in God and faith in this promise. We must believe that Adam and Eve, on the basis of their acceptance of this promise by faith, were forgiven of their sins and that their faith was reckoned to them for righteousness, and that consequently their worship was acceptable. Compare Heb. 11:4; Gal. 3:5-11, 18, and Romans 4.

From New Testament passages, such as Romans 5 and I Corinthians 15, we know that by the sin of our first parents the corruption of sin entered the nature of man, and that ever since all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Thus the tragedy of Eden has been the tragedy of the race, the judgment of Eden has been the judgment of the race, and the promise of Eden has been the glorious hope of redemption for the race.

3. Human Society Before the Flood.

The story of mankind now hastens on to its climax of sin and corruption in the terrible and complete judgment by the Flood. But on the way we are given a few rapid glimpses of the development of human society.

a. A portion of the descendants of Adam retained the godly faith which all should have preserved. By name, Abel, Seth,

Enoch, and Noah appear in the godly line; many others in addition to them must have, at least in part, preserved the faith. But gradually men called less and less upon the name of God until at last faith in God all but disappeared.

b. The great mass of mankind continued in increasing disobedience and sin. Their experiences are typified by the experiences of Cain and Lamech. The prominent and important feature of these experiences is that sin brought about more sin, and that it was punished by God. Nevertheless sin increased, and the wickedness of man became exceedingly great.

c. During the centuries in which sin was ripening to its awful harvest, human institutions were developing and civilization was being built up. We are given but a few glimpses of this development, apparently only sufficient to remind us of what man could have accomplished if he had not yielded to sin. We learn of the establishing of cities and city civilization, of the development of agriculture and stock raising, of the origin of music and musical instruments, of the invention of methods of working metal, of the beginning of literature by the recitation of the first poem, and the growth of religion, but this is all.

In the midst of the growing darkness of wickedness, the light of a holy life shines forth in glory, and it is made clear that the favor and blessing of God rests upon such a life. This is the meaning of the story of Enoch. His translation to glory in a living state, however, was not only a promise to those of faith; it was also a terrible warning to wicked men—that a holy life could no longer exist in the midst of the depths of wickedness except as men lived in close fellowship with God. This is the lesson, too, in part, of Noah's preservation.

4. The Judgment of Wicked Society by the Flood.

The details of the building of the ark and the coming and going of the waters of the flood, interesting though they may be, need not detain us here. Two great, but awful truths are revealed in God's dealing with man through the Flood.

The first truth is that of judgment. Here the destructive effect of sin is revealed in all its catastrophic ghastliness as a permanent lesson to mankind. The complete destruction of the human race, except for one family, displays with the brilliant clarity of the noonday sun what God thinks, and must always

think, of sin. Judgment is inevitable and complete for the sinner; as inexorable as the rising waters of the Flood is his coming destruction unless he becomes a member of the family of grace. All his achievements in culture and civilization, however valuable and notable they may be, cannot create a counterweight to his sin. The curse pronounced upon the sinner, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," can never be lifted by the sinner himself.

The second truth, which is just as great as and more wonderful than the first, is that God can and will save the sinner from his sin if he will accept the gracious offer of salvation. God sought to awaken men to a realization of their desperate condition both by Noah's preaching (for he was "a preacher of righteousness") and by the vivid parable enacted before their scoffing eyes by the construction of the ark. But it was all to no avail. Only Noah and his family believed God, trusted His promise, and found grace in the eyes of God and were saved. And they were not saved by any merit of their own; they were saved not by works, but by faith, as all saved sinners from Adam down to us who read these lines have been saved. Read Heb. 11:7. They manifested their faith by their works in building the ark and entering it.

So the great plan of redemption becomes increasingly clearer. God will destroy the unbelieving, wicked sinner who rejects His offer of mercy, but He will save by His merciful grace those who trust Him and exercise faith and obedience. But their faith must be proved by their works. Beginning with Noah, the ark of salvation must be built by human hands, according to God's plan. Abraham and the patriarchs had their part to do in circumcision and sacrifices. Moses and the children of Israel built the ark in their day by carrying out the ceremonial law. In our day we must prove our faith by the fruit of righteousness.

But as yet, we know nothing of the definite plan of God by which redemption is to be wrought; we know only the principle—the principle of the grace of God and the faith and obedience of man. We know nothing as yet of a chosen family, or race, or of the person of the Messiah. These truths are to come later. But before this truth is further revealed we are given a brief account of human society after the Flood.

5. Human Society After the Flood.

The very brief account of human society after the Flood, contained in chapters 9—11, serves to bring out the following points:

a. Faith in God continues in Noah's family, and is reconfirmed by God's promise of blessing.

b. Sin also continues in Noah's family and is recondemned by the curse upon Canaan.

c. The mercy of God likewise continues to all the descendants of Noah and is established in a covenant which is symbolized by the rainbow.

d. The shedding of human blood is henceforth forbidden to Noah and his descendants (except by command of God), chapter 9, verses 6 and 7. These verses have been much misunderstood. They constitute the oldest law of God for man. Why did God forbid the shedding of man's blood by man's will? Two reasons suggest themselves. One comes from the nature of man and is this: Destruction of life leads to more destruction of life, and the only way to preserve peace and maintain the human race is to quit it altogether. Notice that immediately following this prohibition, comes the positive command that life should be increased and multiplied by man that the earth may be populated. A second reason suggests itself from the nature of the law of Moses. God did not want human beings to use the shedding of blood for human punishment of sin as an expression of human will. For that reason the sixth commandment says, "Thou shalt not kill." The only killing allowed the people of God in the Old Testament was that provided for by the will of God, not the will of man, either in the fulfillment of the penalties of the law of Moses, or in carrying out God's command to destroy His enemies (and the enemies of the people of God) by warfare.

Chapter 10 accounts for the spreading of the descendants of Noah over the eastern Mediterranean basin and lists the peoples living there in the time of Moses. Then one more incident is told to reinforce again the lesson of sin and judgment. The people of Babel, in their pride and vainglory, wish to exalt themselves extremely. As punishment for their sin (the sin of nationalism and national pride, which has been so terribly de-

structive in ancient times as well as in modern times, and which is no doubt one of the greatest sins of society as a whole and leads to war and destruction now as well as earlier), God confounds the language and scatters the people. Once more the lesson is taught. God will judge and punish the sinner.

From this point on, the attention of the reader is turned toward coming events. We are about to be given the story of God's choice of a man and his family as the agents of His redemptive plan; so we are prepared for this and given the connection between Noah and Abraham by (1) a genealogy of the descendants of Shem, and (2) a brief account of the removal of Abraham's father's family westward from heathen Mesopotamia, part way toward the future land of promise.

But in this removal we have already the beginning of further revelation. The people of God cannot live in the midst of a wicked heathen people, as a part of that people, and retain their faith; they must be separated from the heathen world and must live apart from it, not mingling with it. So the family of Terah, Abraham's father, even though worshipping idols, is taken from its heathen home and people, and placed in faraway Haran even before Abraham received his final definite call. And to make the separation complete, the family is kept at the halfway station until idol-worshipping Terah dies, and Abraham becomes the independent head of his family, the chosen agent of God's coming plan of redemption.

Summary

Thus we find in Genesis 1—11 a rich treasure of revelation. More than that, we find here the absolutely essential revelation which is necessary to understand the Gospel of the incarnation, atoning death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Without Genesis 1—11, John 3:16 is a mystery. God sent His Son to die because He so loved the world and is not willing that any should perish but desires that all might believe and have eternal life. But why, why, is the world in danger of perishing? It is because man, placed in a good world, failed to keep his faith in God and to remain in a state of obedience and love toward Him, but by a miserable failure yielded to the temptation of Satan, rebelled against God's will, sinned and fell, thus coming under the punishment of a just God.

Genesis 1—11 in simple, powerful, pictorial narrative tells us about God and man; about sin and salvation; about a sovereign, good, and loving Creator-Father-God; about a rebellious, sinning, falling, corrupted man; about the judgment of God, and about the saving, merciful grace of this same God extended to all who by faith accept the as yet undisclosed and unfulfilled promise. As proof of the salvation by God of those who believe, remember Adam and Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, and Abraham.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What great events mark the beginning and the end of the history recorded in the Book of Genesis?
2. Give eight spiritual lessons from the creation story in the Book of Genesis.
3. Tell the story of the origin of sin in the Fall.
4. Name three great judgments found in the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis.
5. Quote the verse in Genesis which gives the first promise of redemption.
6. What may we learn from the story of the Flood regarding the nature of redemption?
7. Name five characters in Genesis 1—10 who were accepted by God.
8. Name the ancestors of the two lines of humanity after the Fall, godly and ungodly.
9. In what passage in Genesis may we find the beginning of teaching of nonresistance?
10. What was the sin of the builders of the Tower of Babel?
11. Why was Abraham's family called from Ur to Haran, and why were all but Abraham kept in Haran to die?
12. Why is the third chapter of Genesis necessary to understand John 3:16?

Lesson IV

Patriarchal History (Genesis 12—50)

Outline of Patriarchal History

- I. The Life of Abraham, 12:1—25:18.
 1. The call to the final settlement in Canaan, 12, 13.
 2. From the settlement to the birth of Isaac, 14:1—21:21.
 3. From the birth of Isaac to the death of Abraham, 21:22—25:18.
- II. The Life of Isaac, 21:1—28:9; 35:17-19.
 1. From Isaac's birth to his marriage with Rebekah, 21—24.
 2. From Isaac's marriage to his settlement at Beersheba, 25, 26.
 3. From Isaac's settlement at Beersheba to his death, 27:1—28:9; 35:17-19.
- III. The Life of Jacob, 25:19-34; 27—50.
 1. From Jacob's birth to his departure from home, 25:19-34; 27:1—28:9.
 2. From Jacob's home-leaving to his covenant in Gilead, 28:10-31.
 3. From the covenant in Gilead to the descent into Egypt, 32—45.
 4. From Jacob's descent into Egypt to his burial, 46—50.
- IV. The Life of Joseph, 37—50.
 1. From Joseph's birth to his arrival in Egypt, 37, 38.
 2. From Joseph's arrival in Egypt to his promotion to power, 39:1—41:36.
 3. From Joseph's promotion to power to his death, 41:37—50:26.
- V. Judah, 43—46; 49:8-12.

Selections for Reading: Gen. 12:1-9; 15; 18:16-33; 19:12-29; 22; 25:19-34; 27:1-29; 28; 31:1—33:11; 37; 41—45; 50:15-21.

Three men of old are recognized throughout the Old Testament as the fathers of the people of God: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They, the patriarchs, are the founders of Israel, and it is their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that their descendants worshiped, the great Jehovah, the God of the patriarchs who had done mighty deeds for them and established with them and their children's children His great covenant. The story of their lives and of those associated with them, their enemies and their allies, their wives, their servants, and their descendants, particularly of Joseph, the son of Jacob, through whom the people of God came down into Egypt, constitutes patriarchal history. The divinely inspired writer has preserved for us in Genesis 12—50 a chain of powerful and

beautiful stories relating incidents out of their lives which are familiar to every lover of the Word. These stories do not give a complete history of the patriarchs or of their times, but rather a selection of their experiences, which reveal not only the weakness and sinfulness of man, and the holiness and love of God, but disclose with increasing clearness the great redemptive plan and working of God, and set forth the process by which He prepared a people for the great revelation of the law and the sacrifices that was to come at Sinai through Moses.

The Life of Abraham

1. **The Call and Final Settlement in Canaan.** By birth and blood, Abraham was a typical Bedouin Arab chieftain, manifesting in his nature and his life the characteristics and customs of the Arab nomad. But though a true representative of his people and his tribe, he was essentially different from them in two ways: first, because he was not an idol worshiper as his family and tribe had been, but a worshiper of the true God; second, and chiefly because his life was yielded to God and he was willing by faith to let Him work out His plan in his life. It was, therefore, by God's free grace and Abraham's willingness that he became the father of the chosen people, a friend of God, a great example of faith, and the father of the faithful.

Abraham's family lived in the territory of the great city of Ur, located in the fertile valley of the lower Euphrates River on the Persian Gulf, a city which we know by recent excavations to have been the capital of a region of great wealth and culture and a high degree of civilization, and a center of the worship of the moon-god. Ur was no place to prepare a people fitted to receive the revelation of God; so God took first Abraham's family out of Ur to Haran, halfway to Palestine, and then Abraham himself with his immediate family from Haran to Palestine, the future home of Israel. The purpose of the call to this migration, which Abraham obeyed, namely, that through him all mankind should be blessed, was first announced to Abraham after his arrival in Haran. The fulness of the promise, however, came to him only in the promised land after the separation from all others, including his nephew Lot, had taken place, and after Abraham's faith and obedience had been thoroughly tested and he had turned his back upon the

temptations of the cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. It was God's gracious plan to reward Abraham's obedience and strengthen his faith after the testing time in his separation from Lot, and these promises were repeatedly graciously renewed whenever Abraham's heart stood in special need of reassurance.

The first promise of the possession of the promised land came to Abraham at Shechem, his first dwelling place within that land, where he set up his first altar and worshiped the true God in simplicity and godly fear. By this act of worship Abraham established the true faith in a land where from a hundred hills heathen altars smoked, and where most degradingly immoral and barbaric heathen ceremonies were enacted. The history of the patriarchs reveals repeated establishment by the patriarchs of altars to the worship of Jehovah throughout the land. As long as this worship was maintained in spirit and in truth, all was well. However, during his sojourn in Egypt, due to a famine, Abraham seems to have left off the habit of worship. It is not to his credit that he represented his wife as his sister, even though she was his half sister. His misbehavior would have led to the loss of his wife, but for the intervention of God. Expelled from Egypt, Abraham again set up worship at Bethel, where he called upon the name of Jehovah. How different, after his renewal of worship, is Abraham's behavior in the next crisis, the strife with Lot, when his generosity and nobility of character shine forth. Because he stood the test and was willing to live separate from sin, God rewarded him with the enlarged promise which is given in Genesis 13.

2. The Covenant. From the Final Settlement in Canaan to the Birth of Isaac. The greatest event in Abraham's life, and the one most important for future history, and for the plan of redemption, was the establishment of the covenant of promise. Before the establishment of the covenant (Genesis 15) Abraham's generosity was once more demonstrated by his rescue of Lot through the military defeat of Lot's captors, following which he met and worshiped with Melchizedek, king of Salem, a priest of the true and Most High God. Then, at a time when Abraham probably feared vengeance at the hands of the defeated kings who had been Lot's captors, and when his faith wavered because he had no son, came the full promise

of God, and the formal establishment of the covenant between God and Abraham. In this covenant God promised clearly to give seed to Abraham and promised the possession of the promised land by this seed, sealing the covenant with a miraculous manifestation of His presence. On Abraham's side the covenant was ratified by a renewed acceptance by faith of God's promise, even though he was eighty-five years old. "And he believed in Jehovah, and he reckoned it to him for righteousness" (RV). "Such strong faith in God," says Dr. Sampey, "is the finest righteousness men can offer. This is not mere intellectual belief, but a complete surrender of heart and life to the God who promises. Such is the faith that brings justification. It is also a faith that brings forth works of righteousness."

But Abraham's faith wavered, and at the instigation of Sarah, his wife, he erred in seeking to provide the promised seed through Ishmael, the son of a maidservant of his household. So God came to him thirteen years later, with a renewal of the promise, when Abraham was ninety-nine years old. This time God promised a son named Isaac, and Abraham accepted the ordinance of circumcision as the outward sign of his belonging to God as His peculiar possession.

This time, in the renewal of the covenant, God emphasized the requirement of righteousness: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." As if to teach Abraham the great lesson of holiness. God showed him the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and permitted him through intercessory prayer to realize that the holy and just wrath of God against sin leads to the destruction of the unrepentant sinner, but that the long-suffering mercy of God could rescue Lot. Again Abraham's generosity stands out.

In due time God gave Abraham the promised son, and Isaac was born, with unspeakable joy to his father and mother. Isaac became in a double sense the son of promise, that is, the proof of the present fulfillment of God's promise and the guarantee of the future fulfillment of the unfulfilled part of the promise

3. The Cross. From the Birth of Isaac to the Death of Abraham. God decided to subject Abraham to the severest possible test, the test of absolute faith and obedience. He required of Abraham the offering of the son of promise. The test was

made once for all, and the faithful Abraham passed through the ordeal nobly. In his heart he made the great sacrifice, and gave back to God the son of promise, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," as the writer of Hebrews says. It was a terrible, almost unbearable trial for Abraham, but perhaps in it he had the blessed experience of "seeing Christ's day," of having a foretaste of what it could mean for God to sacrifice His beloved, only begotten Son to redeem the world. How God must have rejoiced to see His faithful friend Abraham stand this test! We too may rejoice that the great representative believer of the Old Testament passed through this severe trial successfully, and know thereby that we shall never be tried above that which we shall be able, by faith, to bear victoriously.

Once more, having proved his faith, Abraham received a renewal of the covenant promise. The remaining days of his old age he lived in peace at Hebron, demonstrating in his dying day his faith in the promise of the future possession of the promised land, for he was compelled to acknowledge that he was a sojourner and pilgrim in the land as yet, having even to buy the few square yards of land necessary for his burial place. But before he died he proved his faith by providing for the son of promise a wife of his own blood, to maintain the divinely desired separation from the people of the land.

The Life of Isaac

Of Isaac, in comparison with Abraham his father, and Jacob his son, but few incidents are related. His birth, the attempted sacrifice by his father, his marriage, his troubles at Gerar, and the deception practiced upon him by his wife, Rebekah, and his son Jacob—these constitute the main part of the record. Twice Jehovah appeared to him, both times to strengthen his faith. He erected an altar to the true God, and received from Him the renewal of the covenant of promise made with his father Abraham, thus, himself a child of promise, passing on the promise.

Isaac's place in God's plan seems to have been chiefly to be a link in the chain from Abraham to Moses. He appears as an echo of Abraham; no new revelation came to him. Faithful, submissive, quiet, and true, he maintained the family traditions

and the worship of Jehovah in the land promised to Abraham's seed, though he, like his father, was a stranger and sojourner in the land, and owned no land himself. Most of his one hundred and eighty years he lived in the south part of the promised land, like his father, a Bedouin chief with the characteristics and customs of a nomad. He was buried beside his parents and his wife in the cave of Machpelah.

The Life of Jacob

With Jacob, patriarchal history once more expands into the rich and instructive story, full of incidents, that characterized the story of Abraham. Many stories are told, which when woven together into one account, enable us to trace the development of Jacob's character from birth to the grave. Seen in its fullness, the story of Jacob is a story of the grace of God victoriously transforming a strong and selfish man into a great and pious saint. A miracle of grace is unfolded before our eyes, and as if to make this triumph of divine grace in Jacob clearer and more striking, the story of the failure of Jacob's twin brother Esau is woven into the story of Jacob.

The contrast between Jacob and Esau is evident. Esau was a hunter and a fighter, with some attractive characteristics, a son whom his father Isaac loved. But he was a man whose animal appetites ruled him, and whose character is revealed by his miserable decision to sell his birthright for a bowl of pea soup, and also by his adoption of voluntary polygamy among the heathen. He did not appreciate the value of the spiritual blessings and the promise which Isaac and Abraham enjoyed, but rather longed for temporal prosperity and worldly power, while he at the same time lacked the firm will and pious aspirations of his brother Jacob. God's rejection of Esau stands fully justified by Esau's life.

Jacob was in his earlier attitudes less humanly attractive than Esau. He revealed himself as the typical shrewd Bedouin trader, strong and selfish, willing to employ questionable means to attain his ends, including deception of his father Isaac and his uncle Laban, and taking advantage of his brother Esau. He was ambitious, strong-willed, persevering, and steady in purpose, traits which later, under God's transforming grace, made him a strong and useful character.

The great characteristic of Jacob was his constantly growing appreciation of the covenant blessing, and for this God led and blessed him. In his youth he thought more of the material benefits of the blessing, but at Peniel we see a Jacob who longed with a passionate longing for the spiritual blessing, and wrestled with the mighty wrestler to whom he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Through trials and disappointments, through sufferings brought on in part by his own sin Jacob learned to lean on God. His character ripened, and he entered into closer fellowship with Jehovah. At his first Bethel he bargained with the God who tried to lead him into a more spiritual attitude, but at his second Bethel, when troubles in connection with his daughter assailed him, he erected an altar to the God who had appeared to him there as he fled from Esau.

In his later years blow after blow fell upon him. Jehovah was chastening him whom He loved. The beloved wife Rachel died, famine came, and strife among his sons led to the staggering blow of the apparent loss of his favorite son Joseph whom he mourned for years. But the Jacob who finally moved down to Egypt with his family to spend his closing days under the loving protection of his noble, and high-placed son, Joseph, was not Jacob, the wily supplanter of his crooked youth, but Israel the saint, who lifted holy hands to bless Pharaoh. And when his sunset came, Jacob died in peace with the prophecy on his lips, that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, . . . until Shiloh come," and with a beautiful testimony to "the Angel which redeemed me," and to the grace of God "which fed me all my life long" (Gen. 48:15, 16).

The Life of Joseph

One of the most beautiful stories in the Old Testament is that of the inspiring career of Joseph, of whom it has been well said, that "he was a Christian before the advent of Christ." In contrast to the record of his father, Joseph's record is spotless, one of the few spotless lives in Old Testament history. If a selfish element entered into his life in connection with his youthful dreams of greatness, fiery trials purged out the dross. Brought to Egypt as a young man, and sold to a high government official as a slave, he maintained his personal purity in the

face of great temptations, conquering victoriously because of a deep religious life that kept him from sinning against God, as he himself expressed it. By sheer ability and faithfulness in duty, he rose to the highest position in the empire of Egypt, prime minister under Pharaoh. In his success Joseph proved the keeping power of God, and demonstrated that a successful business career is possible for the faithful servant of God. The touching account of his care for his aged father and his undeserving brethren teaches the lessons of love and forgiveness, and of care for kindred.

And may we not see in Joseph's career a lesson taught the people of God in the Old Testament age, that suffering has value, a lesson which we have learned best through the coming of God's Son to die on the cross for our sins. Joseph was persecuted and slandered, he suffered in slavery and in prison, not for doing wrong but because he refused to do wrong. And he endured it all without complaint, in faith, as seeing Him who is invisible. God's reward and blessing upon Joseph will be an inspiration and a strength to the faith of God's children as long as the Bible is read.

Judah

It would not be right to conclude patriarchal history without a brief statement about Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. So often his character and his significance are overlooked. But he dare not be omitted from patriarchal history for two reasons: first, because he became the head of his brethren, the ruler, the head of the royal line, the one through whom should come the Messiah, the Prince of Peace; and second, because of his beautiful self-sacrificing spirit. As the spokesman for his brethren he took the responsibility for them all, and when he offered himself as substitute for his accused younger brother Benjamin in whose sack the stolen cup was found, he reminds us of our Elder Brother, Judah's lineal descendant in the flesh, who freely offered Himself as a substitute for us guilty sinners.

Summary of Patriarchal History

The two hundred and fifteen years of patriarchal history from the settlement of Abraham in Canaan to the settlement

of Jacob and his clan in Egypt are great years in the redemptive plan of God. In these years God separated His chosen family, guided them, instructed them, punished them for sin, delivered them, and brought them closer to Him in obedience and fellowship. On man's side we see, it is true, weakness and sin, transgression and failure, but in spite of all this, faith victorious, faith in the faithful Jehovah. As sojourners and pilgrims in the land of promise, in which they possessed legally only a burial plot, the grave at Hebron where all the patriarchs from Abraham to Joseph were buried, the patriarchs endured as seeing Him who is invisible, counting themselves heirs of the promise, and looking for a better city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Though they received not the promises, they were persuaded of them and embraced them, having seen them afar off, and they died in faith. In their experiences, experiences of very human men like us, we learn with increasing clearness as the decades pass, the lessons of faith and obedience, of sin, and of redeeming, forgiving love. So we leave the fathers, these saints of old, all men of faith—Abraham, of world-conquering faith; Isaac, of quietly enduring faith; Jacob, of wrestling faith; Joseph, of suffering, victorious, rewarded faith; and Judah, of self-sacrificing faith.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Name the five outstanding patriarchs.
2. What was the purpose of the call of Abraham?
3. Why was Abraham chosen to be the father of the faithful?
4. Give the outstanding failure of Abraham's faith, and the outstanding act of obedience.
5. State the two ways in which Isaac was a son of promise.
6. When and why was circumcision established?
7. Compare Isaac with Abraham.
8. Why is Jacob the deceiver to be preferred to Esau?
9. Compare the Jacob who left home for Padan-aram with the Jacob who returned.
10. In what way does the life of Joseph illustrate God's grace?
11. In what sense does Judah remind us of Jesus?
12. Show how each of the patriarchs lived by faith.

Lesson V

From Egypt to Canaan

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers: Historical Material

For the sake of ease in learning, the contents of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers will be divided into several parts. Lesson V will present the historical material, the whole of the narrative portions, the story of the life of Moses and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, together with the wilderness wandering to the final camp opposite Jericho. The next two chapters deal with the law, the sacrifices, the tabernacle and the priesthood. This will permit a unified, systematic treatment of both history and law.

Author.—The three books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, together with Genesis and Deuteronomy, seem to be parts of what was originally one continuous writing. Therefore, like Genesis, they were all written by Moses though this is not stated in the books. Exodus 24:4, RV, states that "Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah," but this probably refers to the book of the covenant (Exodus 20—23) alone.

Time Covered.—Exclusive of the period from Jacob's settlement in Egypt to the birth of Moses, the time covered is the time of the life of Moses, which is 120 years. Deut. 34:7. The date of the Exodus was about 1320 B.C. Some place it even a few years later.

Content.—The preparation and call of Moses, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the forty years' wilderness wanderings, including the revelation of the law and the ceremonial system at Sinai.

Exodus

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Oppression and the Work of Moses, 1:1—12:36.
- II. The Deliverance, 12:37—18:27.
- III. The Giving of the Law at Sinai, 19—24.
- IV. The Pattern of the Tabernacle and Its Construction, 25—40.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Oppression of Israel and the Work of Moses, 1:1—12:36.
 1. Death of Joseph, 1:1-7.
 2. Bondage in Egypt, 1:8-22.

3. Birth and early career of Moses, 2:1-22.
 4. Call of Moses, 2:23—4:31.
 5. First interview with Pharaoh and its failure, 5:1—7:7.
 6. Ten Plagues, 7:8—12:36.
- II. The Deliverance, 12:37—18:27.
1. Exodus and Passover, 12:37—13:16.
 2. Passing of the Red Sea and destruction of Pharaoh's hosts, 13:17—15:21.
 3. March from the Red Sea to Sinai, 15:22—18:27.
- III. The Giving of the Law at Sinai, 19—24.
1. Preparation of the people, 19.
 2. Moral law (Ten Commandments), 20.
 3. Civil law, 21—23:19.
 4. Blood covenant between Jehovah and Israel, 23:20—24:18.
- IV. The Tabernacle, 25—40.
1. Pattern of the tabernacle, 25—31.
 2. Breach of the covenant by the worship of the golden calf, 32, 33.
 3. Renewal of the covenant, 34.
 4. Construction of the tabernacle, 35—40.

Leviticus

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. The Laws of Sacrifice, Purification, and Atonement, 1—16.
- II. The Law of Holiness, 17—26.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. The Laws of Sacrifice, Purification, and Atonement, 1—16.
 1. Laws for offering the sacrifices, 1—7.
 2. Consecration of the priests, 8, 9.
 3. Sin of Nadab and Abihu, 10.
 4. Laws of purification, 11—15.
 5. Day of Atonement, 16.
- II. The Law of Holiness, 17—29.
 1. Prohibitions for priests and people, 17—22.
 2. Law of festivals, 23, 24.
 3. Year of Jubilee, 25.
 4. Blessings for obedience, and punishments for disobedience, 26.
 5. Laws of vows and tithes, 27.

Numbers

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Events and Laws at Sinai, 1:1—10:10.
- II. Events and Laws from Sinai to Moab, 10:11—21:35.
- III. Events and Laws in Moab, 22—36.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Events and Laws at Sinai, 1:1—10:10.
 1. Numbering and arrangement of the tribes, 1, 2.
 2. Numbering and duties of the Levites, 3, 4.

3. Various laws, 5:1—9:14.
4. Guidance by the pillar of cloud and fire, 9:15—10:10.

II. Events and Laws from Sinai to Moab, 10:11—21:35.

1. The start of the journey, 10:11-36.
2. Complaint about manna, and gift of quails, 11.
3. Miriam's leprosy, 12.
4. At Kadesh—the spies and the judgment, 13, 14.
5. Various laws, 15.
6. Rebellion of Korah, 16, 17.
7. Duties and privileges of priests and Levites, 18.
8. Laws of defilement by dead bodies, 19.
9. Death of Miriam and Aaron, 20.
10. Fiery serpents, 21.

III. Events and Laws at Moab, 22—36.

1. Balaam, 22—24.
2. Sin of Israel at Baal-peor, 25.
3. Final numbering, 26.
4. Law of inheritance, 27:1-14, and chapter 36.
5. Moses' death and his successor foretold, 27:15-23.
6. Laws of offerings and vows, 28—30.
7. Conquest of Midian, 31.
8. Settlement in the East-Jordan Country, 32.

Selections for Reading: Ex. 1:7-14; 2; 3; 6:1-8; 11; 12; 14:5-31; 16; 17; 19:1-6; 23:20-24; 18:32-34.
Leviticus 9; 10:1-11.
Numbers 9:15-23; 14; 21:1-9; 24; 33:50-56.

The greatest event in the history of Israel from the giving of the promise to Abraham to the final collapse of the kingdom of Judah in the captivity in 586 B.C. was the deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the law at Sinai. The two events together make up one great redemptive act by which God completed the separation of His people from the world and the consecration of this people to Himself. In later days the prophets pointed the people back to the love and power of God which had brought them up out of Egypt, and challenged them to obedience and faithfulness upon the basis of the great deliverance. The psalmist likewise praised the great mercy of God and the mighty deeds wrought for His people at that time.

Truly the Exodus was a central point in the history of God's people. The seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had in truth, according to the promise, become very great in number, as the sands of the seashore. There were among them 603,550

men of military age alone, according to Num. 1:46: But Israel was oppressed in a strange land, not the land of promise, and the great revelation of God's holiness and man's redemption through sacrifice had not yet come. Nor was Israel a united people, living according to God's will, under a theocratic government (rule by representatives of God). True, by their sojourn in Egypt, the descendants of Jacob learned many things which in the plan of God they needed to learn, such as many of the arts and crafts of civilized Egypt, including the art of government and the art of warfare, which they, however, learned by example, not by participation. But they could not fulfill their mission as long as they were the slaves of Egypt.

When the fullness of time came, therefore, God delivered Israel, by His mighty arm, out of the land of Egypt, out of the hand of a Pharaoh who did not want to let God's people go. God accomplished this through:

1. A specially prepared leader, Moses.
2. A series of mighty miracles, the ten plagues, ending in the death of the first-born of every family in Egypt and the first-born of all cattle.
3. A mighty defeat of the army of the pursuing Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Points (1) and (2) fall under the first section of the outline of Exodus—I. The Oppression. Let us consider them as preparatory to the deliverance.

The Call Preparation of Moses

The career of Moses from his birth in Egypt to his death on Mt. Nebo reveals two principles which are essential to effective service for God by any human life: (1) human talent and preparation; and (2) divine call, guidance, and blessing. When the second principle was absent, Moses failed. The beautiful story of the babe in the basket boat tells us of a mother who happily combined both principles, showing human common sense in providing for the safety of her first-born baby boy, and faith in God. She did all she could, and trusted Jehovah for His blessing on her efforts. God saved Moses and brought him into the royal family for training, but first of all the mother of Moses provided the boy with a Hebrew mother's training in the faith of his fathers.

The remarkable preparation of Moses for his work as the agent of God for the deliverance of His people falls into three distinct stages. First, he learned to know God through a religious training, at his mother's knee, that shaped his whole future career and that helped to keep him loyal to his people and his God in spite of his life in the royal family. This home training set his heart right. In the palace of Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses was trained by the best teachers of the land, so that when he reached manhood he was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt and prepared to be a ruler. Thus, in a marvelous way, God used the oppressor of His people Israel to protect and train the deliverer of Israel. This royal training equipped the mind of Moses with valuable information and developed his talents. Such a training was greatly needed by the one who was to be the civil leader and ruler of a slave people, as well as their religious leader.

But Moses needed to be trained in the school of humility and trust in God, in the school of patient waiting upon the Lord and His power rather than trust in his own strength. His first lesson in this school came at the age of forty, when without a call from God, he undertook to right a wrong which he saw inflicted by an unjust taskmaster upon one of his heavily burdened Hebrew brethren. His heart was right, for he blazed forth in righteous anger, but he was foolishly wrong in the method by which he rashly chose to deliver his people. His choice to share the affliction of the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season was noble, but God had other plans. It was necessary that both wicked Pharaoh and weak-faithed Israel should learn that Jehovah was the mighty God, ready and able to care for His people. So Moses had to flee for his life from the avenging Egyptian authorities, and he escaped into the desert of Midian far beyond the borders of Egypt. A man trained to rule over an empire must now keep sheep on the back side of a desert for a living. But in the forty years Moses spent in the wilderness school he learned far more than how to tend sheep. He learned to possess his soul in patience and to control his fierce temper, so that he became the meekest and most enduring of all men. Num. 12:3. Without this great lesson, he could never have patiently carried

the burden of a murmuring people for forty years in the desert. And thus at the age of eighty, after he had been fully prepared according to the divine plan, first by a pious mother, then in the best schools of Egypt, and finally by God Himself in the desert, Moses was ready for the great work which God had for him to do, the greatest work any human being was called upon to do before the time of Christ.

The powerful story of the burning, and yet unburned, bush brings vividly to the Bible reader the great essentials that constitute a call from God and the proper response by the called one. Moses was taught: (1) the holiness of God and the necessary holiness of the life that is to serve Him, (2) that God knows the needs of His people and will provide for them, (3) that God will enable Moses to do his work successfully, and (4) that the wrath of God is kindled against all who refuse to hear His call to service. No excuses can hold against God's call. As punishment for his faintheartedness, Moses was made dependent upon his brother Aaron as his spokesman.

But another great truth is embedded in the story of the burning but unburned bush, a truth that contains a glorious promise. When Moses asked for the name, that is the character, of God, a great revelation came. Henceforth God Almighty (*El Shaddai*) wished to be known by the name *Jehovah*, the God of grace and redemption. God had revealed Himself to the patriarchs as a God of power and mercy, but His new revelation of Himself to His people greatly surpassed the old, for He would draw nigh to His people in a new covenant relationship. The children of Israel were to have experimental knowledge of God's grace of a sort that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never had. They were to be given institutions that would make plain the meaning of redemption, would typify Christ, and would serve them for the next millennium and longer until the full revelation of redemption in the work of Christ on the cross replaced the types and shadows of the old dispensation.

Now fully prepared, willing to obey, and ready to proceed in his work, Moses, with Aaron, set out for Egypt and announced to the rejoicing assembled elders of Israel that *Jehovah* had come down to deliver them.

The Contest Between Moses and Pharaoh

The story of the contest between Moses and Pharaoh, which ended in the release of the children of Israel from bondage, is in reality the story of a contest between Jehovah and Pharaoh, the heathen king, with his heathen gods. Pharaoh boldly defied Jehovah as a God powerless to execute His purposes. He increased the bitter burden of Israel in bondage. In rapid succession, God visited Egypt with ten terrible plagues, each more serious than the first, each indicating a greater burden of guilt upon Pharaoh as each renewed opportunity was followed by a renewed hardening of the heart. Finally, after the sixth plague, when the stubborn and deceitful king had repeatedly refused to bow to the will of God, God began "to harden his heart" and to close the door of mercy upon him. God meant to make of Pharaoh an object lesson and warning to all the world. After the eighth plague Pharaoh's day of grace was past. And when after the tenth and terrible plague of the death of the first-born Pharaoh released Israel for the march out of Egypt into the East, the apparent yielding to God's will after all turned out to be insincere. But the last puny attempt of a mere mortal to block the program of God ended in the awful catastrophe of the destruction of Pharaoh and his great army in the Red Sea, when God became "glorious in power," as Moses says in his beautiful song of praise commemorating the deliverance in Exodus 15. Thus came to a glorious end the long and bitter oppression of the Israelites, in which the heathen Egyptians "made their lives bitter with hard bondage."

The Deliverance

The great deliverance of Israel from Egypt by the merciful power of God is rich in spiritual meaning. The meaning of this deliverance was first made plain to Israel in the institution of the Passover feast, a ceremony which taught three truths: (1) that all men deserve condemnation to death as sinners under the wrath of God, (2) but that the love and mercy of God alone saves His children from this condemnation through no merit of their own but through a substitutionary sacrifice; (3) that faith, as proved by the application of the blood upon the doors of the Israelite homes, is necessary to

make effective the sacrificial blood of the atonement, whereby God in the angel of death "passed over" or saved His people. The whole story of the institution of the annual memorial feast of the Passover is instructive to the Christian, for Christ is our Passover, and we are saved from death in the same way as the Israelites of old were saved on the first and terrible Passover night.

On the night of the Passover, the Israelites requested and received from their former masters gifts of jewels and raiment, which no doubt enabled them to build the costly tabernacle and its furniture.

Evidently that night began the presence and guidance of Jehovah in the form of the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day, which thereafter accompanied His people in all their wilderness wanderings, and which was typical of the immediate care and keeping of God which comes to the saved believer and accompanies him unceasingly through all the varying scenes of life. This revealed presence of God with His people, this abode of God among men (the Shekinah), never ceased from that Passover night to the time of the captivity. His presence was in the pillar and cloud, but soon most directly on the mercy seat of the ark in the tabernacle. When Christ came, God tabernacled among men in the flesh. Since the ascension God has dwelt in every believing heart through the Holy Spirit.

The grace and power of God were most gloriously revealed in the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. He had led the Israelites into a place where it was humanly impossible for them to escape from the pursuit of a trained army, and here He miraculously delivered them with a more complete destruction of the enemy than any human power could possibly have accomplished. And all that Israel had to do was to stand still in faith and see the glory of the Lord revealed. By this great deliverance, Jehovah made good His title as the owner of the chosen people. He redeemed them and made them His forever. Henceforth they would not have the slightest excuse to forsake Him for the worship of other gods, and over and over again the prophets and psalmists of later generations made use of this experience as an unanswerable argument for loyalty to Jehovah. Just so we who have been redeemed by the blood

of Christ are under everlasting obligations to honor and serve the One who has redeemed us from sin and has taken us into fellowship with Himself. Like Moses, we do well to celebrate the mercies of God who has delivered us from the bondage of sin, and girdle the earth with songs of gratitude and praise to our Redeemer God.

But the experience of deliverance at the Red Sea was not the only experience of its kind which the Israelites enjoyed. In the few short weeks which elapsed before they came to Sinai, the mount of the Lord, where great revelations awaited them, they were miraculously saved from death in the desert by (1) the sweetening of the water at Marah, (2) the provision of manna for food, (3) the provision of water from the rock in Horeb, and (4) victory over Amalek.

Jehovah had led His people away from the well-traveled direct caravan route from Egypt to Palestine along the Mediterranean coast, into a barren desert region where it was utterly impossible to provide bread and water in quantity sufficient for the sustenance of the great host. This He did with the clear purpose of testing their faith. He did not provide them in advance with supplies, but brought them into need that they might learn to live by faith and trust in Him. In addition enemies began to threaten them. It is but natural that Israel did not stand the test, and began to give way under the strain, with murmuring and complaining. But God's children, now as then, must live above this natural plane of unbelief, must have the life of courageous faith, coming to God in believing prayer, trusting Him to keep and provide. "Blind unbelief is sure to err," and it dishonors the God who has redeemed us.

The Giving of the Law at Sinai

Three months after the Israelites left Egypt they arrived at the base of the mountain in the southern part of the peninsula of Sinai, which was to be the scene of the giving of the law by a special act of God. This mountain, called by the two names, Sinai and Horeb, became a "holy mount" to Israel, because of the nearness of God to His people here. Hither Jehovah had brought His redeemed people, and here He kept them for an epoch-making year, apart from the busy life of the world, that He might impart to them His law and precepts.

Here, during the course of the year's encampment, occurred the proclamation of the Ten Commandments from the smoking mount, the ratification of the new covenant between Jehovah and Israel, and the establishment of most of the civil and ceremonial laws that were to govern the life of the people of Jehovah for more than a thousand years, until the law should be fulfilled in Christ.

Finally when all was completed, the people were organized for the further march. Offerings for the tabernacle were made by the princes of the tribes, and the great host departed for the promised land after a year's stay at Sinai.

The rest of the account of the journey from Egypt to Canaan is a heartbreaking story. The people soon murmured against God and His leader Moses, and many longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. Dissatisfaction broke out on the part of Aaron and Miriam because of Moses' foreign wife. Miriam was punished by leprosy for her rebellion, though healed again by the intercession of Moses. But the crowning tragedy came when the host had reached the border at Kadesh, with the failure of the people to follow the two faithful spies (Caleb and Joshua) of the twelve who had been sent out to spy out the land. Open revolt broke out against Moses, and Caleb and Joshua were almost stoned by an angry mob. Once again, when Jehovah offered to destroy the people and make a new nation out of Moses, this great man unselfishly interceded in mighty prayer. But this time, though Jehovah heard the prayer, He decided that the cowardly generation should be punished and should not be allowed to reach Canaan. They were all condemned to die in the wilderness; only their children would reach the promised land. Caleb and Joshua, the faithful spies, were the only ones of the older generation who were allowed to enter Canaan, except possibly some of the Levites who were not numbered with the men of war.

The following thirty-eight years of aimless wandering in the wilderness were full of severe trials for Moses. An example was the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses and Aaron. At last, just before the entrance into the promised land was to be made at Kadesh, Moses and Aaron themselves failed. They dishonored God by a display of prideful temper before the people who murmured at the lack of water, and

Moses in anger smote a rock twice instead of merely speaking to it as God had commanded. Because of this failure Moses and Aaron were denied entrance to the promised land. Thus God showed that He will hold to strict account those whom He has chosen as His representatives before the world. Their failure brings great reproach upon the cause. And here is a lesson to all. If even the great Moses, after his long experience and close fellowship with God, failed, let us beware when we think we stand, lest we fall.

Aaron died on Mt. Hor soon after this. Because Edom refused a passage through its territories, Moses had to lead the people by a roundabout way south and east to the country beyond Edom and Jordan. On the way many were bitten by serpents, and the plague was stopped only by obedience to the sign of the brazen serpent. Our Lord stated that this incident was a type of Himself on the cross, when He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), and "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14).

In the last months before his death, Moses with the help of Joshua led his people in the conquest of the fertile East Jordan territory. But here again a tragic incident occurred. An enemy king of Moab, Balak, sought to get Balaam, the famous seer, to curse Israel, but Jehovah led him to bless them. In revenge upon the Israelites Balaam induced the women of Moab and Midian to get God's people involved in the immoral worship of Baal. In consequence thousands died.

Finally in the closing months of his life, the Lord through Moses gave many ceremonial and civil laws to the people. Also, by the direction of God, Moses ordained Joshua as his successor. He wrote down "the book of the law," probably most of the Pentateuch, and gave it to the priests for safe-keeping. Deut. 31:24-26. His farewell address, together with the account of his death, is recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What was the greatest event in the history of God's people from the call of Abraham to the captivity, and why?
2. What two requisites for effective service are illustrated by life of Moses?
3. What great lesson did Moses learn, in his forty years in the desert, that was necessary for his work as leader of Israel?
4. Give four lessons from the story of the call of Moses at the burning bush.
5. When and why did God give the name Jehovah to be used?
6. What three truths relating to the plan of redemption are taught by the first Passover?
7. In what two ways did God manifest His constant presence to His people after the crossing of the Red Sea?
8. Name the two occasions when Moses saved Israel by intercessory prayer.
9. Why were none of the people except Caleb and Joshua allowed to reach the promised land? Why were Moses and Aaron denied entrance?
10. From what event in the wilderness wanderings did Jesus draw a type of Himself?

Lesson VI

The Moral and Civil Law

Author.—The uniform teaching of the Bible is that “the law was given through Moses.”

Source.—Ex. 20—23; Deut. 5:6—6:5; Num. 5, 6.

Outline

I. Moral Law, Ex. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21; 6:4, 5.

II. Civil Law, Ex. 21—23; Deut. 24:1-4; Num. 5; 6; 15:30-42; 35; 36.

Selections for Reading: Ex. 20:1—23:13; Num. 35; Deut. 5:1—6:9.

The Law and Institutions of Israel

The revelation of God through Moses to His people at Sinai covered the whole of the life of the people, for God intended to establish, and did establish a theocracy, that is, a divinely ordered society in which everything was controlled by God through His representatives. Hence the law included moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law. It also included complete institutions for governing the people; a priesthood to direct the worship of the people and represent the people before God; a set of elders to govern the people; a prophet, Moses, and other prophets to follow him, who were to represent God to the people, to speak for Him, and in general serve as the guides of the elders in the government as well; a sanctuary and system of sacrifices to provide for the atonement of the sins of the people. The law is recorded as it was given, and is found in part in Exodus and Numbers, but for the most part in Leviticus. In Deuteronomy a revision and recasting of parts of the law in the form best adapted to the life of Israel as a settled people is given.

The Giving of the Law

Let us examine more closely the scene at Sinai when the law was given. Before the people could meet Jehovah, they had to be prepared by a ceremonial cleansing, and even then they were not permitted to draw near, lest the wrath of God should consume them. Then out of the midst of a marvelous

display of His glory on Mount Sinai, Jehovah condescended to speak in the hearing of the trembling people the ten words which lie at the foundation of His moral law, not only for the Jews but for all men. Following upon this, God gave to Moses a series of ordinances and statutes for the direction of the elders and judges in Israel by which they were to administer justice. These laws are called the Book of the Covenant because, immediately following Moses' return from the mount where he was given the laws, a solemn covenant was entered into by the people to observe these laws in faithful obedience forever, in response to the promise of God to lead them by His angel into the promised land, and to drive out the enemy before them, that they might inherit the land and possess it. The covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of blood in a solemn sacrifice upon an altar surrounded by twelve pillars, which Moses had built for the occasion; half of the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar, and half upon the people. Jesus was thinking of this old blood covenant when He established the memorial of the new blood covenant of redemption in the night that He was betrayed, taking the cup and saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20, RV). As the author of Hebrews also said, "He is the mediator of the new testament [covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [covenant], they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Following the conclusion of the covenant, as if to indicate His pleasure, God gave Moses and Aaron and the seventy elders a glorious vision of Himself.

The next stage in the giving of the law was the giving of the pattern of the tabernacle and its furniture. Forty days and forty nights Moses spent in the glory on the mount in the presence of God receiving the pattern. During this time he also was given the Ten Commandments on stone tablets inscribed by God Himself.

During the time that Moses was out of sight a terrible tragedy occurred; the newly made covenant was broken. The first and second commandments were broken by the people, who, with the consent and aid of Aaron himself, set up and worshiped a golden calf. The following events are very instruc-

tive. The anger of Jehovah was kindled and He would have consumed His rebellious people and started anew with Moses as the head of a new chosen race. But the utterly unselfish intercessory prayers of Moses for his people led Jehovah to spare them. Here the nobility of Moses shines forth in a splendid light. Nevertheless the zeal of Moses for the purity of the worship of Jehovah led at once to a severe punishment for the great sin, and by the aid of the tribe of Levi, who alone remained true to Moses and Jehovah, three thousand were slain. Later, on the mount, Moses pleads twice more for the mercy of God upon His people, and God graciously answers his intercession with the promise to lead His people in person to the promised land. In a beautiful concluding scene on the mount, Moses prays for a richer revelation of the glory of God, and God grants him the fullest revelation of His character and glory which Moses can bear and still live. Finally God renews the covenant with Israel, and Moses writes anew upon the tables of stone the Ten Commandments, for the first divinely inscribed tables had been broken by Moses as a symbol of judgment upon the people when their sin of worshipping the golden calf was discovered.

Very instructive is the report that when Moses appeared again to the people his face shone with celestial brightness from his glorious experience with God on the mount. Long waiting in the immediate presence of God illumines the face of the believer and makes him awe-inspiring to sinners. But if the life is to be full of this glory, the interviews with God must be frequent and prolonged (II Cor. 3:12-18) and for this an uninterrupted fellowship with Christ is required. In this believers differ from Moses, who had to veil his face to cover the fading glory.

In the next months, following the renewal of the covenant, the tabernacle was built and its furniture constructed and installed. The materials for the building were contributed by freewill offerings of the people, and the skill necessary to carry out the construction was given by the Spirit of God to the chief craftsman, Bezaleel. When all was completed the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle, and the abiding presence of Jehovah came to dwell on the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. Henceforth, as long as the sanctu-

ary stood, God was worshiped in His temple, and every true Israelite prayed facing it, as did Daniel in Babylon.

In connection with the building of the sanctuary, the rules of acceptable worship were given through Moses, Aaron and his sons were set apart as priests forever, and the ceremonial laws of cleanliness were given. From this time on sacrifices to Jehovah upon the great altar never ceased, theoretically at least [during the captivity, 586-530, the temple was desolate], until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. The only unfortunate incident was the offering of strange fire to Jehovah which incurred the death of Nadab and Abihu as punishment.

The Moral Law—The Ten Commandments

The Ten Comandments spoken by Jehovah from Mount Sinai lie at the foundation of Israel's laws and of all moral law. The civil law and ritual law were subject to change and did change, but these "ten words" were never changed and never will be changed, for they have been recognized by Christ Himself. All, excepting possibly the original application of the fourth commandment, are binding upon all men to the end of time. Jesus took these commandments and applied them to the heart as well as to the outward deed, thus making them fully spiritual, a thing which the Jews of the old dispensation had failed to do.

The Ten Commandments fall naturally into two great divisions, duties to God (1-4), and duties to fellow man (5-10). They might be translated into brief modern expressions as follows:

I. Duties to God

1. Worship only the one true God.
2. Worship God in the spirit without the use of images.
3. Reverence God's name as standing for His nature.
4. Keep God's day holy.

II. Duties to Fellow Men

5. Honor parents, thus preserving the home. This is the first commandment with promise.
6. Do not commit murder. Respect the sacredness of human life.

7. Do not commit adultery. Respect the sacredness of the marriage tie.

8. Do not steal. Respect another's property.

9. Do not lie. Respect the truth.

10. Do not covet. Keep the heart pure.

The Ten Commandments are searching requirements which touch almost every phase of life. Upon the first four true and pure religion is founded; upon the last six a sound social order can be founded, which will include marriage, the home, private property, and maintenance of law and order. If any one of the six is disregarded, serious consequences follow for society. The last of the ten is the most searching, for it touches thought and desire. God requires a good heart as well as a good life. But all of the ten require a right heart, and without this heart not one of them can be kept. Paul says indeed that the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," taught him the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Rom. 7:7-11. But Jesus says that all the law is summed up in two great laws—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:5) and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). Jesus means to say that without a heart that is right toward God and man in its inmost desires, it is impossible to keep the law. The Ten Commandments are not outdated or outlived. They are mightily needed today in their fullest and widest spiritual application.

The Civil Law

Compared to the fundamental moral law, the civil law given to Israel through Moses is not final and absolute. It was adapted to the needs of the time, and adjusted to the hardness of the people's hearts (for instance the law permitting divorce, Deut. 24:1-4, and Matt. 19:3-9). Many of the ordinances were temporary; some were even changed by Moses thirty-eight years later when Israel was about to enter the promised land. Nevertheless much that is found in these laws can still serve as a model for just and righteous laws for the welfare of men and nations today. On the other hand, God tolerated things in the civil law of Moses which He does not allow in the Christian dispensation. This does not indicate a change in God but rather a wise adaptation by God to man's changing needs and capacities.

In comparison with the laws of other nations of this same time, the laws of Moses were much more merciful and just. Many abuses common among other nations were expressly forbidden in Israel. The innocent were much better protected, and the criminal was more justly dealt with. The penalties of the famous contemporary Code of Hammurabi of Babylon were much more severe.

Following are some of the subjects dealt with in the civil law: regulation of involuntary slavery; penalty for murder and the assault of parents, kidnaping, assault of a free man, servants, or a pregnant woman; laws defining the responsibilities of those who own animals; penalties for theft and robbery; settlements of property damage; regulations concerning rape and other sex perversion, oppression of the poor and foreigners; and the prohibition of charging interest on money lent to other Israelites. These sound almost contemporary. As has been said before there were many more that were more temporary in nature.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Name all the events that happened during the year's stay at Mt. Sinai.
2. What are the Ten Commandments and the following ordinances called?
3. In what chapter are the Ten Commandments given?
4. Repeat the Ten Commandments according to the two divisions.
5. What is God's part in the covenant made with Israel? What is Israel's part?
6. Quote the verses from the Pentateuch which Christ called the two greatest commandments.

Lesson VII

The Religious Institutions and Ceremonies of Israel

Source: Ex. 25—31; Leviticus; Num. 9:1-14; 18; 19; 28—30.

Outline

I. Ceremonial Law, Leviticus, all except 8—10; Num. 9:1-14; 19; 28—30.

II. Institutions:

1. Tabernacle, Ex. 25—31.
2. Priesthood, Ex. 29; Lev. 10; Num. 18.
3. Festivals, Lev. 23, 24; Ex. 23:14-17.

Selections for Reading: Ex. 23:14-19; 25—27; Lev. 1—7; Num. 18.

The Ceremonial Law

The ceremonial law regulates Israel's approach to God and provides for the worship of God by a nation. It is based upon the fundamental conception of God as the "Holy One"; "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy." The idea of holiness is twofold: first, separation from the sinful world; and second, separation to God, or consecration to God. Holiness does not exist apart from God, and can be found only in things devoted to God, whether a person, a people, a place, an act, or a thing. From this point of view Israel was a holy people because devoted to God, and therefore separated from all other nations. From the same point of view every Israelite, before offering a sacrifice to God, had to cleanse himself ceremonially, not because he thereby became morally pure, but because he needed to be reminded that only those who are separated from the evil of the world, and have no worldly taint, can stand in the presence of a holy God, and have fellowship with Him. The unfortunate thing was that the Israelites came to substitute outward ceremonial cleansing for inward moral purity and uprightness of heart thus changing ceremonial cleansing from a teaching symbol into a thing of value in itself.

The ceremonial law made it plain that no living being

could approach to God and stand in His presence in his own right, by virtue of his own goodness. In the first place, man required the aid of a priest, a specially consecrated and purified representative; and secondly, he was required to bring an offering. Furthermore the lesson of his sinfulness, and the need of divine grace and redeeming forgiveness, was taught through the requirement that every offering had to be accompanied by the shedding of blood to be of any value. Without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins, and hence a bloodless offering could not be accepted from man. With those fundamental principles in mind let us briefly consider the entire sacrificial system of the Mosaic law. There are two general classes of offerings, and three basic types.

I. Two Classes of Offerings.

1. Public, offered at the expense of the nation.
2. Private, offered by an individual.

II. Three Kinds of Offerings.

1. Animal offerings, or blood sacrifices. Cattle, sheep, or goats of both sexes (rarely doves) were used. The animals must be free from blemish, and at least eight days old. Sacrifices were of three kinds: (1) burnt offering; (2) sin offering; and (3) peace offering. Fuller discussion follows below.

2. Meal offering or vegetable offering. White meal, or unleavened bread, cakes, or wafers, or ears of roasted grain, constituted the material, which was always offered with salt, and (except in the sin offering) with olive oil. The meal offering was offered with an animal sacrifice, or independently as an offering by itself. In the former case it was entirely consumed in the burnt offering, while in the latter case it was consumed either in whole or in half upon the altar, while the other half went to the priest.

3. The drink offering. This offering was never offered alone but only with the meal offering when it accompanied the burnt offering or peace offering.

The three sacrifices or animal offerings, mentioned above (II, 1), were the most important offerings.

1. **The burnt offering** signified entire self-dedication of

the offerer to Jehovah. Hence the entire animal was consumed on the altar, while the blood was sprinkled about the altar.

2. **The sin offering** and the trespass offering made atonement for transgression of the offerer, the former (sin offering) for sins which did not affect others, but only oneself, the latter (trespass offering) for trespasses which affected others. In both, only the fat of the animal was burned on the altar, while the flesh was either burnt outside the camp, or given to the priests for their consumption, as the case might be. The essential part of these offerings, however, was the blood. The blood was symbolically displayed before Jehovah as evidence that the sin had been expiated by the taking of the life of a substitute. The blood was either poured before the altar, or on the altar, or applied to the horns of the altar of incense. Sometimes several methods were used for the same offering. In any case the intent was clear; sin must be atoned for by the shedding of blood, that is, by the death of a living being, an animal that was not in itself guilty but was without blemish.

3. **The peace offering** was of three kinds: (a) the thank offering in recognition of unmerited blessings; (b) the votive offering, in payment of a vow; and (c) the freewill offering as an expression of love for God. In all three cases the blood was sprinkled upon the altar, and the fat was consumed on the altar, while the flesh was divided between the priests and the offerer, who with his friends ate it at a meal before the Lord at the sanctuary, where Jehovah was present as a guest.

The procedure in offering a sacrifice consisted of five acts:

1. Presentation of the sacrifice at the door of the sanctuary by the offerer himself.

2. Laying on of hands by the offerer upon the animal victim's head, signifying his identification with the animal as his substitute.

3. Slaying the animal by the offerer himself, who thus symbolically killed himself, accepting thereby the just punishment for sin.

4. Symbolic application of the blood to the altar, to indicate that expiation for sin was made to God.

5. Burning the sacrifice on the altar, whereby its essence or flavor ascended to God, becoming a sweet (that is, a pleasing) smell to Him.

In concluding this brief summary of the offerings it should be said that not all sins could be atoned for by the sacrificial system which the law provided. Only sins committed through ignorance or weakness could be atoned for, whereas those done deliberately or with a high hand could not be atoned for. Many sins are enumerated which could be punished only by death or expulsion. From such terrible sins of open defiance of the law of God, that is, rebellion against God, nothing in the sacrificial system could avail. On behalf of such rebellious sinners, however, the mercy of God could be invoked through intercessory prayer, as Moses did for Israel several times, and for Aaron and Miriam. God was righteous, not letting sin go unpunished, but He was also a God of mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Ex. 34:6, 7. Prophets and psalmists of later times unite in exalting the mercy of Jehovah to repentant sinners (cf. Psalm 51). Without this mercy rebellious, sinful Israel would have been cast off many times in the course of her history. As it was, Israel was not cast off until she rejected the Saviour in her last great act of rebellion, the crucifixion of Christ (cf. Matt. 21:33-46).

Institutions

1. The Tabernacle.

Since Israel was a theocracy, that is, a visible representation of the reign of God, and Jehovah was regarded as King, it became necessary to provide a place where He might dwell among His people, and where He might give visible manifestations of His glory. For this purpose a "dwelling" or "tabernacle" was constructed, which was Jehovah's "holy habitation," "the house of Jehovah." It was made demountable so as to accompany the Israelites on their journeys. Since it was the place where Jehovah met His people and communed with them, it was called the "tent of meeting," and the "tabernacle of the congregation," and since it was the depository of the tables of the law or testimony, it was also called "the tent of testimony." It was constructed at Sinai according to a divine pattern given to Moses by God Himself, and was used as the place for the official public worship of God from the time of the Exodus till the reign of Solomon.

It was in essence a semirigid tentlike construction 15 by 45 feet (10 by 30 cubits) in dimensions and about 15 feet (10 cubits) high, built of upright boards of acacia (shittim) wood overlaid with gold, which were set in bases of silver and united by horizontal poles of acacia (shittim). The open rectangle thus created was covered with four costly coverings, of white linen, goat's hair, red-dyed ram's skins, and badger skins. The east end of the rectangle was not boarded shut, but left open for an entrance, and was hung with a curtain of embroidered linen suspended from golden hooks attached to five pillars overlaid with gold. The interior was divided into two rooms by a curtain or veil of rich linen embroidered with symbolic figures of the cherubim. The first or eastern room, called the holy place, 15 by 30 feet in size (10 by 20 cubits), was entered daily by the priests in their ministry, while the western room, called the most holy place, measured 15 feet (10 cubits), a perfect cube, and was entered only once a year by the high priests only, namely, on the great Day of Atonement. The tabernacle was placed in an open court, 75 by 150 feet, enclosed by a continuous curtain of linen about $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet (5 cubits) high, suspended from rods (fillets) of silver hung between acacia (shittim) pillars.

In this open court, all the public worship of Israel was conducted, and all the sacrifices were presented. For this purpose the great or brazen altar, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet (3 by 5 cubits) square, was placed near the center of the space in front of the entrance to the tabernacle proper. On this altar a fire, which at first had been miraculously lighted, burned without ceasing. A brazen basin was set between the altar and the sanctuary at which the priests performed their ceremonial cleansings before conducting the sacrifices.

Within the tabernacle were four additional pieces of furniture. Three were in the front or eastern room: the golden altar of incense; the seven-branched golden candlestick, or lamp; and the wooden table overlaid with gold, on which the shewbread and wine were placed. In the holy of holies the only object was the oblong, wooden chest covered with gold, known as the "ark of the covenant," upon which two golden figures of cherubim, with outstretched wings, were mounted. The space between the wings down to the lid of the chest (the mercy seat)

was lighted with a glow called the "glory" or "shekinah glory," the visible sign of the presence of God.

The tabernacle was a relatively costly structure with much precious metal about it, of gold and silver. Its construction was made possible by the freewill offerings of the people which in turn consisted largely of the "gifts" the Egyptians had given before the Exodus. It was dedicated exactly a year after the departure from Egypt. During all the period of the wandering a cloud rested on it by day and a pillar of fire by night. When the camp was moved the structure was taken down by the Levites who carried it to the next stopping place where it was again set up.

2. Priesthood.

The approach of the Israelites to God in worship, whether individually or as a whole, had to be made through specially ordained representatives, called priests, who therefore officiated at all acts of worship.

At Sinai Aaron and his sons and descendants were appointed to be priests forever, with Aaron as the chief priest or high priest. The priests were especially consecrated or ordained to their office by the anointing with oil, and were to give themselves wholly to their service. In worship they were required to wear special priestly garments of white linen. When not engaged in worship they dressed like other men. The high priest wore a special blue robe of great splendor and significance. Over this he wore a short sleeveless shirt of fine linen called the ephod. On his chest hung a breastplate of judgment adorned with precious stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. On his head was a special pointed cap, to the front of which was fastened a gold plate inscribed "Holiness unto the Lord." To the breastplate were attached the mysterious Urim and Thummim by which the will of God could be ascertained.

A very significant work of the high priest was the special ministry on the great Day of Atonement. On this day, once a year, atonement was made for the priesthood, the tabernacle, the altar, and all the people, by sprinkling the blood of sin offerings in the holy of holies. Then one goat was taken as the substitute for the people, the sins of the people were symboli-

cally laid upon its head, and it was driven away into the wilderness bearing the reproach of the nation.

3. The Festivals.

The ceremonial law also prescribed weekly, monthly, and yearly festivals. The weekly festival was the Sabbath, consecrated to rest and joyful devotion. The monthly festival was the day of the new moon. Three great annual feasts were appointed by the law: (1) Passover, a week in April, which celebrated the deliverance from Egypt; (2) Pentecost, a day in May, which was the feast of the harvest of the first fruits; (3) Tabernacles, a week in October, which was the feast of the final harvest, and commemorated the wandering in the wilderness. Later in the history of Israel other festivals were added. The feast of Purim was held in March celebrating the Jews' deliverance from wicked Haman. Esth. 9:20-25. Judas Macca-baeus instituted the feast of Dedication in 165 B.C. to celebrate the rededication of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes.

This brief account of the law of Moses and the institutions which it provided gives an outline picture of the religious life of the Israelites under the plan which God expected them to follow until the Saviour and Messiah was to come in person.

The law served a twofold purpose—it regulated the life and worship of Israel under the Old Covenant, and typified or foreshadowed Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant. Fundamentally the same God and the same plan of redemption are revealed in both the Old and New Covenants. Israel was God's people who had been called by His grace into covenant fellowship, and many of the terms which are used to describe the Christian church in the New Testament are taken from the descriptions of God's people in the Old Testament.

The law in itself did not provide the grace which the Gospel brought, but rather led to condemnation. The law reveals man's sin, God's holiness and love, forgiveness through substitutionary sacrificial atonement, and consequent sanctification. Nevertheless, the law in itself could not save. It had value only because it was fulfilled in Christ, and only those who lived by faith were saved under the law, for justification by faith is an Old Testament teaching, as Paul himself shows. Paul

also teaches (Rom. 7) that the law revealed sin and depravity in the heart of him who tried to keep it, and thus served to prepare him for faith, that is, it served as a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24). In fact both Paul and Peter show that the dispensation of law was inferior to the dispensation of the Gospel, for it was a yoke of bondage "which the fathers were not able to bear," in contrast to the freedom of the Christian, and it was a ministry of condemnation and death, whereas the Gospel is a ministration of righteousness; it was a covenant of the letter in contrast to a covenant of the spirit. The law could not make alive; that was the work of Christ in the heart through faith.

The key to the understanding of the relation of the law to the Gospel is given by the Epistle to the Hebrews. That entire book is an exposition of the superiority of Christ and the Gospel to Moses and the law. The old law foreshadows, "typifies," the work of Christ who brings the reality. Therefore Christ (with the Gospel) is in every way "better" than the old, a better High Priest, a better Promiser, a better Sacrifice, a more perfect Tabernacle

The law was a preparation for the Gospel, for it made man feel the great need of a Saviour. Those who kept the law in spirit as well as in letter joyfully received the Saviour when He came. The symbols and types of the Messiah contained in the law teach us much that is instructive to Christians. The greatest reason for the study of the Old Testament is to learn still more about the person and work of our great Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus Christ.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What are the two elements in the idea of holiness?
2. What was the purpose of the ceremonial cleansing under the law?
3. Name and describe the three general kinds of offerings.
4. Name and give the purpose of each of the three animal offerings or sacrifices.
5. What did the sprinkling of the blood on the altar signify?
6. Explain the meaning of the three names: "tabernacle," "tent of meeting," "tent of testimony."
7. Name and place all the furniture of the tabernacle, both in the tent and in the court.
8. What was the purpose of the priesthood?
9. Name the three great annual feasts provided for by the law.
10. What was the twofold purpose of the law?
11. In what sense was the law a preparation for the Gospel?

Lesson VIII

Deuteronomy

Author.—Moses, except for some scribal additions such as the account of his death.

Time.—Forty years after the deliverance from Egypt, just before the entrance into Canaan.

Contents.—The Book of Deuteronomy consists almost entirely of a great final address of Moses delivered to Israel in three installments, committed to writing and solemnly ratified as a covenant. The address occupies thirty of the thirty-four chapters. The remaining chapters recount Moses' preparation for his departure, the ordination of his successor, Joshua, and the death of Moses.

Purpose.—Deuteronomy is the book of preparation for the entrance into Canaan after thirty-eight years of wandering in punishment for the sin of unbelief at the time of the report of the spies at Kadesh. Israel has finally reached the East-Jordan land, and has conquered East-Jordan territory. The new generation needs to be re-instructed in the law which had been given at Sinai thirty-nine years before, and since a settled life in Canaan in cities and towns and on farms is to replace the wandering, seminomad life of the wilderness, modifications of the original law are necessary.

Hence Moses, the original author of the law as given in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, reviews the greater portion of the law before the people, with accompanying admonitions and warnings. For this reason the title of the book is Deuteronomy, meaning "the second law."

Deuteronomy is one of the outstanding books of the Old Testament, rich in spiritual teachings. The honor in which the book was held by Christ and the apostles is indicated by the large number of quotations from this book in the New Testament. It was from this book that all of Jesus' replies to the tempter were taken.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. First Address of Moses, 1—4.
- II. Second Address of Moses, 5—26.
 1. Historical review, and admonitions, 5—11.
 2. Legal precepts, 12—26.
- III. Third Address of Moses, 27, 28.
- IV. Fourth Address by Moses at the Ratification of the Covenant, 29, 30.
- V. Concluding History, 31—34.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. First Address of Moses, 1—4.
 1. Story of journey from Sinai to Kadesh, 1.

2. Story of journey from Kadesh to Moab, 2:1-25.
 3. Story of the conquest and allotment of the East-Jordan land, 2:26—3:29.
 4. Exhortation to obedience, 4.
- II. Second Address of Moses, 5—26.
1. The Ten Commandments, 5.
 2. Exhortations to obedience with promise of blessings and warnings of judgment, 6—8.
 3. Reminder of past failures and rebellions, 9, 10.
 4. Renewed exhortation to obey the law and to study it, 11.
 5. Laws and precepts for use in Canaan, 12—26.
- III. Third Address of Moses, 27, 28.
1. The law to be inscribed at Ebal, with the curses to be given at Ebal, 27.
 2. Blessings to be given at Gerizim, 28.
- IV. Fourth Address of Moses, 29, 30.
1. Renewal of the covenant and charge of Moses to the people, 29, 30.
- V. Concluding History, 31—34.
1. Ordination of Joshua, and the charge to the priests and Levites, 31.
 2. Song of Moses, 32.
 3. Blessing by Moses, 33.
 4. Death of Moses, 34.

The Book

In this book the aged Moses, divinely appointed leader of Israel and prophet of God, pours out his heart in earnest appeals to his people to love Jehovah and keep all His commandments. The appeal to Israel to be faithful and obedient is based upon the love and mercy of God toward His people as demonstrated over and over again in the preceding forty years. For this reason much of the history of the deliverance and the wilderness wanderings is retold by Moses. But imbedded in the history rich spiritual passages are found. We should not forget that Jesus makes Deut. 6:5 the first and greatest commandment, placing alongside of it Lev. 19:18. The presence of these two sentences alone in the Pentateuch is sufficient to lift these books to the highest plane for the Christian. The later Jews made no mistake in choosing six verses from Deuteronomy as the essence of their religion, and requiring them to be memorized by all Jewish boys before being admitted to membership in the synagogue. Another outstand-

ing feature of the Book of Deuteronomy is the beautiful poetic song of Moses contained in the thirty-second chapter.

First Address

Moses begins his great address to Israel by recalling the promise of God given at Horeb (Sinai) thirty-eight years before, together with the command to go forward into the promised land and to occupy it. After mentioning the appointment of judges at that time by Moses, the address moves on to remind Israel of their great failure through unbelief when they were at Kadesh and became discouraged at the report of ten of the twelve spies. Moses specifically says that the people "did not believe God" and for that reason lost their opportunity and had to wander in the wilderness. The futile attempt to attack, in their own strength, the Amorites in the hill country only demonstrated all the more the need of the Israelites to trust in God and to obey Him.

The thirty-eight years that follow this failure at Kadesh are passed over very rapidly as the address goes on. But the victories of the past few months over Sihon, King of Heshbon, and Og, King of Bashan, are related in detail, together with the allotment of the East-Jordan conquered territory to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Here Moses discloses his request to God to be able to go into the promised land, and the fact that it was refused and that he was merely allowed to see the land from Mount Pisgah.

At the conclusion of the historical review, Moses makes a strong appeal for obedience to the statutes and judgments which God had commanded, together with the warning not to add to or diminish from the words of the law. A strong appeal against idolatry follows this, with the solemn warning that Israel will perish and will be scattered among the nations as a punishment if they fall into idolatry, although even then they are promised mercy and forgiveness if they return. So Moses was the first of the prophets to prophesy in essence the captivity. His exhortation concludes with the appeal to Israel to remember the great deeds of deliverance which God had performed, and to think of Him therefore as the only God, the One to obey. After the conclusion of the address Moses set aside three cities of refuge east of the Jordan to which persons

guilty of unpremeditated murder might flee for safety. This address occupies four chapters.

Second Address

The second address is much longer than the first, filling twenty-two chapters. This address differs from the first in that it does not recount history but rehearses some of the laws given at Sinai, with emphasis upon the spirituality of the laws and insistence upon their observance.

The first half of the address is devoted to a retelling of the story of the giving of the law at Sinai, together with a repetition of the Ten Commandments in slightly different form, plus a commentary on them. Moses repeats the touching appeal of Jehovah at Sinai for obedience: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever" (Deut. 5:29)! This appeal to obedience rings through the Book of Deuteronomy in loud tones again and again. Moses emphasizes the blessings of obedience. One is led to feel that Moses knew how disobedient they would be in the future, how hard it would be to remain true to God and His law, and for this reason in his last days made such a strong attempt to secure the promised obedience. He warned the people that in times of prosperity they would forget God, and he pleaded with them to "Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5). This great and first commandment (as Jesus called it) is followed by the command to give faithful teaching to the children. This teaching was again to be used to remind future generations of the great deliverance from Egypt.

As one of the means to establish and maintain faithfulness to Jehovah, Israel is commanded to be separate from all other nations, for Israel is to be "an holy people unto the Lord." The expression "holy people" here means separated from the world and dedicated to God and His service. As a good and sufficient reason for this separation and dedication Moses reminds them that it was only God's love that chose them and not any merit of their own. This same love would continue to bless them above all other people. Moses promises them deliverance from all their enemies by the Lord Himself, who

would drive out inhabitants of Canaan before them and deliver their kings into Israel's hands. This theme of God's mighty deeds in their behalf in the past and His promises of blessing for the future is repeated several times, with a particularly strong and effective statement in the eighth chapter. Then by reminding the Israelites of their sins and rebellions against God in the past Moses tries to make them humble and give up trust in their own righteousness for trust in God. In contrast to Israel's rebellions, God's mercies are enumerated. And again the appeal is made, "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, . . . and keep his commandments, alway" (Deut. 11 :1). Finally a blessing and a curse is set before them, the blessing to accompany obedience and the curse to follow disobedience.

The latter part of the second address, beginning with the twelfth chapter, brings a long series of laws. A first group deals with religious matters such as the preparation of a central place of worship, prohibition of eating blood, requirements regarding the eating of holy things in the holy place, provisions for the Levites, the punishment of idolaters, regulations governing the eating of meats (clean and unclean) and concerning the giving of tithes. Other laws establish the three great annual feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, and provide for the seventh year to be a year of debt release for the poor.

Another set of laws gives instruction regarding government, including even the election and duties of a king. In these laws are some marked advances over other nations of that time, such as the prohibition of enchanters, diviners, and witches, as well as the provision for cities of refuge and the punishment of false witnesses.

Finally a group of laws is given concerning private and social life, such as the regulation of inheritance, punishing a stubborn son, sex distinction in clothing, immorality, vows, divorce, wages, muzzling the ox that treads out the corn, unjust weights, etc.

At the conclusion of the second address, the people were commanded to write the words of the law upon stones which were to be transported into Canaan and used to build up an altar on Mt. Ebal.

Third Address

Here Moses also gives orders to arrange the people in two groups at Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal in the promised land to receive the blessings and cursings, the former for obedience and the latter for disobedience. These blessings and curses are specified in detail in a powerful appeal by Moses in this address.

Fourth Address

Finally Moses draws up a covenant between Jehovah and Israel. This is accepted and put into force. A fourth address accompanies the ratification of this covenant which is a renewal of the covenant at Sinai, and which leads to a promise of obedience by the people. In this address Moses sets before Israel death and life, as the issues of disobedience or obedience.

Concluding History

After the ratification of the covenant, Moses publicly charged Joshua with his duties as his successor and then committed the law to the priests, with the charge to read it publicly every seven years. At the request of God Moses wrote a song praising Him for His mercy toward His people, to serve as a testimony and as an antidote against the prophesied apostasy. Finally Moses gave his blessing upon the Israelites and upon their tribes in a touching farewell address. His concluding words apply to God and His people in all ages, "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord"; "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:29, 27).

With these last words to his people Moses went up onto Mount Pisgah (Nebo) alone to view the promised land, and there he was buried, in an unknown grave.

The last verses of Deuteronomy pay a tribute to Moses. It is fitting here perhaps to gather together the tributes to Moses out of the Scriptures.

1. Moses was the first and greatest prophet of the Old Testament. God communed with him face to face. Deut. 34:10. He was a type of Jesus as a prophet. Deut. 18:15-19.

2. Moses was the great lawgiver. "The law was given by Moses" (John 1:17).

3. Moses was a prince of intercessors (Jer. 15:1), and was thoroughly unselfish in his praying.

4. Moses was the meekest man of his time. Num. 12:3.

5. Moses was a great soul winner, for he led his people to put their trust in Jehovah.

A sign of the importance of Moses in revelation and in the kingdom of God is the fact that at the transfiguration he appeared and spoke with the glorified Christ.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Explain the name, "Deuteronomy."
2. Upon what does Moses base his appeal to Israel to be faithful and obedient to God?
3. What punishment does Moses prophesy as coming upon Israel if they fall into idolatry?
4. In what sense was Israel to be a "holy people"?
5. Describe the renewal of the covenant which Moses supervised.
6. Name two occasions when Jesus used quotations from Deuteronomy.
7. Give five great characteristics of Moses.
8. In what sense was Moses the first prophet?
9. What New Testament scene indicates the greatness of Moses?
10. Where and how was Moses buried?
11. Who was Balaam?

Lesson IX

Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan

Introductory Note on the Historical Books

The twelve historical books from Joshua to Nehemiah (Esther) contain the history of God's people, the Hebrew nation, from the first settlement in Canaan under Joshua to the last return from the captivity in Babylon, a period of nearly a thousand years. The Jews reckoned these books as six in number, and counted the first four, that is, the books before Chronicles in the English Bible (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), as "prophetical books," naming them "the former prophets."* This name indicates the high regard in which the Jews held these books, but still more their conception of their nature and purpose as inspired writings in bringing to men messages from God. We too shall seek to find in these books not only interesting information about the history of Israel, her judges, kings, prophets, and people, but also and perhaps with more eagerness, lessons for life from the dealings of God with His people as a whole, and with individuals. We shall also see how through the ages of Israel's history God's one increasing purpose runs, how the revelation of the coming Redeemer becomes clearer and clearer, and the spiritual side of prophetic teaching becomes stronger. We shall see on man's side rise and fall, obedience and disobedience, success and failure, the all-too-common tragic story. On God's side we shall see the everlasting mercies of Jehovah constantly renewed, His fallen children restored again and again by His infinite compassion and love. But we shall see how, as the prophet Isaiah says, after He had planted His "vineyard in a very fruitful hill" (establishment of the law and the settlement in Canaan) and "fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, . . . and built a

* The threefold division of the Old Testament used by the Jews—Law, Prophets, and Writings—led to the inclusion of the historical books with the prophets, so that the first-named were called "former prophets" to distinguish them from the prophets proper, whose writings were called, the "latter prophets." See Contents of the Old Testament in Lesson I.

tower in the midst of it," God was disappointed to harvest wild grapes instead of good fruit, and in consequence had to lay waste the vineyard in judgment (captivity of Israel and Judah). We shall see the tragedy of the growing apostasy of God's people, but we shall also see the faithful remnant, who remained the hope of Israel, true to God and His Word, separate from the heathen world, devoted to God's cause, looking forward to the great, far-off divine event when out of Judah should arise the Messiah, the Saviour who should save His people from their sins.

The historical books have other remarkable characteristics. They show a close acquaintance with the secret motives of men and the hidden purposes of God. At the same time the utmost impartiality is used; the weaknesses of the great are not covered up, their sins are not condoned. And all along these books reveal a remarkable adaptation to the needs of the readers in furnishing lessons of practical holiness.

The writers of the historical books are never mentioned. It may be supposed, however, that men like Joshua, Samuel, and the prophets wrote them. Names of prophets and seers are given, however, who wrote portions of the history of Israel, which portions were used in writing the completed historical books. For example, David's history was written by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (I Chron. 29:29, 30); Solomon's history was written by Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo (II Chron. 9:29). Isaiah wrote the history of Uzziah (II Chron. 26:22), and Hezekiah (II Chron. 32:32), and perhaps of other kings. Shemaiah and Iddo wrote the story of Rehoboam (II Chron. 12:15), Iddo wrote the story of Abijah (II Chron. 13:22), and Jehu wrote the story of Jehoshaphat (II Chron. 20:34).

It is, of course, clear, as has been said in Lesson I, that only a selection out of the enormous mass of material on the history of Israel is given to us in the Bible. The writers do not intend to, or try to, give a complete account. Again, the events which men might prefer to read are frequently omitted. Instead of political events and great deeds, which are frequently merely mentioned, or passed over in silence, things are given out of the private life of all kinds of men, from mighty kings to poor widows. As ordinary histories go, the historical books of the

Old Testament are far from complete, but for the purposes of God and the revelation of His grace and truth the books are fully and richly complete: "To man, to nations, to the church, every chapter is a lesson; and the history, studied in the light of the law and prophets, is to be applied to life under the guidance of the Gospel."

Divisions of the History

The great dividing points of Hebrew history after the Exodus are: (1) the entrance into the promised land; (2) the establishment of the kingdom under Saul; (3) the divisions of the kingdom; (4) the captivity of Judah; and (5) the close of prophecy.

I. From the Settlement of Canaan to the Division of the Kingdom.

Settlement to Saul.

Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel 1—10.

2. Saul to Solomon.

Books: I and II Samuel, I Kings 1—11, I Chronicles, and II Chronicles 1—9.

II. Divisions of the Kingdom to the Captivity.

Books: II Kings 12—25, II Chronicles 10—36.

III. Captivity to the Close of Prophecy.

1. Captivity.

No historical books. Information in the prophetical books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

2. Restoration.

Books: Ezra and Nehemiah.

Esther deals with a personal story in Babylon.

Joshua

Author.—Unknown. Joshua the source of most of the information.

Time Covered.—Entrance into Canaan to the death of Joshua, about 25 years.

Contents.—Story of the conquest and settlement of Canaan. Fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and his descendants regarding possession of the promised land.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Conquest of Canaan, 1—12.
- II. Division of the Land Among the Tribes, 13—22.
- III. Joshua's Farewell Addresses, 23, 24.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Conquest of Canaan, 1—12.
 1. God's charge to Joshua, 1.
 2. Spies at Jericho, 2.
 3. Miraculous crossing of the Jordan, 3, 4.
 4. Preparations for the conquest, 5.
 5. Conquest of central Canaan, 5:1—10:15.
 - a. Capture of Jericho, 6.
 - b. Sin of Achan and the defeat at Ai, 7.
 - c. Conquest of Ai and reading of law at Ebal, 8.
 - d. Gibeon spared. Long day of battle at Beth-horon, 9:1—10:15.
 6. Conquest of southern Canaan, 10:16-43.
 7. Conquest of northern Canaan, 11.
 8. Summary, 12.
- II. Division of the Land Among the Tribes, 13—22.
 1. Description of the land, 13.
 2. Allotment of the land, 14—21.
 - a. First division, five tribes, 14—17.
 - b. Second division, seven tribes, cities of refuge, and Levites, 18—21.
 3. Misunderstanding about the altar at the Jordan, 22.
- III. Joshua's Farewell Addresses, 23, 24.
 1. First farewell address, 23.
 2. Second farewell address, 24:1-28.
 3. Death of Joshua, 24:29-31.
 4. Burial of Joseph's bones, 24:32, 33.

The Conquest of Canaan

Joshua had been the trusted helper of Moses for forty years, during the entire wilderness wandering from Egypt to Canaan. Having been born in Egypt and having lived there till he reached mature manhood, he had had a rich experience and training before being ordained, some forty years later, as Moses' successor to lead Israel into the Promised Land and take possession of it. The great test of his life had come when he with Caleb demonstrated faith in God by recommending the immediate conquest of Canaan, at which time they were almost stoned to death by the unbelieving Israelites. Besides

his great faith in God and proved obedience, his outstanding talent was that of military leadership. He was a great general, as he had already demonstrated in the victorious conflict with the Amalekites at Rephidim, as well as in the East-Jordan campaign before the death of Moses. What was needed after Moses' death was a military leadership combined with absolute faithfulness to God. This rare combination Joshua furnished to an unusual degree. Hence he was publicly ordained by Moses before the high priest and the congregation in Shittim, and received a private consecration and charge from Jehovah in the tabernacle.

The character and history of Joshua, as revealed in the record of his work in the book bearing his name, are very instructive. In the first place, the Spirit of God was in him. Although he had the full promise of success from God, yet he received a direct charge from God to be strong, of good courage, and very courageous. In other words, zeal and devotion were necessary to success. Joshua had the right combination of experience, talent, intelligence, zeal, and faith to make a great and successful leader of Israel and servant of God. He realized fully that prayer and dedication to God were necessary. Hence before the conquest of the Canaanites (after Jericho) he solemnly renewed the dedication of himself and the people to God, and in times of emergency sought by prayer special blessing and help. In return God gave him special tokens of His presence and blessing, as at the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho.

The military program of conquest was very simple and was effectively carried out except for the temporary setback at Ai, due to the covetous deed of Achan. It was as follows:

The permanent camp was established at Gilgal east of Jericho in the Jordan valley. From here Jericho and Ai, strong fortresses of the enemy, were conquered. Then in two campaigns, one in the south with the great victory of Beth-horon where the day was miraculously lengthened to complete the victory, and one in the north with the great victory of Merom, the general conquest of the land was completed. Joshua blundered, however, in three points: (1) in making a treaty with the heathen Gibeonites; (2) in not occupying the citadel

of the Jebusites, later Jerusalem; and (3) in not conquering the Philistines. This left strong enemy forces in the center of the country, and tended to separate Judah in the south from the other tribes in the north, and probably accounted in part for the later cleavage between the tribes which led to the division of the kingdom. A total of seven years was occupied in the conquest. A brief summary of the conquest is given in Joshua 12.

The high points in the story of the conquest are the victories over Jericho and Ai. Two things stand out in the capture of Jericho: the miracle of the falling of the walls, and the part played by the harlot, Rahab, who was saved for her service to the people of God and found a place in the ancestry of the Redeemer. The story of Ai is valuable because of the lesson (Achan) that unconfessed, hidden sin among God's people will prevent the power of God from working and will render service ineffective. After restitution had been made victory was again possible.

The conquest of the land was, however, not the equivalent to a dispossession of the heathen inhabitants by the Israelites; unfortunately the land was not wholly occupied, but only for the most part the central hill country. The Jordan Valley and the coastal plain remained in the hands of the enemy until the time of David. Even in the occupied territory the Canaanites were not completely driven out or exterminated. The remaining groups were a constant source of irritation to the Israelites and led them into idolatry and sin.

The plan of God had been complete extermination of the Canaanites for this very reason. Israel needed to be kept pure, and they needed an object lesson in the awful consequences of sin. The Canaanites were fearfully wicked, steeped in idolatry, licentiousness, and cruelty. They were themselves invaders, and not the original inhabitants of the land. There can be no criticism of God's instructions which made Israel the instrument of a holy God to punish a sinful people, so far sunk in corruption that there was little hope of reclaiming them, whereas they were only a source of pollution to Israel as it was. It is only regrettable that the command was not fully carried out.

During the conquest all Israel was assembled at Mt. Ebal

and Mt. Gerizim in the heart of the land, where all the law was read, including the blessings and cursings pronounced by Moses in Deuteronomy, and all Israel accepted the law.

In the conquest we have the final triumph of God's people, and the fulfillment of God's promise. Just so the church may expect at the end of time to enter the promised land of eternal rest, triumphant, possessing the fullness of the salvation and redemption promised by God to His believing children.

The Division of the Land Among the Tribes

Canaan was to be the home of Israel's tribes from henceforth. The distribution was made under Joshua's direction by lot, partly at Gilgal, and partly at Shiloh, the larger tribes receiving larger portions. Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh already had their allotments east of the Jordan. The Levites received no tribal area, but instead forty-eight cities out of the whole land. Special grants were made, like Hebron to Caleb, and Timnath-serah to Joshua. Six cities of refuge for innocent manslayers were established. The districts assigned for occupation had to be conquered fully by the tribes, a work which Joshua strongly encouraged. During the allotment the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, where it remained until David brought it to Jerusalem.

The Farewell Addresses of Joshua

The nobility of character and true piety and devotion of Joshua are beautifully portrayed in the two farewell addresses which he gave to Israel shortly before his death. The first one is a touching appeal to Israel to love the Lord and serve Him obediently, based upon a reminder of all that the Lord had done for Israel, and reinforced by promises and threatenings. The second address is of a similar nature and was given at Shechem. It briefly recounts the history of God's mercies from the time of Terah on down and centers in an appeal to Israel to serve the true God—"choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15), and leads to a renewed covenant of obedience to the law of God. A stone of witness was set up at Shechem as a memorial to the covenant. Alas, how soon both the stone

memorial and the covenant were forgotten and with what disastrous results! Joshua had tried to commit Israel for all time to faithfulness to Jehovah, but he had tried what is impossible. Each generation must make its own decisions and stand the test itself. Joshua's appeal quickened for the moment the loyalty of the leaders of Israel, but when his associates and friends were gone things changed for the worse.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. Why did the Jews call the historical books "the former prophets"?
2. Give several characteristics of the historical books.
3. Name eight men who wrote portions of the historical records used in the historical books.
4. In what two respects was Joshua great?
5. Name the three steps (campaigns) in the conquest of Palestine by Joshua.
6. What were Joshua's three blunders, and why were they serious?
7. What lesson may be drawn from Achan's sin at Ai?
8. How were the Levites provided for in the allotment of tribal land?
9. What challenge did Joshua make to Israel just before his death?
10. Study the accompanying map and locate the different tribes, cities of refuge, etc.

Lesson X

The Period of the Judges (Judges, Ruth)

Judges

Author.—Unknown, possibly Samuel.

Time Covered.—400 years (?) from Joshua to Samuel; with Samuel about 450 years. Acts 13:20.

Contents.—Experiences of Israel with disobedience, sin and deliverance under various judges, with stories illustrating conditions.

Divisions (for general view and memory work)

- I. Transition from Joshua to the Judges, 1:1—3:6.
- II. Stories of Thirteen Judges, 3:7-16.
- III. Two Stories Illustrating Conditions in the Transition Period of I, 17—21.

Outline (for reference and study)

- I. Transition from Joshua to the Judges, 1:1—3:6.
 1. Occupation of the land by the tribes, 1:1—2:5.
 2. Introduction to the period of the judges with spiritual lesson indicated, 2:6—3:6.
- II. Stories of Thirteen Judges, 3:7-16.
 1. Othniel, 3:7-11.
 2. Ehud, 3:12-30.
 3. Shamgar, 3:31.
 4. Deborah and Barak, 4.
 - a. The Song of Deborah, 5.
 5. Gideon, 6—8.
 6. Abimelech, 9.
 7. Tola, 10:1, 2.
 8. Jair, 10:3-5.
 9. Jephthah, 10:6—12:7.
 10. Ibzan, 12:8-10.
 11. Elon, 12:11, 12.
 12. Abdon, 12:13-15.
 13. Samson, 13—16.
- III. Two Stories Illustrating Conditions in the Transition Period of Division I, 17—21.
 1. Micah's image worship and its establishment among the Danites, 17, 18.
 2. The sin of the men of Gibeah and its punishment, 19—21.

Selections for Reading: Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 13—16.

Transition from Joshua to the Judges

The Book of Judges tells the story of conditions in Israel from the death of Joshua to the time of Samuel, the last of the judges, who prepared the way for King Saul. It tells the story as a record of the spiritual life of Israel and gives us in advance the general plan into which the entire story of the centuries from Joshua to Samuel will fall, with the lesson which is to be learned from it. This advance explanation is found in the second chapter of the book after a brief statement of the actual occupation of the allotted tribal districts by the tribes. The generation who had worked with Joshua and who had been inspired by his faithful leadership were both courageous and faithful and were much better than their murmuring and obstinate fathers in the wilderness. But gradually the zeal for Jehovah cooled, the laws were transgressed, the people went after strange gods, and sin took deep root. We pass into the Dark Ages of Israel's history. Judges 2:7, 10-12, graphically tells the story, "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. . . . And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger."

A number of reasons probably accounted for this tragedy. After the generation died which had an experimental knowledge of Jehovah's great work for Israel, the rising generation was not taught the glorious deeds of Jehovah for His chosen people. The precepts of the law were not faithfully implanted in the home. The worship of God was neglected, and as ignorance and indifference spread, the sharp distinction between Israel and their idolatrous neighbors disappeared. Instead of destroying the heathen they kept them as slaves and began to intermarry with them, and consequently idolatry came in.

But in addition to the religious failure another serious mistake was made. The tribes had pledged themselves to help each other in time of need. But soon each tribe became so busy cultivating its own territory that it did not listen to appeals for help from the other tribes in times of need. Occasionally there was a united stand against the enemy, as at the time of Deborah, and then there was glorious victory. But, in general, ease, luxury, licentiousness, and indifference broke down national unity, and weakened their powers of defense, while the Canaanite inhabitants of the land, gradually growing stronger, either aided the foreign powers who attacked Israel, or themselves, as in the case of the Philistines, became strong enough to attack Israel again and again with repeated success.

The author of the Book of Judges presents his story as a cycle of four stages that kept repeating itself: (1) Israel forsook Jehovah for other gods; (2) Jehovah in anger sent an enemy to enslave them; (3) in their distress Israel cried to Jehovah for deliverance; (4) Jehovah in mercy raised up a leader to deliver Israel from the oppressor. This victorious leader then became judge for the remainder of his life. Each generation failed to learn from its predecessor the lesson of apostasy and destruction, and so the story repeated itself.

During this period local government seems to have been in the hands of the princes of the tribes and the elders, with no national government. The judges were primarily military leaders, who temporarily exercised a general authority over larger areas, but at no time over the whole of Israel. A total of thirteen judges are named in the book, six major judges and seven minor ones. Since the territories over which they ruled, or the tribes which they delivered, were seldom the same, there is no way of determining exactly how long the period covered by the book lasted. We are not to think of the thirteen judges as successors to each other except in a few cases. A list of the judges with their tribes and the enemies from which they won deliverances, is given below. To the thirteen named in the Book of Judges, the two of I Samuel (Eli and Samuel) are added to make the list of judges complete. The six major judges were Othniel, Ehud, Barak (and Deborah), Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

List of Judges*

Judge	Tribe	Enemy
1. Othniel	Judah	Mesopotamians
2. Ehud	Benjamin	Moabites
3. Shamgar	Judah (?)	Philistines
4. Barak (& Deborah)	Naphtali (& Ephraim)	Canaanites
5. Gideon	W. Manasseh	Midianites
6. Abimelech	W. Manasseh	Midianites
7. Tola	Issachar	Midianites
8. Jair	E. Manasseh	Midianites
9. Jephthah	Gad	Ammonites
10. Ibzan	Zebulun (?)	Ammonites
11. Elon	Zebulun	Ammonites
12. Abdon	Ephraim	Ammonites
13. Eli	Levi	Philistines
14. Samson	Dan	Philistines
15. Samuel	Levi	Philistines

In general the judges were men of ability and leadership, whom the Spirit of God chose and endowed with courage and power. Some were men of faith and high character, others seem to have been quite ignorant of the law of Moses, and several had a low moral standard. The best known of them, Samson, is by no means what he should have been. We are to think of the judges, not as prophets or teachers, but rather as special men appointed for a definite purpose, namely, military success and government. God had to use the men who were available and do the best He could with them. The faults of these men are not for a moment whitewashed or condoned, heroes though they were. We marvel at what God can do with weak vessels. What kind of men are we furnishing Him to work with today? The great God is, after all, limited in the work of His kingdom by the men whom He has to use as His workers.

Glimpses of the Leading Judges

1. Othniel drove out the Mesopotamian invaders, who had oppressed Israel eight years. In his youth Othniel had won the hand of Caleb's daughter by his brave and successful attack

* From Sampey, *Syllabus for Old Testament Study*, p. 91.

on the strong town of Kirjath-sepher. Josh. 15:16-19. The Spirit of Jehovah came upon him one day as he was meditating on the sufferings of Israel, and he drew his sword and chased the invaders out of the land. Judg. 3:7-11.

2. Eglon of Moab mightily oppressed Israel for eighteen years. Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, resolved to assassinate the cruel king and free his people from the Moabite yoke. He drove a sharp sword through the body of the king, and then destroyed his army completely. The Bible tells the story of Ehud's deed without either praise or censure. Judg. 3:12-30.

3. Deborah, a prophet and female judge, possessed inspiration, skill, and courage. In emergencies God sometimes uses women to do work ordinarily committed to men. Deborah is perhaps the greatest character described in the Book of Judges. Whether seated under the palm tree in the hill country of Ephraim, or going with Barak at the head of Israel's army, or singing the praises of Jehovah for the victory over Sisera, she is a picturesque and noble figure. She was the wife of Lapidoth, and calls herself "a mother in Israel" (Judg. 4, 5).

4. The story of Gideon is a favorite with both young and old. God found Gideon discouraged and timid; but led him first to a stronger personal faith in Himself and then by degrees brought him to the point of attacking the host of Midian. Gideon at first hardly dared to assail idolatry among his own people; but when he had once made a beginning, by breaking down the altar of Baal and cutting down the image of Astarte (a heathen goddess) beside it, the Spirit of God gave him courage to gather an army against the invaders. Jehovah stripped him of all his army but three hundred brave men anxious to drive out the plundering Midianites. By a skillful night attack he routed the Midianite host, and then pursued the foe until victory was complete. The story abounds in dramatic scenes. Gideon seems to have been uninstructed in the Mosaic law, like most of the military leaders of the troubled period of the judges. He made a costly golden ephod, which became an object of worship to his family and to all Israel. He also took many wives. Though refusing to accept the office of king over Israel, he yet lived in royal state. Judg. 6-8.

5. Jephthah delivered the Israelites east of the Jordan from

the inroads of the Ammonites. If one stops to consider the story of Jephthah's early life, he can well understand how such a rude chieftain would mingle with his devotion to Jehovah much of heathen ignorance and superstition. When diplomacy failed with the king of Ammon, Jephthah went out to battle, after having made a rash vow (perhaps in secret) that he would offer up as a burnt offering the person who should first meet him out of the door of his house, if he should return victorious. It was wrong to make such a vow, it was wrong to execute it when made; but Jephthah felt in honor bound to keep it, even though it meant the sacrifice of his only daughter on the smoking altar. Some think that Jephthah did not literally sacrifice his daughter but condemned her to lifelong celibacy. We can no more defend this sacrifice than we can defend Samson's immoral acts. The Spirit of Jehovah clothed Jephthah with power in battle, and used him as a deliverer of Israel, so that he has a place among the heroes of faith. Judg. 10-12.

6. **Samson** was a mixture of strength and weakness. How often must his pious father and mother have wondered at his strange tastes and peculiar deeds! He gambles and plays practical jokes and gives the reins to his animal appetites. He is not strong enough in his moral life to resist the charms of the Philistine women. One cheats him out of the secret of his riddle, and another betrays him into the hands of his enemies. Here we behold Samson the weakling. When the young lion roars against him, he rends the fierce beast as he would rend a kid. When the Philistines shout again him, ropes and thongs are snapped like threads, and he leaps among them and slays a thousand men with his own hands. In desperation, the blind hero pulls a house down upon himself and his foes, that he may be avenged for the loss of his eyes. Here we behold Samson the mighty man. Judg. 13—16.

The final four chapters of the book give two tragic stories to illustrate the conditions of Israel about the time of the death of Joshua, just before the time of the judges. The position of the stories at the end of the book, after the story of Samson, is misleading. In the first story we are surprised to find a grandson of Moses officiating as priest before a graven image. So soon was the second commandment broken by a priest. The

second story tells of an immoral outrage that led to a war which almost exterminated the tribe of Benjamin and left it a weak and small tribe forever after.

Ruth

Author.—Unknown, possibly Samuel.

Time.—Probably late in the period of the judges.

Contents.—The experiences of a Moabite woman who was converted to the Jewish faith.

Purpose.—To inspire to faithfulness.

Outline

- I. Naomi's Sojourn in Moab, with Death of Husband and Son, 1:1-5.
- II. Return of Naomi with Ruth to Bethlehem, 1:6-22.
- III. Struggle of the Two Women with Poverty, Helped by Boaz, 2.
- IV. Ruth's Bold Act, 3.
- V. Redemption of Naomi's Property and Marriage of Ruth, 4.

It is refreshing to turn from the dark picture of Israel presented to us in the Book of Judges to the beautiful story of Ruth contained in the short book that bears her name. This charming story is a true one, not fiction, and is given to show that the religion that was the peculiar precious possession of Israel could and did produce characters of faith and noble conduct as well as beautiful home life. No doubt there were other characters as noble as those of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, and no doubt there were other homes as attractive as the ones these persons represent.

The heroine of the book is Ruth, who surpasses in faith and devotion both Naomi and Boaz, although both of the latter were noble characters. Ruth must have been converted from paganism to the worship of the true God by the beauty of the lives of the family into which she married. Her character is revealed in: (1) her willingness to give up her native land and people to remain with the worshipers of God; (2) her devotion to her mother-in-law, not only in accompanying her, but in supporting her after the return to Bethlehem; (3) her industrious, modest, faithful, affectionate life in Bethlehem. Ruth was a model daughter and became a model wife. The women of Bethlehem were right in their estimate when they said to Naomi that Ruth was better than seven sons.

The second half of the book is a love story dealing with

the courtship and marriage of Boaz and Ruth, the great-grandparents of David. The fact that the book closes with the genealogy of the ancestors of David gives good reasons for the thought that the story is included in the Bible because of Ruth's relationship to David. Here the mercy of God is shown to be broader than the racial and blood limits of Israel, for the blood of Ruth, the foreigner, flowed not only in the veins of David but also in the veins of David's greater Son, the Messiah. In the second half of the story we see not only Ruth's faith in God, but also her faith in good men. Boaz, too, is an example of a virtuous man, with high regard for virtuous womanhood, and for the duties of a son to his mother.

So we see in the Book of Ruth lives that were good and pure and true. Such lives are beautiful and attractive to man and pleasing to God today as much as they were three thousand years ago in Bethlehem. May the story of Ruth who went through every test and was faithful continue to inspire men with the purity, beauty, and power of sweet home life.

Questions

(For Review and Discussion)

1. What was the typical succession of events in the time of the judges?
2. What two fundamental reasons might be given for the repeated apostasy of Israel in the time of the judges?
3. Why is it impossible to know the exact time covered by the Book of Judges?
4. Name the six major judges and tell something of each one.
5. Why did Ruth choose the people of God rather than her own people?
6. What lessons of home life can be drawn from the Book of Ruth?
7. What relation was Ruth to King David?

