

Adult

Sabbath School Quarterly

Third Quarter

1968

July, August, September

“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Sabbath School Quarterly

Adult Lessons

Volume 53

Number 3

Published quarterly by the Bible Advocate Press at Second and Willow, Stanberry, Mo., and entered as second class matter July 14, 1924, at the post office at Stanberry, Missouri under the act of March 3, 1879.

Third Quarter

1968

July, August, September

Subscription price: \$1.25 per year; 35 cents a single copy;
30 cents per copy in bundle orders of six or more;
or \$1.00 each when ordered by the year in clubs
of six or more ordered sent to one address.

Address all orders to
BIBLE ADVOCATE PRESS
STANBERRY, MISSOURI 64489

July 20 is Home Missions

Department Emphasis Day

People like a bargain when they see one, and most of us are economy minded. However, there is an economy that is neither wise nor right. It is the economy of not making the Gospel available to mankind. When the days are dark, men need light. When times are hard, men need comfort. When illness strikes, men need the knowledge of God's healing power. When the outlook is discouraging men need the confidence which is inspired by the Word of God. When despair is abroad, men need hope. There are luxuries that may well be spared; necessities that may be curtailed, but the Gospel is indispensable at all times. It is even more indispensable in times like these.

Christ is the only hope of individuals and of society. The Bible is the answer to man's quest for salvation and the true source of godly knowledge and wisdom. The Church stands as a beacon light pointing the way to everlasting life in a world torn by strife. The Church is the sanctuary where sin-sick souls may find Christ and be motivated to live a happy, successful Christian life.

FAITH FOR OUR TIME Broadcasts, the national radio program of the church, lifts up Jesus and the true Gospel of salvation and light. The many testimonies received every day attest to the saving, healing, comforting Gospel preached to the listeners of **FAITH FOR OUR TIME** Broadcasts. It is encouraging to read of people who, for the first time in their entire life, have heard and accepted the truth of God's holy Sabbath. Testimonies of healings bring rejoicing to the hearts of those who believe and know that God does heal in this day and age. Testimonies of answered prayer cause a more sure knowledge that God not only hears, but that He answers prayer. Testimonies of new light brought to listeners is an assurance that the Gospel is reaching the hearts of the hearers. God has said that His Word would not return unto Him void.

The best thing man can do is to send forth the Gospel in power and in truth. **FAITH FOR OUR TIME** is the answer to the great need of getting the Gospel to the people in this most dynamic method. Give generously to the national radio broadcast of the church.

4

September 21 is Ministerial

Department Emphasis Day

God established spiritual leadership in Israel under the old covenant. The entire tribe of Levi was set aside for the ministry, so we might conclude that one man out of twelve in Israel was involved in this work. This tribe was given no land, only cities to live in. The Levites were to receive the tithes from their brethren to live on; they were not to leave their spiritual work to raise their own produce for a livelihood. This proves that God considers the spiritual ministry of great and vital importance.

The ministry of today is just as important—its work requires full surrender to the service of God. A conscientious minister who is truly called of God gives his life to this service even as did the apostle Paul and many others. The spiritual concern of the ministers is to look after the welfare of the Father's business, and this must take first place in their lives.

The ministry desperately needs the support of the brethren, spiritually and financially. The Ministerial Department is keenly aware of the need for better and more efficient programs to carry the Gospel to all classes of people. But this cannot be done without funds.

In consideration of our worldwide mission, we owe our brethren in other countries equality in love, concern and spiritual assistance. The brethren in Mexico have urgently invited us for several years to come to Mexico to hold the Ministerial Council there. The Executive Board has voted to hold the next Ministerial Council in Mexico this fall. This will involve additional costs, but we owe this love to the brethren in Mexico.

In order to carry on business in our Ministerial Council we must have a quorum of 37 credentialed ministers present from the United States. Several ministers will not be able to attend the Council in Mexico unless they receive financial help from the brethren in the field through the Ministerial Department. The department also has other expenses in making arrangements for the Council, as well as in carrying on its regular program.

Your offering on September 21 will help meet these needs. May God bless you.

5

July 6, 1968

Matthew

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:29-46.

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Lesson Commentary: Although Matthew is the first book in the New Testament, it was not the first one written. The Gospel of Mark was written before Matthew, the latter having been written approximately 65-68 A.D. Tradition says that the disciple, Matthew, was the author of this gospel, but later historians are becoming very skeptical of this opinion. Many agree that he was, however, the author of a Discourse Document that constitutes many of the important characteristics of the book. The author is nowhere named in the Gospel.

At any rate, it seems quite certain that the first gospel was written by a Christian Jew for the purpose of confirming to Jewish Christians that Jesus was the promised Messiah. We have several reasons for coming to this conclusion. (1) There are many references made to the Old Testament confirming the fulfillment of prophecies. (2) He often refers to Jesus as the "Son of David," thusly assuring the Jews that it was He Who is to sit and rule upon the throne of David. (3) He traces the genealogy of Jesus to Abraham. The Jews were proud of the fact that they had Abraham as their father and knew that their promised king must come from the same lineage. (4) There is an impressive description of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and expressing His burden for it (Matthew 23:37). He desired to be the blessing to the people in the same way that they were expecting their awaited Messiah to be, but they refused.

The book contains five main discourses: (1) The Sermon on the Mount (Chs. 5:1 to 7:27), (2) Address to the Apostles (Ch. 10:5-42), (3) Collection of Kingdom Parables (Ch. 13:1-35), (4) Discourse on Humility and Forgiveness (Ch. 18:1-35), and (5) The Apocalyptic Discourse (Chs. 24:4 to 25:46).

The reason the Gospel of Matthew has been placed as the first book of the New Testament is because it was early recognized

as the authoritative and most comprehensive record of Jesus' life. It contains a record of His birth and infancy and of His resurrection appearances, not found in Mark. Its material is very well arranged and can be used easily for instruction purposes.

The book may be divided as follows: (1) The introduction of the Messiah; including His genealogy, birth, infancy, call and preparation (Chs. 1:1 to 4:16), (2) The ministry in Galilee (Chs. 4:17 to 16:28), (3) The "new" Messiah, beginning from the transfiguration until His journey to Jerusalem (Chs. 17:1 to 20:34), (4) Jesus in Jerusalem (Chs. 21:1 to 25:46), and (5) Jesus' death and resurrection (Chs. 26:1 to 28:20).

The outstanding characteristics of the gospel of Matthew is that it contains much of the thoughts of Jesus; hence, it has many teachings in it that underlie the entire realm of Christian thinking.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Where was John the Baptist preaching? Matthew 3:1. What was his message? Verses 2 and 3.
2. What was promised to those whom John baptized with water? Verse 11.
3. What was John's reply when Jesus asked to be baptized? Matthew 3:13, 14. How did Jesus respond to that? Verse 15.
4. Why was Jesus led into the wilderness? Matthew 4:1. How did this experience end? Verses 10 and 11.
5. How many petitions have we in the Lord's prayer? Matthew 6:9-13. What further instructions are given in verses 14 and 15?
6. How did the crowds react following Jesus' teachings on the mountain? Matthew 8:1. Tell the blessing of one, in particular. Verses 2, 3.
7. What were the five foolish virgins lacking? Matthew 25:8, 9. What might the oil in this parable represent?
8. How long did Jesus predict He would remain in the sepulchre? Matthew 12:38-40. When did Jesus arise from the grave? Matthew 28:1.
9. What commission was given to the Apostles? Matthew 28:19, 20.

July 13, 1968

Mark

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 6:32-44.

MEMORY VERSE: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Lesson Commentary: The Gospel of Mark is said to be our most important gospel because it is the oldest surviving record of Jesus' life. Historians believe that all three of the other gospel writers received much of their information from the writings of Mark, as well as many other sources. It was probably written sometime before 60 A.D. by a man named John Mark who was a disciple and interpreter of Peter. He has also been associated with Paul and Barnabas and is believed by some to be the cousin of Barnabas.

It seems as though Mark received most of his information from Peter with whom he worked extensively. It comes closer to being an eyewitness than any other gospel. Mark emphasized Jesus' actions where Matthew placed greater emphasis on Jesus' thoughts and teachings. We understand that even though the accounts of Jesus' life as retold by Peter appear in a large part of the gospel, these accounts were generally known and accepted by the body of believers at that time. Other than what Mark received by oral report, there is also much evidence that he received information from documentary sources.

During the time of the writing of the book of Mark, the writer and Peter were working in Rome. Following the writing of Matthew and Luke the book of Mark was largely supplanted by these larger and more popular accounts, as were many other records that later disappeared. It seems as though some church or group of people valued Mark enough for its origin that they preserved it, and it is quite conceivable that the believers at Rome were influential enough to accomplish this.

Mark's primary purpose was the narration of the life of Jesus. It was evidently written to believers, primarily, since he does not explain many terms he uses that were then by and large only understood by believers. It is likely that Mark was a Christian Jew because he shows acquaintance with Jewish laws, a knowledge of the Scriptures, an understanding of Aramaic and a familiarity with the geography of Palestine and Jerusalem. It is further known that Mark was a resident of Jerusalem, where his mother occupied a large house.

A favorite word used by Mark was "straightway," appearing more than forty times to give a sense of urgency to his writings. He answers the question that is often asked, "What was Jesus like?" He reveals Jesus by deed and in human terms, such as: eating (Mark 14:3), drinking (2:16), becoming weary and sleeping (4:38), His compassion (5:19), love (10:21), and other emotions.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What did Jesus do in Galilee? Mark 1:14, 15. How was He received? V. 22.
2. Into what other directions did His ministry extend? Mark 1:32-35.
3. How did the people of Capernaum regard His ministry? Mark 2:1-5.
4. On an occasion, what information was given to Jesus, and what was His surprising response? Mark 3:31-35.
5. What means were employed by Jesus to teach the multitudes? Mark 4:2.
6. Describe Jesus' attitude toward one who was casting out devils in His name. Mark 9:38-40.
7. What did Jesus reveal to His disciples and what was Peter's reaction? Mark 14:27-31. Did Peter make his promise good? Verses 66-72.
8. What took place the moment that Jesus died? Mark 15:37, 38. Discuss the meaning of this event.
9. What charge did Jesus leave with His disciples, and state the promises that accompanied it. Mark 16:15-18.

Luke

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 15:11-24.

MEMORY VERSE: "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Lesson Commentary: The purpose of the Gospel according to Luke is clearly seen in the opening verses of the book. It is to give an orderly and accurate account of the events which make up the historical foundation of the Christian faith. He was determined to do this from what he learned by means of thorough and accurate investigation (Luke 1:3). These writings, as well as the Book of Acts, were written to Theophilus, who was probably a Roman official who was sympathetic to Christianity. Luke addresses him as "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3), which would correspond to "right honorable" in our present vernacular. Such language was not used in referring to Christians; and therefore, Theophilus must have been some man of position who was not necessarily a Christian.

Luke, as a physician, probably had a keener understanding of the realities of life than most people. Consequently, this places greater literary value on his writings.

The Gospel falls naturally into five divisions: (1) Early years of Jesus (Mark 1:5 to 2:52), (2) Preparation for the ministry (Chs. 3:1 to 4:13), (3) The ministry in Galilee (Chs. 4:14 to 9:50), (4) Journey to Jerusalem (Chs. 9:51 to 19:44), and (5) Crucifixion and Resurrection (Chs. 19:45 to 24:53).

Approximately one-third of Luke resembles closely the writings of Mark, while other sections not found in Mark resemble Matthew. However, there is sufficient difference in all of the writings to deny any suspicion of copying. Nearly half of Luke's material can be read only in his particular Gospel.

Some of Jesus' most memorable and beautifully presented parables may be read in Luke. Also, it is noticeable that Luke had an appreciable amount of understanding of and sympathy for women. This can be seen in Luke 7:36-50 and 8:1-3 as well as other places throughout the book. It is the most literary of the gospels, written in good Greek. It actually displays a minimum of theology, which tends to impress one that he was not primarily interested in settling doctrinal disputes.

The universal appeal of the gospel is also noticed. Possibly the influence of Paul is seen here in the writings of Luke. He

passes over the teachings of Jesus dealing with Jewish interests and features stories of the Good Samaritan, of the woman in Simon's house, and of Zacchaeus.

Luke also makes a strong humanitarian appeal, showing definite sympathies toward the poor. This can be detected by reading what is termed, "Mary's Song" (Luke 1:51-53), by his description of the preaching of John the Baptist (3:11-13), Jesus' announcement that He came to preach to the poor (4:18), the woes pronounced upon the complacent and well-fed (6:24-26), and by his telling such parables as the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Other outstanding features of this gospel are the constant references to prayer, his instruction on prayer, and his accounts of answered prayer. Also, there are many references to the Holy Spirit, which are even more numerous in the Book of Acts.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What was the message the angel brought to Mary? Luke 1:28, 29. What name was she to give her son? Verses 30, 31.
2. To whom was this news first revealed? Luke 2:9-12.
3. Note the breakdown of the ministry of John the Baptist, and tell which message he had for the various groups: (a) the multitudes (John 3:7, 8); (b) those in search of an answer (Verse 11); (c) the publicans (Verse 13); (d) the soldiers (Verse 14); to those wondering if he was Christ (Verses 15-17).
4. What was a prominent custom of Jesus? Luke 4:16.
5. How did Jesus respond to the complaint that He was socializing with publicans? Luke 5:27-32.
6. Describe the reward that awaits the generous. Luke 6:38.
7. What significant question was asked of Jesus by a lawyer? Luke 10:25. Review the answer given by Jesus, and give examples of how this parable may be related to our present times. Luke 10:27-37.
8. What was the turning point in the degenerating situation of the Prodigal Son? Luke 15:17.
9. How did Jesus surprise Zacchaeus after spotting him in a tree? Luke 19:5. What was the result of the visit? Verses 8, 9.
10. What was the reaction of the disciples when Jesus appeared before them in a meeting following His resurrection? Luke 24:36-45.

Read page 4—support Home Missions today!

John

SCRIPTURE READING: John 20:19-31.

MEMORY VERSE: "And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou them, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" (John 1:25).

Lesson Commentary: The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are called "Synoptic Gospels." They give the account of the life of Jesus from essentially the same point of view. In contrast to the literal facts given in the Synoptic Gospels, John writes with a spiritual emphasis. The essential differences in all four gospels may be described as follows: Matthew shows the **mind** of Christ as the great Teacher; Mark describes His **actions**; Luke gives us His **mood** in terms of compassion and sympathy; and John shows His **influence** through the Holy Spirit.

These outstanding differences can be noticed between John and the Synoptic Gospels. The latter writers gave the birth of Jesus, while John tells of His incarnation (John 1:1-14); in the Synoptics Jesus is commonly addressing groups of people, while in John He often speaks to individuals. The Synoptics have Him speaking mostly of others, while in John He speaks much of Himself. In essence, the first three Gospels are mostly narrative, whereas John is basically theological. The use of parables is noticeably absent in the fourth Gospel.

John's Gospel may be divided into the following: (1) the Prelude which begins with the "Word made flesh" to the disciples witnessing Jesus as the Son of God (John, chapter 1); (2) the manifestation of Christ's glory and power (Chs. 2 through 6); (3) the difference between light and darkness (Chs. 7 through 12); (4) Christ revealing Himself to His disciples (Chs. 13 through 17); (5) final revelation of Christ's glory (Chs. 18 through 20); and (6) the appendix (Ch. 21).

The authorship of the Gospel has also long been under question. It is said that the disciple was one of fiery temperament and did not have the personality to write such a tender and compassionate thesis as we have in the gospel of John. However, several references may be cited to indicate the love demonstrated by John, giving him the title of the "beloved disciple." At the Last Supper he leaned on Jesus' breast. (John 13:23); he alone was faithful

12

at the cross and was given the "care" of the mother of Jesus (John 19:26); he was one of the first to believe Jesus was resurrected (John 20:1-10); and he was the first to recognize the Lord at the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-7).

The date for the writing of the gospel has been placed somewhere between 90 to 100 A.D. Some historians contend that both James and John were martyred around 70 A.D. However, the weight of opinion is that the Disciple John died a natural death, after having lived an appreciable number of years.

The purpose of John is stated toward the end of the book in chapter 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The greatness of this is not so much in the record of historical fact, but the interpretation of events into the Christian experience.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What information does John give concerning Jesus' pre-existence? John 1:1, 2, 14.
2. What basic teaching did Jesus give to Nicodemus? John 3:1-8.
3. Repeat the promise Jesus gave to a woman at a Samaritan well. How did she respond to the promise? John 4:13-15.
4. What causes a person to be "bound," and how may he be made free? John 8:32-36.
5. State the differences between the Good Shepherd and an hiring? John 10:10-14.
6. At the home of His deceased friend, Lazarus, what description of Himself did Jesus give to Martha? John 11:25, 26.
7. What interesting example did Jesus leave with the disciples, and what was the meaning of it? John 13:4, 5, 13-16.
8. Review the reassurances Jesus gave His disciples in His farewell messages. John 14:16-18, 26, 27.
9. What reason did Jesus give for His reluctance to defend Himself and His cause when He was on trial? John 18:36.
10. Analyze the question which Jesus asked Peter three times. Can you give any reason why Jesus pressed this matter so? John 21:15-17.

18

August 3, 1968

Acts

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 5:1-2-23.

MEMORY VERSE: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

Lesson Commentary: The book of Acts of the Apostles was the second book written by Luke. Some have thought that Luke meant to have them kept together as one work, but Luke's own description of the writings names them the former and latter treatise. Like his other writings, it shows clear and superb literary style, and its main appeal is to the Greco-Roman world rather than the Jewish world. Its story begins shortly before the ascension and tells of the early spreading of the gospel from the Jewish to the Gentile peoples.

The author accompanied Paul on several of his missionary journeys and therefore Acts is, by and large, the account of an eyewitness. It is likely that the writings of the book took place in Rome and was written around 80 to 85 A.D.

It is thought by many that the book of Acts was written as a sequel to his gospel to show the working power of the religion that Jesus established. It shows dedicated men under the influence of the Holy Spirit going about demonstrating the blessings of Christ.

Acts gives a good picture of many phases of life in the first century such as the philosophical thinking then surrounding Athens, and the business monopoly of the silversmiths in the temple of Diana at Ephesus. It also describes modes of travel at that time, such as the ride of Philip in a chariot (Acts 8:28, 29), the coastal freighter on which Paul rode (Acts 21:1-3), the story of the shipwreck (Acts 27:28-30), and the necessity to travel by horse (Acts 23:24, 32).

It is interesting to note the uniform outlines and patterns of the sermons recorded in this book. They consist of the following parts: (1) the new age promised by the Prophets has come, and (2) this new age arrived by means of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of which events the apostles were witnesses; (3) the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a consequence of Christ's coming and (4) this outpouring is proof that a new age has arrived. This preaching included a strong compassionate appeal to repent from sin and turn to God.

14

The writings of this book are some of the best of the New Testament. It is said by critics that the true identity of each of its characters has been described and preserved with vivid clarity, and that it is faithful in its record of events. It proves to the reader and the student that Luke, as well as all other writers of the Bible, was guided by the Divine power of the Holy Spirit to lead men into all truths.

Acts begins with Peter as the main character and ends with the greater part of its having the spotlight on the Apostle Paul. It is the best account of his missionary journeys, his successes as well as his sufferings, and many of his testimonies.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Give a description of the events that brought an end to the actual presence of Jesus on earth. Acts 1:6-11.
2. What spectacular event took place on the day of Pentecost? Acts 2:1-4. How did the people react? Vv. 41, 42.
3. Tell of the experience of a lame beggar who collected alms at the gate called Beautiful. Acts 3:3-8.
4. What significant lessons may be learned from the episode involving Ananias and Sapphira? Acts 5:1-10.
5. What was Peter's reaction to an order to cease preaching the gospel? Acts 5:29-32. How did the counsel react to this? Verse 33. What saved them? Vv. 34, 38-40.
6. Give some of the final utterings of the martyr, Stephen. Acts 7:55, 56, 59, 60.
7. How was Saul, the antagonist of the Church, converted? Acts 9:1-9.
8. State the truth that was revealed to Peter in connection with a vision he received. Acts 10:34, 35.
9. What effect did Paul's testimony have on King Agrippa? Acts 26:26-29.
10. How did Paul spend his time in Rome while awaiting his trial? Acts 28:30, 31.

15

August 10, 1968

Romans

SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 5:1-10.

MEMORY VERSE: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Lesson Commentary: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans is the most important of Paul's letters and is considered the first great work of Christian theology. It explains the doctrine of righteousness by faith, as opposed to the philosophy held by Judaism that righteousness came by works alone. The Apostle begins a thought and continues to build up a theme through the entire writing up to the end of chapter 15, verse 13. The letter reveals a great deal of thought and planning invested in it in addition to showing a genius for collecting and unifying material for such use.

The church at Rome had, by this time, been established and declared a prominent congregation. Some historians believe it was a large group. Its founder could have been neither Peter nor Paul since it was well established by the time either of these leaders arrived at Rome. It had a membership consisting of both Gentiles and Jews, the Gentiles having the larger representation. There was a basic difference of belief and practice between these two groups, the Jews still practicing some of the Mosaic law and insisting on its being observed.

Paul hopes, by this letter, to bring about some understanding and reconciliation resulting in peace between the two groups. He explains that Jews and Gentiles have equal claim to the Kingdom of God and that all are justified by faith. He preaches the possibility of complete righteousness before the face of God, but this can be accomplished only by a complete realization of the nature of moral law, and the keeping of it by faith in God. He points out that both Gentiles and Jews have laws and both are transgressors. Both need the gift of God to make them worthy of eternal life.

During the writing of this epistle, Paul is said to have been at the height of his career. He had been traveling as a missionary for six years and was soon to be placed under bonds. Romans was his last work which was written while he still enjoyed his freedom. After having worked faithfully and witnessing the spreading of the gospel, the conversion of many, and the raising of churches,

he now had tremendous confidence in the ability and willingness of God to give to man through Christ much more than he had ever lost in Adam.

It is thought that the book was written in 58 or 59 A.D. when the writer was probably between 50 and 60 years of age. It was written on his second trip to Corinth.

External powers prevented Paul's actual preaching as a free man in Rome. He desired very much to give the brethren there an idea of the message he preached before an intended visit to that capital city. It is probable that he had been corresponding with some from Rome. Therefore, he wrote this outstanding letter and sent it by means of a messenger named Phoebe who was then enroute to that city.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. To whom was this letter written? Romans 1:7. What is the theme of this book? Vv. 16, 17.
2. Give a description of one who is truly a Jew. Romans 2:25-29.
3. How was the Jew advantaged? Romans 3:1, 2. Despite this advantage how does he rate with the Gentile in the matter of guilt for sinning? Vv. 9-12, 23.
4. Through what means may one escape the consequences of sin? Romans 4:14; 5:1.
5. What should be the attitude toward sin on the part of those who have been justified? Romans 6:1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 22, 23.
6. Give a contrast between Paul's condition described in Romans 7 and the worthy character of the law. Romans 7:7, 12-14.
7. Give a description of Paul's feelings for Israel. Romans 9:2-5. Why did he feel this way? Romans 10:2, 3.
8. When may we expect a change in Israel's attitude? Romans 11:25-29.
9. What does God consider a reasonable service? Romans 12:1, 2.
10. What must our attitude be toward civil powers? Romans 13:1, 2. Why? Vv. 3-7.
11. State Paul's advice concerning the treatment that should be given to those who are offensive and devisive. Romans 16:17, 18.

August 17, 1968

First Corinthians

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

MEMORY VERSE: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Lesson Commentary: The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians was written in answer to many rumors he had heard about the church since his first visit there. Also, through personal correspondence, he had been asked several important questions concerning marriage and divorce, a woman's place in the church, the use of spiritual gifts and others that he endeavored to answer in this epistle.

It seems quite evident that the church at Corinth had fallen into a serious state of corruption. They had many faults that gave an unfavorable testimony to others. It was reputed that they failed to take a firm stand against the practice of fornication, and they even had one in their midst who had taken his father's wife. They were taking their fellow Christians into courts of law run by heathen judges. The church was constantly disturbed by a disorderly manner in which those possessing spiritual gifts exercised them. The Lord's Supper observances became occasions for contention because the wealthy people of the group were bringing elaborate dinners and were surfeiting while the poor among them remained hungry. Other immoral practices were tolerated and, in some cases, even defended.

It is commonly agreed that the reason for this church's lax behavior was due to the divisions that existed there. They had differences in doctrines, but it seemed they differed more greatly on the acceptance of the various leaders. Some defended Paul; others Apollos, who continued teaching there after Paul left Corinth the first time. Others followed Cephas and then there were those who claimed piously that they believed only the teachings of Jesus and regarded Him as their only leader. In general, the membership had the dangerous tendency to glory in men, rather than remain steadfast in the gospel each of their favored leaders preached.

There are two discourses in this book that reveal some of Paul's most inspiring writings. The first comes in his discussion of the spiritual gifts, and in his attempt to establish some kind of order and purpose in their use. He writes his treatise on love (chap-

18

ter 13) and calls it the "more excellent way." He lists it as being the true evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:8, 13). All shall fail without charity (love), but where love abides there is God and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Little of the twelfth and fourteenth chapters can be fully grasped without remembering carefully the character and purpose of love described in the thirteenth chapter.

The other notable treatise is on the resurrection of Jesus, and the change of our bodies from mortality to immortality. No other writing is so complete and so inspiring as this on the subject of the Resurrection at the Second Coming of Jesus.

The book of 1 Corinthians was always and still is regarded as the earliest and most valuable account of the Last Supper and the Resurrection of Jesus. This letter to the church at Corinth was written in Ephesus in the early spring of the year 57 A.D., according to historians.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. To whom was this epistle written? 1 Corinthians 1:2.
2. How do the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world differ? 1 Corinthians 1:20, 24-28; 2:4-7.
3. Why was it necessary for Paul to write to these people "as unto babes"? 1 Corinthians 3:2-4.
4. How are we to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread? 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, 11.
5. Describe the effects that our offenses against the brethren have. 1 Corinthians 8:11-13.
6. What was Paul's attitude toward others while carrying on his ministry? 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
7. To what extent should unity prevail in the Church? 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13. How might this come about? Vv. 25, 26.
8. Give a description of love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
9. In what way may we represent God best in our church services? 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40.
10. What mystery does Paul reveal in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54?

19

August 24, 1968

Second Corinthians

SCRIPTURE READING: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Lesson Commentary: Shortly after the Apostle Paul sent his first letter to the church of God at Corinth, it is said that he went there for a short visit and then returned to Ephesus where he continued to preach and teach for some time. Finally, Demetrius and his fellow silversmiths started an uprising that forced the Apostle Paul to leave, and so he went to Troas to meet Titus with news about the Corinthians. He was disappointed when the latter did not arrive, and he proceeded to Macedonia where finally Titus arrived to give him news about the progress of the saints in Corinth.

Corinth was the type of city that would make a minister worry about his flock. It was located in a strategic position where the merchants were able to become wealthy transporting goods. Also, it was a frequent meeting place for traders of other localities, providing an appreciable amount of tourist trade. Excavations reveal that these merchants probably sat around in the market places during the day and discussed business, and at night they would frequent "night clubs." Thirty-three taverns were located at the rear of one row of columns one hundred feet long and eighty feet wide. It was the largest non-religious structure in Greece. It is apparent that in a place like this, money carries with it more than its deserved share of influence, and it seems possible that the church was not free of this liability.

Titus' report in most parts was favorable, as he reported the response of the Corinthian Church to the first letter Paul had written to them. The members had repented of their fornication and dealt severely with the violators. They also gave a cordial response to a plea on behalf of the poor saints and showed other definite signs of improvement. Most important, it seems as though a great part of the division mentioned in the first letter had disappeared. However, it is also evident that those who formerly did not regard Paul as an authority also thought little of his letter and probably a lot less of him. This was noticeable, and it gave rise to this letter of condemnation and love mixed with censure and even some threatening.

20

The book can be divided into three parts according to content: (1) the beneficial effects of his first letter to them and his attitude toward these improvements; (2) discourses on the general substances and effects of the gospel he preached, and ends up making an appeal for the poor saints (Chs. 4 through 9); and (3) he vindicates his own dignity and authority as an apostle against the parties that oppose him. This can be read in chapters 10 through 13.

The second epistle to the Corinthians was written approximately one and one-half years after the first one, or in late summer of 58 A.D.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. After sending a straightforward message in his first letter, how does Paul approach the church at Corinth in his second letter? 2 Corinthians 1:3-6.
2. What was Paul's feeling toward these Corinthian brethren while writing this epistle? 2 Corinthians 2:4.
3. How do the Old and New Testaments (ministrations) differ? 2 Corinthians 3:6-8.
4. Name a basic motive that compelled Paul to give his life to "persuading men." 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11.
5. Give reasons why it is inappropriate for a Christian to be "yoked" with an unbeliever. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17. To what kind of associations might this passage have reference? (Note verse 17 on this).
6. Describe Paul's sentiments concerning the first letter that he sent to the Corinthians in view of the news he received from Titus. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.
7. What should be our attitude toward sharing materially to meet the needs of the gospel? 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.
8. What kind of comparisons should the Christian avoid? 2 Corinthians 10:1-2, 13. Why does Paul make this observation? Vv. 17, 18.
9. Note the evidence that Paul gives to indicate that he actually was an apostle of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:23-31.
10. How did Paul react when he failed to receive an answer to prayer? 2 Corinthians 11:7-10.

21

Galatians

SCRIPTURE READING: Galatians 6:7-18.

MEMORY VERSE: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Lesson Commentary: It is possible that Galatians was the first book of the New Testament written. Some authorities contend that Paul wrote it after his second visit to Galatia, which would be in the year 48 A.D. Some of the later authorities consider that it may not have been written until after his third missionary journey at which time it would have been written along with several of his letters from Ephesus in the year 52 or after.

The people of Galatia had several qualities that are worthy of consideration. They were quick to understand matters, and they usually acted promptly. They were easily impressed and showed real desire to acquire knowledge. However, along with these attributes often comes a weakness that was fully reflected in these Galatians. They were fickle, easily misled. It seemed that each time someone came along with a new doctrine, they were eager and quick to accept it.

The churches of Galatia were founded by Paul and were made up mostly of heathen converts who changed to the Christian religion readily. Among them were also several Jews of the more conservative school of thought who insisted that many rites of the Mosaic law should still be kept. So zealous were they that before long the majority of members in the Galatian churches accepted them.

These same Jews were also guilty of questioning Paul's authority and were instrumental in spreading rumors that (1) Paul was not a divinely-commissioned apostle at all, but merely a messenger of the church at Jerusalem; (2) he and Peter were in rites, including the all-important and oft-discussed ritual of circumcision; and (3) Paul was actually not always opposed to these rites but chose to be especially severe with the Galatians. Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians to present them with a more accurate appraisal of his attitude and doctrine. He considered this

22

letter so important that he wrote it with his own hand (Galatians 6:11).

Paul is often accused of being inconsistent in regard to circumcision because he performed the rite on Timothy (Acts 16:3), and he condemned the Galatians for the same practice. One can understand, however, that Paul was not hostile toward the act of circumcision, but he definitely opposed the doctrine that made it necessary for salvation. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Galatians 6:15).

The first two chapters of this letter to the churches in the province of Galatia are considered important historically because they give firsthand testimony of the beginning of Christianity.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Why was Paul so surprised at the Galatians? Galatians 1:6, 7.
2. What advice to protect themselves against deception did Paul give? Galatians 1:8, 9.
3. From where did Paul receive the gospel that he preached? Galatians 1:11, 12.
4. Give Paul's reason for going up to Jerusalem. Galatians 2:1, 2.
5. Describe the difference that erupted between Peter and Paul at Antioch. Galatians 2:11-14.
6. How might one become an heir to the promises given to Abraham? Galatians 3:16, 29.
7. What further obligation is imposed upon those who consider it a command of God to practice circumcision? Galatians 5:2-4.
8. Give a contrast between the works of the flesh and those of the Spirit. Galatians 5:19-23.
9. How should one who is overtaken in a fault be treated? Galatians 6:1, 2.
10. In what respect does the "law of harvest" relate to our lives? Galatians 6:7-9.

23

Ephesians

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians 2:1-10.

MEMORY VERSE: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Lesson Commentary: Ephesus was the celebrated capital of Ionia, an old city that was famous for its worshippers of the goddess, Diana. In her honor a magnificent temple was built that ranked among the seven wonders of the world. Also in this city, many Jews settled, and among them Paul began a Christian work. After several years of industrious and dedicated labor, the apostle raised up a work of such considerable success that Ephesus was considered the Christian center of Asia Minor. He was able to gain much attention of the followers of Diana to where Demetrius, the leader of the wealthy and powerful silversmiths, and others began taking measures to silence him (Acts 19:21-41). Following his departure, Timothy assumed the oversight of the work there.

History also informs us that the Apostle John worked effectively in the city and found the work most satisfying. He died while there and was buried beside Mary, the mother of Jesus. This is interesting, considering the fact that it was probably this same disciple to whom Jesus said, when dying on the cross, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:27).

John also mentions the church at Ephesus in the Revelation and names several of its attributes such as her labor, patience, intolerance of evil and false prophets. However, he criticizes the church for having lost her first love and appeals for her to repent. He warns the church of Ephesus against those who do the deeds of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans were a sect within the Ephesian churches who practiced polygamy and ate meat offered to idols.

Paul wrote this letter while he was in Rome during his imprisonment sometime between 59-61 A.D. Authorities contend that the letter was not written only to the church at Ephesus, but was a circular that was intended for all the churches in that region of Asia Minor. It is argued that if the letter were meant for only the church at Ephesus, Paul would certainly have been more specific and also greeted some as he did in his other letters.

In Ephesians, Paul discusses his theme from two different viewpoints, a doctrinal and an advisory. The key verses to the doctrinal

discussion are found in chapter 1:9, 10, telling us the divine purpose at the heart of the Christian message. He tells of God's purpose to unite all conflicting forces into a unit in Christ.

In the second part of the discourse he likens the Church to the body of Christ and explains that her members must work with love, understanding and mutual service in order to bring about unity in the Church. By this means it can work effectively to bring more harmony to a confused world.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What is the mystery of the Will of God? Ephesians 1:9, 10. By whom is this mystery made known? Ephesians 3:9-11.
2. Once we believe the Word of Truth, what does the Holy Spirit do for us? Ephesians 1:13, 14.
3. Give a reason why God has given us the privilege of sitting "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:6, 7, 10.
4. How has the coming of Jesus affected the barriers that were established between nations, and particularly between Israel and the Gentiles? Ephesians 2:11-22.
5. Name some qualities that will help us to walk worthy of our calling. Ephesians 4:1-3.
6. For what reason are the various gifts of the spirit given to the Church? Ephesians 4:11-15.
7. Give a contrast of the life that is ignorant of God and one that has been taught about the Lord Jesus. Ephesians 4:19-24, 31, 32.
8. How will the walk of a wise man be noticed? Ephesians 5:15, 16.
9. Describe the extent to which a husband should love his wife. Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29.
10. Why is the armour of God so necessary? Ephesians 6:11-13.

September 14, 1968

Philippians

SCRIPTURE READING: Philippians 2:1-11.

MEMORY VERSE: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Lesson Commentary: This letter was written by Paul about 62 A.D. while he was in prison in Rome. The Church of God at Philippi was begun by Paul and Silas as the first church group raised up on the continent of Europe.

Philippi was then a Roman colony, having been built about 42 B.C., and there was no Jewish synagogue there. This accounts for Paul and Silas going out to the riverside for worship services on Sabbath (Acts 16:13). Here they found some women assembled and among them was Lydia who was converted.

It was here that Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, and during the night an earthquake brought about their release. The jailor, knowing this was the work of God, asked how he also might be saved. He and others of his household were converted and baptized that night.

This church at Philippi supplied Paul with many of his needs while he was doing missionary work in other areas (Ch. 4:15, 16). This seems to have been some of the first foreign missions work. It was a great help to Paul in his ministry.

The Apostle seemed to have a warm spot in his heart for the Philippian brethren because of their kind treatment offered him during the time of his sufferings at the hands of his enemies, and he was always grateful for their willingness to support the work which benefited others.

This church seems to have been established around 51 A.D. Paul later visited these members on his way to gather provisions for the famine-stricken brethren at Jerusalem. This journey must have been made about 58 A.D. after Paul left Ephesus due to the uproar there. He remained at Philippi during the feast of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6). This would indicate Paul's lack of regard for observance of this feast, since **it was observed at Jerusalem.**

26

The burden of this letter seems to be the expression of Paul's desire to have the brethren continue in the faith, to cultivate charity, unity, and humility among the brethren. He did not hesitate to pass out "flowers" to those who were faithful. He advised them to live a good life as a witness for Christ before others. He assured them that his difficulties had worked to his advantage in spreading the gospel, and he wished for them to receive new courage despite the adversity that he was called upon to suffer.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Give a description of Paul's sentiments for the brethren at Philippi. Philippians 1:3-8.
2. In what way did the capture of Paul aid the spreading of the Gospel? Philippians 1:12-14.
3. What significant decision was confronting Paul as he wrote this letter? Philippians 1:21-24. How would this be resolved? Vv. 25, 26.
4. Give an analysis of the attitude we should develop toward others. Philippians 2:3-8.
5. Describe the dedication shown by Epaphroditus to the Gospel, and how did Paul regard him? Philippians 2:25-30.
6. What right had Paul to "have confidence in the flesh"? How disposed was he to exercise it? Philippians 3:4-8.
7. Name some goals that Paul was seeking. Philippians 3:10-12. How did he intend to reach them? Vv. 13, 14.
8. What are some characteristics of those who are enemies of the Cross? Philippians 3:18, 19.
9. Describe the kind of thoughts with which a follower of Christ should be preoccupied. Philippians 4:8.
10. To what extent was Paul able to cope with the changing circumstances he encountered? Philippians 4:11-13.

27

September 21, 1968

Colossians

SCRIPTURE READING: Colossians 3:1-14.

MEMORY VERSE: "But now ye also put off all things; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).

Lesson Commentary: Colosse was a city in Phrygia of Asia Minor a few miles east of Laodicea. It is thought that missionaries from Ephesus established a church group there. It was probably pastored by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7) and had Philemon and Onesimus as members.

Paul probably wrote this letter to the Colossians from prison in Rome during his first term there in 62 A.D. (Acts 28:16). This letter was delivered to them by Tychicus, who was sent as a messenger and comforter.

This letter warns the Colossians against the half-Judaistic, half-Oriental philosophy that had been creeping into their worship. There is some resemblance between this letter and the one to the Ephesians, but when we consider that the "spirit of iniquity" had already made itself manifest (2 Thessalonians 2:7) we understand why Paul had a special message for all the churches. The burden of his message was to sustain the purity of the gospel and the dignity of the risen Christ.

In this letter, Paul admonishes the brethren to set their minds on things above, accepting Christ as the perfect sacrifice which nullifies the former offerings consisting of meats and drinks, new moons and feast days, all of which were shadows of better things to come (Colossians 2:14-16). The law that was abolished or expired was that which was against us and contrary to us. The sacrifices of bulls and goats could not take away sin.

It should be recalled here that the offering of sacrifices as atonement for sin was done before specific feast days were enjoined. The days were given to allow specific times for the practice of the ordinances. Separated from the ordinances, the days had no purpose. It follows that if the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary brought an end to the sacrificial ordinances, there remains no purpose in observing the days.

Attempts have been made to link the Seventh-day Sabbath

with the Sabbaths mentioned in Colossians 2:16. While some regard the Sabbath of creation as a shadow of a greater rest to come, there is no significant Scriptural backing to adequately sustain it, particularly to the obvious degree that the feast-day sabbaths were shadows. Therefore, any attempt to retain the sanctity of the feast-day Sabbaths by linking it with the Seventh-Day Sabbath, and any attempt to abolish all of them are found wanting. Colossians 2:17 gives a distinction that has purpose. Its meaning, when accepted, is clear.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What was Paul's prayer for the brethren at Colosse? Colossians 1:9-11.
2. Note the description given of the creative work of Jesus. Colossians 1:15-18.
3. What promise is given to those who continue in the faith? Colossians 1:21-23.
4. Review the warning Paul issued to the church at Colosse. Colossians 2:4-8.
5. How is the man who has been made alive through the forgiveness of his sins advantaged? Colossians 2:13-17.
6. In the constant change of values each person experiences, what must a Christian carefully keep in mind? Colossians 3:1-3, 5.
7. Name some characteristics of those who are the elect of God. Colossians 3:12-16.
8. What virtuous attitude should be adopted and/or retained by each member of a household? Colossians 3:18-25.
9. How ought a master to regard his servants? Colossians 4:1.
10. With whom were the Colossians requested to share this letter? Colossians 4:16.

Read the information on page 5; and
give the Ministerial Department your faithful support.

September 28, 1968

First Thessalonians

SCRIPTURE READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10.

MEMORY VERSE: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Lesson Commentary: Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, in which Paul, having preached the gospel, converted some Jews, and a great number of Gentiles. The unbelieving Jews, envying his success, raised such a commotion against him that he and his companion, Silvanus, were forced to leave the city. Afterwards, Paul went to Athens where he learned that the converts at Thessalonica were being persecuted severely since his departure. For this reason Paul sent Timothy to strengthen them. Meanwhile, Paul went to Corinth where he wrote this epistle as well as the second letter to the Thessalonians. Both were written in the same year, some 19 years after the ascension of our Lord.

Paul opened his letter by reminding the brethren of the great work that had been done among them through the preaching of the gospel and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul stated how he had been preaching, not with the idea of pleasing men, but giving the Word of God in all boldness, yet with gentleness. He called on them to walk worthy of their calling. He reminded them that even Jesus and the prophets suffered for the cause of God at the hands of their enemies.

The Apostle indicated that he often wished to return to them, but Satan had prevented him. He reminded them that he had warned them of the persecution that would come and assured them of his happiness at the report brought to him by Timothy that they were remaining steadfast in the Lord.

Paul stressed the fact that they had been called out of the world, and they should walk to please God, possessing their bodies in holiness and abstaining from fornication. They should treat their brethren in full confidence, not deceiving but loving one another.

This letter deals much with the second coming of Jesus, making mention of it in every chapter. The fourth chapter gives interesting detail concerning the appearance of Jesus and the rapture of the Church. The resurrection of the righteous dead and the

translation of the saints remaining alive at His Coming are given in their order. This prophecy was given to bring comfort to those suffering severe trial.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How did Paul describe the ministry which he had performed earlier at Thessalonica? 1 Thessalonians 1:5. What was the result? V. 6.
2. How far reaching were the effects of their conversion? 1 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.
3. What was Paul's major concern while preaching the gospel at Thessalonica? 1 Thessalonians 2:4-9.
4. What beneficial effect did the visit of Timothy have on both the brethren at Thessalonica and on Paul? 1 Thessalonians 3:2-7.
5. What intense desire did Paul express in this letter? 1 Thessalonians 3:9, 10.
6. Give the description of sanctification which Paul desired for this church. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.
7. In what order will the saints rise to meet Christ at His coming? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.
8. How may we be prepared for the coming of the Lord? 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.