



According to Luke--I

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**PUBLISHED BY:
Joy Bringer Ministries, Inc.
900 E. 16th St.
Berwick, PA 18603**

**For more information contact:
Rev. Ruth Joy Capozzi
900 E. 16th Street
Berwick, PA 18603
ruth-joy@verizon.net**

INTRODUCTION

Luke was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus. He wrote his gospel after much research and many interviews. He carefully records the fact that these sources were eyewitnesses of the events recorded (see Luke 1:2). He includes information about Mary, the mother of Jesus, that no other gospel records, and gives greater prominence to women than the other authors. Luke's writing is the most polished of the New Testament. He gives more attention to social issues of the day. He calls attention to the private prayer life of Jesus. Luke also writes with a view toward the historical setting. He establishes the date of Jesus' ministry very carefully (see Luke 3:1 & 2). During the next year we will study the writing of Luke, first from his gospel and then from his record of the Acts of the Apostles.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This is the sixteenth in a series of twenty quarterlies (5 years) covering the greater part of the historical portion of the Bible. Now available are:

The Men and Women of Genesis	The Captivity and Return
Lessons From Exodus	The Miracles of Jesus
Wilderness Examples	The Parables of Jesus
Possessing the Land of Promise	The Personal Ministry of Jesus
The Days of the Judges	According to Luke - I
Israel's Early Kings	We Beheld His Glory (John-I)
Lessons From the Kings	Full of Grace & Truth (John-II)
	Matthew: The King and His Kingdom-I & II

JOHN PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS

Read: Luke 1:1-4; 3:1-38

Memory Work: He shall call upon me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honor him. Psalm 91:15

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord chose and inspired Luke to write his Gospel so that we would have a record of His ministry from a non-Jewish source.*
2. *We need the message of repentance today. Man can never fully enjoy his redemption until he has truly repented of his sin.*
3. *Our faith in Christ must be proved by Godly and selfless living.*
4. *If Jesus, the Son of God, had to pray for wisdom, strength and guidance, how much more do we need to pray for help from above!*

I The Author and His Book: All that we know about Luke is from the scriptures. He was the companion of the apostle Paul. He joined the missionary enterprise at Philippi and thereafter, except for one brief interlude when he was left behind, writes in the first person plural form. He was not of the circumcision (see Col.4:11-14). Paul calls him "the beloved physician" and indeed his writing contains many medical terms of that era. His description of the sea voyage and storm indicate that he had an experts familiarity with ships and sailing also. This has led some scholars to conjecture that Luke was a ship's doctor at one time. The author of the third Gospel was obviously educated in Greek schools. His style, though written in the vernacular, is the most cultured of all the New Testament authors. He is second only to Paul in the quantity of writing included in the New Testament.

Luke addresses both his Gospel and the record of the Acts

of the Apostles to one called, "most excellent Theophilus." The introduction to each of his books proves that Luke could write in the grand and formal style of his time. Luke himself was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, but he gathered from eyewitnesses reports of His work and teaching. No doubt, he also gathered as much written material as he could find. This may have included the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. One interesting source of Luke obviously was Mary, the mother of Jesus. His record of the activities of Mary before the birth of Jesus could only have come from herself. She must also have been his source for the details of the birth of Jesus.

Luke exalts womanhood. Only he tells the story of Anna and of Mary and Martha. Luke's Gospel also has a tender compassion for the poor, and warnings to the rich. He recognizes and records the universality of the Christian message. He denounces the Jews' radical bigotry, and honors the hated Samaritans. Luke also gives great emphasis to prayer. He only wrote those things which the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and his careful scholarship indicated were certain.

II The Word of God Through John: We read of John the Baptist, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel" (Luke 1:80). There in that obscure and hostile wilderness, an event of worldwide significance occurred. The word of the Lord came upon John from heaven and he was given a message and a mission. The message was a call to repentance, and the mission was to prepare the way for the Messiah, God's son. So significant was this event in the progressive revelation of God, that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to date it in a most accurate and unmistakable way. He lists one emperor, one governor, three tetrarchs, and two high priests. The word of the Lord came to John in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. The Roman empire was oblivious to the obscure revelation in the Judean wilderness, but the Holy Spirit recognized the importance of this event and carefully dated it. It seems to be the inescapable conclusion that the date so carefully recorded here marks the beginning of the seventieth week in the prophecy of Daniel (Dan.9:25). The prophecy foretold 7 weeks (of years) and 62 weeks (of years), unto Messiah, the Prince. The word Messiah means literally anointed, and it was at Jesus' baptism by John, here in Luke 3, so carefully dated, that Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit. It is the only place in the New

Testament where a date is so firmly fixed, and the inescapable conclusion is that it marks the beginning of that seventieth week, which Daniel tells us was determined from the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, to the coming of the Messiah.

The message that was given to John from above was a message of repentance. He came back from perhaps ten years in the wilderness to the region about Jordan, preaching repentance. He warned the people that the kingdom of God was at hand and that they should straighten out their lives. He also baptized those who responded to his message in the waters of the river Jordan. John also had specific instructions for those who came to him personally with questions. When the multitudes asked what they should do, John advised them to share their abundance with the less fortunate. To the tax-collectors he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (Luke 3:13). Even soldiers were told to "do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (vs.14). John powerfully denounced the scribes and Pharisees who came to be baptized by him. He called them a generation of vipers and demanded that they bring forth "fruits worthy of repentance" before he would consider baptizing them. He told them not to think that they were acceptable to God because they were natural descendants of Abraham. God could raise up children of Abraham from the stones along the river bank. Great crowds came to John. His popularity soon caused the Jews to question whether John was the Messiah. But John realized fully that he was preparing the way for Jesus, the messenger of the covenant. He baptized with water unto repentance, but the Messiah Himself would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, changing the very nature of those so baptized.

Concerning the ministry of John, G. Campbell Morgan observed, "I wonder whether we do not need a ministry of this kind now. I sometimes wonder whether Christ does not still need John the Baptist to prepare His way. I wonder it, in these days when I consider some types of evangelistic work, from which the note of strong demand upon men seems entirely absent. I wonder whether the message of the Christ can ever prevail until the message of John has gone before it... The first note of the message of Christ as recorded, is the whole message of John: 'From that time began Jesus to preach and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' That is where he began and he never departed from it. He also

said, 'Ye offspring of vipers,' and more than that, He said, 'Ye serpents.' The note of severity was there. Somehow we are missing a vital element in our message from Christ if we fail to understand that the call to repentance must always precede the call to confidence in the redeeming Lord."

III Jesus is Baptized, Praying: Luke leaps ahead in his narrative to record that Herod imprisoned John and then records that when many people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized by John. Here in Luke we are told that while Jesus was being baptized He was praying. The Greek word used here and translated, "praying" is used seven times of Jesus in the book of Luke. The author makes much of the fact that Jesus, Himself, was a man of prayer. This emphasis leads one to believe that Luke also was a man who gave himself to prayer. Certainly we can plainly see the truth that if Jesus prayed at the important places in His life and before His decisions, that we, too, need to pray earnestly for help and guidance in our natural lives. It was while Jesus was praying that the heavens opened. The Holy Spirit in the embodiment of a dove descended on the Lord Jesus. This was a sign to John the Baptist that Jesus was the Lamb of God and the Messiah. At the same time the voice of God spoke from heaven to Jesus, "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (vs.22). Twice, later in Jesus' ministry, God spoke again from heaven; on the Mount of Transfiguration and again when the Greeks asked to see Jesus.

IV The Genealogy of Jesus: Here we are told that Jesus was "about 30 years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph which was the son of Heli" (vs.23). The words, "as was supposed" in the parenthesis do not mean "generally thought," but rather "according to the law." In other words Luke declares that Jesus was the son of Joseph not by nature but by law, the law of adoption. Joseph, we are told was the son of Heli, but in Matthew we read that Joseph was the son of Jacob. How can Joseph have two fathers? The answer is that he was the son of Heli through marriage, namely his marriage to Mary. That means that the genealogy of Luke traces Mary's ancestry while Matthew traces that of Joseph. It must needs be that Mary is a descendant of David, for Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus who was foretold to be the root and offspring of David. Mary's ancestry is traced to David through Nathan, his son while Joseph's ancestry is traced through Solomon and the

kings of Judah. The genealogy of Joseph begins with Abraham, but the ancestry of Mary is traced all the way back to Enos and Seth and "Adam which was the son of God!" How marvellous is the Word of God! Unsearchable riches are everywhere in the Holy Scriptures, waiting to be found and enjoyed by seekers.

NOTES:

LESSON 2

THE HOLY GHOST MINISTRY OF JESUS

Read: Luke 4

Memory Work: With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation. Psalm 91:16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Word of God is our best weapon to overcome temptation.*
2. *Whether we are in the wilderness of the secular world, or in the temple of religious service, we may, indeed we must, be filled with the Holy Spirit.*
3. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest liberating power in all the world.*
4. *The Word of the Lord has the authority to deliver from sickness and demonic power.*

I In the Wilderness: When Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan, the voice of God sounded forth from above "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased," (Luke 3:22) and the Holy Spirit, in the embodiment of a dove, came and rested upon Him. It was at this point that Jesus was anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. He received a full and complete filling of the Spirit, for God did not give the Spirit by measure unto Him (see John 3:34). From the banks of Jordan, Jesus, newly filled with the Holy Spirit, was led, or driven, by the Spirit into the wilderness. Luke records that Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days. Then after forty days of temptation, Satan, with all of the deceitfulness of hell, attacked the Redeemer with three temptations designed to destroy His great work of redemption. Since we know that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, we know that as a boy he was subject to such temptations as are common to young people. The forty days in the wilderness were filled with temptations also. The three and one half years of ministry were

filled with temptations common to those who serve God and minister to people. He overcame and was triumphant in every case. But in these three great temptations, Satan himself attacked our Lord with all the cunning deceit of hell.

Satan's first words to Jesus are very suggestive of how the enemy works. God had spoken from heaven and said, "Thou art my beloved Son," and the enemy says, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (ch.4:3). Just as in the Garden of Eden, Satan cast doubt on the Word of God. God is true. His Word is truth. Satan is the liar. He was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Jesus resisted this temptation to use His Divine power for personal need, by quoting the scripture from Deuteronomy. He said, "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God" (vs.4). We may overcome the temptation to be occupied with the natural bread of the material needs of our families by recognizing the truth of Christ's answer here. We need to labor for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life. We need the spiritual food of the Word of God. Let every bread winner recognize this supreme necessity.

Next Satan offered the Lord all the power and glory of the kingdoms of the Roman empire, if He would fall down and worship him. The word translated kingdoms here, had the emphasis of economics in it. Jesus was not prepared to obtain power over the nations by any means contrary to the law of God. Again He quoted the scripture from Deuteronomy and overcame the enemy. We, too, may share in Jesus' triumph by allowing nothing in this world to come between us and the worship of and service to our Lord.

Finally, Satan quoted (and twisted) the scriptures also. He attempted to get Jesus to leap from a pinnacle of the temple. He misused Psalm 91 to suggest that Jesus' life would be miraculously preserved if He did this. But again the Lord recognized the deceitfulness of the enemy and repudiated his suggestion by quoting, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (vs.12). Satan will try anything to get God's children to waste their lives. If he cannot get them to commit outright suicide, he will attempt to get them involved with any earthly thing that will keep them from fulfilling God's will for their lives. Let us be sure that we do not waste our opportunities.

Jesus conquered Satan by overcoming these temptations in the hostile wilderness. Adam failed miserably the one test God allowed him to endure while in the garden of paradise. The

consequences of Adam's fall are the plague of humanity, but the glorious triumph of our second Adam allows every believer to share in the victorious, triumphant, overcoming life of Christ. Let us claim our heritage and "reign in life by Christ" (Rom.5:17).

II In Nazareth: After Jesus' triumph over the devil in the wilderness, He went, in the power of the Spirit, to Galilee. Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit and carefully records that Jesus went in the power of the Spirit. Every minister of the Gospel ought to fulfill his ministry, wherever he may go, in the power of the Spirit also. In Galilee, Jesus taught in the synagogues and was praised by all who heard Him (vs.15). On one occasion He returned to His own home town and went, as was His custom, to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He was given the prophet Isaiah to read, and the reading was from chapter 61:1-3 (though it was not numbered in chapters and verses at that time). "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor...", Jesus read (vs.18). Here was the official announcement of the dawn of the Gospel age. Here was the fulfillment of the type of the year of Jubilee. When He closed the book, Jesus sat down. Some historians think that Jesus sat in the always empty chair that was supposedly reserved for the long expected Messiah. If that is so, it certainly would make for a dramatic impact when He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (vs.21). Other scholars think that Jesus simply sat down as the Jewish teachers did when they taught the people. This, too, would have astonished the people of Nazareth, for they knew Jesus as a carpenter, the son of Joseph, not as a learned teacher and scribe. Jesus' remarks created a stir in the synagogue. It was not so much what He said, as the gracious and polished manner in which He said it, that caused their astonishment. Jesus recognizing their attitude, reminded them from the stories of Elijah and Elisha that God had to find Gentiles to fulfill His purposes. This brought down the house, and they attempted to murder Jesus by thrusting Him out of the city, leading Him to the top of a precipice nearby. But Jesus was able to escape from them, passing through the midst of the mob miraculously, if not invisibly. The people of Jesus' own city found it difficult to accept His ministry because they had known Him as just a local carpenter. Jesus told them that no prophet was without honor except in his own country. He could not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief.

III In Capernaum: Jesus left Nazareth and made His dwelling place at Capernaum (see Matt.4:13). This was a busy industrial and commercial center, the hub of Galilee. There were more than 250 towns in Galilee and it was there that Jesus began His wonderful anointed ministry. In Capernaum, Jesus went to the synagogue, on the Sabbath days (vs.31). The people were astonished at the authority with which Jesus taught them. In the Capernaum synagogue a man possessed with an unclean demon began to cry out. The demon recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God. The demon did not want to be destroyed. Jesus rebuked the demon and commanded it to come out of the man. After the unclean demon had thrown the man down, it did come out, and the victim was delivered. The people who saw it were amazed that Jesus had the authority to command the evil spirits and to cast them out. The word "rebuked" in verse 35 could be literally translated, muzzled. Jesus did not need nor want the advertising of the underworld to promote the glorious Gospel message, so He muzzled the demon.

The same word is used to describe how Jesus delivered Peter's mother-in-law from the great fever that had incapacitated her. Luke's language here is medical in nature. He distinguishes this fever as great, something in the nature of pneumonia, rather than a minor fever from a chill or a cold. Jesus stood over her and rebuked (muzzled) the fever and it left her. She was able immediately and miraculously to rise and serve the guests. The power of the Spirit surely was working mightily in Jesus.

As the sun was setting, people began to appear from everywhere bringing all manner of sick folk to Jesus. He laid His hands on each of them and healed them all. Many were delivered from evil demons. Jesus rebuked (again, muzzled) them, and did not allow them to advertise who He was. Finally, Jesus departed into a desert place, no doubt for a few hours of fellowship with His Father. But soon the people found Him and desired Him to continue His ministry in Capernaum. Jesus declared, however, that He must also preach the Word in other towns of Galilee.

May the ministry of our churches today be anointed by the power of the Spirit, that demon forces may be muzzled and cast out, the sick healed, and the Word of the Kingdom taught in authority. The power of God is just the same today.

LESSON 3

CALLING SINNERS TO REPENTANCE

Read: Luke 5

Memory Work: Review Psalm 91:1-16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Those who respond to Jesus' call to follow Him are given power to become fruitful workers in His kingdom.*
2. *We can be assured that it is the will of God to cleanse us from all sin and to heal us from all sickness.*
3. *Unforgiven and unrepented sin hinders the physical healing.*
4. *Jesus can take common and despised men and women and make them into honorable vessels of His kingdom.*
5. *It is a privilege to answer the call of the Lord, to leave all else and follow and serve Him.*

I Thou Shalt Catch Men: Jesus had been visiting the towns of Galilee, and preaching in the synagogues. People began to follow Jesus in order to hear Him teach the word of God. There was quite a crowd pressing about Him on the shore of Gennesaret (Galilee) one day. Two fishing ships stood there by the lake and Jesus asked Simon, to whom the one belonged, to thrust the ship a little way out from the shore. Jesus then sat in the boat and taught the people, who stood on the shore of the cove. When He had ended His teaching Jesus told Simon (Peter) to launch out into deeper water and to let down his nets to catch some fish. Simon protested momentarily, advising the Lord that they had fished all night without any success, but then added, "nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). Immediately after the net was let down, it caught a great number of fish. Peter had to call for his

partners to aid him in hauling in the great catch. Both ships were filled to the gunwales, to the point that they were in danger of sinking. The fishermen were astonished at the tremendous catch. Peter fell down at Jesus' feet and said, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (vs.8). Peter had previously met the Lord and perhaps had begun to follow Him. He felt unworthy to be an associate of One so omnipotent. But Jesus assured them that they need not be afraid. "From now on," He told them, "you will catch men." When they had brought the ships safely to shore, they immediately left everything to follow Jesus.

The Lord is calling still for men and women to follow Him and to become fishers of men. There was nothing sinful about the occupation of fishing. Jesus, Himself, was a most successful fisherman. Yet He called these men to forsake all and follow Him. Certainly, many men and women can serve the Lord while they are secularly employed, but some must answer the call to leave everything to follow and serve the Lord.

II I Will: Be Thou Clean: Luke does not record the Sermon on the Mount. Many of the teachings of that great sermon of the kingdom are repeated in the teachings of Jesus recorded by Luke. Both Matthew and Mark tell the incident of a leper coming to Jesus for healing. Matthew places the event immediately after the Sermon on the Mount. Luke mentions that it took place in one of the little towns of Galilee, which Jesus was visiting in order to teach and preach the kingdom of God. Luke describes the sick man as "full of leprosy" (vs.12). That was a medical description of that time. The leper came to Jesus and fell at His feet and besought Him saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus reached out His hand and said "I will: be thou clean." The healing was instantaneous. All the leprosy left him, and Jesus charged the man not to advertise his healing, but to go and show himself to the priest, as required by the law, and to offer the sacrifice, which Moses commanded, as a testimony. But the story of this remarkable deliverance spread far and near, and brought great crowds to Jesus to hear Him and to be healed by Him (vs.15).

This story has two important relevant truths for us. First of all, it reveals that the Lord is willing to heal us from our sicknesses and infirmities. Every Christian believes that the Lord can heal every sickness. But not all find the faith to believe that it is His will to heal all sickness. Psalm 103 re-

cords that our Lord "forgiveth all thing iniquities," and "heal-eth all thy diseases" (vs.3). There is not one single case recorded in the Gospels where the Lord refused an applicant for healing. We may rest assured that it is God's will to heal us. A father once brought his possessed son to Jesus and pled, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus at once advised the distraught father, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). There is no question about our Lord's ability or willingness to heal and deliver. The question is in our ability to believe. Let us cry out with that father, "Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief."

The second lesson to be learned from the healing of the leper is as a type of healing from the leprosy of sin. Whenever the Lord delivered a leper it is always referred to as a cleansing rather than a healing. We must be cleansed from the leprosy of sin if we are to have fellowship with the Lord and His people. Thank God, Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. He says to those sick with the leprosy of sin who come for cleansing, "I will. Be thou clean." Hallelujah! Even as you read this page He is ready, willing and able to cleanse and forgive you of all your sins. Lord, I believe. Do it now!

III Thy Sins Be Forgiven Thee: The cleansing of the leper brought such crowds to Jesus, that He felt compelled to withdraw to the wilderness for a time of prayer and worship and fellowship with the Father. Every busy minister should learn this lesson. The more demanding the work of God becomes, the more necessary it becomes for the worker to withdraw for seasons of intimate fellowship with his Lord. After the renewing time of retreat, Jesus continued His Spirit-filled ministry. Pharisees and doctors of the law came from towns all over Galilee as well as from Judea and Jerusalem, to evaluate His ministry. They were critical. They were sitting by, listening and watching for something to take hold of to accuse Him. The power of the Lord was present to heal despite their antagonism. Four men brought a paralyzed friend to Jesus. So great was the crowd in and around the house in which Jesus ministered, that they in desperation opened the roof and let the patient down before Jesus from above. The Lord was impressed with the faith of those who brought the sick man to Him. But He recognized that the sufferer's primary problem was sin. To the astonishment of all, Jesus said to the sick one, "Man, thy sins are

forgiven thee" (vs.20). This rocked the Pharisees and the doctors of the law. They reasoned rightly, that no one could forgive sins but God. They concluded incorrectly that therefore, Jesus was blaspheming when He presumed to pronounce the forgiveness of sins to the young man. Jesus read their thoughts and posed a question to them: whether it was easier to say, "thy sins be forgiven thee,?" or to say, "rise up and walk?" (vs.23). He told the astonished religious leaders, "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," and then He turned and spoke to the paralyzed patient, "I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house" (vs.24). Instantly the healing was accomplished. The young man rose up before them all and took up the cot on which he had lain and marched off toward his home glorifying God as he went. Everyone was amazed at what they had seen. They glorified God, but certain questions puzzled the Pharisees and religious leaders.

We learn from this incident, not only that the Lord Jesus forgives sin, but also that the forgiveness of sin takes precedence over the healing of sickness. It is often so, that some secret sin hinders the ministry of healing. When sin is taken out of the way the word is given, "Arise and be healed."

IV Calling Sinners To Repentance: Not long after these things, Jesus came across Matthew (also called Levi) sitting at the receipt of custom. His was a very despised occupation. He had sold out his loyalty to his own nation to the Romans for the sake of a lucrative position. These tax collectors and customs officials were called publicans. They were looked upon with disgust and contempt and included with harlots in the estimation of the self-righteous Pharisees. Levi was probably taking custom money from the ships coming from across the lake. He surely made good if not honest money at his occupation. Jesus seeing him called for him to follow Him. At once he rose up and left all to follow Jesus. It is quite probable that Levi had known something of Jesus before this incident. So the Lord plucked from the ranks of the most despised class one who became the author of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Matthew wanted his fellow tax-gatherers to have the opportunity to meet Jesus and he discerned that Jesus would not shy away from meeting them. He made a great feast and invited them all. The scribes and Pharisees were horrified to see Jesus and His disciples dining with the despised publicans and sin-

ners. Jesus explained that the healthy did not need a physician, but those who were sick, and that He, indeed, did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It must be remembered, however, that whenever Jesus did attend such affairs it was that He might save sinners. He certainly did not enjoy sinful atmospheres. We must be careful that we do not separate ourselves so from people that we cannot lead sinners to Jesus, or on the other hand that we associate so much with the world that we compromise our testimony.

The final teaching in Luke five, emphasizes the need for a total spiritual rebirth. He does not teach that we should upgrade our morals or ethics, but that we should be born again. We need not look for a new leaf to turn, but a new life to learn. He has the new wine of His kingdom for new reborn vessels. Praise the Lord! We may be those vessels. He forgives, He heals, He calls, and He enables.

NOTES:

JESUS CHOOSES TWELVE

Read: Luke 6

Memory Work: Review Psalm 91

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Sabbath principle is for the spiritual and physical well being of humanity.*
2. *Absolute necessities and helpful ministry to the needy are lawful on the Sabbath.*
3. *The Lord makes no mistakes when He chooses and sends forth His servants.*
4. *Faithful ministers, who teach the whole counsel of God will meet with opposition and persecution.*
5. *Love and obedience are fundamental necessities for the ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

I Lord Also of the Sabbath: As Jesus traveled about Galilee, teaching and preaching the Word of God, and healing the sick, He attracted large crowds of admirers. He also aroused the jealous hostility of the scribes and Pharisees. They followed Jesus only that they might find fault with Him and accuse Him. On one particular Sabbath day some of the disciples of Jesus plucked some ears of grain as they walked through the fields. Note that it was not even Jesus Himself that did this, but His disciples (Luke 6:1). The Pharisees immediately accused the Lord of sanctioning this Sabbath breaking work. The disciples had rubbed the grain between their hands, thus separating the shell and chaff; and after blowing this away had popped the kernels into their mouths. Jesus responded to the criticism of the Pharisees by asking them if they had never read the story of what David and his men had done when they fled from Saul: how they ate the show-bread of the tabernacle because they were hungry. Only priests were permitted to partake of the show-bread, but necessity overruled this stipulation. It is

interesting to discover that what the Lord's disciples did was specifically mentioned in the law of Moses. "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn" (Deut.23:25). The traditions recorded in the Jewish Mishnah listed 31 items of work prohibited on the Sabbath day. Among them were harvesting and threshing. To these 31 man-made prohibitions were added explanations including the ridiculous conclusion that plucking was harvesting and rubbing was threshing. So in reality the law of God was set aside in favor of the traditions of men. The Lord declared at this time that He was Lord also of the Sabbath.

On another Sabbath the scribes and Pharisees set a trap for Jesus. They watched Him when He came to the synagogue to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath. There was a man there with a withered right hand. It is likely that the scribes and Pharisees brought him there purposely to set a trap for Jesus. But Jesus was well aware of their deceit and called the man to stand forth in the midst. Jesus put the Pharisees on the spot by asking them whether it was lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath, to save life or to destroy it. If His alternatives seem a little unfair, the Pharisees asked for and deserved His scorn. Then the Lord looked each one right in the eye (Mark notes, "with anger") and said to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand." Instantly his hand was made whole. But the scribes and Pharisees were "filled with madness" and began to conspire regarding what they might do to Jesus.

The Lord instituted the principle of one day of rest in seven for the benefit of humanity. The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. But that is not to be used as a rationalization to condone all manner of work and play on the Lord's day. Only rest and worship are sanctioned for the Lord's day. There are exceptions such as absolutely necessary work that cannot be done on another day, such as the work of the minister in preaching and teaching. Also, emergency repairs and helpful works of charity for others. The scripture condemns those who do their own pleasure on the Sabbath (Isa. 58:13). Recreation is not sanctioned for the Lord's day. This is all for our own well being. Both physically and spiritually it is of the utmost importance that we observe this day not with foolish prohibitions of man but according to the clear instruction of God's word.

II He Chose Twelve: Jesus gained many disciples in those days. They followed Him everywhere. They loved to see the sick healed. They enjoyed His authoritative teaching. In those days Jesus left the crowd of disciples and went into a mountain to pray. This is the third time already that Luke records Jesus' prayerfulness. This time we read that He continued all night in prayer to God. The time had come for Jesus to select twelve men to be with Him, who later would go forth to do the work He gave them to do. The choice of these twelve was of the utmost importance. Jesus did not choose them by researching their accomplishments. They were probably all Galileans with the exception of Judas. They were rather rough and common men. To the natural understanding they were an unlikely crew to choose as leaders and builders of a heavenly kingdom. The Lord needed the entire night to receive the wisdom to choose these men. John records in Jesus' prayer before the cross that the Father gave Him these men (John 17:6). So we can say with authority that in that night-long prayer session with the Father, Jesus was given these blessed twelve whom the Lord then chose to be His apostles (set apart and sent forth). When morning dawned, he called His disciples unto Himself and then named the twelve that were thus chosen to walk with Him. Can you name the twelve? Of course, some are more prominent than others. We know the four fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John. Then we easily remember Matthew, the publican because he wrote the first Gospel. The infamous Judas, a son of perdition we remember. The rest are not quite so easily called to mind. Thomas is unfortunately always associated with doubting. There were also Philip and Bartholomew (possibly the same as Nathanael), James, the son of Alphaeus and another Judas (brother of the second James), and finally Simon the zealot. Several of these are quite obscure. But when John saw the vision of the New Jerusalem while on the isle of Patmos the names of all twelve were seen inscribed on the foundation of that Holy City. Aside from Judas, these men were not failures. The fact that several are obscure to us does not mean they were obscure to God. They were given to Jesus by the Father and it was through them that God worked and established His kingdom on earth.

The Lord is still choosing men and women to be with Him and to go forth for Him. In a sense every single believer is a successor to these original twelve for every believer is chosen to be a witness to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in a special way, our Lord is still calling some to apostolic offices, some to preaching ministries and some to teaching ministries and some to pastoring the flock of God. While every believer is called to serve, some are specially chosen and equipped to fill full-time posts in the service of our Lord. The men Jesus chose were not polished and educated. Jesus taught and prepared them and the Holy Spirit empowered them. This is just what makes a real effective worker today: learning from walking with Jesus and power from the flow of the Holy Spirit. No believer is excluded from the opportunity to serve the King.

III The Nature of Christ's Kingdom: When Jesus came down to the plain from the mountain, great multitudes surrounded Him. They came from far and near. They were there from Jerusalem and Judea, as well as from the sea coast area of Tyre and Sidon. They brought their sick and He healed them all. Then he taught the disciples. The teaching here is very similar to the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Having just chosen the twelve who were to be His Apostles, Jesus describes the blessedness of true prophets of God and then contrasts them with false prophets. His true disciples are blessed because they are poor (in spirit) and hungry (for righteousness); because they weep over their sins and weaknesses; and because they are persecuted and abused and excommunicated for Christ's sake. The Lord declares that this is how the fathers of the Jews treated the true prophets of their time.

Jesus denounces with "woes" those who are self sufficient and self satisfied and self confident and self righteous. "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," Jesus warned, "for so did their fathers to the false prophets. The message of repentance and righteousness and self denial is not a popular message. The whole counsel of God does not win popularity contests. Teaching the necessity of absolute humility and purity is foreign to our modern culture, but it is still the truth of God.

Jesus also emphasizes the necessity of love. His kingdom is a kingdom based on love. "God so loved that He gave." We are to love one another like Christ loved us. When we preach and teach the truth of God, it is to be ministered in love. Even when we are abused and mistreated we are to respond with love. If we seek to extract a fault from our brother's eye, we must be sure that there is no unloving attitude like a huge beam in our own eye.

This parallel teaching to that of the Sermon on the Mount seems particularly directed to the twelve whom Jesus had just named. Also, of course, it is for us who follow in their train. If we are to bring forth good fruit for God we must be good examples in love and obedience and each grace, even as our Lord is the perfect example of all that He Himself taught here. We must dig deep in repentance and build carefully in righteousness and obedience that our house does not fall in the time of testing.

NOTES:

LESSON 5

JESUS, THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

Read: Luke 7:1-50

Memory Work: Review Psalm 91

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord appreciates real faith in His people. May our faith in Him increase.*
2. *The compassion of Jesus moved Him to raise the only son of a widow woman back from the dead. His compassion is no less today.*
3. *The greatest ministry of Jesus was the teaching and preaching of the gospel. Today, also, the highest work is teaching and preaching the glad tidings of the gospel.*
4. *We must always remember that Jesus forgives sin and sinners and makes them children of His kingdom. We dare not remember the sins of those whom the Lord has forgiven and cleansed.*

I Great Faith: After choosing the twelve apostles and teaching the multitude about the nature of His kingdom servants, Jesus returned to His home base at Capernaum. The elders of the Jews came to Jesus on behalf of a Roman centurion. The officer had heard about Jesus and now his personal servant was dangerously sick and at the point of death. This Roman soldier was a most unusual man. He loved the Jewish nation and had a synagogue built for their worship. This made him the friend of the religious leaders. That a Roman officer should have such regard for his servant is also unusual and noteworthy. He cared for his servant like the nobleman cared for his son (see John 4). Perhaps this Centurion was familiar with that miracle which took place in Capernaum also.

The Jewish elders told Jesus that this man was worthy and urged Jesus to go to him and to heal his servant. Jesus agreed and started out. As Jesus came near the house, the centurion

sent his servants out with the message that he was not worthy to receive Jesus into his house. He explained that he had not come personally to Jesus because he was unworthy. But the confident captain urged Jesus simply to speak the word only and the servant would be healed. He had an amazing understanding of the authority of Jesus. He explained that his soldiers obeyed his commands because he had the power of the imperial government behind him. He himself was under the authority of his commanding officer and the chain of command gave his word power. He recognized that Jesus was under the authority of Almighty God and that at His word sickness must flee. Jesus marveled at him. He declared that he had not found such faith in any of the Jewish people.

So we have three estimates of this remarkable man. The Jews told Jesus that he was worthy. He himself sent word to the Lord that he was not worthy to receive the Lord into his quarters. But Jesus' evaluation is most significant: "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel" (vs.9). Of course, the servant was healed! On one other occasion the Lord observed someone with great faith. That one was the Syro-phoenician woman who came to Jesus on behalf of her possessed daughter (Matt.15:28). It is noteworthy that the only two commended for great faith were gentiles and that each of them came on behalf of another.

We read in the story before us that Jesus marveled at the centurion's attitude. On one other occasion Jesus marveled, and that was at the unbelief of the people in his own country (Mark 6:6) where He could not perform the mighty works of God because of it. Lord, we believe, Help thou our unbelief.

II Great Compassion: After this Jesus went to the city of Nain. Many of His disciples went with Him and a great crowd of people. It must have been a joyful crowd that traveled along. But as they neared the city of Nain another crowd appeared issuing out of the city. This was a sad procession indeed. They were on their way to the cemetery. The only son of a widow of the city was dead and the funeral procession met the crowd about Jesus. No doubt, Jesus' followers respectfully stepped aside to let the funeral pass. The poor desolate mother wept as she walked. Mourners howled. But as they passed by where Jesus stood, He saw the poor mother. He was moved with compassion. Jesus stepped out and spoke to the woman. "Weep not," he told her and then He touched the bier. The bearers of the coffin

stood still. Then Jesus spoke. He spoke as if the dead young man could hear. He said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." He that was dead, sat up. Can you imagine the bearers at this point? They lost no time in setting that bier down. Then Jesus "delivered him to his mother." So the sad crowd was swallowed up by the glad crowd and the joy increased. The miracle performed in the presence of two large crowds was bound to bring great fame to Jesus. The story of this tremendous miracle filled the whole country.

III John's Question: Even in Herod's prison John heard of this miracle. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed "he that should come," or if they were to look for another. Perhaps John who was suffering undeserved punishment at the hands of the political leaders was looking for an overthrow of the secular power of the Romans and their vassals, like Herod. Certainly it was the generally accepted idea that the Messiah would deliver Israel from the yoke of Rome and restore the nation to a place of supremacy among the nations. Jesus received John's messengers and courteously asked them to observe for a while. In that hour he ministered to the sick and needy around him. Then he told them to go and tell John what they had seen: how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. He sent this message to John: "Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me." That was as much as to say, "trust me John, even though you do not now understand my method."

After the messengers were gone, Jesus spoke to the people about John. He asked rhetorically what the crowds went out into the wilderness to see? Was John a prophet? "Yea," Jesus assured them, "I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." He told them plainly that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah. He said that there was no one "born of women...greater than John." It is not exactly clear what Jesus meant when he added, "but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (vs.28). Some think that Jesus is pointing to the greater dispensation of the gospel as compared with that of the law and prophets. Some puritan ministers thought that Jesus referred to Himself as younger (least) than John and greater than he. At any rate, we know that John fulfilled his ministry and did indeed prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

Jesus condemned the men of that generation for their indifference and critical attitude. They accused John of being extreme because he fasted and dressed very differently. They said he was demon possessed. When Jesus came, they criticized Him because he attended feasts, and did not live like John the Baptist. They called Him a glutton and a winebibber, though neither was true. The glory of the kingdom of God was hidden from the wise and prudent scribes and Pharisees and was revealed unto babes. Publicans and harlots repented already in the time of John and were baptized of him, while the scribes and Pharisees "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of him" (vs.30).

IV Great Forgiveness - Great Love: A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat with him. The Pharisee evidently only asked Jesus to come that he might observe Him and find fault. It would be amazing that Jesus accepted this invitation were it not even more amazing that Jesus came into this hostile world. He came to save sinners. Jesus wanted Simon in His kingdom. So He accepted this invitation, even though He was treated rudely. While Jesus ate, a woman of the city, who had been a sinner (a harlot) came and stood at Jesus' feet weeping. It is likely that this woman had met or heard Jesus before. Now she brought an alabaster box of ointment. Her tears fell on Jesus' feet and she loosed the tresses of her hair and dried the tears away and then broke the alabaster box of ointment.

Simon observed the display of affection scornfully. He would never allow such a woman to touch him. He said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner." She was from the red light district. She had a sordid past. He was from the upper class. His attitude was typically Pharisaical. "I thank thee that I am not as other men." He judged Jesus because He did not perceive what manner of woman this was. But Jesus turned the tables on Simon. He was after Simon. Jesus posed the little riddle of the two debtors who owed their creditor 500 and 50 pence respectively. When they had no means of paying their debt the generous creditor forgave both debts. The question was: which debtor would love him more? Simon supposed correctly that the one that had been forgiven the most would love the most. Then Jesus compared the woman's love with that of Simon. He had neglected the common courtesy of water to wash his guest's feet. He gave no

customary kiss of greeting to his guest, nor did he provide the usual oil for his head. But this woman, whom Simon so despised had washed Jesus' feet with tears and smothered His feet with kisses and anointed them with alabaster ointments. It was not Jesus' discernment that was defective, but Simon's. He only knew and remembered her past. But Jesus knew her repentance and forgiveness. She dared to come to the cold cruel house of Simon because Jesus was there. Her love had to find expression even at the fear of insult and abuse from the self-righteous Pharisee. Yet Jesus desired Simon also to experience the forgiveness of sin. The Lord assured the woman that her sins were forgiven and bade her go in peace. Let us remember the mercy of the Lord and not hold up the past sins of those who come to Jesus. Though Jesus hates sin, He loves the sinner. We do well to do likewise.

NOTES:

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Read: Luke 8:1-56

Memory Work: Review Psalm 91

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is important that everyone understands the teaching of the Gospel.*
2. *The Lord Jesus has power over the evil forces of Satan which causes even demons to tremble.*
3. *The Lord does not force His ministry of deliverance on unwilling subjects, but no evil power is beyond His authority.*
4. *Jesus exercised His authority over disease and death. That authority is undiminished today.*

I Of Their Substance: We are told that Jesus traveled to every city of Galilee bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. The teaching about the kingdom is perhaps better understood if the word kingship of God is used. Jesus taught the Galileans about the kingship of God. The twelve disciples recently chosen and named apostles were with Him. There were also quite a few women who traveled with Him. Many of them had been healed by Jesus, and some had been delivered from evil spirits. Mary of Magdala was one of them. Jesus had cast seven demons from her. Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, was another of these loyal women. She was from the official class. These two were loyal to the end for they were among those who went to the tomb on that first Resurrection morning. Susanna is also mentioned here, though never again. These were only three among "many others which ministered unto Him of their substance" (Luke 8:3). Jesus had no accumulation of wealth. His disciples were not men of means. The Lord had no visible means of support during His years of ministry. These women, among them several of means, supported the Lord and His disciples. Jesus Christ was content to be

supported in this way while He carried on His mighty ministry. Although it is "more blessed to give than to receive," it takes more grace to receive than to give. What an unspeakable privilege these women had. Surely they will be honored throughout the ages of eternity for their thoughtful generosity. Incidentally, there is no record in the gospel of any woman being hostile toward the Lord.

II Take Heed How Ye Hear: As the crowd of followers grew from the cities of Galilee, Jesus used parables to teach them the truths of God. His story of the sower was used to illustrate the importance of how we should listen to the preaching of the word of God. The people could easily understand the illustration of the sower. Most, if not all of them had fields where they sowed seed for their own needs. They knew that all the seed sown did not bring forth abundant fruit. The illustration from their everyday life helped them to understand the need for receiving the teaching of God's word into prepared and fertile ground. Among those who attend services where the word of God is taught there are some who do not really listen to what is said. In these there is little chance of fruitfulness. If Jesus had to use stories to help the common people to understand the truths of the Gospel, we can rest assured that such a method is necessary today also. At first reading, verse 10 might be thought to indicate that the Lord did not want the people to understand the teaching of the kingdom. That is unthinkable. Jesus quoted from Isaiah. He recorded that God had blinded and hardened Israel because of their persistent rebellion. But Jesus was using these illustrations to overcome their dullness. He wants all to understand and see the light. People are inclined to listen with greater attention to what is said about attaining financial security, than about how to please the Lord and increase in holy daily living.

III His Mother and His Brethren: During this time Jesus was busy teaching, preaching, and healing often from sunrise to sunset. He often spent entire nights in prayer. His tremendous activity worried Jesus' mother, Mary. She got several of His brothers to go with her to get Jesus to come back home and to stop His feverish activity. Like many natural mothers, she was worried about "her boy". She worried that He was not eating properly nor getting sufficient rest, so she went to get Him. But when she came to where Jesus was she could not even get

near Him because of the great crowds around Him, She had to send a message to Him that she and Jesus' brothers were without "desiring to see Him." He certainly meant no discourtesy, but realizing that their natural desires would only hinder His God-directed ministry, Jesus rebuffed their interest by declaring that whoever heard and obeyed the word of God was His mother and His brother. His brothers did not believe on Him at this time and His mother, no doubt, did not fully understand. The bonds which unite us to other believers and servants of our Lord sometimes become more important than the natural family ties.

IV Where Is Your Faith? One day Jesus asked the disciples to take Him in a small ship to the other side of the lake. As they launched forth and sailed on the sea of Galilee, Jesus fell asleep. He had been working hard and keeping long hours. Now He fell sound asleep. So sound did Jesus sleep that even the sudden storm did not awake Him as He lay in the stern of the ship. The disciples were not novices at sailing. They had sailed in many sudden storms before. But this was worse than usual. They did their best to bail out the water that filled the ship so that they were in jeopardy. Finally, in desperation, they awoke the Lord and said, "Master, Master, we perish." Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging water and they instantly stopped. The word translated here, "rebuked" is literally "muzzled." It is the same word used to describe how Jesus silenced and cast out the demons that acknowledged Him as the Holy one of God (Luke 4:33-35). This storm was of the devil. The enemy got control of the elements while Jesus slept and thought to destroy the whole plan of God. The disciples also thought the cause was about to perish. But the Lord immediately asked the disciples where their faith was. He had asked them to take Him to the other side of the lake. They should have had faith to see this through themselves. They should have and could have rebuked the storm themselves because Jesus had told them to go to the other side of the lake. Let us learn to take steps of faith to rebuke and muzzle all that hinders us from accomplishing what the Lord has commissioned us to do.

V A Legion of Demons: When the ship brought Jesus to the other side a fierce demon possessed man met Jesus. He had been possessed for a long time. He went about naked and uncontrol-

lable, living in tombs. This man came to Jesus and fell down before Him. The demons knew Jesus and cried out not to be tormented and sent into the abyss. The demons recognized and acknowledged the authority of Jesus. When Jesus asked the demon's name, he responded that it was Legion, for many demons had entered into the poor victim. The demons asked to be allowed to possess the pigs which were feeding nearby and Jesus allowed it. The pigs immediately went wild. They ran down a steep place and were choked in the sea. The keepers of the pigs quickly reported what had happened to the men in the city. When the leaders of that place came out to Jesus, they found the possessed man sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. They were afraid of Jesus and asked Him to go away from them. They did not want the deliverance ministry of Jesus, especially if it was to cost them their pigs. The Lord does not force His deliverance on those who do not desire it. He departed from them and went back again over the lake. The delivered man desired to accompany Jesus, but the Lord asked him to return to his city and show what great things Jesus had done for him. There are those today also, like these ignorant Gadarenes, who have seen what glorious deliverances Jesus can accomplish, but who prefer their pigs. They do not want to give up their beer and booze or their miserable tobacco and pot or worse. The Master who cast out the legion of demons in a moment can deliver from these unclean habits also. The demon possessed man, fell before the Lord. Let those who need deliverance do likewise, before their choice of piggish habits chokes them and lands them in the abyss for eternity.

VI Authority Over Disease: Back on the other side Jesus was gladly received again. They had been waiting for Jesus. Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, was especially looking for Jesus, because his 12 year old daughter was at the point of death. He asked Jesus to come to his house. His faith was not so great as the centurion's who believed that Jesus could heal his servant without coming to the house. But Jesus responded to Jairus' request and set out at once. There was such a crowd around Jesus that it was difficult for Him to proceed. Then a woman who had suffered for 12 years from an issue of blood came behind the Master and clutched the border of His robe. She determined, despite her weak condition to touch the garment and believed she would be healed. Jesus felt at once that

virtue and power had gone out of Him and He turned and asked who had touched Him. When the woman acknowledged what she had done, Jesus reassured her that her faith had brought healing to her and that she should go in peace.

But alas, the delay caused by this interruption was too much. A messenger came from Jairus' home with the news that his little girl was dead. It was too late. But Jesus overheard the message and told Jairus not to fear, but only to believe. No doubt, they hurried the rest of the way. But when they arrived the professional mourners were already howling their pretended grief. Jesus took only the mother and father with Peter, James, and John into the room. The others "laughed Him to scorn" when He said that she was not dead but only sleeping. The Master took the precious child by the hand and said "Little lamb, arise" Her eyes fluttered and opened and she sat up to the astonishment of her parents. The Lord, with a touch of humor, had to remind the thankful parents to give her something to eat. Jesus truly is revealed as Master of everything. Elements, demons, disease and death are all under the authority of our Lord and Master, and He is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever!

NOTES:

LESSON 7

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Read: Luke 9:1-62

Memory Work: Psalm 91

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The authority to heal the sick and the commission to proclaim the kingship of God is still the work of Christ's servants. The kingdom of God is not only a future kingdom, but a present reality.*
2. *When we dedicate our talents to the Lord, He can bless them and use them, however feeble they may seem, to bless and feed many. We must bring Him our loaves and fishes.*
3. *We need to see and understand the glory connected with taking up our cross and losing our lives for His sake.*
4. *The glorious Divinity was revealed in Jesus when He was transfigured on the mount.*
5. *We each should have our mountaintop transfiguring encounters with our Lord, but then we must be ready to meet the enemy in the valley, too.*

I Power and Authority: The twelve apostles had seen Jesus perform many miracles. Twice they had seen the dead revived by His word. Now Jesus called these twelve chosen and privileged men to Himself and gave to them power and authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons and to preach the kingship of God. The Greek word which is translated here as power is dunamis: it is energy and force, it is dynamite. Not only did the Lord give the twelve this power, but He also gave them the authority or right to exercise that power. Their work was first and foremost to preach that the kingdom of God was at hand. That was their main work. The casting out of demons and the healing of the sick proved the reality of their proclamation

and attracted attention to the main burden of their ministry. John the Baptist had preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus, also, had begun His ministry with the same proclamation. What these apostles were saying was that God was now manifested as the Almighty King. Whoever would repent and believe could become a part of that kingdom. Too often, we think of the kingdom of God as a territory or as a period of time. Both of those concepts are partially true, but the great revelation that we need to see is that God is king here and now. The kingdom has not been postponed to some future age. He reigns now. Every healing and every deliverance from the bondage of the enemy proves it anew. This is an exceedingly important truth to embrace. God reigns now and is available to any and all who apply to Him in faith. Although Satan is active in this world, our King has utterly defeated Him. He is bound wherever and whenever God's children exercise this power and authority that is given to them.

The Lord told the twelve that they need not take any supplies for their mission. When we do God's work in God's way, He undertakes to provide for every need. The ministry of the twelve was very effective. Even Herod heard of what Jesus was accomplishing. Guilt caused him to conclude that John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, was risen from the dead. When the twelve had completed their first mission Jesus took them to a desert place for a rest.

II Five Loaves and Two Fishes: Soon the multitude discovered where Jesus was and came after Him. He did not chase them away, but welcomed them and taught them of things concerning the kingdom of God. He also healed the sick which were among them. As the sun began to set, the disciples urged Jesus to send the multitude away so that they could get themselves food and lodging. But Jesus told the twelve to give the people food to eat. They protested that all they had was five loaves and two fishes. Jesus instructed the disciples to have the people sit down and prepare to eat. He took the loaves and fish and looked up to heaven and gave thanks. The text says, "He blessed them" (vs.16). Was it the food He blessed, or was it the disciples? Whichever it was, the result was miraculous, for all ate and were filled and the number was five thousand men beside women and children.

The story is condensed here in Luke, but one thing is clear, the Lord can take the little we may have to offer and

bless it and us and use what we have given to feed a multitude. Let us consecrate what little we have to the Lord for His use. A solo for His glory can bring great blessing. A testimony or some witness for the Lord may be the means of opening the door of salvation for one or many. Don't wait until you have a lot to offer. Consecrate your five loaves and two fishes.

III Thou Art The Christ of God: Jesus led His disciples in quest of a little liesure to Caesarea Philippi. While there Luke records again that Jesus was alone praying. This is the fourth time that Luke has noted Jesus' practice of prayer. Here we are told Jesus was alone praying, and that His disciples were with Him. At first glance it seems like a contradiction, but upon consideration it is evident that it is true to life. Those who truly learn the art of real prayer, are often "alone" with God while surrounded by disciples or others. Finally, Jesus turned to the twelve and asked them "Whom say the people that I am?" They told Him that some thought He was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and others thought that He was a reincarnation of Elijah and still others that He was one of the other Old Testament prophets risen from the dead. Then Jesus asked the twelve, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter instantly spoke for the twelve and confessed that they were convinced that Jesus was the Christ of God. The Lord declared that the Father alone could reveal this to them and charged them not to publish that revelation. Even today, this fundamental truth comes to men by the revelation from the Father. Logic and rhetoric will not do the job. It is still the work of the Father through the agency of His Holy Spirit to draw men and women to Jesus and to reveal Him as God's Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Messianic promises. He is God's perfect Prophet, His eternal Priest and glorious King. He is not just one among many. He is the Christ of God. Whom do you acknowledge Christ to be? Your true answer to that will determine your eternal destiny, for no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ.

IV Transfigured: After Peter's inspired confession that Jesus was the Christ of God. Jesus began to speak of His rejection and death. He also warned His disciples that unless they were willing to take up their own cross and follow Him, they could not be His true disciples. We need to see clearly that taking

up our cross and dying to self and the world is not a distressing necessity, but a glorious privilege. That is the only path that leads to transfiguration and glorious Divine and eternal life. Let us pray for understanding that we may welcome all that is death to self because of the glory of the new resurrection life which becomes our right when that death is swallowed up in life.

Jesus took only Peter, James, and John with Him up into a mountain to pray. Luke records the fifth incident of Jesus' prayer life. It was while He was praying that the fashion of His countenance was altered. Even Jesus' garment became dazzling white. He shone like lightning. He was changed, perhaps as those who are alive and remain shall be changed when the last trumpet will sound. Surely from the mount Jesus could have taken one step and been gone from earth and back into the glory of heaven, but instead He spoke with Moses and Elijah, who miraculously appeared there on the mount, of the exodus which He would accomplish at Jerusalem. They spoke not only of Jesus' death, which the word decease suggests, but of His exodus from this realm of the natural body, which was before Him. The three disciples were half asleep but wakened enough to see the glorious light and the miraculous visitors. Peter suggested that they build three booths for Jesus and Moses and Elijah. Then the voice of God was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son: hear Him" (vs.35). A cloud came and overshadowed the entire scene. It was from that cloud that the voice of God was heard. When the cloud ascended Moses and Elijah went with it and only Jesus remained. He instructed the disciples to keep secret what they had seen until He was risen from the dead. They obeyed but could not understand what He meant by rising from the dead.

V He Set His Face To Go: Jesus came to this world to give His life for the redemption of humanity. He did not turn away from that purpose. He deliberately came down from the mountain of glory and set His face to go to Jerusalem where He knew His crucifixion would be accomplished. Immediately, at the foot of the mountain Jesus was met by a distraught father seeking deliverance for his demon possessed only child. The disciples who had enjoyed success on their recent mission were powerless to deliver this boy. Jesus quickly rebuked the unclean demon and the boy was delivered.

Again, Jesus spoke to His disciples of the fate that lay be-

fore Him. They did not and perhaps did not want to understand. They began to argue as to who was greatest among them. Jesus took a child as an illustration and urged them to give up their thoughts of greatness and receive little children in His name. Jesus had to rebuke James and John when they wanted to strike the Samaritans dead with lightning because they would not give lodging to Jesus and His company. He reminded these sons of thunder who wanted to call down lightning, that He had come to save men's lives, not to destroy them. The last incidents in this chapter illustrate the necessity of those who would be followers of Jesus, to really take up their cross and forsake all of the material life to follow Him. Everything that hinders us from total liberty to serve Him in His kingdom must be renounced. He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, though He knew full well what awaited Him there. Let us stedfastly take up our cross and follow Him and having put our hand to the plow; let us not look back and thus show ourselves unfit for the kingdom of God.

NOTES:

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Read: Luke 10:1-42

Memory Work: Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:2

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *There is an urgent need for harvest laborers to reap the earth today. Every born again believer ought to consecrate himself to go, if that is the Lord's will for him.*
2. *There is no greater reason for rejoicing than that our names are written in heaven.*
3. *There is no way to obey the commandment to love God with heart, soul, strength and mind; and our neighbor as ourselves, except by a new birth from above.*
4. *Let us be sure that we do not neglect the quiet waiting on God, in our desire to serve Him.*

I Seventy Sent Out: The twelve apostles had remarkable results when they were sent out and commissioned by the Lord to proclaim the Kingdom of God (see Luke 9:1-9). Now Jesus sent out seventy more disciples to preach the Kingdom of God in all the cities where He himself was coming. They went out in pairs. Thirty-five teams healing the sick and preaching the Kingship of God. This was an intensive campaign to reach the neglected towns of Perea on the east of Jordan. Jesus' instructions to the seventy were similar to those given the twelve. The seventy returned rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them. Jesus exhorted them to rejoice that their names were in the book of heaven rather than over their success in casting out demons. The Lord rejoiced in the Holy Spirit as He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. He rejoiced, also, that these

simple men understood the principles of the Kingdom of God while the wise and prudent scribes, Pharisees, and doctors of the law could not comprehend it.

May God grant us the simplicity to understand and experience the kingship of God. It is true today as certainly as it was then, that the harvest is great and the laborers are few. Every one born again by the grace of God has an obligation to offer themselves to God for His work. He will set all to work for Him. Only some are called to full-time harvest work, but all are called to support that work and to do their own share of witnessing for Him. Whatever the results may be, our greatest joy is in that our names are listed in the book of life in heaven.

II To Inherit Eternal Life: The religious leaders of Israel often attempted to trick Jesus into saying something which could be used against Him. An expert in the old testament law stood up to tempt Jesus one day, and asked Him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus was never caught unawares in these traps which were set for Him. He turned the tables on this lawyer and asked him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The lawyer quoted, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself (Luke 10:27). He was quoting from Deut.6:5 & Lev.19:18. On another occasion when a scribe sincerely asked Jesus which commandment was most important, Jesus quoted the same two scriptures. It is evident that to obey these two commandments fully is impossible without a Divine new birth. The law said, "Do, and live" while the Gospel says, "Live, and do." We can only love the Lord our God as the law demands, and our fellow man as ourselves, when we have experienced the new birth from above.

III Summary of the Ten Commandments: The first four commandments all deal with our relationship with God. Ancient traditions state that these four commandments were on the first tablet of stone. The lawyer quoted the summary of them. To be sure, if we love the Lord with heart, soul, strength and mind, we will have no other gods, or graven images, we will honor His name, and hallow His holy days. The ancient traditions also suggest that the last six commandments were on the second tablet of stone. These last six commandments deal with our relation-

ships with our fellow man. They are indeed summarized by the word the lawyer quoted from Lev.19:18, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Paul explained to the Romans, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Rom.13:9).

IV The Parable: When the lawyer quoted these two summaries of the law, Jesus told him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Attempting to justify himself the lawyer asked Jesus, "who is my neighbor?" Now again, Jesus wanted the lawyer to answer his own question, so He told a story (see verses 30-35).

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." When Jesus said the certain man went down he really meant literally down. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho goes down very steeply. The capital city is at an altitude of 2550 feet while Jericho, only 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem is 3350 lower at an elevation of -800 feet. Jericho is close to the Dead Sea and on the edge of the great rift that runs from Jordan south to central east Africa. Jesus may have also meant that down to be figurative; for Jerusalem was the location of the temple where the presence of God had been manifested, and Jericho was the city of the curse (Josh.6:26).

The road itself was a steep winding road in an area which became increasingly desolate as you neared Jericho. The climate at Jericho is sultry, hot and humid, while Jerusalem enjoys a drier and generally more comfortable atmosphere. It was this same treacherous and steep road which Mary and Joseph had to retrace as they looked for their 12 year old son, Jesus, who had stayed behind at Jerusalem, about His Father's business. The road was infamous for its dangers. The Jews from Galilee used the road to avoid contact with the despised "neighbors," the Samaritans. They detoured many extra miles on the east of Jordan and then up this steep and dangerous road to get to Jerusalem for the feast days. The robbers who inhabited the area delighted themselves in falling on lone tourists and pilgrims, often leaving them wounded and naked.

Such was the case of the certain man in our Lord's story. He was left by the bandits, naked, bleeding, and half dead. A

priest was first to come upon the tragedy, but perhaps fearing for his own safety, he quickly passed by on the other side. A Levite was next to come that way. He, at least, stopped and looked at the poor victim. But he, too, quickly hastened on without helping him. Next came a despised Samaritan. When he saw the poor man, he had compassion on him. He was prepared for just such an emergency. After purging the wounds with wine and soothing the sting with oil, he bandaged them. Then he placed the victim on his own beast and brought him to the nearest inn. He cared for him there through the night, and on the next day, before resuming his journey, he instructed the keeper of the inn to provide the necessary care at his expense which he would repay as he passed on his next journey. The very words "good Samaritan" have become a part of our language. Truly this Samaritan traveler was a good neighbor.

V Do Thou Likewise: Now the Lord Jesus pointedly asked the lawyer, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves?" The lawyer would not take the name "Samaritan" on his lips, but he answered, "He that showed mercy on him." Jesus then concluded the matter by advising the lawyer, "Go and do thou likewise."

Remember the lawyer asked two questions of the Lord, and the Lord made him answer both questions himself. The first question was what he must do to inherit eternal life, and the answer was to obey the two part summary of the ten commandments. This obedience is impossible without the regeneration that comes through faith in Christ. The second question was, "Who is my neighbor?" To paraphrase the answer, any needy one with whom I come in contact is my neighbor.

VI Practical Application: Six times in the New Testament these words are quoted from Lev.19:18. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Real kindness in action is the key that opens many hearts to the regenerating power of Christ. It is easy to mind our own business, or to be over cautious and "not to get involved." But the Gospel teaches active love. It is this kind of love that proves that we are truly disciples of Jesus who loved us enough to get involved and to "come where we were" and pay the price for our deliverance from the thief who comes to kill and steal and destroy.

Sometimes this parable is taken to be a picture of humanity on the downward road from Paradise to the place of a curse.

Satan had robbed man of innocence, immortality, and fellowship with God and left him more than half dead, when the Savior came to earth and lifted us up, healing the wounds and paying the full price of redemption. Surely He is our great example of redeeming love. Let us so love one another that all men shall know that we are His disciples. Let us pray that our eyes shall be opened to the needy around us and then let us be sure not to pass by on the other side.

VII The Better Part: Luke tells us about the house of Martha where Jesus was always welcome. John completes the story of this household in John 11 and 12 where Lazarus is raised from the dead and Mary anoints Jesus' feet with the very costly ointment for His burial. It was a remarkable household. Jesus loved all three. The parents were no doubt dead. The house was left to Martha who was, no doubt, the oldest of the three. Lazarus must have been quite young when orphaned. They all loved Jesus and welcomed Him into their home. Martha expressed her love for the Master by preparing an elaborate banquet for Him. She was so anxious to please Him that she drove herself to distraction. Her agitation was compounded by the fact that Mary, her sister, did not help with the preparations but sat at Jesus' feet listening to His Word. Finally, she complained and charged Jesus with not caring that Mary had left all the work to her. But Jesus sweetly advised her that "one thing is needful." Mary had chosen to serve Jesus by listening to His Word.

Sometimes we are tempted to become too involved in service for our Lord, to the neglect of that quiet personal fellowship with Him which is most needful. Let us choose that better part. We will be better equipped to serve Him as we do so.

LESSON 9

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER

Read: Luke 11:1-54

Memory Work: If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Luke 11:13

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Since every victory in God's kingdom, and every work for Him is accomplished through prayer, nothing is more important than that we learn to pray.*
2. *The equipment which is provided for us to inspire effective prayer is the Holy Spirit.*
3. *We pray, not to a reluctant and sleepy friend, but to a generous and loving heavenly Father.*
4. *It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Satan is bound and subject to those who believe.*
5. *The Holy Spirit brings us the wisdom to know the will of God and to avoid insincerity and hypocrisy.*

I Teach Us To Pray: The twelve disciples were observant enough to see that there was a direct relationship between Jesus' powerful ministry and His praying. He had told them, after casting out the demon from the young son at the foot of the mount of transfiguration, that "this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer" (Matt.17:21). Some of Jesus' disciples had followed John the Baptist before they became His apostles. They remembered that John had taught his disciples to pray. Now they observed Jesus at prayer again. Perhaps He even prayed aloud. This is the sixth time that Luke records that Jesus spent time in prayer (Luke 11:1). One of the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray even as John had taught his disciples. What victories would be won today if the believers

earnestly asked the Lord to teach them to pray. Jesus responded with very important and enlightening teaching. He reminded them of the prayer He had taught them some time before. The emphasis in that prayer was that God should be glorified and His kingdom manifested. The personal requests had to do with food for one day at a time and grace to forgive that they might be forgiven. The burden of that prayer was that God's name should be hallowed and that His kingdom would be manifested in the saving of souls and healing of bodies and that God would be able to rule in the lives of the believers. Our prayer today should not be overbalanced with requests for ourselves.

Then Jesus told a very enlightening story. He told of one who received visitors late at night and who had no food to set before them. In the hour of need the host went to his friend to ask for bread to meet the emergency. Alas, the friend was already in bed and not inclined to rouse himself to supply this need. But when the needy one continued to knock and the friend realized he could not sleep with that constant knocking, he reluctantly got up and gave him three loaves.

The truth that Jesus wanted His disciples to learn from this parable is the contrast between the friend and the Father. The heavenly Father is not a sleepy and reluctant donor, but a willing and generous Father. We are taught to expect that our Father will supply our need quickly and joyfully when we apply to Him. The Lord also taught His disciples how the Father supplies our need to minister to a needy world. He meets the need by giving us His Holy Spirit. That is how we are enabled to pray: by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Earthly fathers subject to the frailties of the flesh, yet delight to give good things to their children. How much more shall the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them who ask. This is how we receive the loaves to set before the hungry and needy. This is how we are enabled to pray. When we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helps our infirmity and inspires us to pray according to the will of God. The baptism of the Holy Spirit with the glory and ecstasy and life changing power is wonderful, but there is still the need to go to God again and again for the infilling of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs and emergencies all around us. Every believer has the right to a glorious baptism of the Spirit, and every believer has also the privilege to go to the heavenly Father to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to conquer in the daily battles

and emergencies we face. Note, that here Jesus says that every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Would you be taught to pray? Ask the loving, generous Father for the Holy Spirit. Would you minister to the needs of a lost and dying world? Knock at the door of heaven and ask for the power of the Spirit. The Father will rise quickly and give all that is needed.

II With the Finger of God: Next, Luke recorded how Jesus had been casting out a dumb demon. When the evil spirit was cast out the dumb person began to speak. Some of the people who witnessed this deliverance concluded that Jesus cast out the evil spirits by the power of Beelzebub, the chief of devils. Attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to the power of the devil is dangerous blasphemy. The Lord pointed out that if Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom was divided and could not stand. With a touch of satire, Jesus asked, "if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" (Luke 11:19). Then Jesus reasoned that if He "with the finger of God" cast them out, obviously the kingdom of God had come upon them. The phrase "with the finger of God" is another way of saying that the deliverance was wrought by the Holy Spirit. Luke has chosen to illuminate the teaching of Jesus regarding praying for the Holy Spirit by showing that Jesus ministered by the finger of God. Those who pray for and receive the Holy Spirit will also accomplish works of deliverance.

The Lord explained that when a strong armed man guards his realm, his goods are in peace. When a stronger than he comes the stronger one strips the strong man of his defence and spoils his goods. The strong man represents the devil and the stronger than he is the Lord Jesus. By this illustration we are assured that Jesus reigns now. His kingdom is not postponed to some future millennial time, but now by the power of the Spirit Satan is overcome and his dominion of oppression and possession destroyed by the Stronger than he. Yes, we now live in the era of the kingdom of God. We must be wary that we do not forfeit the glorious deliverances which our Lord has purchased. Let us believe and see the salvation of our God.

III Warning to the Delivered: Jesus explained that when a demon has been cast out of a poor victim, it seeks for rest as it walketh in desert places. Finding no body to inhabit the evil spirit returns to its former dwelling. He will do his best

to reenter that body even bringing other evil spirits with him. The result is that the poor victim is worse off than before. This should serve as a stern warning to those who have been delivered from evil habits which have bound them. They must walk close to Jesus and invite Him in to possess them. Then there will be no vacancy for the old demon to repossess.

IV The Sign of Jonas: Despite the many wonderful works which Jesus performed the Jews wanted Him to show them some sensational sign. The Lord called them an evil generation. The only sign would be the sign of Jonas. Just as Jonas was a sign to the people of Nineveh, Jesus would be to this generation. The old prophet was three days and nights in the belly of the whale and Jesus would be three days and nights in the belly of the earth. The Lord warned the huge crowd which pressed around Him, that the people of Nineveh would arise in the judgment with this generation and would condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonas while this evil generation hardened their hearts despite hearing a greater than Jonas.

The Lord spoke also of having a single eye so that the whole body should be full of light. If our whole purpose in life is to live for the glory of God, we have a single eye. It is the Holy Spirit which lights up our lives with the light of heaven and then that light is to shine forth in this dark world.

V Woe Unto You Pharisees: As Jesus spoke one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. The Lord accepted the invitation, but once in the house He trampled the traditions of the Jews by sitting right down to eat without the customary ceremonial washing. The Pharisee was horrified, but Jesus used the occasion to denounce the Pharisees for their great concern for outward cleansing while within they were full of "ravening and wickedness". The Lord pronounced 3 woes upon the Pharisees. He accused them of tithing carefully from their insignificant herb gardens while neglecting the important matters of the law of God. He denounced them for their love of being honored and for their corrupting influence on the society of that day. One of the lawyers, that is, an expert in the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders, protested that Jesus was reproaching their honored profession. Indeed, Jesus directed three more denouncing woes upon the lawyers. He denounced them for laying heavy obligations on the people while they did not perform those obligations themselves. He also denounced them for their

hypocrisy of building memorials for the prophets which their fathers had killed. They still had the spirit of murder in their heart. Jesus warned them that all the innocent blood which had been shed since the murder of Abel would be required of that generation. Indeed it was some forty years later when Jerusalem was destroyed. Finally, the Lord denounced the lawyers for taking away the key of knowledge from the people. They hindered those who searched for the truth. The scribes and Pharisees and lawyers were very hostile to Jesus and urged Him vehemently to respond to many questions. They hoped to catch Him somewhere so they could accuse Him, but He was not caught unawares.

NOTES:

SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Read: Luke 12:1-59

Memory Work: But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:31,32.

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We must take very seriously the Lord's warning against hypocrisy, and search our hearts lest this great evil destroy our experience and usefulness.*
2. *God the Almighty Creator, is deeply interested in the minute details of each life and will guide and protect us as we are faithful to Him.*
3. *The material things of earth can easily become rivals for the heavenly treasures of the kingdom.*
4. *As servants of the Lord, we are obliged to feed the flock and minister to their needs. We must avoid abusing our authority by using the flock for selfish purposes.*
5. *We must be willing to pay whatever price is necessary to be children of His kingdom; even if it alienates us from our loved ones.*

I Beware of Hypocrisy: Jesus had just dined in a Pharisee's house. He had used the occasion to denounce the Pharisees severely. He had also pronounced a threefold woe upon the experts of the law. They were enraged by His denunciation. They urged Jesus vehemently and attempted to provoke Him into saying something by which they could accuse Him. As Jesus left the house of the Pharisee, a great crowd pressed about Him. It was a violent mob scene. In the midst of the clamor and hubbub the Lord spoke to His disciples. He warned them to

beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy. The sect of the Pharisees had arisen in the days of the Maccabees. They were a noble and godly influence upon the nation. They lived in very strict obedience to the law themselves and taught the Jewish people to maintain their national identity by so living also. But as time passed, this noble and holy society was ruined by the evil of hypocrisy. They began to find ways to circumvent the law of God. They remained very zealous for trivial and unimportant traditions of men but allowed themselves to disobey the commandments of God. Nothing is more severely denounced by the Lord Jesus, than hypocrisy. If this superficiality and hypocrisy could destroy the noble society of the Pharisees, it can also do the same to an assembly and its witnesses. God demands sincerity from His children. Hypocrisy is play-acting. It is wearing a mask. Every believer ought to be deeply concerned that he is sincere. Every minister and teacher needs to be doubly watchful, lest having ministered to others they be disqualified from the reward for hypocrisy. Every church has hypocrites. The Lord said it would be so. That ought not to offend anyone or hinder them from following the Lord. But you don't have to be one. Come on! Stop pretending. Be real. Seek the Lord with all your heart and purge out the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.

II God Will Take Care of You: The scene was full of potential danger. The mob was milling around Jesus. The Pharisees and lawyers were seeking to provoke Him. The Lord knew well that soon He would lay down His life. In this time of imminent danger, He admonished His disciples not to fear those who could kill the body, and then do no more. He urged them to fear the Lord God who had power after the death of the body, to reward with eternal life or to punish with eternal death. Jesus assured His followers that God cared for each of them personally. This teaching is of great importance to us. The Lord revealed that even the sparrows which were sold for a few cents were noted and watched over by God the Father. The disciples (and we) are of more value than many sparrows. The Lord went so far as to assert that even the hairs of our heads are numbered by the Almighty. This teaching was given to bring confidence to the disciples of our Lord who are persecuted. The Lord promised the help of the Holy Spirit for those who are accused before the judges of this world. His followers

need not worry about their defense. The Holy Spirit would inspire them for their own defense in the hour of trial. Many people in this world believe in a supreme being. The creation testifies to an Almighty hand that called forth all things. They believe in an impersonal God simply ruling generally the course of the universe, but totally estranged from the personal individual experiences of life. Our finite comprehension finds it difficult to understand how even a supreme being could be personally involved with almost four billion people and know and care about their conditions. Despite our limited understanding this teaching of Jesus reveals that it is so. We are of more value than many sparrows. God does know about you; and He cares. Let it encourage us to expect His help in every time of need.

III Beware of Covetousness: Suddenly, a man in the crowd demanded the Lord to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Quickly the Lord rebuked the man and said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12: 14). Then He spoke to the two men and the whole crowd warning them to beware of covetousness. The love of material things is the foremost contender for the affection that belongs to the Lord and Him alone. Jesus illustrated His warning against covetousness with the parable of the rich fool. The fields of this certain rich man brought forth an abundant harvest. To secure his well-being for many days, he tore down his barns and built bigger storehouses. He then spoke to his own soul and assured himself that he was now secure for a long time. The Lord, however, called him a fool, for that very night the rich man's soul was required of him. The abundant material provision could do him no good beyond the grave. He had made careful provision for this life, but none for that which was to come so much sooner than he thought. There would be squabbling over the inheritance, no doubt, even as the brothers who precipitated this teaching were in dispute over their inheritance. But the foolish rich man had made no provision for his eternal well-being. "So is everyone," our Lord pointed out, "that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (vs.21). The Lord went even further and warned against anxious care for food and clothing. He assured His listeners that the heavenly Father was aware of our needs and we need not waste our time worrying about material needs. The birds somehow got enough to eat even in winter; and lilies

whose life span was but a few hours are clothed with more beauty than Solomon. But the Lord did not lay down His life to redeem birds and flowers, but to redeem you and me. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things" (Rom.8:32). The unbelieving children of this world worry continually about these material things, but we are not so to waste our time. Let our seeking be for the rule of God in our lives. If we seek to be goverened by His loving providence every necessity is assured and much more beside. We can trust Him. Only let us be concerned with our heavenly security. Let us be rich toward God. This is accomplished by sacrificial giving to the cause of Christ. The Lord admonished his audience to sell what they had of possessions and give alms, thereby laying up treasure in heaven. If our treasure is above, our hearts will be above also. But if our treasure is in gold and stocks and bonds and real estate investments in this world, our hearts will be earthbound and suffer loss.

IV Faithful and Wise Stewards: Peter asked the Lord if this teaching was for the twelve or even for all. The Lord answered by asking a question: "Who is a faithful and wise steward?" (vs.42). Yes, the teaching was especially for the twelve, but not exclusively. The Lord spoke to all who are stewards of the work and people of God. If the head steward of the householder runs the household well in his lord's absence and provides well for all, the Lord will reward the faithful steward on his return. But if the steward abuses his authority and beats the servants and lives in wanton indulgence eating and drinking and becoming drunk, when the Lord of that house returns he will cast the steward out of his house and punish him for his abuse of authority. This is a serious charge to the ministers of the gospel. They are commissioned to feed the flock of God and to guard them from the dangers about them. Each minister of the Gospel has a serious obligation. He is not to use the people of God for his own advantage. Some, even in New Testament times made merchandise of God's people. The true minister of the Gospel is to declare the whole counsel of God to his flock, holding back nothing that is profitable for them. The Lord closes this passage with a frightening warning concerning the responsibility of His stewards. They are warned that their punishment will be greater if they knew the will of the Lord and did not fulfill it.

V The Cost of Discipleship: Finally, the Lord issued a bold challenge. He declared flatly that the Gospel would bring division even to close families. Some would believe and some would not. Those who would be His true disciples must be willing to pay this high price of forsaking loved ones to follow Him. Of course, they can pray and believe for their eventual conversion, but initially we must be willing to forsake everything and everyone to follow Jesus.

Take the world but give me Jesus
All its joys are but a name
But His love abideth ever
Through eternal years the same.

No price is too high to pay: No sacrifice is too great to make to obtain the kingship of Jesus Christ in our lives.

NOTES:

LESSON 11

PROMISES TO ZACHARIAS AND MARY

Read: Luke 1:5-80

Memory Work: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Luke 1:68,69

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The plan of God is progressing toward the glorious goal of the full redemption of humanity, and the manifestation of His eternal kingdom.*
2. *God uses the lowly vessels of earth to realize His great purposes. The wise and noble of earth seldom understand His ways.*
3. *We should recognize the potential in our children to be sons and daughters of God, and to be messengers of the Gospel.*
4. *The great deliverance promised through the Gospel is not from political tyranny and material poverty; but from the oppression of the evil one and from the debased life apart from the glory and presence of God.*

I Dawn of the Gospel: It had been four hundred long years since the last of the Old Testament prophets had uttered and recorded the last inspired words of that era: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6). When those words were spoken Israel was only a shadow of what it had once been. Only a small remnant had returned from captivity. First the Babylonian empire had subjugated Israel and led them into captivity. Next the Medes and Persians ruled the world. Cyrus decreed that Jerusalem and its

temple should be rebuilt, but the Jews who returned were an oppressed minority. When the Greeks came to power under Alexander the Great, Israel was dominated by the wild rulers of that era. There were, however, a few in Israel who knew their God and did exploits. Judas Maccabees was a valiant warrior who purged out the vile idols which the terrible Greek, Antiochus Epiphanes had forcibly set up in Jerusalem. For a brief time Israel enjoyed the help and blessing of God. The sect of the Pharisees arose in those days. Their purpose was to teach the law of God and maintain the purity and separation of the chosen people. This sect deteriorated, however, until in the days of the Gospel they were full of hypocrisy. After the terrible Greeks came the Romans. They conquered all nations and set up their forces of occupation everywhere. They eventually set Herod the great over the land of Israel. He was an Idumean, descended from Esau, and the tool of Rome. They gave him the empty title of king, but he was their vassal. Herod built temples to honor the gods of Rome, and arenas for the violent sporting activities. He also began to build a great temple in Jerusalem to placate the Jews. Not only was Galilee of the gentiles sitting in gross darkness, but Judea and Jerusalem, too seemed forgotten of God.

Yet there were some devout and righteous men and women in Israel. It was amidst the great spiritual darkness in the days of Herod that the first bright streaks of a new dawn lit the horizon with hope. There was a priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia. His wife, Elisabeth, was also descended from Aaron. These two were righteous before God. They carefully obeyed His commandments. Often they had prayed for God in mercy to give them a child. But Elisabeth was barren and at last they ceased their petition for a child because they were too old. Just on the day when Zacharias had his long awaited opportunity to burn the incense in the holy place of the temple, the messenger of the Lord appeared to him. The angel stood at the right side of the altar of incense and told Zacharias not to be afraid. The prayers which he and Elisabeth had thought unheard were now to be answered. The angel promised a son and informed the priest that his name was to be John. The angel promised that the child would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. He was to be a Nazarite: drinking neither wine nor strong drink all his life. Most significant of all, the angel quoted those last words of Malachi, linking this miraculous birth with the revelation of God which seemed

to lay dormant for four hundred years. "He shall go before him (the Messiah) in the spirit and power of Elias to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared" (Luke 1:17). Zacharias asked for a sign and the angel who gave his own name, Gabriel, granted the priest's request. He would be deaf and dumb until these things were accomplished. After fulfilling the days of his ministry at the temple, Zacharias returned to his home. As promised, Elisabeth did conceive and she hid herself for the first five months. No doubt, Zacharias wrote out all the message of the angel for Elisabeth to read and understand.

II Another Angelic Visit: The same angel appeared in the Galilean town of Nazareth to a young virgin who was espoused (engaged) to Joseph. They were both descendants of David. The angel greeted Mary with the wonderful words, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (vs.28). Mary was perplexed by this salutation and wondered what was meant. Then the angel announced that she was to conceive and bear a son and call his name Jesus. He was to be great and receive the throne of David his ancestor. Mary questioned how she could conceive without the participation of a man. She was informed that she would conceive by an act of God by the Holy Spirit upon her. She was told that her cousin Elisabeth had also conceived and was in the sixth month. Mary submitted readily to the purpose of God despite any misgivings she may have had about the consequences. She quickly left Nazareth and went to the hill country of Judea to visit her expectant cousin. There when she met Elisabeth and greeted her, the babe in Elisabeth's womb leaped for joy. That is the inspired record. Elisabeth also was filled with the Holy Spirit and sang (vss.42-45). Mary responded with another beautiful inspired song full of quotations from the Psalms (vss. 46-55). This beautiful poem is called the Magnificat. It explains how God has remembered the promises to Abraham and is now using vessels of low degree to accomplish His high purposes.

III His Name Is John: Mary stayed three months with Elisabeth and left just before the birth of the promised son. When the child was born, it was a boy as promised. On the eighth day when the baby was to be circumcised and named, joyful neighbors and relatives gathered for a great celebration. Zacharias

was still deaf and dumb. Elisabeth indicated that the child's name was to be John. The name appropriately means "grace of God." The relatives protested. There was no one in either of their families with that name. They made signs to the father (indicating that he was deaf as well as dumb) as to what he would have the child named. Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote "His name is John." He did not say "shall be" but he said "is". He was named nine months and some days before. It was settled at once. Zacharias's mouth was opened. After nine months of silence this man of God had something to say. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. His prophecy began and ended with the truth that God had visited and redeemed His people (vss.68 & 78). How appropriate was this word. Not only did it encompass the incarnation soon to become a reality, but it suggests that God had come down to deliver oppressed humanity. Zacharias recognized that his son, John, was the messenger who would prepare the way for the "horn of salvation...in the house of...David" (vs.69). Zacharias certainly understood that the enemies were not the Romans, but the ignorance and sin into which both Israel and the whole of humanity had fallen. He quoted Isaiah's prophecy concerning Galilee of the gentiles (Isa.9:1 & 2), indicating that the redeemer would "give light to them that sit in darkenss and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (vs.79).

So John was born. His name means "grace of God", and he ushered in that era which is often named "the day of grace". The name of His Father, Zacharias means "jehovah remembers", and the name of the mother, Elisabeth means, "the oath of God". God had made promises to Eve and to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob. To Abraham God "swore" that of his seed all nations would be blessed. Jehovah remembered His oath. Though long dark years intervned, at last the horizon brightened, the day of God's grace dawned, the dayspring from on high visited us, the Sun of righteousness has risen and shines forth today in full orb'd splendor. Jehovah remembers his oath. His grace is sufficient. We shall be like Him as we claim those promises which offer us the opportunity to be partakers of His Divine nature. Let us believe and receive.

John grew and became strong in spirit. Probably at age twenty, instead of taking a place in the rotation of priests at Herod's temple, he went instead to the desert where the word of the Lord came upon him.

LESSON 12

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Read: Luke 2:1-52

Memory Work: And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2:10-11

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *God can control the actions of the Emperors of this world and cause them to do His will, working out His Divine purposes.*
2. *What the world needs most is not advisers or reformers or builders; but a Savior!*
3. *Heaven's angels appeared to the shepherds at the birth of the Lord and welcomed Him back when He had accomplished God's redemption (see Rev.5).*
4. *Despite rampant hypocrisy, there were a faithful few looking for God's redemption.*

I Caesar Augustus' Decree: Augustus was the first Roman emperor. He was the great nephew of Julius Caesar and took the name "Caesar" out of courtesy to him. The title "Augustus" was chosen purposely to command worship from his world of subjects. The title of "king" did not satisfy the emperor, nor did titles such as "Dictator" or "Imperator". At first the Roman government had been a republic: the people had a say in their own rule. But that had passed away and Augustus was the first of the absolute rulers of all the people of the world. The powerful armies of Rome had bludgeoned the whole world into subjection.

The province of Judea was a very insignificant part of the Roman empire. Herod was set over it as a vassal "king". Galilee and the city of Nazareth were even more obscure. Augustus had the power and authority to control the lives and actions of all the people of the empire. He decided to take a

census and accordingly issued orders that every man should return to his native town to be enrolled. Naturally, this caused considerable inconvenience to many individuals. For many it would be costly, and impractical. But all had to obey. The great Augustus had decreed it.

No one was more inconvenienced than Joseph and Mary of Nazareth. It could not have happened at a worse time for them. Mary was nearing the end of months of expectant motherhood. The trip was not only uncomfortable, but even dangerous for her. Yet there was no appeal from the decree issued by the mightiest man on earth. But, consider for a moment the words of Micah, the prophet, spoken at least 650 years before these events: "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Joseph and Mary were living in Galilee and Nazareth. The time was near for the promised child to be born. They obviously had not thought of going to Bethlehem for the blessed event. Perhaps they were totally unaware of the prophecy of the place of the birth of the Messiah. But just at the right time the imperial emperor issues the decree forcing Joseph to take his wife Mary to his native town to be enrolled. The parents of Jesus were insignificant to Augustus. Yet now as we consider the story we see that the attention of all of heaven was focused on these events. Augustus was the insignificant one. He was the tool of God for issuing the decree that brought Joseph and Mary to the right place for the birth of Jesus. God had that decree issued and the whole world was forced to enroll because of the word of prophecy that the ruler of Israel would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

II Unto You Is Born A Savior: When Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem there was no lodging to be had. Even the enclosure where travelers brought their cattle for the night was filled. With Mary's time so near, she needed some place away from the throngs of travelers. The only place was in some cattle shed. No palace for the new-born king, no hotel had room, even the poorest community inn could not accommodate His birth. Oh, the wonder of it all: the only begotten Son of God is born into a world that has no room for Him right from the start. There, in that cattle shed, Mary felt the pangs of delivery. Joseph stayed faithfully by her side until the anguish

of the hour was forgotten for the joy that the man child was born into the world. Right there in that obscure place, the most stupendous event in the history of humanity took place. She brought forth her firstborn son and she herself wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid the babe in a manger. No loving relatives to help, no midwife, not even the barest necessities of hygiene were available. The Savior of mankind is born in a stable amidst bad smells and animals.

Meanwhile, in the hills nearby shepherds, were watching their flocks that night. They possibly were tending the sheep which were sold at the temple for sacrificial purposes. David had watched his father's sheep on these same Judean hills and delivered them from the lion and the bear. Suddenly, there appeared an angel of the Lord to the shepherds and the glorious light of God shone in the night. The shepherds were terribly frightened. The angel assured them that there was no need to fear but rather that rejoicing was in order. He brought good news of great joy for all people. That very night the Savior, the Messiah and King was born. The angel described where Jesus had been born and where He lay. Then there appeared a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest (heaven), and on earth, peace to men of good will." The author of the epistle to the Hebrews records that when God brought the first begotten into the world, He commanded, "And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6). This is a quotation from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament from Deuteronomy 32:43. The visit of the multitude of the heavenly host certainly fulfilled this prophecy.

The shepherds acted at once. They went to Bethlehem and found Joseph and Mary watching over the baby lying in the manger. Then they made known the things which had happened and what the angel had said. It stirred up considerable interest for a time. Mary, however, kept all of these things in her heart and often pondered about them.

III According to the Law: St. Paul wrote to the Galatian christians that "in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal.4:4-5). Jesus Himself said that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. So everything connected with Jesus fulfilled not only the prophecies concerning the Messiah, but also the law of God given through Moses. Accordingly, on the eighth day as specified in the law,

(Lev.12:3), Jesus was circumcised. This was the occasion also of the official naming of the child. Four children were named by God in the scripture record. They are Ishmael and Isaac, sons of Abraham; and John the Baptist, and Jesus. The name Jesus is a form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which in turn is a contraction of the name Jehoshua, meaning Jehovah-Savior. When the Ephraimite Nun named his son Hoshea, during the slavery in Egypt it was a sigh of hope. Hoshea means salvation. Later, Moses changed that name to Jehoshua, and that was shortened to Joshua. Jesus is an English form of the Greek interpretation of Joshua. No doubt, there were many boys named Jesus in that time. But only one has become synonymous with salvation. What a beautiful name! What a wonderful name! There is peace and power and hope in that name. The world may abuse it and take it in vain, but we love it and say it reverently many times each day.

According to the law, Mary had to appear at the temple to be purified forty days after the birth of a son (Lev.12:2-6). So Mary and Joseph came with Jesus to the temple and offered the sacrifice for purification. Mary offered two turtledoves or two young pigeons for this sacrifice. This indicates that Joseph and Mary were quite poor, for this sacrifice was designated for those who could not afford the regular animal sacrifice. They also presented Jesus in dedication to the Lord. Originally the Lord intended to take the first born son of every Israelite household to be a priest. They should then have been a kingdom of priests. Mary followed the original plan of God and presented Jesus at the temple. So Jesus entered the nation of Israel according to the law by His circumcision, and entered the priesthood not by the Levitical substitution, but as originally intended by the presentation of the firstborn according to the law.

IV Them That Looked For Redemption: Mary placed the babe in the arms of aged Simeon, a devout and righteous man of Jerusalem who was expectantly waiting for "the consolation of Israel." The Holy Spirit had revealed to this man that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. This man not only had ears to hear what the spirit said, but also was led by the Holy Spirit to be in the temple when Mary brought Jesus. Immediately when Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms he knew that this was the chosen and anointed one. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," he cried. He then declared his willingness to die in peace. Simeon also recognized that Jesus

was intended to bring light to the Gentiles as well as to Israel (Luke 2:32). This remarkable man of God blessed Mary and Joseph and prophesied some remarkable things to Mary. All came to pass. Another very old saint of the Lord came into the temple just at that instant, too. She was Anna, a prophetess. She was one described by Malachi 400 years before when he said, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name" (Mal.3:16). This aged Anna spake often of Him whom she saw that day in Simeon's arms, to all who looked for redemption in Israel. Let us be sure at this Christmas time, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, Jehovah-Savior, to speak of Him and honor Him who indeed is our great Savior and Redeemer.

NOTES:

WARNING ISRAEL

Read: Luke 13:1-35

Memory Work: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.
Luke 13:24

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is necessary for those who want to be in the kingdom of God to repent and turn from the world and the flesh.*
2. *Christ's provision of forgiveness and healing is more important than preserving religious traditions.*
3. *Because of the growth of the church some seem to be a part of it who are stumblingblocks to others.*
4. *The door of opportunity for salvation will not always be open. We must enter quickly and fully before it is too late.*
5. *Jerusalem and the nation of Israel lost their opportunity to be a part of God's eternal kingdom. They were left with empty religious traditions and a temple without the presence of God.*

I The Necessity of Repentance: Some who were listening to Jesus mentioned to Him that Pilate had ordered some Galileans executed even while they were offering sacrifices. The Lord responded to this information by warning them not to suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners than others. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," Jesus answered them (Luke 13:3). The Lord also directed their attention to a recent accident in Jerusalem. Eighteen people had died when a tower in Siloam had toppled suddenly on them. Probably, the Lord was speaking to men from Judea and Jerusalem. They wanted to

call attention to the wickedness of despised Galileans when they told their story; but Jesus mentioned another catastrophe which took place in Jerusalem. Then He noted particularly the necessity for repentance that they might not perish. The Galileans whom Pilate slew and the victims of the falling tower in Jerusalem died violently, but unless we repent we will all perish. The Lord was directing attention to the hereafter. The "perishing" He was speaking of was eternal. This is an extremely important emphasis. Repentance is absolutely basic and fundamental to salvation and the new birth. Today, there is little teaching on the necessity of repentance. "Just believe" is the great call, but Jesus said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (vs.5). To repent is to turn away from. Paul explained that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Cor.5:17). The emphasis on "all things new" should not be at the expense of "the old things are passed away." Too many today, are hanging on to worldly pleasure and fleshly lusts while claiming to be new creatures. Unless the new life is validated by real turning away from the things of the world, the hope of salvation is not on the proper foundation. John's ministry began with a call to repent (Matt. 3:2), and Jesus, too began to preach by calling His hearers to repentance (Matt.4:17). The first message of the Apostles when they had received the infilling of the Holy Spirit concluded with a call to repentance (Acts 2:38). How dare we omit this basic emphasis today? Any preaching which neglects this call to repentance must be suspected of being the work of men.

II The Necessity of Fruitfulness: The Lord told a story to illustrate the importance of fruit bearing. A certain man planted a fig tree in his vineyard. When he obtained no fruit from the tree in three successive years, he ordered his caretaker to cut it down. But the servant instreated for one more opportunity. He proposed to dig about the tree and fertilize it. If then it did not bring forth fruit it would indeed be cut down. Now the fig tree is a type of Israel. Three years Jesus had been ministering to the Jews. They bore no fruit. They still had one opportunity left. Would the death and resurrection of Jesus provoke them to fruitful response to the work of God? If not, the nation would be cut down. Indeed it came to pass at the destruction of Jerusalem. From that point on, the natural Israel lost their perrogatives to the Israel of God made up of believers among Jews and Gentiles.

Let us consider that if the Lord demanded fruit from the people of Israel, how much more does He have the right to expect the fruit of holiness and an overcoming life from us who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and who enjoy the great privilege of the word of God from the New Testament? If we bring forth no fruit are we not in danger of being cut down and opportunity given to others in our place? Come on! Let us determine to please our Lord and bring forth good fruit by our abiding life in Him.

III Ought Not This Woman Be Loosed? Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. This was His habit. He certainly did not agree with much that was done and taught there, yet He went faithfully to the synagogue and seized each opportunity to serve the Father in heaven. Where this synagogue was we do not know. But we do know that a poor woman was there present who was terribly bent in half. The unfortunate victim of an oppressing evil spirit could not lift herself up at all. She had been in this awful condition for eighteen years. Jesus had eyes which saw the suffering individuals. He went to her at once and said, "Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity." He laid His hands upon her and instantly she stood straight up and glorified God. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant. He spoke up and advised the people that there were six days of the week in which men ought to work. On those days they should come to be healed and not on the sabbath day. He had no joy in the deliverance of the woman. He pretended to be concerned with the righteous observance of the sabbath. Jesus recognized his hypocrisy and exposed it by calling attention to the fact that the ruler and other leaders loosed their oxen and donkeys from the stables to take them to drink water on the sabbath. Then Jesus asked pointedly, "Ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" The Pharisee had presumed to tell the people what they ought to do; but Jesus exposed envious hostility in him and declared what really ought to be done. So forceful was the logic of the Lord that His enemies were ashamed, and the people rejoiced for all the glorious things Jesus did.

IV How Many Will Be Saved? Jesus gave two illustrations regarding the kingdom of God using the mustard seed and leaven as His comparison. These parables are covered in Matthew 13 and

we pass over them now and note that as Jesus journeyed on toward Jerusalem and the cross, someone asked a question. The enquirer wanted to know if only a few would be saved. Jesus did not answer directly. This is important. What Jesus did say was in effect, "Never mind about how many will be saved, just make sure that you enter in at the strait gate and walk the narrow way." The teaching which follows shows the urgency of entering at once, and the danger of presuming that since we are familiar with the things of God, we are safe.

As to the question itself, we do not get a direct answer. The Lord Himself said, "few there be that find it," yet in the book of Revelation we see a great multitude which no man can number. Probably the best balanced attitude to have is that for myself I must be so careful and earnest as if only a few are to be saved and I must seek with all my heart to please and serve Jesus all the time. And yet in my service for the Lord and my witness for Him I should work as if the whole world must hear the Gospel and be saved. The secret is with the Lord. Let me strive for myself to make my own calling and election sure. Let me also pray and witness to those all around as if all must be saved.

V Ye Would Not: Certain Pharisees, who obviously wanted to get rid of Jesus, came and told Him that Herod was seeking to kill Him. They advised Jesus to flee. But He ignored the danger and told them to take a message to "that fox" that He would be ministering to the oppressed and needy today and tomorrow and that on the third day He would be perfected. He was sure of the protection of God until His work was finished.

He also sarcastically suggested that no prophet would be killed outside of Jerusalem, the holy city. How He had desired to bring, the people of that city into His kingdom but alas, they would not come. Now their prized temple and worship was left to them desolate: without the Divine Presence. Jesus had once called the temple His Father's house, but now He called it "your house". Let us be sure that we respond to the ministry of the Gospel and that we really enter in to the life of God by the Holy Spirit. He has promised to make His abode with us if we steadfastly obey Him and walk in His commandments. Let us heed the warning and make our calling and election sure.