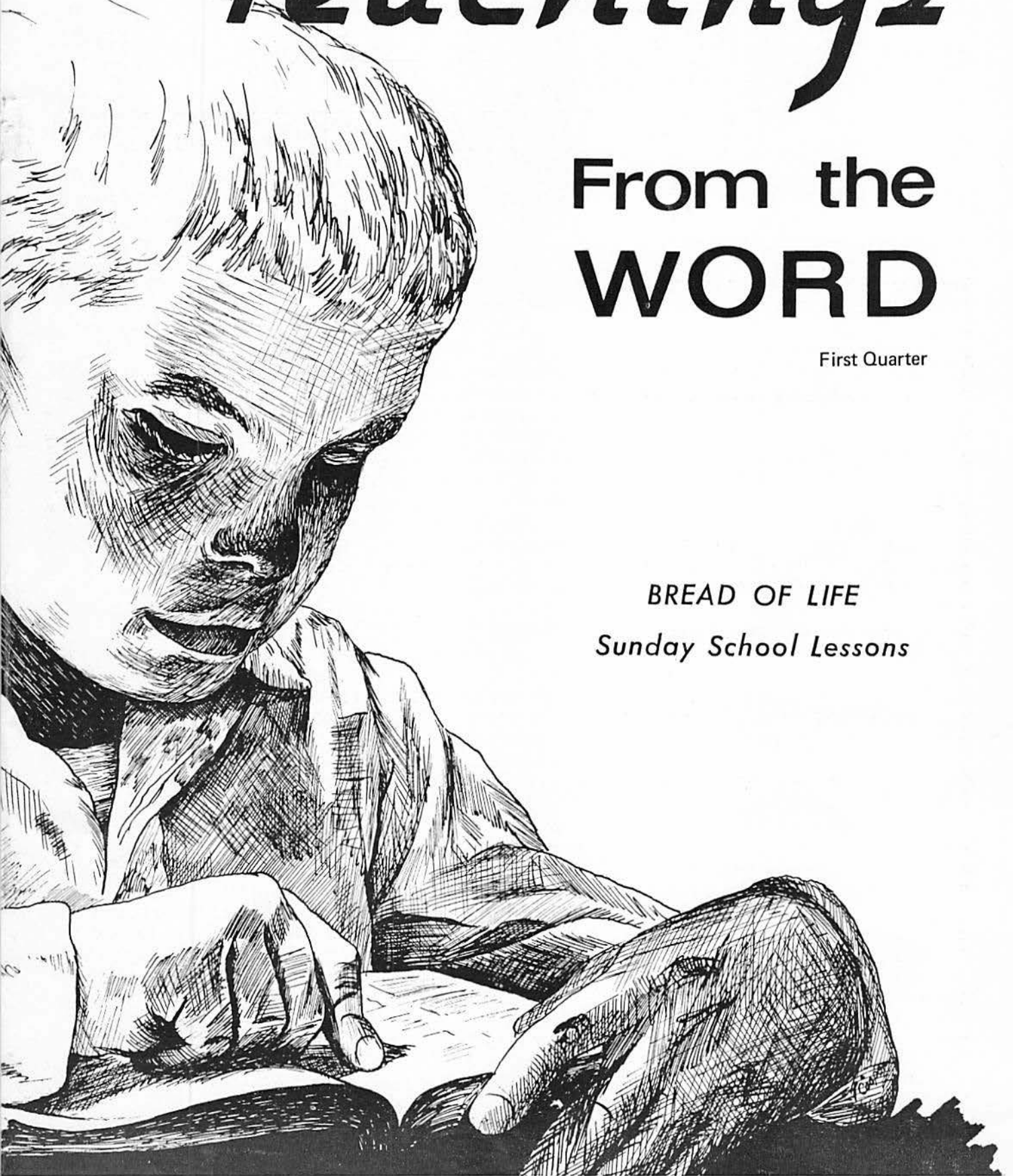


Teachings

From the
WORD

First Quarter

BREAD OF LIFE
Sunday School Lessons



BREAD OF LIFE
SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
TEACHINGS FROM THE WORD

T“TEACHINGS FROM THE WORD” is a Bible study covering the entire Bible in one year and placing special emphasis on the doctrines of the Word of God. This is the first of four quarterlies and covers the period of Bible history from creation to the ending of the forty years of wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. The last two lessons of this quarterly are on the prophecies related to the birth of Jesus and the actual birth and childhood of Jesus. These lessons are placed at this point in the study so that they coincide with the Christmas season.

Doctrine has often been a subject considered dry and dull by many Christians. As a result they fail to make a concentrated effort to learn systematically what the Bible teaches on various subjects. The entire Bible is full of doctrine necessary for our growth and establishment as Christians. Events of history as well as the lives of individuals will be used in this study as the means for bringing out these teachings.

Following the first lesson entitled “The Beginning and the End,” a lesson which will be repeated again at the close of the year, are three lessons on the “second coming of Christ.” The New Testament frequently refers to Old Testament patriarchs in connection with its teachings on this subject. Therefore, it is fitting that in studying about Enoch, Noah, and Lot, the New Testament lessons on the second coming be brought out.

Four lessons are devoted to the major feasts of the Jewish calendar. The importance of knowing about these “old covenant” festivals lies in the teachings they offer regarding present dispensation realities. For example, the New Testament tells us that Christ is our “passover sacrificed for us.” To understand the full and rich meaning of this statement, knowledge of the origin of the Passover and its meaning to the Israelites is necessary. Basic truths are brought out by this event. These include the teaching that man is a sinner in need of salvation from the penalty of sin, that God is the only Saviour (Deliverer), and that God offers a way of salvation which is all of His grace and is received by faith. Similarly the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles portray great lessons on privileges we enjoy today as God’s people under the “new covenant.”

Lessons such as these can be approached in one of two ways. For the younger and less mature Christians the details of the Old testament events should be stressed. These details can in a sense be likened to the scaffolding which must be erected before the actual building is constructed. Without the scaffold (the details) the building cannot be built. For the more mature believers, a knowledge of the details should be assumed and the lesson can be approached from the standpoint of bringing out the teachings which the events bring out.

Much of the doctrines of the Bible have their roots in the Old Testament. To Paul, Peter, and the other apostles of Acts it was still the Scriptures, even though a new era had begun with Pentecost. A thorough knowledge of the Old Testament provides a good foundation for Christian faith. The New Testament merely completes what the Old commenced, and neither is fully understandable without the other. Both form two halves of a perfect whole. There are more than 250 direct quotations from the Old Testament which are found in the New. Someone has figured that there are over 1,600 quotations, references, and allusions which link the New Testament with the Old. A knowledge of the Old Testament details is therefore quite important.

The ministry of example is one of the Old Testament’s major emphases. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). In any one passage, look for an example to follow, a sin to avoid, a command to obey, a promise to claim, and a prayer to echo. As the seedbed, the foundation, and preparation of all that appears in the New Testament, the Old testament is profitable for the man of God.

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LESSON 1 — OCTOBER 6

The Beginning and the End

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Genesis 1
Tuesday:	Genesis 2
Wednesday:	Genesis 3
Thursday:	Revelation 6
Friday:	Revelation 19
Saturday:	Revelation 21
Sunday:	Revelation 22

MEMORY VERSE:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

INTRODUCTION:

Questions concerning the origin of man and his ultimate end have long puzzled mankind. Old and young alike, in every generation, have sought answers to these questions in an attempt to achieve an identity. Today philosophers and psychologists are seeking answers to questions such as: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "What is my purpose on earth?" "Where am I going?" These are all valid questions and mankind deserves an answer. Fortunately, the Bible provides answers to all of these questions by declaring man's beginning and end as well as the causes for the conditions found in the world today.

LESSON NOTES:

The Beginning: Physical creation is very briefly described in Genesis 1. It is described in simple, non-technical language and is intended to demonstrate the power of "Him with whom we have to do" (Psa. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). It is not intended as a scientific explanation of all the forces that went into creation.

The story of creation culminates with the creation of man as the climax of all God's handiwork. On this point the Bible is very plain and specific — man was created; he did not evolve. Furthermore, it is clear from reading Genesis that all of the preceding steps in creation were but preparations for the creation of man. Creation's wonders were made for man; man was not made for creation.

Two purposes were expressed by God in His creation of man. First, man was to be made in the image of God, the only work of creation so made (Gen. 1:26). Secondly, man was made to have dominion over the rest of creation. He was to reign as a prince over God's handiwork. All creation was to be subject to him.

Man was also created with a free will and given a choice to obey or disobey his Creator. His choice of disobedience resulted in a curse upon all creation, plunging mankind into chaos. Both man and earth were subject to the curse (Gen. 3:14,17,19). Man's physical nature changed radically in that his body became mortal, being subject to death, including all its manifestations in life. As a final act in the fall, he was denied access to the tree of life (v. 24).

The End: The origin of Satan is not told in Genesis. Suffice it to say that he is introduced as an arch-enemy of God, bent on destroying His work. From Genesis to

Revelation the conflict between Satan and God is woven into the fabric of God's Word. Creation placed man squarely in the center of Satan's rebellion against God. Man's free will gave him the choice of obedience to one or the other. By his act of disobedience man chose sides with God's enemy and enslaved mankind to his destructive power.

The downfall of Satan's dominion is foretold in Genesis 3:15. Note that the final victory was to come through the offspring of those who were responsible for failure. If defeat was the result of man's choice, then no victory would be complete unless it also was by man's choice. It is on this earth among His created beings that God will defeat the power of evil and make an open show of Satan's lies.

Revelation is the last book in the Bible. As the first (Genesis) speaks of origins, so the last deals with the culmination of all things. In a sense, it reveals not so much an end as a new beginning. It shows the end of a world in which Satan holds dominion and the beginning of a world "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). It reveals a world inhabited by those who by choice have desired righteousness and God's dominion.

Revelation has been a puzzle to many. Keep in mind that it relates to the supernatural warfare between the forces of heaven and forces of hell. It is the "revelation" of Jesus Christ and His ultimate triumph over the man of sin and his work (Rev. 1:1). Just as the first creation centered about man, so the new creation will be centered around people. The "bride," the Lamb's wife, spoken of in Revelation, is also referred to as the "holy city," the new Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:2,9,10). These are composed of *people* whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (vv. 12,27).

The Lessons: It is independence of God that has produced the chaos we see on this planet. Satan has dominion over this world because of the fall. Jesus recognized him as the "prince of this world" (John 12:31). Paul called him the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). The whole world lies in darkness. It is impossible therefore to derive standards of life and conduct pleasing to God from the world. God's Word and plan are the only safe guides.

Jesus Christ was revealed in the flesh and will again be revealed in glory to destroy the works of Satan. His designation as the "second Adam" clearly points to Him as the beginning of a new order of man. His triumph was to be in precisely that area where the first Adam failed. Complete obedience to the will and Word of God marked His life. Provision has been made by God for each person likewise to become a child of God and obtain the nature of Jesus Christ.

Man was created as a "living soul." The body is a temple which houses the soul. While the body is subject to death (Heb. 9:27), the soul lives on forever and partakes either of eternal life or everlasting punishment. Eternal life is offered through Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and begins in this life. Today God is preparing a people who love Him and will serve Him continually as He intended Adam to do. All history approaches its climax with the revelation of these sons of God. It is a matter of choice, and the choice has eternity as its stake. It is only those that do His commandments who will have access again to the tree of life (Rev. 22:14).

Enoch and the Second Coming

DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	Genesis 5
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Hebrews 10:35 - 11:6
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Jude
<i>Thursday:</i>	1 Thessalonians 4
<i>Friday:</i>	1 Thessalonians 5
<i>Saturday:</i>	2 Thessalonians 1
<i>Sunday:</i>	2 Thessalonians 3

MEMORY VERSE:

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Heb. 11:5).

INTRODUCTION:

The repetitious and almost lyrical quality of Genesis 5 is broken only by the comments made in connection with a man called Enoch. With each of those mentioned from Adam to Noah, with this one exception, is that phrase of finality, "and he died." It is as if to underscore the dreadful end which sin brought into creation that God in a succinct fashion in this chapter shows the pattern of each man's life to be birth, existence, and death. Then to inject a ray of hope into an otherwise dark sequence is the life and end of Enoch, a totally different man.

LESSON NOTES:

His Life: Very little information regarding this man is supplied in Genesis 5. Other than learning that he was a married man and a father, we know only that he "walked with God" (vv. 22,24), and because of this walk with God, he disappeared from this earth without tasting death, for "God took him." Only Elijah experienced a similar departure from this life (2 Kings 2:11).

It remains for the New Testament, written thousands of years later, to provide additional details of his life. That he is used as one of the prime examples of faith is significant (Heb. 11:5,6). Though not directly stated, one can assume from the context and sequence of thought that Enoch's faith was such that he diligently sought God, knowing and believing that God would reward those who diligently sought Him (v. 6). People who lived with Enoch knew that he pleased God by the pattern of his life. Faith always has positive fruit in conduct and provides a testimony for all to see.

Jude provides the most interesting insight yet into the life of Enoch. Here we see that Enoch was also a prophet who preached to his generation and warned them that the Lord was coming to earth "with ten thousands of His saints" to execute judgment on all the ungodly (vv. 14,15). Whether he knew it at the time or not, Enoch was prophesying the second coming of Christ, for Jude plainly places this prophecy in this context.

His End: Several important observations should be made about Enoch's day. First, we can see that wickedness and evil works were already rampant many hundreds of years before Noah's era. Men were already making "hard speeches" against their Creator. Secondly, we learn that God did not leave that generation without a witness of His displeasure and judgment of their evil deeds. Finally, we can observe that even in such a day it was possible for a man to please God and to walk daily with Him.

Obviously, these two simply stated virtues are exceedingly important in God's eyes, for it was on the basis of these alone that God took the extraordinary step of "translating" Enoch directly into His presence without his tasting death. It is interesting to observe that from a time-sequence point of view of all those men listed in Genesis 5 born prior to Enoch, the first to leave the earth was Adam and he by death, while the second to leave the earth was Enoch and he by translation. Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared were all alive when Enoch was translated.

The Lessons: Enoch's walk with God began by his believing that God is. True faith also begins at this point of belief. This is not the kind of faith which in its finest moments believes that there is a God somewhere way out in the universe but one which causes our actions to be performed and our words to be spoken on the pure basis that God is. Progressing logically from this point, Enoch took God completely into his life so that it could be said that "Enoch walked with God." Such a walk is a result of not only believing that God is but that He is in you and beside you constantly. Enoch had no advantage in knowing a God any different from our God. He learned to walk with the same holy and invisible God.

Let it not be assumed that because Enoch "walked with God" he drifted along in some fog oblivious to the world he lived in. The common attack made on those who desire a close and holy walk with God is that they become "of no earthly good." Enoch knew what was going on around him, and he made it his business to warn the evildoers of the judgment they were piling up against themselves. This one fact made his life exceedingly practical and placed everything of this earth in its proper perspective. He knew that a righteous and holy God would not long tolerate evil in the world He created but would one day execute judgment against the wicked.

This is one fact of the second coming of Christ which is plainly taught by Paul also. Christ at His coming will bring judgment, taking vengeance "on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8). Their punishment will consist of eternal banishment from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (v. 10). By the same token, those who are His at His coming, whether they be dead or alive, shall be caught up (as Enoch was) to meet the Lord in the air and be forever "with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

In the same context Paul admonishes God's people concerning how they ought to "walk and to please God" (v. 1). It is the walk of holiness on earth which prepares us for the walk of holiness above. Enoch lived looking for His appearing.

Noah and the Second Coming

DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	Genesis 6
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Genesis 7
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Matthew 24:36-51
<i>Thursday:</i>	Matthew 25:1-13
<i>Friday:</i>	Matthew 25:14-30
<i>Saturday:</i>	Matthew 25:31-46
<i>Sunday:</i>	2 Thessalonians 3

MEMORY VERSE:

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man (Luke 17:26).

INTRODUCTION:

Several hundred years after Enoch's translation lived Noah of whom it is also said, he "walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). Instead of being translated that he should not taste death, however, Noah was spared the judgment which God visited upon the men of his day. A twofold importance is attached to Noah. First, there is the life of the man himself and God's dealings with him which are of great instructive value to us. Then there is the teaching of the second coming which Christ gave in which He used the "days of Noe" as a specific illustration.

LESSON NOTES:

The Days of Noah: Wickedness, violence, and immorality were the order of the day in Noah's time. Outwardly, great strides were made by man, and it appeared as though there was great progress. The offspring of the marriages between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" were indeed "men of renown" (Gen. 6:4). Inwardly, however, man became continually more wicked and vile, and the earth, despite the men of renown, was filled with violence. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (v. 5).

Out of this generation only one man was found worthy enough to be spared destruction. To him alone was revealed the plan which God had for the earth. The "natural" men could not receive the things of God. Even venerable Methuselah, the son of Enoch, died in the year of the flood.

Noah, as his custom was, acted upon his knowledge. Moved with fear over that which was to come to pass, he built an ark to the saving of his house (Heb. 11:7). According to all that God commanded him, so did he, and as a result he was ready when the floods came (Gen. 6:22; 7:5,9). Everything was then destroyed. Only Noah and those with him in the ark were saved.

Watch Therefore: Upon viewing the splendor of the temple just days prior to His death, the Lord shocked His disciples by declaring its destruction. His disciples then asked Him two questions: "When shall these things be?" and "What shall be the signs of thy coming?" To the Jewish disciples, these were one and the same. But the Lord's answer treated them as two separate events (Matt. 24:3).

To the first question the Lord gave a detailed chronology of events and signs to watch for. However, in addressing the second question (v. 36), the Lord admitted that only the Father knew when that day would be. Then He went on to teach the disciples the necessity of being prepared for the event and used the "days of Noe" to illustrate His point.

While it is certainly likely that the character of the days of the coming of the Son of man would be similar to the character of the days of Noah, this was not the burden of the point which the Lord was making. Eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage are not in and of themselves sinful. They, like every other activity, can, of course, be indulged in loosely, immorally, and to excess. But the Lord was simply using these figures to show that life went on normally until the flood took them by surprise and destroyed them. There were no ominous portents. All things were going on as they had from the beginning, and there was no reason to suppose life would not continue to go on normally. Only the preaching of Noah and the innate witness within their own heart told them that wickedness would not go unpunished. These they ignored and laughed to scorn. The difference between Noah and his generation was that he was ready for the event, they were not. Herein lies the similarity between Noah's day and the coming of the Lord.

The Lessons: Wickedness and unrighteousness will not go unpunished by a holy and righteous God. His Spirit will not always strive with man (Gen. 6:3). The sentence upon Noah's day stands upon *all* people today (Rom. 3:10,11,23). As Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, so God has by grace made a way of escape from damnation for all through Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:25; John 10:28). Noah found salvation in the ark because he acted in faith on God's Word.

God's judgment does not distinguish between the thoughts of the heart and outward actions as society's laws do today. They are one and the same to Him. In fact, it is by a man's thoughts that he is condemned (Matt. 5:28; 1 Sam. 16:7). The outward appearance can be one of uprightness and purity, while the heart can be impure and sinful.

Preparedness for His coming is the primary lesson the Lord taught concerning this event. The reference to the "goodman of the house" specifically illustrates that being *always* ready is an absolute necessity, for we do not know when He shall come, neither will we be told the time of His appearing (Matt. 24:43,44). Indications are that Noah did not know God's precise timetable for the flood either. The fact that God gave mankind 120 years does not mean Noah was aware of this fact. But the span would be easily known to the writer of Genesis after the flood took place. Note that God did not mention a time in His instructions to Noah (Gen. 6:13-21). Neither do we know how many years the ark waited in its ready condition before Noah was instructed to enter it. Only seven days prior to the rains did Noah know when it would rain, then it would have been too late to do anything. The point is, he was ready because he obeyed God's instructions. Being ready is also the major lesson to be drawn from the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). It would be good ever to pray that the Lord will direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. 3:5).

Lot and the Second Coming

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Genesis 11:27-12:9
Tuesday:	Genesis 13
Wednesday:	Genesis 18
Thursday:	Genesis 19:1-29
Friday:	Luke 17:20-37
Saturday:	2 Peter 2
Sunday:	2 Peter 3

MEMORY VERSE:

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17:28a, 30).

INTRODUCTION:

By reading only the Old Testament account of Lot one would not think highly of him. From the New Testament account of his attitudes, one would conclude that he was quite a saintly man. A balance is achieved by reading, comparing, and combining both narratives. In the Old Testament, Lot is seen in comparison to Abraham. His deliverance from Sodom just moments prior to its destruction is the major event related to his life. In the New Testament, Lot, as Noah, is used to illustrate features of the second coming of Christ.

LESSON NOTES:

Lot: The thread of Lot's life is picked up when he is a young man who joins himself to his uncle, Abraham. Though told to leave his kin, Abraham allowed the orphaned Lot to remain with him as he journeyed to Canaan and subsequently to Egypt and back (Gen. 12:1,5; 13:1). In the process, Lot increased in wealth right along with Abraham (13:2,5).

No statements are made regarding the spiritual inclinations of Lot as they are regarding Abraham. Neither is there any indication that Lot was interested in being a peacemaker when his herdsmen were unable to co-exist with the herdsmen of Abraham. It remained for Abraham to take the initiative in this issue (v. 8).

It is of importance to note that Lot not only chose the "well-watered" plain but that he *deliberately* pitched his tent toward Sodom, a city well known for its wickedness (v. 13). While Lot was driving his tent stakes in the suburbs of Sodom, which ultimately led to his being found in the gates of the city as a well-known citizen (19:1), Abraham went and built an altar to the Lord, seeking that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Gen. 13:18; Heb. 11:10). The progression and contrast is of more than passing interest.

Taken captive in the defeat of Sodom, Lot was liberated only through the intervention of Abraham. Likewise, through the intercession of Abraham, Lot was spared the destruction visited upon Sodom.

The Second Coming: There is no doubt that Lot was

a righteous man whose soul was vexed by the immorality of Sodom. This fact must be accepted, for the New Testament states it explicitly (2 Peter 2:7,8). Lot was no different from many Christians who, though vexed over conditions they live in, see certain natural advantages and benefits of a locale or environment in spite of its wickedness, and allow the seeming advantage to override their vexation.

Like Noah, Lot is used also in the New Testament to illustrate facts concerning Christ's second coming. Important among these is the suddenness with which the event will take place. Life went on normally in Lot's days as in Noah's. People ate, drank, married, bought property, made plans for the future, and did all the things people do in the normal course of events. Then, just moments after Lot was removed from the city by divine intervention, destruction rained upon the city and all were destroyed.

Lot's wife stands as a remembrance and reminder of the fate of those whose heart is closely linked with things of the world. Her heart remained in Sodom with her belongings and friends, though destruction was imminent. This event is held up in the New Testament as a concrete warning against turning back longingly towards the "city of destruction" after having been saved from the judgment of that city.

The Lessons: The choice Lot made to pitch his tent toward Sodom was based entirely on temporal and carnal motives. Having made this choice, Lot's influence steadily decreased, though he himself apparently avoided the corrupt life of the city. Strange that he could even feel comfortable among such folk! Perhaps it was his wife who exerted the influence over Lot regarding Sodom. In any case, the choice was not without its harvest of grief. His daughters became engaged to young men of Sodom no different in character from the others of the town. Lot had absolutely no influence over these future sons-in-law, for they mocked him when he warned them of destruction. Compromise always results in loss of Christian witness and effective testimony.

Destruction of the ungodly will accompany the coming of the Son of man. In the days of Noah, the flood destroyed them all. In the days of Lot, fire and brimstone destroyed them all (Luke 17:27,29). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of the end of all who would live ungodly (2 Peter 2:6).

One of the most common reactions to discussions on this subject with the ungodly is scoffing and mocking. Peter warns of those sophisticated men of the world who would scoff at talk of the Lord's coming and, as part of their attitude, would walk after their own lusts. From the days before the flood to the present time, these scoffers have been with us. Notwithstanding their laughter, we have the sure Word of God that He is coming in judgment against all ungodly. What appears to mankind as slackness concerning this promise is but longsuffering on the part of the Lord, for He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Carnal Christians, as typified by Lot, may be saved by the skin of their teeth or "as by fire" in that day. But how much better to live in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God (vv. 11,12).

The Passover

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Exodus 3
Tuesday:	Exodus 11
Wednesday:	Exodus 12:1-20
Thursday:	Exodus 12:21-36
Friday:	Exodus 12:37-51
Saturday:	Deuteronomy 16:1-8
Sunday:	John 1:29-51

MEMORY VERSE:

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7b).

INTRODUCTION:

A comparison of the first and last chapters of Genesis brings into view an interesting contrast. Born free, created in the image of God, and given dominion over all things, God's creation is seen at the end of Genesis, living in Egypt (a type of the world) and existing completely at the mercy of Egypt's Pharaoh. Exodus, in its opening chapters, then reveals the complete slavery into which God's people were finally brought (Ex. 1:8-14). As Genesis contains the seeds of the doctrine of regeneration, so each successive book of the Bible further develops teaching on salvation. Exodus contains one of God's clearest, most vivid, and wonderful illustrations of deliverance from bondage.

LESSON NOTES:

The First Passover: It must always be remembered that in its initial inception, the event which came to be called the "passover" was one which set a distinction between two groups of people and spared one the judgment which was to be visited upon an entire land (Ex. 11:4-7). Precise instructions were given in preparation for this event. Only to the extent that these instructions were diligently followed was judgment averted.

There was absolutely nothing that the helpless children of Israel could do about their condition of slavery. They were thoroughly oppressed and completely under the yoke of Pharaoh. Following God's commands to the letter was their only salvation. In His great mercy, God was intervening on their behalf (Ex. 12:12). Faith and obedience were all the oppressed could exercise.

Aside from the details concerning the lamb and the preparations for the exodus itself, a twofold requirement was laid upon the Israelites for the "passover" night. First, the lamb was to be slain and its blood fully drained. This blood was to be applied to the doorposts of the home as a sign to the angel of death to "pass over" the home so marked, whence the name "passover." Equally important was the second requirement that the entire family was to be *within* the home so marked and was to feed on the entire lamb, finishing it completely. This was to provide strength and sustenance for a long and arduous journey ahead.

An Ordinance Forever: In order that this momentous event and its significance be never forgotten, the Lord commanded an annual commemoration of the Passover. To underscore its historical significance as the birthday of their nation, the month in which the

Passover was celebrated was designated the first month of the Jewish year (Ex. 12:2). Furthermore, as part of the annual observance of the Passover Feast, the children were to be instructed as to "why" such a memorial was taking place (Ex. 12:26,27). Thus successive generations were to be impressed by the mighty act of God which miraculously brought His people out of Egypt.

The Passover was thus the single most important feast in the Jewish calendar. It was one of the three great annual feasts in which all of the males were to appear before the Lord. (The other two were the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles.) As an ordinance, it was mandatory that *all* the congregation of Israel observe it (12:47). By the same token, *only* those who were circumcised (i.e., those who were truly Israelites) were allowed to participate in its celebration. Provisions, however, were made for "strangers" to be numbered among the children of God (v. 48).

The Lessons: It was St. Augustine, in referring to the correspondence between the Old and New Testament, who made the pointed observation that "the New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed." For us today, the value of the Passover lies in its illustration and teaching of the way of salvation provided for us by God. It shows in a very clear manner all the elements necessary for salvation. The bondage and judgment of sin, the faith, obedience, and trust in the blood of Jesus, and the complete freedom of the deliverance are all simply and vividly illustrated. All Old Testament historical facts have their spiritual counterparts. Old Testament history presents a type or pattern by which our finite minds can grasp spiritual realities (1 Cor. 15:46).

The passover night and its observations pointed to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary, for Christ is our passover. Very simply it means that Jesus was that Lamb without blemish who was set apart that He might deliver His people from the bondage of sin (John 1:29,36). It is His blood shed for the sins of many which provides the protection and cleansing by which sinful man can avoid the penalty of sin. Faith in this blood through the spiritual application of it to the doorposts of our heart provides salvation and deliverance. Just as the Israelites had also to feed on the lamb in its entirety, so the spiritual Israelite (the believer in Jesus) is required to feed on the words of Jesus *in their entirety*. Jesus said, "My words are spirit and they are life." They have been given to us to provide sustenance and strength for the journey ahead which will not be without its difficulties, though begun in freedom from sin. Christ is our passover, sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7).

What made the passover a night to be much observed unto the Lord (Ex. 12:42) was the fact that He alone was responsible for their deliverance. When conditions change for the better, we have a habit of not only forgetting the old conditions but also the way in which they changed. God wanted His people to be ever mindful of His deliverance throughout their history that they might continually serve Him and glorify His name. Furthermore, He wanted this reminder to serve to encourage them to trust Him completely for future moments. The passover was an expression of God's love for His people and His power to effect miraculous changes.

The Great Passover

DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	Numbers 9:1-14
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Joshua 5:10-15
<i>Wednesday:</i>	2 Chronicles 30
<i>Thursday:</i>	2 Chronicles 35:1-19
<i>Friday:</i>	Ezra 6:16-22
<i>Saturday:</i>	John 2
<i>Sunday:</i>	Luke 22:1-30

MEMORY VERSE:

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you (Exodus 12:13).

INTRODUCTION:

Although the Lord was quite explicit in His command that the Passover be celebrated yearly, the Jews as a nation were very lax in its observance. Only six Passovers are recorded in the Old Testament although it is very probable that the number celebrated were not this few. As an annual festival, the Passover commemorated the Israelites' freedom from bondage and was to be celebrated with great joy and thankfulness. It was their "independence" day and was to be observed with all the fervor and joy such a day inspires.

LESSON NOTES:

Early Observances: The first anniversary of the original Passover was correctly observed in the wilderness of Sinai. It was at this first observance that the Lord, in His great mercy and graciousness, provided an alternate date for those who for reason of defilement, disability, or distance were unable to observe the Passover on its actual anniversary (Num. 9:10,11). Celebrated thirty days later, this came to be called the "second" or "little" Passover. It was not, however, an escape for those who were too busy or lazy to mark the actual observance (v. 13). Inexcusable absence was a sin. That soul was cut off from the people.

There is no record of any Passover being observed again until the Jews entered Canaan forty years later (Josh. 5:10). Since the Jews neglected circumcision during these years, there is reason to believe they also neglected the Passover in this period. Circumcision was a necessity for the correct observance of the Passover. A failure to follow the full plan of God always results in carelessness in other spiritual matters.

Indirectly we know that the Passover was observed again during the days of Samuel (2 Chron. 35:18). Direct references to other observances show that the Passover was celebrated during the reigns of Solomon (2 Chron. 8:13), Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:15), Josiah (2 Kings 23:21), and under Ezra (Ezra 6:19). It appears to have been observed with regularity during the time of Christ (John 2:13; Luke 2:41; 22:7).

Later Observances: The three later Old Testament records of Passover celebrations provide instructive

material. First, we see in all three how a desire to be obedient to God in this matter never failed to be met with great blessing. It might not be amiss to say that the failure to adhere strictly to its celebration, although but the symptom of deeper trouble, was the cause of a lack of blessing among the people (see 2 Chron. 30:7,8). Particularly during the reign of Hezekiah do we see the complete eagerness of the Lord to respond to His people's efforts to serve Him. Their inadequate, feeble, and, in fact, ceremonially incorrect celebration of the Passover was met with great blessing (2 Chron. 30:17-21). The Lord is not an arbitrary and stern God who demands an unreasonable adherence to the letter of the law. He is one of love, mercy, and compassion who looks upon the heart. The sincere and committed heart is never turned aside.

Joyfulness was a major element of all Passovers celebrated with earnestness. This is one of the three things implied in God's command to "appear before the Lord." In addition to the person's presence and offering, joyousness on the part of the worshipper was included. So great were the blessing and joy during the Passover which Hezekiah observed that seven additional days were set aside for rejoicing and confessing (2 Chron. 30:22,23). As a result, their prayers were heard (v. 27). Joy was also a major element of the Passover celebrated in Ezra's day (Ezra 6:22). Earnest seeking of the Lord should be done with joy and should also result in more joy. Confessions also should be made with joy.

The Lessons: Even though the Lord set precise requirements for the keeping of the Passover and wanted it to be observed in all its details, He did make other provisions less demanding than the others. For example, the provision for a second Passover for those who because of ceremonial uncleanness or absent was a sign of His mercy and kindness. The gracious blessing on those who celebrated the Passover while yet impure, through the intercession of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:18), shows that even under the law there was much grace. This does not mean that God will lower the standards and will never really prosecute the sinner or wayward saint as His word promises. Grace makes no allowance for sin to abound (Rom. 6:1,2). It simply shows that God is not an overdemanding taskmaster who cannot be satisfied, but One who makes sufficient allowance for circumstances, that no man is without excuse. Those who are earnest in seeking Him will be met by Him. On the other hand, those who mocked and laughed to scorn the invitation of Hezekiah never experienced the blessing of God (2 Chron. 30:10,11).

The Passover was an offering to the Lord (Num. 9:13), in which the "redeemed" offered thanks to God. These included both Israelites and "strangers" who had separated themselves, through the act of circumcision, to the Lord. Separation and setting apart was one of the meanings of the Passover. Not only did it commemorate the breaking away of the Israelites from the "uncleanness of Egypt," but as an annual ordinance, it was a time of re-affirming the separation from all that defiled. It gave indication of a renewed desire to seek God totally. In this connection, the purging of the temple by Jesus at the Passover festival has real significance (John 2:13-15).

Feast of Pentecost

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Leviticus 23:1-22
Tuesday:	Exodus 19
Wednesday:	Exodus 20
Thursday:	Exodus 34:10-35
Friday:	Acts 2:1-47
Saturday:	2 Corinthians 3
Sunday:	Hebrews 8

MEMORY VERSE:

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1,4).

INTRODUCTION:

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were consecutive events. On the fourteenth day of the first month the Passover was observed, and on the fifteenth day of the same month the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. This latter feast lasted for seven days (Lev. 23:6). The Passover as well as the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were days of "holy convocation" when no servile work was to be done (vv. 7,8). In this sense they were days which were observed in the same way as the weekly sabbath.

LESSON NOTES:

Feast of Pentecost: During the Feast of Unleavened Bread began the observation of the second major festival of the Jewish year. This event, the second of the three at which all male Jews were commanded to appear before the Lord, was the Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks. This feast actually commenced on the "morrow after the sabbath" with the waving before the Lord of the first sheaf harvested for the season. This also signalled the beginning of the spring harvest of grain. The "sabbath" referred to was not the weekly sabbath but the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus the events were as follows on the three consecutive days: the Passover, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the waving of the sheaf of the first fruits of harvest before the Lord.

Fifty days later, the day of Pentecost "fully" came. That is, seven weeks plus one day after the waving of the first sheaf, an offering of the first fruits of the harvest was presented to the Lord in the form of two loaves baked from the harvested grain. This marked the close of the spring harvest. It is from these fifty days that the name "Pentecost" comes. *Pentecost* stands for "fifty" as *pentagon* represents a five-sided figure. The character of the feast is further expressed by alternate designations of the same event as the "feast of harvest" (Ex. 23:16), "day of first fruits" (Num. 28:26), and Feast of Weeks.

Pentecost was first observed when the Jews entered Canaan (Lev. 23:10), forty years after the first Passover. As with the other feasts, it had a dual purpose. It reminded them of God's provision for them in giving them the rich blessings of a harvest, and it also taught

them to put the Lord first in all their blessings (Ex. 34:19; Prov. 3:9).

Pentecost and the Law: Jewish tradition further teaches that the Feast of Pentecost marked the anniversary of the giving of the law by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. From a standpoint of timing this is quite accurate. There is no reason why such a tradition should be manufactured without real basis in fact. It was the third month of the year when the Israelites camped at the mount in the wilderness of Sinai (Ex. 19:1). This would place the giving of the law during the same month as the Feast of Pentecost.

The covenant which God had with His people was to make of them a "peculiar treasure . . . above all people" and a "holy nation" (Ex. 19:5,6). It was for this purpose that He brought them out of the house of bondage and brought them unto Himself (v.4). In order that they might be a holy people, He gave them the law as the standard of holiness. Fear and reverence for a holy God pervaded both the law and the manner in which it was given (Ex. 20:3-5,18,21).

The Lessons: Joy and thankfulness were major lessons which the Lord desired to teach His people. They were to be joyful over the freedom and liberty into which He had brought them in Canaan, and they were to be thankful for the good things which this new land provided. An equally important lesson slipped into this feast was kindness and consideration for the less fortunate. In reaping the harvest, they were intentionally to leave something in the fields for the poor and the strangers to reap (Lev. 23:22). The blessing was not to be kept entirely for one's self.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit taking place on the Day of Pentecost is full of rich significance (Acts 2). God does not allow such things to happen by chance. First of all, it was on the "morrow after the sabbath" that Christ arose from the grave to become the "first fruits" of them that slept (Matt. 28:1; 1 Cor. 15:20). After He ascended into heaven, He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit which He bestowed on His disciples on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). It was on that day that the first fruits (3,000 souls) were brought to the Lord as the first of a harvest of many to be reaped throughout this gospel era.

From another standpoint this is significant in that on the day of Pentecost it was the law of God which was written with the Spirit of the Living God in "fleshy tables of the heart" as it was many years before in tables of stone. This was the new covenant which God had been promising His people (Heb. 8:10), a covenant whereby every man would be enabled to fulfill the law of God by virtue of an inner power (the indwelling Holy Spirit). The Lord never put aside the moral law as found in the ten commandments. Jesus endorsed and supported them in his teachings. The law is ever "holy, just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). It was lacking only in that it was powerless to change the heart (i.e., the basic nature) of man so that the law could be kept. In this sense it was a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," for it showed man that a greater, an *inward*, power was necessary which could be supplied only by the Holy Spirit. Thus a better covenant has been provided by God through the ministration of Jesus Christ. The speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost signified an inner control of a bodily function by the Holy Spirit. As with the original law, this writing of the law in the inward parts is intended to develop a holy people.

Feast of Tabernacles

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Leviticus 23:23-44
Tuesday:	2 Chronicles 5
Wednesday:	2 Chronicles 7
Thursday:	Ezra 3:1-7
Friday:	Nehemiah 8
Saturday:	John 7:1-36
Sunday:	John 7:37-53

MEMORY VERSE:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink (John 7:37).

INTRODUCTION:

The third of the three annual feasts at which all males were to appear "before the Lord" was the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:24). To review, these three feasts were the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Passover took place in the first month of the Jewish religious year and takes place today in March or April. Fifty days later came the Feast of Pentecost. The Feast of Tabernacles took place in the fall, in the seventh month of the Jewish year. This places it approximately in September or October of our year.

LESSON NOTES:

The Feast: The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was that of the Feast of Tabernacles. It fell at a time of year when the hearts of the people would be naturally thankful and glad, for it took place at the conclusion of the harvest for the year. It is no doubt from the idea of this feast that the early Pilgrim fathers of America set aside a day of "thanksgiving" following the bountiful harvest of their first crop in a new land.

Beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days. During these days the Israelites were to live in "booths." This was to commemorate the manner in which the Jews were forced to live while wandering in the wilderness (v. 43). Above all, it was to be a period following the ingathering of the fruit of the land in which the Israelites were to rejoice before the Lord. It was, therefore, also called the "feast of ingathering" (Ex. 23:16; 34:22), the "feast of Jehovah" (Lev. 23:39), or simply "the feast" (1 Kings 8:2; 2 Chron. 5:3; 7:8,9).

The Feast of Tabernacles followed by five days one of the most solemn of Jewish events, the Day of Atonement, in which the sin of Israel was removed and its covenant relation to God restored. Thus a sanctified nation could keep a holy feast of harvest joy to the Lord.

Notable Observances: For a feast specially dedicated to joy and thanksgiving, the Jews were extremely remiss in its observance. None was observed from the days of Joshua to the time of Solomon (2 Chron. 5:3). The celebration then was remarkable as well as noteworthy, for it coincided with the dedication of Solomon's temple. At this time the ark, signifying the pres-

ence of God, was brought into the temple amidst shouts of praise (2 Chron. 5:1,3,13). Then the cloud of the Lord's glory so filled the house of God that the priests could no longer minister by reason of the cloud (v. 14). So it was that from amidst the great joy of this celebration the blessing of God filled an earthly tabernacle. Thanksgiving, joy, and praise never fail to bring the glory of God to earth.

The feast was again celebrated in the days of Ezra and was a regular event during the days of Christ. It was on the "great day (the last day) of the feast" of Tabernacles that the Lord stood up amongst the worshippers and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." The last day was called the "great day" of the feast partly from the fact that it closed the feast and the religious year and was always celebrated with loud shouts of joy and praise. The reference to water on this occasion no doubt came from a ceremony which tradition added to this feast whereby the way in which God miraculously supplied water during the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness was commemorated. Each day of the feast, a priest, accompanied by a joyous procession, went down to the pool of Siloam and drew out a pitcher of water. Upon his return to the temple, this water, along with wine, was poured upon the altar. Perhaps the Lord made His offer just when this high moment of ceremony was taking place. Undoubtedly it was appropriately timed, for even at the highest moment of the most joyous feast of the Jewish year there remained that lack of reality within the hearts of the devout and a cry for "living" water. John specifically states that the Lord's cry was an offer to be baptized with the Holy Spirit so that from one's innermost being rivers of living water would flow (John 7:39).

The Lessons: Thankfulness, joy, and gladness for all things are lessons the Lord wants each of us to learn. Giving thanks for food each day at the beginning of each meal is a very simple and elementary form of thanksgiving but one which teaches that we are to be thankful in all things. God is the provider of all we have. He provides rain and sunshine which make our crops grow. Thankfulness should be a way of life for God's people, not just an occasional event.

Of the three major Jewish festivals, each of which had a prophetic as well as historic meaning, the Feast of Tabernacles is the only one which has yet to be fulfilled. Christ fulfilled the Passover by His atoning death on Calvary. The Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the conversion of the 3,000 as the first fruits of all the souls to be harvested before the end time. Indeed the harvest is going on daily as many from the "whitened" harvest fields are won to Christ. The day is fast approaching when the harvest will be over and we will celebrate with great joy that final "Feast of Tabernacles" when all the redeemed of the Lord will rejoice before His throne.

In a sense, however, we begin to experience this joy now. The Christian life is a perpetual Feast of Tabernacles where we are ever cognizant of being pilgrims and travellers in this wilderness of sin, yet at the same time with joy drawing waters out of the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). This well is the inner source of joy and life which springs from a Spirit-filled body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Aaron

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Exodus 4-10-31
Tuesday:	Exodus 7
Wednesday:	Exodus 24
Thursday:	Exodus 32
Friday:	Exodus 33
Saturday:	Numbers 16
Sunday:	Numbers 20

MEMORY VERSE:

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts (Psalm 65:4a).

INTRODUCTION:

But for the hesitancy of Moses to step out boldly in response to God's call, Aaron might never have occupied the prominent position he held in Israel. After repeated complaints by Moses of his inadequacy as a public speaker and several attempts by the Lord to assure him of His help, the Lord relented to Moses and in His displeasure assigned Aaron to be Moses' spokesman or prophet (Ex. 7:1). Here, incidentally, is a perfect example of how the word "prophet," when used in the Bible, simply means "one who speaks for another." It does not mean one who foretells the future although those who spoke for God and were thus His prophets were sometimes used to speak of future events.

LESSON NOTES:

Second Best: The Lord never forces His will upon any of His people. After making His will known to Moses and patiently listening to Moses' many reasons for not complying, the Lord relented and did things in accordance with Moses' wishes. This does not mean that the Lord spitefully withheld any help or blessing from Moses, or for that matter, from Aaron and all the Israelites. On the contrary, God is not at all like we are prone to be. The record shows that God did many wondrous works through both Aaron and Moses. However, *our* will always results in second best and, as the Israelites found out on other occasions, brings "lean-ness to the soul" (Psa. 106:15).

Little is known of Aaron prior to his alliance with Moses to lead God's people from Egypt. He was three years older than Moses and, though his brother, quite different from him. Apparently, Aaron spent all of his 83 years to this time in Egypt. He was well known to the elders of the children of Israel and undoubtedly was himself one of their leaders. It was he who introduced Moses to them after his forty-year absence (Ex. 4:29).

Aaron was not only a witness to, but a participant in, the wonderful works of God in freeing Israel. Jointly, he and Moses confronted Pharaoh and performed the signs which God had given them (Ex. 7:3). Along with Moses and some seventy others, he witnessed the magnificent presence of God at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:9); and while Moses ascended further up the mount of God to receive His commands, Aaron was left in charge of the Israelites.

Failure: Aside from his position as the first high priest, an appointment which reflects the great grace of God, Aaron is best known for his involvement with an early and great sin of Israel whereby the covenant which they had solemnly made with God a short time before was broken. It is to be noted first that this incident is an example of the fickleness of God's people and of the iniquity of the heart in lusting for a former life. It is for these reasons that God's people need leaders who, knowing the will of God, will stick to His call despite the opposition from within the ranks of the children of God.

It was not many days after the Israelites had unanimously shouted their ratification of God's covenant (Ex. 24:3) that they suddenly felt that Moses, since he was out of sight, was gone forever and they were alone. Seeking something tangible, which the eyes could see and the hands feel, they cried for Aaron to make them a god. Weakly, seemingly at once and without any remonstrance, he submitted to their wishes and fashioned a god which was similar to the god of Egypt. With joy the people ascribed to it all of the wonderful works which the Lord Himself had performed. Silently Aaron listened to this blasphemy without one word of reproof. It is evident that he feared the people instead of God. His attitude was, "They are going to do it anyway, so I may as well go along with them and enjoy it" (Ex. 32:22); for not only did he go along with them, but he entered wholeheartedly into the celebration by building an altar and setting aside a special feast day (v. 5). Furthermore, it appears that Aaron not only permitted but encouraged the people to give free rein to their sexual passions in their festivity according to practices usually engaged in by the heathen in their pagan worship (v. 25). Later, when questioned by Moses concerning his actions, Aaron's answers were like those of a politician — evasive, disclaiming personal responsibility, and indicative that expediency, not principle, was his guiding rule (v. 22-24). Unquestionably, Aaron repented of his sin, and certainly when Moses spent a second forty days on the mount neither he nor the Israelites repeated their sin but remained true.

The Lessons: The Lord made us as we are (Ex. 4:11). He knows our frame (Psa. 103:14) and is perfectly aware of our capabilities and limitations. He considers all of these things when He calls us to work for Him. It grieves Him greatly when we show our lack of trust and faith in Him by failing to do our best and instead complain about our inadequacies. Our talents should be used for His glory as He directs despite our own opinions of our abilities. He will provide what is necessary to do His work.

The best speechmaker is not necessarily the best leader of God's people. Eloquence and facility to speak well in front of others are not of themselves proofs of strong character. Sometimes the less articulate is a better choice if he is more spiritual. He is less apt to get in God's way, and his lack is likely to make him more dependent on God. The servant of God working in His vineyard should seek for a heart that is right with God instead of eloquence. Aaron brought the great sin of idolatry upon God's people, and they suffered for it (Ex. 32:20, 35). God's people need leaders who will save them from the iniquity of their own hearts.

Aaron and Moses respectively are prime examples of the two outstanding types or kinds of Christian lead-
(Con't, on last page)

The Sin of Murmuring

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Exodus 14
Tuesday:	Exodus 15
Wednesday:	Exodus 16
Thursday:	Exodus 17
Friday:	Numbers 11
Saturday:	Numbers 14:1-37
Sunday:	1 Corinthians 10:14

MEMORY VERSE:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings
(Phil. 2:14).

INTRODUCTION:

It was not long after the Israelites had been marvelously and miraculously delivered from an oppressive slavery that it became apparent that God was leading a stiffnecked and rebellious people bent on complaining and ungrateful for what He had done. To be sure, there were difficulties and problems which were almost immediately experienced. But God had already shown His power to deliver and His readiness to intervene for His people. It was a lack of faith in God's promise which made the Israelites see the problems rather than the Lord.

LESSON NOTES:

Trials and Testings: Immediately after he had sent the Israelites from him, Pharaoh had regrets about losing this slave labor force and began to pursue them (Ex. 14:5). It is not surprising that the Israelites should be alarmed over this. What is surprising is that they would rather have died in Egypt than die for the freedom God promised them (v. 11). God's command to Moses was to stop "crying" for deliverance but to "go forward" (v. 15). There is a time for praying but there is also a time for action in taking the victory God has already provided.

The Israelites went from one extreme to the other. When the victory at the Red Sea was given, they spent a day in joyous praise and worship (Ex. 15). This was, of course, the right thing to do. Praise fixes the victory firmly in the soul. However, it was but three days later, not having found any water and then coming upon water that was bitter, that they sat down and cried against Moses for having brought them that way (Ex. 15: 23). Poor Moses, all the bad was his fault.

It was here in connection with making this bitter water sweet that God gave one of His most wonderful promises to His people. He revealed Himself by the name *Jehovah-raphi* — "I am the Lord that healeth thee" — and promised that none of the diseases of Egypt would come upon them if they would hearken to His word (v. 26). This is the cornerstone of the doctrine of "divine healing."

These Ten Times: The Jews' history followed a pattern of difficulty, complaint, deliverance, difficulty, complaint, deliverance, etc., almost all of it taking place before the third month of their deliverance from Egypt!

While God is exceedingly patient and longsuffering, there is a limit to His patience. When the Israelites sat down and wept at the report of the ten spies who had reported on the walled cities and the giants of Canaan, and mourned the day they left Egypt, the Lord had enough (Nu. 14:1-4). This marked the tenth time (v.22) that they murmured against the Lord and tempted Him. As a result they were denied access to the land of promise and the promise of an inheritance was made to their children instead (vv. 30,31).

It would be a good exercise to take a sheet of paper and label three columns across the top with titles such as "Reference," "Difficulty," "Solution." Then listing the Bible references of "these ten times" in the first column, note in the other two columns the specific trial which the Israelites faced and their reaction, and the solution which God provided. The incidents can be found in Ex. 14:11,12; Ex. 15:24; Ex. 16:2,3; Ex. 17:2,3; Ex. 32:10; Nu. 11:1; Nu. 11:4; Nu. 11:34; Nu. 13:33; Nu.14:10.

It should be noted that God allowed the Israelites to be *confronted with* difficulty in order to see whether they would trust Him or not (Ex. 16:4). The Christian life is one of glory but God has not promised to make the way an easy one. He has promised the grace to help in time of need.

The Lessons: Our memories tend to be very short in some instances, particularly when it comes to things the Lord has done for us. Either we minimize the deliverance after it takes place or we just plain forget about it. Each new difficulty erases the memory of the help given in a former crisis. Here is an excellent reason why it is a "good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Psa. 92:1). Testimonies of what God has done, whether given publicly or privately, for something seemingly small or large, tend to stamp the imprint of God's goodness firmly in the mind. Experiences of testing and deliverance are given to be stored up in the heart so that the faith they build can be called upon on subsequent occasions.

In First Corinthians, the sin of murmuring (1 Cor. 10:10) is listed in the same category as the sins of idolatry (v.7) and fornication (v.8). While many might consider themselves free of these latter two, few can really say that they "do all things without murmurings or disputings" (Phil 2:14). It is our nature to complain. If we could only recognize that *all* murmurings, no matter at whom they are directed, are murmurings against God (Ex. 16:8), and if we could only see how God abhors a complaining spirit, perhaps we would be more careful. The Israelites paid an awful price for their murmurings. Their experience has been written for our learning upon "whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

As a final note, it should be remembered that God did not allow the Israelites to face situations which were beyond their experience. He specifically led them in a less difficult path than they were ready for (Ex. 13:17) knowing that they would have been overwhelmed otherwise. The Lord never allows us to be tempted above that we are able to bear but will always provide a way of escape if we seek it (1 Cor. 10:13). On the other hand, let him who things he is immune to the potential danger of a complaining attitude "take heed lest he fall" (v. 12).

Balaam

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Numbers 22:1-21
Tuesday:	Numbers 22:22-41
Wednesday:	Numbers 23
Thursday:	Numbers 24
Friday:	Numbers 25
Saturday:	2 Peter 2
Sunday:	Jude

MEMORY VERSE:

Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication (Rev. 2:14).

INTRODUCTION:

The failure of the Israelites to inherit the land in the second year of their deliverance resulted in an additional thirty-eight years of wanderings in the wilderness (Nu. 14:33,34). During these years, they met with many difficulties but throughout were sustained by the good hand of the Lord. The record of these events is found in the remainder of the book of Numbers (chapters 15-36). The Edomites, Canaanites, Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan were among those who opposed the Israelites in their travels (Nu. 20:21; 21:3, 23,24,35). The manner in which God fought for His people threw fear into the hearts of the kings of the surrounding lands (Nu. 22:2-4).

LESSON NOTES:

Balaam the Prophet: The story of Balaam is one of the most unusual and fascinating in the whole Bible. Four entire chapters are devoted to it. The spectacle of a dumb animal reproving a headstrong prophet in a human language challenges the imagination of all ages. Such an event is not to be passed over lightly. With God all "things are possible," including the giving of speech to an animal. It is quite an indictment of the servant of God who failed to heed God's voice and had to be addressed in this manner.

That Balaam was a prophet of God is without question. A man who knew how to find out the mind of God, he was well known as a man who was used to bring blessing and curses to many (Nu. 22:6). Some of the noblest words of man came from his lips (22:18; 23:12,19; 24:17-19). Here is an example of how God did not leave the Gentiles of the Old Testament without a witness.

Deep within his heart, however, Balaam was not entirely right with God. Though he knew God did not want him to enter into alliance with Balak (22:12), Balaam told the messengers to wait for the night after Balak returned with more inducements (vv. 18,19). He kept the door open for another answer when he should have shut it tight. Similarly, later in Balak's company, he made three distinct attempts to curse the Israelites,

but God turned the curse into a blessing (cf. Josh. 24: 9,10 with Nu. 23 and 24).

The Way of Balaam: There are three separate references in the New Testament to the "way of Balaam." Peter says he loved the ways of unrighteousness (2 Peter 2:15). Jude speaks of those who run "greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (v. 11). And in Revelation we read of those who "hold the doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14). It is here that we read how Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel by having them eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.

This allegation made in Revelation is supported by a statement in Numbers 31:16. The Midianite women caused the children of Israel, through the *counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord.

It is apparent by piecing together all of the references to Balaam in the Bible that he was responsible for the sin which Israel fell into in Numbers 24 even though it is not specifically stated so in this chapter. Despite his assertions to the contrary, Balaam was greedy for the reward Balak offered. When he had failed to bring a curse upon Israel, he gave Balak advice on how to cause the Israelites to bring defeat upon themselves. Following Balaam's advice, Balak had the women of Midian approach the camp of the Israelites to flirt with and entice their men to sin. Lured to "commit trespass" in this way, the men of Israel brought a plague upon their own people.

The Lessons: The wilderness wanderings of the Jews demonstrate the manner in which the Lord kept His people. In spite of their repeated failings and attitudes of ungratefulness, and in spite of the fact that their wanderings were a punishment for faithlessness, He never forsook them. He watched over them and gave them victory after victory over their enemies. This is an attribute of the Father which should cheer the heart of every one of His children. "God is not a man" as Balaam so eloquently noted. He will ever fight for us if we trust Him. Defeat comes only from a deliberate failure to trust and by sin.

Flirtation, in its very specific meaning as well as its more general use, is playing with fire. Men and women, whether they be teen-age young people or grownups who think it is smart and innocent fun to engage in flirtatious adventures, will find themselves having set in motion events which they can't control. It was this knowledge on which Balaam based his counsel. Balaam also can be accused of having "flirted" with the "reward of unrighteousness." It would have been better for him had he given Balak's messengers a firm and unequivocal "no" the second time they came. To have in effect said "no, but wait and see if the Lord changes His mind" betrayed his inner motives. God allowed Balaam to go because that was what Balaam really wanted. The Lord never forces His will on any of us.

The example of Balaam should give everyone, especially those who are in any way connected with the ministry, cause for soul searching. Being gifted and used by God does not indicate or guarantee a heart that is right with God. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). It is a fact to recognize that the gifts of God may be operative in a person whose heart has departed from God's ways.

(Con't. on last page)

Prophecies on the Birth of Jesus

DAILY READINGS:

Monday:	Isaiah 7:1-14
Tuesday:	Isaiah 9:1-7
Wednesday:	Isaiah 11:1-2
Thursday:	Jeremiah 23:1-8
Friday:	Zechariah 6:9-15
Saturday:	Micah 5
Sunday:	Luke 1:67-79

MEMORY VERSE:

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet (Matt. 1:22).

INTRODUCTION:

Throughout the four-thousand-year interval from the fall of man to the birth of Jesus there was a sustained hope among God's children that He would raise up someone to restore man to his rightful place. This hope was born out of and nourished by the many promises from God of such a Redeemer. The very first promise of this kind was given right at the moment of Adam's failure (Gen. 3:15). From that point on, particularly in the history of the Israelites, this promise was supported and elaborated upon repeatedly. Even Balaam, the subject of last week's lesson, gave a magnificent prophecy concerning the Lord (Nu. 24:17-19).

LESSON NOTES:

Isaiah: Though there were many specific promises given early in the history of the Israelites, as witnessed by the promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:18) and Moses' prophecy (Deut. 18:15), much of the prophesying took place during the later stages of Jewish history. Most of these utterances were delivered during the dark period of their history. Such was the case with those of Isaiah who lived and taught during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Contemporary with him were Micah, who also prophesied to Judah, and Hosea, who prophesied to Israel.

Isaiah prophesied of judgment and peace. His preachings were directed specifically at Judah's current situation. As such his prophecies had an immediate application; but their complete fulfillment was to be found in the coming Messiah, His ministry, and His reign.

During the reign of Ahaz, Syria and Israel were waging war with Judah. Through Isaiah, God promised Ahaz the victory but told him to ask for a sign. When in unbelief he refused a sign, God gave him one despite his refusal (Isaiah 7:14). While it is possible that a child with the name Immanuel was born in Ahaz' day, its real fulfillment took place in Jesus (Matt. 1:23). Isaiah's prophecies included the Gentile nations as well as Judah. One of the greatest Messianic passages in the Old Testament is given in Isaiah 9 where the name of this Ruler to be born is elaborated upon. Though judgment was imminent in Judah, Isaiah saw the light of a far off day when he told about the coming of one

born of the house of David and described His anointing from above as well as the method of His rule and the glorious results which would follow (Isaiah 11:1-5).

Other Prophets: Jeremiah prophesied during the last forty years of Judah's history. These were also days of darkness and disaster. Preaching against the shepherds of his day (the kings) who failed in their responsibility by scattering and destroying God's people, he prophesied the coming of a King who would execute judgment and justice in the earth as well as shepherds who would feed the people (23:4-6).

Zechariah likewise foretold the coming of a king who would rule over God's people. Prophesying during the period of history when the Jews had returned from exile, Zechariah acted out his prophecy by placing a crown on the head of a man named Joshua, the Old Testament equivalent of the Greek name Jesus (Zech. 6:11-13). This prophecy took place during the period of slackness when the Jews stopped in their efforts to rebuild the temple. Its subject was of one who would build the true temple of the Lord.

Contemporary with Isaiah, Micah prophesied to the cities of Judah. It was his prophecy regarding Bethlehem that the chief priests and scribes read to Herod on the inquiry of the wise men (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6).

The Lessons: The final prophecy concerning Christ was spoken by Zacharias (Luke 1:67-68). Speaking in the past tense, he glorified God for having fulfilled all the promises given to His people by having raised up a "horn of salvation in the house of David" (vv. 69, 70, 73). Particular attention should be paid to the fact that this fulfillment centered about redemption (v. 68) and salvation by the remission of sins (vv. 69, 71, 77) and was to enable His people to serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness (vv. 74, 75).

In the many prophecies given in the Old Testament concerning Christ, a variety of names were given to Him. Each of the names given is descriptive of a phase or aspect of the Lord's work and mission. He was promised as a ruler, that is, as a king who would rule over a kingdom (Isa. 9:7). It was promised that He would rule in righteousness, and that He would also be a Wonderful Counsellor, a Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and a Prince of Peace.

These specific prophecies concerning the Lord always included the gentile nations as well as the Jews. This coming deliverer and ruler was to reign over all nations and all were to benefit from His benevolent rule, not just the Jewish nation. This was one portion of Isaiah's prophecy which Zacharias quoted almost verbatim (Lu. 1:79; Isaiah 9:2) and applied to Jesus. From the very beginning (Gen. 22:18) salvation was promised for all people of the earth who would make the Lord their king and live under His rule.

Read until the passage says something to you. Write it down. Pray it back until your soul gets hot with the truth. Share it with someone else as soon as possible.

Birth and Childhood of Jesus

DAILY READINGS:

<i>Monday:</i>	Luke 2:1-20
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Matthew 1:1-25
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Luke 2:21-39
<i>Thursday:</i>	Matthew 2:1-18
<i>Friday:</i>	Jeremiah 31:15-34
<i>Saturday:</i>	Hosea 11
<i>Sunday:</i>	Luke 2:40-52

MEMORY VERSE:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matt. 1:23).

INTRODUCTION:

The many Old Testament prophecies of a Messiah prepared a devout "remnant" of Israelites for the coming of Jesus Christ. The careful students of the Scriptures were expectantly awaiting His arrival. While many were hoping for a deliverer, which to the natural Jew meant one who would free them from the Roman slavery under which they were living, there were a few who saw the oppression of sin as a greater bondage and who longingly anticipated the coming of One who would save them from sin (Matt. 1:21; Lu. 1:77). It was to these that the Lord appeared at His birth.

LESSON NOTES:

His Birth: Matthew and Luke are the only Gospels which record the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Matthew makes specific and pointed references to the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by His birth and records the incidents which are of value in this area. Thus Matthew connects Jesus with Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, Luke presents Jesus as a historical person by placing the account of His birth within the framework of world history. The only dated event of the New Testament is contained in Luke's Gospel (2:1,2). With great care is the time and place of this greatest event of man's history recorded.

Emphasis is given in Matthew's account of the virgin birth of Jesus, a doctrine which has been constantly under severe attack, especially in these days. It is clear that Joseph had absolutely no part in the conception of Jesus. It was not until after the birth of the child that he "knew" Mary (Matt. 1:25). His first inclination was to suspect her of infidelity. Because of it he planned to "put her away," that is he, planned to break the engagement. This he was contemplating doing as quietly as possible though under the law he was entitled to have her publicly disgraced. Under the conditions, his remarkable restraint is a tribute to his fine character (v. 19). The appearance of the angel enlightened Joseph to the fact that Jesus was conceived miraculously by the Holy Ghost, a miracle which like the resurrection of Jesus has never been duplicated.

His Childhood: The early years of the Lord's life were fraught with peril. Herod was especially wrought up over the prospects of one who would rule in Judah and thus force him from his position of power. Jealously guarding his position, and finding that Bethlehem was to be the place of His birth (Matt. 2:1-6,16), he took the extreme measure of having all the males under two living in that city slain. Matthew shows four specific prophecies fulfilled by this event (vv. 5,6,15,17,18,23).

While danger lurked on every hand, the Lord in His early formative years was shielded from these and other dangers by the calm, steady homelife fashioned by Mary and Joseph. Mary "kept" and silently pondered those prophecies which had been given her concerning the child. Thus He was prevented from ever knowing and becoming alarmed over what was taking place externally as well as from thinking too highly of His unusual abilities or calling (Luke 2:19,51). Devout concerning the law (vv. 21-24) Jesus was taught by example from His earliest days His duty to God and "His Father's Business".

The two prophecies given at His dedication in the temple present interesting study material. Many in that day, like Simeon and Anna, were "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (v. 25) and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem" (v. 38). They may have been few in number and unnoticed and ignored by the world but their eyes were anointed by the Holy Ghost to see God's salvation (v. 30). The shepherds and wise men were also of this number. Note that Simeon saw Jesus not only as the glory of Israel but as the light to lighten the Gentiles (v. 32).

The Lessons: The very few incidents given in the Bible concerning the birth and childhood of Jesus underscore the importance of those which are given, and that which is said, concerning Him. His poverty and unobtrusive birth while the world around was hunting and bustling in its pursuit of riches form an interesting comparison. Only a small number were aware of what was taking place. Prophecy was being fulfilled before their eyes and they did not know it.

Matthew's opening statement concerning the "book of the generation of Jesus Christ" corresponds directly to the "book of the generations of Adam" recorded in Genesis 5. Both "generations" refer to that which is to follow as opposed to that which preceded it even though Matthew does follow his statement with genealogies up to Christ. Those who followed Adam all died (see Gen. 5: 5,8,11,14,17,20,27 and 31; 1 Cor. 15:22). The "generation of Jesus Christ" includes all those who have been made alive through His salvation.

In reviewing the list of genealogies up to the birth of Jesus, it is of interest to observe that of the five women mentioned in Matthew, four were Gentiles. In addition, the line of descent took some turns which made the family into which Jesus was born completely representative of all forms of sinful man. Rahab, for example, is hardly the type of person a family would be proud to number in their fold (Josh. 6:25). The events surrounding Judah and Thamar as well as David with Uriah's wife hardly make for proud pedigree. Jesus Christ represented sinful man and His purpose in life to save His people from their sins.

(Con't. from page 9)

ers, great and small. The one, like Aaron, may indeed be a "saint of the Lord" (Ps. 106:16), but he regards the people and under pressure from them will agree with their wishes even to the point of outright disobedience to the expressed will of God as to idolatry or immorality. The other, like Moses, will regard only God and no amount of pressure will cause him to compromise or to disobey in the least particular.

It is significant that the sin of the Israelites for which Aaron was responsible was one of the five sins which Paul singles out as "common to man" (1 Cor. 10:7, 13). Paul warns us spiritual Israelites of the need to take heed lest we fall into the same sin. This

being so, we should ever be on the alert for the steps which lead to such a sin, one of the chief being compromise.

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The Lord's own words cast a somber note on this thought. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22,23).

A good prayer to pray when studying the Bible:

"Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths.
Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me:
For Thou art the God of my salvation;
On Thee do I wait all the day."

Psalm 25:4,5