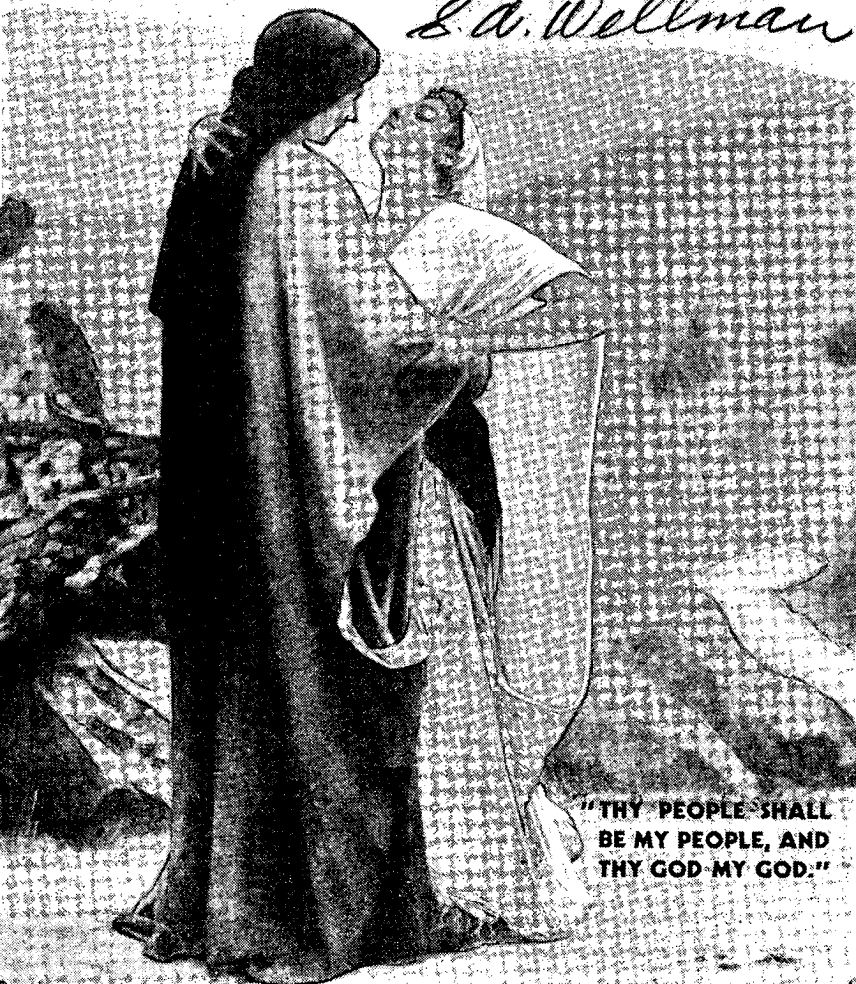


SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON QUARTERLY

No. 173 • Third Quarter, 1938

E. A. Wellman



"THY PEOPLE SHALL
BE MY PEOPLE, AND
THY GOD MY GOD."

STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF RUTH AND ESTHER

Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly

BOOK OF RUTH

INTRODUCTION

"This exquisite idyl is united as a supplement to the book of Judges by the word translated 'now,' with which it opens. It was evidently written after the monarchy was established. It has been ascribed to the prophet Samuel, and it is easy to understand the special interest with which he would narrate the origin of the family of the youth whom he had anointed as future king.

"It is clear, however, from the need of explaining a custom which had become obsolete, that the events narrated took place in the early settlement of Israel in the Land of Promise, and probably before the judgeship of Gideon. The story gives a graphic and admirable picture of the simplicity and beauty of the home life of those early years; and it teaches us that we need never despair of our life, for in ways we know not of, God is bringing good out of evil, and sunshine from the dark and cloudy sky."—"Through the Bible Day by Day," *F. B. Meyer*, vol. 2, p. 40.

Lesson 1 for July 2, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Ruth Chooses the God of Israel

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ruth 1.

MEMORY VERSE: "Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

SEED THOUGHT: "Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith."—"Steps to Christ," p. 52.

FAMINE EXILES ELIMELECH TO MOAB

1. Owing to famine, to what decision did a man of Bethlehem Judah come? Whom did he take with him? What were their names? Ruth 1:1, 2.
2. What sorrow came to the household? Verse 3.

NOTE.—Most commentators state that the death of Elimelech took place probably after the arrival of the family in Moab.

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3. What course did the two sons take? For how long did the family dwell in Moab? Verse 4.

NOTE.—The Targums referred to in the notes on these lessons are translations, or perhaps more truthfully, paraphrases of scriptures in the Hebrew. After the Babylonian captivity, many of the Jewish exiles who had returned to Palestine, were no longer familiar with the Hebrew tongue, and in the synagogues the scriptures when read were at first orally translated or paraphrased into the Aramaic, then in common use. Later these were written down, and constitute the present Targums, or Aramaic interpretations of the Scriptures. They give an understanding of the records as then used and understood, and in written form date about the time of Paul and the other apostles.

"The Targum," says Clarke's Commentary, "very properly observes that 'they [Mahlon and Chilion] transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord, and took to themselves strange women.'" The instruction of God to Israel was, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." Deut. 7:3, 4.

This warning and instruction has been given to the remnant church concerning marriages with unbelievers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 the apostle says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Says the spirit of prophecy, "It is a dangerous thing to form a worldly alliance. Satan well knows that the hour that witnesses the marriage of many young men and women closes the history of their religious experience and usefulness. They are lost to Christ. They may for a time make an effort to live a Christian life; but all their strivings are made against a steady influence in the opposite direction. Once it was a privilege and joy to them to speak of their faith and hope; but they become unwilling to mention the subject, knowing that the one with whom they have linked their destiny takes no interest in it. As a result, faith in the precious truth dies out of the heart, and Satan insidiously weaves about them a web of skepticism."—"*Testimonies*," vol. 4, pp. 504, 505.

4. What further sorrow came to Naomi toward the close of the ten years? Verse 5.

NOTE.—Again the Targum adds, "Because they transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord, and joined affinity with strange people, therefore their days were cut off." While this may be tradition, still it gives the attitude of the Jewish people toward the results of disobedience.

NAOMI DECIDES TO RETURN

5. What report reached Naomi concerning the land of Israel? What decision did she make? Who started the journey with her? Verses 6, 7.

6. On the journey, what counsel did Naomi give her daughters-in-law? What tribute did she pay them? What did she crave for them? Verses 8, 9.

7. What was their response to Naomi? How did she further entreat them? Verses 10-13.

8. After further weeping, what decision did each make? Verse 14.

NOTE.—"Ruth clave unto her." In her short married life the Moabitess Ruth had found in her mother-in-law that which bound her heart to Naomi.

Moreover, she gives evidence also of having learned to love and respect Naomi's religion and to trust her God. The repeated tests given her by Naomi in their conversation at the time of parting with Orpah—ending with Orpah's return to her people and their gods—gives evidence of the deep consciousness in Ruth's heart of the religion of Jehovah.

9. What further reason did Naomi give Ruth for returning to her country? Verse 15.

THE CHOICE OF RUTH

10. How did Ruth begin her plea to continue with Naomi? How completely did she pledge herself to Naomi and Naomi's God? Verses 16, 17.

NOTE.—The comments of Dr. Clarke on verses 16, 17 are interesting. He enlarges upon Ruth's words as follows: "A more perfect surrender was never made of friendly feelings to a friend: 'I will not leave thee'—I will follow thee; 'I will lodge where thou lodgest'—take the same fare with which thou meetest; 'thy people shall be my people'—I most cheerfully abandon my own country, and determine to end my days in thine. 'I will also henceforth have no god but thy God,' and be joined with thee in worship, as I am in affection and consanguinity. I will cleave unto thee 'even unto death; die where thou diest; and be buried,' if possible, in the same grave. This was a most extraordinary attachment, and evidently without any secular motive."

11. What caused Naomi to cease urging Ruth to return? Verse 18.

NOTE.—The steadfastness of purpose on the part of Ruth convinced Naomi that her heart was fully set on going back with her to Bethlehem. It is such steadfastness and loyalty of purpose which God would have every soul display who chooses the service of Christ.

THE RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

12. How were these two received on their arrival in Bethlehem? Verse 19.

13. What testimony did Naomi bear concerning her experience? How did she regard the sorrows that had come to her? Verses 20, 21.

NOTE.—"The Lord hath brought me home again empty.' Having lost all three by death. It is also likely that Elimelech took considerable property with him into the land of Moab; for as he fled from the face of the famine, he would naturally take his property with him; and on this Naomi subsisted till her return to Bethlehem, which she might not have thought of till all was spent."—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

14. At what time of the year had they arrived in Bethlehem? Verse 22.

NOTE.—"In the beginning of barley harvest.' This was in the beginning of spring, for the barley harvest began immediately after the Passover, and that feast was held on the 15th of the month *Nisan*, which corresponds nearly with our March."—*Clarke.*

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING

September 24, 1938

CHINA DIVISION

Lesson 2 for July 9, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
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Ruth Gleans in the Fields of Boaz

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ruth 2.

MEMORY VERSE: "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth 2:12.

SEED THOUGHT: "God had made provision that all who would renounce heathenism, and connect themselves with Israel, should share the blessings of the covenant. They were included under the term, 'the stranger that sojourneth among you,' and with few exceptions this class were to enjoy equal favors and privileges with Israel."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," p. 507.

RUTH SEEKS FOOD THROUGH GLEANING

1. What custom had been enjoined by the Lord concerning gleaning in the fields of Israel? Lev. 19:9, 10; 23:22.

NOTE.—"The law of God gave the poor a right to a certain portion of the produce of the soil. When hungry, a man was at liberty to go to his neighbor's field or orchard or vineyard, and eat of the grain or fruit to satisfy his hunger. It was in accordance with this permission that the disciples of Jesus plucked and ate of the standing grain as they passed through a field upon the Sabbath day. All the gleanings of harvest field, orchard, and vineyard, belonged to the poor."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," p. 531.

2. What relative of Elimelech's lived near Bethlehem? What was his position in the community? Ruth 2:1.

3. What permission did Ruth seek from Naomi? On arrival in the fields, where, fortunately, did she commence gleaning? Verses 2, 3.

BOAZ VISITS THE FIELDS

4. When Boaz visited the fields, how did he greet the reapers? How did they reply? Verse 4.

NOTE.—"This salutation between Boaz and his reapers is worthy of particular regard; he said 'Jehovah be with you!' They said, 'May Jehovah bless thee!' Can a pious mind read these godly salutations without wishing for a return of those simple primitive times? The words may be thus paraphrased: 'May God be with you, to preserve you from accidents, and strengthen you to accomplish your work!' 'May God bless thee with the increase of the field, and grace to use His bounty to the glory of the Giver!'" —*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

5. Concerning whom did Boaz inquire? What was the answer of the reapers? Verses 5-7.

6. In what kindly words did Boaz consent to Ruth's continuing her gleaning? Verses 8, 9.

NOTE.—When a stranger united with Israel, casting in his lot with the people of God, definite instructions were given to the Israelites regarding their attitude toward him. In "Patriarchs and Prophets," page 311, we read: "Aliens who united themselves with Israel were to be protected from wrong

or oppression. 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' In treating Ruth kindly, Boaz was manifesting the spirit God had enjoined upon His people, and thereby demonstrating his own loyalty to the principles of God's kingdom.

7. With what humility did Ruth accept his kindness? Verse 10.

NOTE.—Throughout the East it has ever been the custom for an inferior to prostrate himself before those of superior rank. One writer tells of traveling in the hills of India, and while riding along the mountain trail encountering a villager proceeding afoot who, on seeing him at a distance, immediately stepped off the trail. On the traveler's nearer approach, the man stepped from his shoes (loose sandals), and when the traveler came close he bowed himself with forehead to the earth in a deeply respectful attitude. The custom still prevails in more remote sections, though largely abandoned where modern ways have altered both the attitude and the nature of men.

BOAZ RECOGNIZES RUTH'S LOYALTY

8. What did Boaz reveal concerning his knowledge of Ruth's past loyalty? What wish did he express for her future? Verses 11, 12.

NOTE.—"The Lord recompense thy work,' [for] the dutiful respect which thou hast paid to thy husband, and thy tender and affectionate attachment to thy aged mother-in-law.

"A full reward be given thee.' This is spoken with great modesty and piety: The kindness I show thee is little in comparison of thy desert; God alone can give thee a 'full reward' for thy kindness to thy husband and mother-in-law; and He will do it, because 'thou art come to trust under His wings'—to become a proselyte to His religion. The metaphor is taken from the young of fowls, who, seeing a bird of prey, run to their mother to be covered by her wings from danger, and also to take shelter from storms, tempests, cold, etc. It is evident from this that Ruth had already attached herself to the Jewish religion."—*Clarke*.

9. How did Ruth respond to the kindness of Boaz? What further kindness did he show? Verses 13, 14.

10. What commands were given to the young men of Boaz? What were the results of Ruth's first day of labor? Verses 15-17.

NOTE.—"Let her glean even among the sheaves." This was an unusual privilege; for the custom was that no one was permitted to glean till all the sheaves were bound and the shocks of grain set in place.

"An ephah of barley," according to conservative authorities, is approximately four and four-tenths gallons; certainly a good day's work.

RUTH REPORTS TO NAOMI

11. On Ruth's return to Naomi, what questions were asked? What customary blessing was pronounced? What did Ruth reveal to her? Verses 18, 19.

NOTE.—"If we would glean a heap, we must be content with a little at a time. It is wonderful what may be done by never passing by a thing that is worth preserving. We have trampled underfoot during our life that which, if saved, would have done much to make a golden age for ourselves.

"No one can glean well who is not able to persevere. If we mean to succeed, we must go on long after we are weary. We shall glean with greater care and industry if we remember that we must live forever on the results of this

life. If men did but think they gather gold for a crown or iron for fetters, they would be more careful what they pick up."—*The Sermon Bible*, vol. 1, p. 409.

12. Again how did Naomi express her gratitude? Whom did she say Boaz was? Verse 20.

NOTE.—"Next kinsman." "In order to prevent families from running to decay, if a brother died childless, the next unmarried brother took his widow; and the children from that marriage were reputed the children of the deceased brother. The office of the next akin was *threefold*: 1. It belonged to him to buy back the forfeited inheritance, or the liberty of him who had been obliged to sell himself for a servant. 2. It was his right to avenge the blood of any of the family who had been killed, by killing the murderer. 3. It belonged to him to take the widow of a deceased brother or relative, if he died childless. If the nearest akin in any case refused, he was treated with indignity, lost his right to the inheritance, and the next of kin to him might come forward and take the widow, etc., as in the case of Boaz."—*Clarke*.

13. What command of Boaz did Ruth reveal to Naomi? Verse 21.

14. What counsel did Naomi then give to Ruth concerning her work? How fully did Ruth follow her advice? Verses 22, 23.

Lesson 3 for July 16, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Ruth and Her Kinsman

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ruth 3.

MEMORY VERSE: "Now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Ruth 3:11.

SEED THOUGHT: "It was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people."—"Christ's Object Lessons," p. 290.

NAOMI PLANS FOR RUTH'S FUTURE

1. What did Naomi seek for Ruth, her daughter-in-law? Ruth 3:1.

NOTE.—Naomi speaks of seeking rest for Ruth, her daughter-in-law. It will be remembered that in chapter 1, verse 9, Naomi, speaking to both her daughters-in-law, said, "The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." In chapter 3, verse 1, Naomi evidently has the same thought in mind, and knowing the uprightness of Boaz, and the law concerning marriage of the widows of Israel, and also Boaz's nearness of kinship which placed an obligation to marry upon him, she seeks through her planning to bring his duty home to his heart,

2. As the harvest closed, what would Boaz and his servants be doing? Verse 2.

3. What plan of action did Naomi set before Ruth? How did Ruth relate herself to Naomi's planning? Verses 3-5.

NOTE.—Only Naomi's knowledge of the uprightness of Boaz could have excused the instruction here given to Ruth. Under the circumstances and customs of the times she was doubtless justified. What would have been a fatal mistake under ordinary conditions proved to bring about what the law of succession in the families of Israel required.

4. What was Naomi's purpose in thus directing Ruth's actions? Deut. 25:5, 6.

NOTE.—The law of succession in the families of Israel demanded that the next of kin marry the widow of an Israelite, and raise a family in his name. If the nearest male relative failed to carry out the law, he was publicly disgraced, and the obligation fell upon the next nearest in kinship.

RUTH FOLLOWS NAOMI'S INSTRUCTION

5. How carefully did Ruth carry out her mother-in-law's plans? Ruth 3:6, 7.

6. At midnight, how was Boaz awakened? What did he discover? What question did he ask? How did Ruth reply? Verses 8, 9.

NOTE.—The expression, "spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid," says in effect, "Take me to thee for wife," and as the Targum has translated it: "'Let thy name be called on thy handmaid to take me for wife, because thou art the redeemer,' that is, thou art the kinsman, to whom the right of redemption belongs. Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, he throws the skirt or end of his tallith over her, to signify that he has taken her under his protection."—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

BOAZ PROMISES RUTH AID

7. For what did Boaz commend Ruth? What did he promise her? For what was Ruth known throughout Bethlehem? Verses 10, 11.

NOTE.—Boaz's commendation of Ruth for making choice of him in accord with Jewish law, rather than seeking marriage with younger men, is a recognition of her piety and loyalty to the laws of the people whose faith she had adopted. By this choice she demonstrated that she was no ordinary proselyte, but had taken upon herself the full obligation of the household of God's people.

8. What did Boaz then reveal to Ruth concerning near relatives? If this kinsman failed in the law of kinship, what would Boaz do? Verses 12, 13.

9. Before daylight, as Ruth rose to go, what caution did Boaz give? What gift did he make for her and her mother-in-law? Verses 14, 15, 17.

RUTH AGAIN REPORTS TO NAOMI

10. On arrival home, how was Ruth greeted by Naomi? How fully did Ruth reveal her experience? Verse 16.

NOTE.—The question asked by Naomi of Ruth, "Who art thou, my daughter?" is rendered by the American Revised Version, margin, and the Variorum Bible, thus: "How hast thou fared?"

11. What counsel did Naomi give to Ruth concerning the matter? Verse 18.

NOTE.—Again Naomi takes the lead in directing the course of Ruth. She evidently knew Boaz well. She knew his loyalty to principle, his energy, and aggressiveness in right doing. She knew he would not rest till he had searched out the nearer kinsman, and had learned whether or not he would fully carry out the law. Boaz had promised “as the Lord liveth” (verse 13), and under oath he would not delay to bring matters to immediate decision.

12. What was the intent of the Mosaic law of inheritance? Deut. 25:6.

Lesson 4 for July 23, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Elimelech's Inheritance Is Redeemed by Boaz

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ruth 4.

MEMORY VERSE: “The women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.” Ruth 4:14.

SEED THOUGHT: “Of Christ's relation to His people, there is a beautiful illustration in the laws given to Israel. When through poverty a Hebrew had been forced to part with his patrimony, and to sell himself as a bondservant, the duty of redeeming him and his inheritance fell to the one who was nearest of kin. So the work of redeeming us and our inheritance, lost through sin, fell upon Him who is ‘near of kin’ unto us. It was to redeem us that He became our kinsman. Closer than father, mother, brother, friend, or lover, is the Lord our Saviour.”—“The Desire of Ages,” p. 327.

IN THE GATE OF THE CITY

1. Following the ancient custom, where did Boaz go that morning? Who appeared? How did Boaz accost him? With what result? Ruth 4:1.

NOTE.—The action of Boaz in sitting in the gate of the city and awaiting the coming of the kinsman was the common practice of the times. If one had a cause to plead, or a matter to bring before the constituted court of those days, he followed the procedure of Boaz.

2. Whom else did Boaz call? Verse 2.

NOTE.—“Probably it required this number to constitute a court. How simple and how rational was this proceeding! 1. The man who had a suit went to the city gates. 2. Here he stopped till the person with whom he had the suit came to the gate on his way to his work. 3. He called him by name, and he stopped and sat down. 4. Then ten elders were called, and they came and sat down. 5. When all this was done, the appellant preferred his suit. 6. Then the appellee returned his answer. 7. When the elders heard the case, and the response of the appellee, they pronounced judgment, which judgment was always according to the custom of the place. 8. When this was done, the people who happened to be present witnessed the issue. And thus the business was settled without lawyers or legal casuistry.”—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*

3. How did Boaz place the situation of Naomi and Ruth before the elders and near kinsman? What was the kinsman's reply? Verses 3, 4.

4. What further did Boaz say the kinsman must do to redeem the inheritance? Verse 5.

5. What altered attitude did the kinsman then take? Verse 6.

THE REDEMPTION OF ELIMELECH'S INHERITANCE

6. What was the custom in ancient Israel when a kinsman failed to redeem an inheritance as prescribed? Verse 7.

7. What did the kinsman therefore do? Verse 8; Deut. 25:7-10.

NOTE.—First Boaz states the case concerning the land belonging to Naomi, parts of the inheritance of the family. The kinsman was willing to buy and preserve the land to the family, but halted when he discovered that to purchase it he must marry Ruth, the wife of one of Naomi's dead sons, Mahlon, thus establishing the family of Naomi through Ruth. On the latter part of this experience, Clarke's Commentary says, "The law of such a case is given at large in Deuteronomy 25:5-9. It was simply this: If a brother, who had married a wife, died without children, the eldest brother was to take the widow, and raise up a family to the brother deceased; and he had the right to redeem the inheritance, if it had been alienated. But if the person who had the right of redemption would not take the woman she was to pull off his shoe and spit in his face; and he was ever after considered as a disgraced man. In the present case the shoe only is taken off, probably because the circumstances of the man were such as to render it improper for him to redeem the ground and take Ruth to his wife; and because of this reasonable excuse, the contemptuous part of the ceremony is omitted."

8. How did Boaz then confirm his purchase of the inheritance before the elders? Ruth 4:9, 10.

9. Confirming their witness, what blessing did the elders desire for Boaz? Verses 11, 12.

THE BIRTH OF OBED

10. How did the Lord honor the marriage of Boaz and Ruth? Verse 13.

11. On the birth of Ruth's son, how did the women of Bethlehem honor Naomi? Verses 14, 15.

12. What did Naomi become to the child? What name was bestowed upon the lad by the friends of Naomi? Of what king was he the grandfather? Verses 16, 17.

NOTE.—The son of Ruth and Boaz was given a name Obed (serving), by the neighbors of Naomi, his grandmother. They rejoiced with Naomi over the birth of a grandson in that Ruth had shown her abiding love for her mother-in-law, making her worth "seven sons" to Naomi in her old age. It is small wonder that Naomi took the babe and gave it loving care. He grew to become the father of Jesse, the father of David, of the tribe of Judah.

PROGENITOR OF OUR LORD

13. From whom was Boaz descended? Of whom was Pharez the son? Verses 18-21; Matt. 1:3.

14. As the great-grandfather of David, of whom did Boaz become the progenitor? What lesson may be learned from this genealogy? Matt. 1:5-16.

NOTE.—A study of the ancestry of Obed leads us in the closing verses of

the story of Ruth to three individuals who were at birth strangers to the covenants of promise, aliens from the tribes of Israel. The mother of Pharez was a Canaanite; Rahab, the mother of Boaz, was an inhabitant of the city of Jericho; and Ruth, the mother of Obed, was herself a Moabitess. The line continues through Jesse and David on through a princely line to Christ the Redeemer, the sinless One, the Son of God. Of His ancestry we read in "The Desire of Ages":

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life."—Page 48.

A study of that ancestry from Abraham to Christ reveals not only heathen interalliances, but all the weaknesses of the human flesh revealed in the progenitors of the Son of God. The book of Ruth gives the link which reveals the connected ancestral line of the Messiah, and these last few verses trace that ancestry from Judah, son of Jacob, through to David, king of Israel, type and progenitor of Christ.

BOOK OF ESTHER

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The book of Esther is a most beautiful and meaningful story. The events here recorded happened in Susa, or Shushan, a city in the province of Elam in the Persian Empire. This city carries a halo of interest for every Bible student. During the last days of the Babylonian kingdom Daniel was carried to "Shushan the palace" where he saw unfolded the future political kingdoms, and also things pertaining to the work of God. Daniel 8. It was here, a few years after Esther's time, that Nehemiah, a member of the court of Artaxerxes, received a royal commission to rebuild Jerusalem.

Ahasuerus is the Hebrew for Xerxes, so Esther became the queen of the great Persian king who led a mighty army against Greece.

Nothing in the contents of the book of Esther, nor in any reliable tradition, indicates its authorship. The last paragraphs of the book (chapter 10) would seem to preclude the supposition that it was written by Mordecai. I. M. Price says:

"After everything is said, the most probable conclusion is that the book was written in the Persian period, not far from the time of Artaxerxes Mnemon (406-359 B. C.), by a Susian Jew, who was perfectly familiar with the palace, and with Persian history, and with Persian institutions and customs. His purpose was to preserve for his people the origin and significance of Purim."—*The Monuments and the Old Testament*, p. 411.

"Recent discoveries," says the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, "have proved the marvelous accuracy of the book." All results of archaeological study go to show that the book of Esther gives an accurate portrayal of the life and customs and political organization of the times of the Persian kings.

In the book of Esther God appears as the deliverer of His people, and by the Jews is given credit for the great deliverance of them from their enemies

on this occasion. Ever since the events herein narrated, Purim, in memory of that deliverance, has been celebrated by the Jewish people. This in itself is evidence of the authenticity of this story of deliverance.

Of the meaning of this experience of God's people of old time to His children today, we are told: "The trying experiences that came to God's people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. The revelator, looking down the ages to the close of time, has declared, 'The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.' Some who today are living on the earth will see these words fulfilled. The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict."—*"Prophets and Kings,"* p. 605.

Lesson 5 for July 30, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
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The Feast of Ahasuerus

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 1.

MEMORY VERSE: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." 1 Peter 2:17.

SEED THOUGHT: "Jesus bade His disciples, instead of resisting the demands of those in authority, to do even more than was required of them."—*"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing,"* pp. 110, 111.

AHASUERUS' DISPLAY OF POWER

1. What was the extent of Ahasuerus' kingdom? Esther 1:1.
2. Where were his throne and palace located? Verse 2.

NOTE.—The kingdom of Xerxes extended, according to Xenophon, from India and the Red Sea on the east to the Black Sea on the north, Egypt and Cyprus on the west, and Ethiopia on the south. Shushan (Susa) was its capital. French excavations have uncovered at Susa what is believed to be the palaces of Xerxes and Esther. The palace covers about two and one-half acres. The throne room was decorated with thirty-six fluted columns, sixty-seven feet high, which supported a flat cedarwood roof brought from Lebanon.

3. Of what kingdom was Ahasuerus ruler? In the third year of his reign, what did he purpose to do? For how long did he first display his power and glory? Verses 3, 4.

4. For how many did he prepare a feast? What decorative effects were prepared? Verses 5, 6.

NOTE.—"What more natural than that the proud monarch, smarting under his humiliating defeat at the hands of the Greek troops, should seek to drown himself in the raptures of his palace?"—*"The Monuments and the Old Testament,"* p. 407.

"Luxury was the characteristic of the eastern monarchs, and particularly of the Persians. In their feasts, which were superb and of long continuance, they made a general exhibition of their wealth, grandeur, etc., and received the highest encomiums from their poets and flatterers."—*Dr. Adam Clarke*.

5. What plan was followed in providing for the wishes of the guests? Verses 7, 8.

6. At the same time, what did Queen Vashti do for the women? Verse 9.

VASHTI CALLED BEFORE THE NOBLES

7. On the seventh day of the feast, what did Ahasuerus demand of his chamberlains? For what reason? Verses 10, 11.

8. What attitude did Queen Vashti assume? How did this affect the king? Verse 12.

NOTE.—"Here is given a glimpse of a noble woman, who respected herself too highly to yield to a demand, wholly foreign to the customs of the time, which forbade women to appear in public."—*Through the Bible Day by Day*, F. B. Meyer, vol. 4, p. 36.

Says Clarke in his commentary, "She well knew that this act of disobedience would cost her her crown, if not her life also: but she was regardless of both, as she conceived her virtue and honor were at stake.

"Her humility was greatly evidenced in this refusal. She was beautiful; and might have shown herself to great advantage, and have had a fine opportunity of gratifying her vanity, if she had any: but she refused to come.

"Hail, noble woman! be thou a pattern to all thy sex on every similar occasion! Surely, everything considered, we have few women like Vashti."

VASHTI UNDER ROYAL DISPLEASURE

9. For whom did the king call? What position did these seven occupy in the kingdom? Verses 13, 14.

10. What problem was laid before them? Verse 15.

11. Who became spokesman for the seven princes? What was their attitude toward Vashti's refusal of the king's request? Verses 16-18.

NOTE.—The councilors of the king are said to have been princes of Persia and Media. These were his privy councilors, admitted at all times to the king's presence. Memucan, who seems to be the principal speaker for the princes, was apparently a parasite and fawning sycophant who sought to please the king by his counsel, and also incidentally to further his own ends by recommending the divorcement of Vashti and thereby make excuse for a law demanding the vassalage and enslavement of all Persian women. None but those drunk with power and intoxicated with wine could have wished for what was the evident intent of the decree then issued.

12. What recommendation did they make to the king? Verses 19, 20.

NOTE.—It is a common saying, "As unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians." The Persian affected such a degree of wisdom that a law once promulgated could not be altered, but must be executed regardless of the consequences. This again appears in a later experience in the history of Esther.

13. How fully did King Ahasuerus carry out the plan of Memucan? Verses 21, 22.

NOTE.—God had instructed, and common sense has ever dictated, that

man should be the ruler of his own house. With an understanding of Eastern customs, then and now, it is difficult to believe that this condition did not obtain in Persian households. The decree of the king was the outgrowth of his drunken rage and the masculine self-esteem, as well as the evident reaction of his accusing conscience against which he rebelled. With a group of councilors, equally under the influence of a long indulged appetite for wine, little better judgment was to be expected.

Lesson 6 for August 6, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Esther Chosen Queen of Persia

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 2.

MEMORY VERSE: "Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him." Esther 2:20, last part.

SEED THOUGHT: "God's purpose for the children growing up beside our hearths is wider, deeper, higher, than our restricted vision has comprehended. From the humblest lot those whom He has seen faithful have in time past been called to witness for Him in the world's highest places. And many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God's word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings."—"Education," p. 264.

IN VASHTI'S ROOM

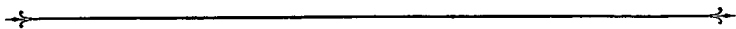
1. Afterward what plan for replacing Vashti was suggested to King Ahasuerus? Esther 2:1-4.

NOTE.—No doubt Xerxes' campaign against Greece came between the events of chapters 1 and 2. The great feast was in the third year of his reign (Esther 1:3), and Esther was introduced to the king in the seventh year of his reign (ch. 2:16).

2. Who is mentioned as dwelling in the royal city of Shushan? Of what tribe was he a member? With whom had he been carried captive into Babylon? Verses 5, 6.

NOTE.—An interesting comment is made by the Targum (one of the Jewish paraphrases of the original) which says, "He was the son of Jair, the son of Shimea, the son of Gera, the son of Kish;" and "this was the same Shimea that cursed David; and whom David forbade Joab to slay because he saw, in the spirit of prophecy, that he was to be the predecessor of Esther and Mordecai."—*Clarke*.

3. Who dwelt with Mordecai? What is said of her beauty? What had she become to Mordecai? Verse 7.



The beathen in his blindness has clearer sight than he who, having eyes, sees not.

INTO THE KING'S HOUSE

4. Into what place and into whose charge was Esther brought with many others? Verse 8.

5. With whom did Esther find favor? What was given her? To what place in the women's house was she exalted? Verse 9.

NOTE.—Says Clarke, "He conceived a partiality for her above the rest, probably because of the propriety of her deportment, and her engaging though unassuming manners." Seven maidens were given her to serve her, and she was preferred to the best of the house of women. It is evident that Esther had been well trained in the house of Mordecai, and, placed under the exceptionally perplexing conditions of the king's household, she had carried with her the grace and tact developed in youth in the home of her foster father.

6. What had not Esther made known? Why? How did Mordecai show his concern for her? Verses 10, 11.

7. When Esther's turn came to go to the king's house, unto whose direction did she give herself? Verse 15.

8. As she appeared in the king's house, what favor did she obtain? To what position was she exalted? Verses 16, 17.

NOTE.—"We must not judge Esther by our own standards, but by the custom of her time. Each of these young girls was considered to be married to the king, was kept under his roof, and was his wife of a lower rank. How great is the influence of Christianity in raising our standards and pervading the world with a loftier morality! She was not bidden to deny her parentage, but only advised not to proclaim it. Verse 10. When, afterwards, she was raised to power, she showed no flinching from identification with her race. So she attained the highest position in the world to which a woman could aspire. God lifted her there to serve a high and noble purpose."—*F. B. Meyer*.

The king, loving Esther above all the women who had been gathered to his household, "made her what is now called in the East, the sultana, the queen. She was the mistress of all the rest of the wives, all of whom were obliged to pay her the most profound respect."—*Clarke*.

9. On Esther's advancement to be queen of Medo-Persia, how did the king celebrate the occasion? Verse 18.

10. At this gathering, where did Mordecai sit? What had Esther not yet revealed? Why had she withheld this information? Verses 19, 20.

11. What plot was discovered by Mordecai while sitting in the royal gate? Verse 21.

12. Through whom was information passed to the king? With what result? Where was the record of the event made? Verses 22, 23.

NOTE.—"Her relative, Mordecai, discovered a plot against the king, and told it to his ward, the queen, and she to her royal spouse. The deed was unrewarded; in this, however, the faithful doorkeeper felt no disappointment. He acted not for reward, but from a sense of duty. But the act was registered both in heaven and on earth, and it bore fruit. It is enough for us to do our duty, and please God."—*Through the Bible Day by Day*, vol. 4, p. 37.

Love opens both its heart and its hands to a world in need.

Lesson 7 for August 13, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
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The Plot to Destroy Israel

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 3.

MEMORY VERSE: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

SEED THOUGHT: "God ceased not to plead with those who voluntarily remained in the land of their exile; and through manifold agencies He made it possible for them also to return. The large number, however, of those who failed to respond to the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressible to later influences; and even when Zechariah warned them to flee from Babylon without further delay, they did not heed the invitation.

"Meanwhile conditions in the Medo-Persian realm were rapidly changing. Darius Hystaspes, under whose reign the Jews had been shown marked favor, was succeeded by Xerxes the Great. It was during his reign that those of the Jews who had failed of heeding the message to flee, were called upon to face a terrible crisis. Having refused to take advantage of the way of escape God had provided, now they were brought face to face with death."—"Prophets and Kings," pp. 599, 600.

THE ADVANCEMENT OF HAMAN

1. To what place in the kingdom did King Ahasuerus promote Haman the Agagite? Esther 3:1.
2. What attitude did all the king's servants take toward Haman's promotion? Who was the only exception? Verse 2.
3. What did they say to Mordecai? When he failed to comply, whom did they inform? Verses 3, 4.

NOTE.—The commentator Dr. Adam Clarke thus explains the attitude of Mordecai, "He did not bow down; nor did him reverence, nor did he prostrate himself.' I think it most evident, from these two words, that it was not civil reverence merely that Haman expected and Mordecai refused; this sort of respect is found in the word *kara*, to bow. This sort of reverence Mordecai could not refuse without being guilty of the most inexcusable obstinacy, nor did any part of the Jewish law forbid it. But Haman expected, what the Persian kings frequently received, a species of divine adoration; and this is implied in the word *shachah*, which signifies that kind of prostration which implies the highest degree of reverence that can be paid to God or man, lying down flat on the earth, with the hands and feet extended, and the mouth in the dust.

"The Targum says that Haman set up a statue for himself, to which every one was obliged to bow, and to adore Haman himself. The Jews all think that Mordecai refused this prostration because it implied idolatrous adoration. Hence, in the Apocryphal additions to this book, Mordecai is represented praying thus: 'Thou knowest that if I have not adored Haman, it was not through pride, nor contempt, nor secret desire of glory; for I felt disposed to kiss the footsteps of his feet (gladly) for the salvation of Israel; but I feared to give to a man that honor which I know belongs only to my God.'"

4. What was the effect of Mordecai's attitude on Haman? Verse 5.

HAMAN PLOTS AGAINST THE JEWS

5. What wickedness did Haman plot against all the Jews in the kingdom? Verse 6.

NOTE.—The vindictive spirit of Haman was evidenced by his scorning to limit his intended revenge to Mordecai, the only individual actually to refuse the worship commanded. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, merely refusing to go beyond that which, according to his understanding of God's commands, he had been forbidden to do. Not respect, nor honor, but a demand for worship was involved, hence his consistent refusal.

6. Over how long a period did Haman's servants cast lots, before Haman disclosed his plans to the king? Verse 7.

NOTE.—It seems to have been in the purpose of Haman to ascertain what day would be most propitious for the destruction of the Jews that none should escape. First the day and then the month was determined and the lot fell on the month Adar, the Greek text saying that the day designated was the fourteenth (Heb., thirteenth) of that month.

7. What statement concerning the Jews did Haman make to the king? Verse 8.

8. What has ever been God's purpose for His children in their relation to the world? 1 Peter 2:9.

NOTE.—Haman's description of the Jewish people in verse 8 indicates that, although they had not lived according to God's instruction, had failed to return to their own land when God's providences pointed the way, and had continued by choice to live among the heathen, they still retained God in their knowledge, and sought to carry out the precepts of their faith. "Their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws." Such also was the charge against Daniel and his companions by the princes of Babylon. With every true Israelite, as with every true Christian today, the law of God comes first. Loyalty to the principles of the kingdom of Christ is paramount. Yet the world thinks of them as rebellious and disloyal when these principles clash with the commands of men. God's "chosen generation," "royal priesthood," "holy nation," "purchased people," will often seem to oppose the wishes of man in standing true to God, but in so doing will "show forth the praises" of their Leader and Redeemer, the Son of the living God. Although men may misunderstand their attitude, they in truth are and should be the most loyal and obedient servants of any land in which they may reside. Notwithstanding, there will be those who will seek to condemn and destroy, and God's children must face such crises in their history in faith, with prayer and fasting.

9. What did Haman offer the king in exchange for the promised destruction of the Jews? Esther 3:9.

10. What was the king's response? How fully did he purpose to give the Jews into Haman's hands? Verses 10, 11.

THE EXTENT OF THE PLAN TO DESTROY

11. To how many of the king's subjects was the decree sent? What was the purpose of this decree? Verses 12, 13.

NOTE.—"Misled by the false statements of Haman, Xerxes was induced to issue a decree providing for the massacre of all the Jews 'scattered abroad

and dispersed among the people in all the provinces' of the Medo-Persian kingdom. A certain day was appointed on which the Jews were to be destroyed and their property confiscated. Little did the king realize the far-reaching results that would have accompanied the complete carrying out of this decree. Satan himself, the hidden instigator of the scheme, was trying to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God."—*Prophets and Kings*," pp. 600, 601.

12. To what intent was the copy of the writing posted in every province? Verse 14.

13. What similar decree is foretold in prophecy? Rev. 13:15.

NOTE.—Haman's plans were thorough. He intended that when the hour struck, every Jew in every province of the empire should die. As the Persians then ruled in Palestine, the homeland of the Jewish people, it would have meant, if carried out, the utter destruction of the Jews. Of the decree that will, near the close of earth's history, go forth against God's people, we read:

"The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. The reverence of God's people for His law, is a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord, and are trampling on His Sabbath."—*Prophets and Kings*," p. 605.

14. How were the provincial posts hastened? What did Haman and the king do? What was the attitude of the city Shushan? Esther 3:15.

NOTE.—"They [the inhabitants of Shushan] saw that in a short time, by this wicked measure, the whole city would be thrown into confusion; for although the Jews were the only objects of this decree, yet, as it armed the populace against them, even the Persians could not hope to escape without being spoiled, when a desperate mob had begun to taste of human blood, and enrich themselves with the property of the murdered. Besides, many Persian families had no doubt become united by intermarriages with Jewish families, and in such a massacre they would necessarily share the same fate with the Jews. A more impolitic, disgraceful, and cruel measure was never formed by any government."—*Clarke*.

Lesson 8 for August 20, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Esther's Call to Service

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 4.

MEMORY VERSE: "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.

SEED THOUGHT: "The law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life. To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God

and man. Those who for Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world, will keep it unto life eternal.

"The life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction."—"The Desire of Ages," p. 623.

MORDECAI'S SORROW

1. On perceiving what had been planned against his people, what did Mordecai do? To what place did Mordecai carry his mourning? Esther 4:1, 2.

NOTE.—Mordecai's grief was real. As in the case of Nehemiah, whose sadness at the state of Jerusalem and Israel attracted the attention of King Artaxerxes, and of Moses who pleaded for Israel when their transgressions merited divine wrath, so Mordecai was oppressed by the impending fate of his people under the decree of Haman. Following the custom of his time, he expressed his grief by dressing in sackcloth with ashes. In this garb he came before the gate of the king's palace. He could not go within as his custom had previously been, for one clad in mourning was forbidden to enter. Nor was the mourning confined to Mordecai. Throughout the provinces the decree threw the Jews into consternation, and the devout devoted themselves to fasting and weeping and to prayer.

2. What effect did the posting of the decree in the provinces have upon the Jews? Verse 3.

THE NEWS REACHES ESTHER

3. Who brought news of Mordecai's state to Esther? What did she do? What was his response? Verse 4.

4. What command did Esther lay upon Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains? Verse 5.

5. What information did Hatach receive from Mordecai? Verses 6, 7.

6. What did Mordecai give Hatach? What charge did Mordecai send to Esther through Hatach? For what was she to make request? Verses 8, 9.

NOTE.—Hatach was a trusted emissary between Esther and Mordecai. Mordecai trusted him sufficiently to send this confidential information through him to the queen. Hatach had been appointed by the king to serve Esther, the queen. Honeycombed as all those eastern courts were with disloyalty, this eunuch was doubtless set not only to serve but to spy upon the queen. Yet she had gained his devotion to her as at first she had won the high regard of Hegai, the keeper of the women of the king's household. Mordecai's request of the queen in this message through Hatach shows how much he was disturbed by the circumstances of his countrymen. Knowing as did Queen Esther what her possible fate would be, still Mordecai requested her to seek help for her people, the Jews.

ESTHER AND MORDECAI'S MESSAGES

7. Of what did Esther remind Mordecai concerning the customs of the Persian court? Verses 10, 11.

Study daily—not for a goal, but for your soul.

8. What reply did Mordecai send to Esther concerning her personal safety? Verses 12, 13.

NOTE.—Although in the royal palace, and queen consort of the king, Esther was in danger of her life as much as any of her countrymen. Haman sought the extinction of the Jewish people. Neither he nor his would have spared high or low. Moreover, it is a principle of life that he who would save himself at the expense of others in the end suffers the same or a worse fate than those whom he deserts or condemns. Our Saviour puts it, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9:24.

9. In case Esther failed to act, what confidence did Mordecai express in God's giving deliverance? What would befall her father's home? Verse 14, first part.

NOTE.—God calls individuals to service, and to decisions which often involve life and death. He called upon Abraham to sacrifice Isaac; on Elijah to face Ahab and Jezebel, who had threatened his life; upon Daniel and the worthies to face the lions, and the fiery furnace. He has definitely instructed men at times of their impending experiences, some of which would lead to death. For instance, the prophet Agabus foretold in figure to the apostle Paul his subsequent binding, his sufferings, and death. But if the called of God fails to respond, every ultimate blessing will be lost, and another will take his place. Better to suffer affliction with the people of God for a season than to rule in the courts of Egypt. Better far to choose today's sorrow and suffering in the hope of life eternal than to look forward to "judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" of God.

Esther had been called to the kingdom at this time to stand for her people, the chosen people of God. To her it meant choice between duty and apparent personal safety and security. Her choice indicates the nobility of her character.

10. Of what did Mordecai remind Esther concerning her call to the kingdom? Verse 14, last part.

11. What command did Esther lay upon Mordecai and all the Jews in Shushan? What similar course would she and her maidens follow? Verse 16, first part.

12. With these preparations, what was Esther determined to do? With what words did she close her message? Verse 16, last part.

NOTE.—In spite of her heathen surroundings and associations, Esther knew the faith of her fathers. It was likewise her faith. "Gather the people," "fast ye for me," she instructs Mordecai. With her maidens who served her, she entered into that same three-day period of fasting and praying. At its close, her faith as to the future committed into the hands of her God, she was willing to risk her life in going into the presence of the king uninvited. Such was Oriental despotism, that her well-justified fear was expressed very tersely in her words, "If I perish, I perish." She was willing to perish if need be for her people. Who can measure the value of such a spirit of self-sacrifice!

13. How did Mordecai carry out Esther's commands? Verse 17.

Twenty-five cents is the average, not the individual, goal.

Lesson 9 for August 27, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
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Esther Moves to Save Her People

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 5.

MEMORY VERSE: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." Prov. 8:13.

SEED THOUGHT: "The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her."—"The Acts of the Apostles," p. 600.

BEFORE KING AHASUERUS

1. Upon arrival in the royal court, where did Queen Esther stand to gain the king's attention? Esther 5:1.

NOTE.—"The palace among the Persians," says Lenormant, 'was quite inaccessible to the multitude. A most rigid etiquette guarded all access to the king, and made it very difficult to approach him. . . . He who entered the presence of the king, without having previously obtained permission, was punished with death.' But a further, and peculiarly conclusive, testimony to the historical character of the book is afforded by the recovery of the palace of Xerxes and Esther. An inscription of Artaxerxes Mnemon found at Susa tells us that it was destroyed by fire in the days of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the son and successor of Xerxes. Within some thirty years, therefore, from the time of Esther, that palace passed from the knowledge of men. Nevertheless, the references in the book are in perfect accord with the plan of the great structure as laid bare by the recent French excavations. We read (chap. 4) that Mordecai, clad in sackcloth, walked in 'the broad palace of the city, which was before the king's gate.' The ruins show that the House of the Women was on the East side of the palace next to the city, and that a gate led from it into 'the street of the city.' In [chapter] 5:1, we read that Esther 'stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house.' 'The king,' we also read, 'sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house,' and that from the throne he 'saw Esther the queen standing in the court.' Every detail is exact. A corridor led from the House of the Women to the inner court; and at the side of the court opposite to the corridor was the hall, or throne-room of the palace. Exactly in the center of the farther wall the throne was placed and from that lofty seat the king, overlooking an intervening screen, saw the queen waiting for an audience. Other details, such as that of the king's passing from the queen's banquetting-house into the garden, show a similarly exact acquaintance with the palace as it then was. That is a confirmation the force of which it is hard to overestimate."—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, art. Book of Esther.*

2. When the king saw her, what court custom did he follow? In what manner did Queen Esther respond? Verse 2.

NOTE.—The golden scepter was in use in Persia at this time, as note the following from Xenophon: "It is not," said Cyrus to his son Cambyses, "the

golden scepter that saves the kingdom; faithful friends are the truest and safest scepter of the empire."

3. What offer did the king make? What request was made by the queen? Verses 3, 4.

4. How did the king respond? Verse 5.

AT THE FIRST BANQUET

5. While feasting, how did the king express his desire to know Esther's wishes? Verse 6.

6. For what did Queen Esther make request this first day? What promise did she make concerning the morrow? Verses 7, 8.

NOTE.—It may seem strange to some that Queen Esther did not at this first banquet make known her request to the king. It is evident both that she desired to further pave the way by winning the king's favor before revealing her plan, and that God was in the delay that Haman should fully reveal the wickedness of his spirit before action should be taken. The events of the latter part of this chapter, where Haman reveals his pride, and the cruelty of his disposition toward those who failed to fully recognize his position, led directly to his complete destruction.

THE PRIDE OF HAMAN

7. How did the invitation to Esther's banquet affect proud Haman? What incident at the king's gate aroused his anger? Verse 9.

NOTE.—Haman's joy was completely shadowed for a time by observing Mordecai in the king's gate, refusing to do obeisance to him. We sometimes wonder why Mordecai refused; and the only reasonable excuse seems to be that there was in the requirement the thought of worship, which a true Israelite could give only to God.

8. On arrival home, whom did Haman call about him? Verse 10.

9. What did he first bring to the attention of his wife and friends? Verse 11.

10. Of what did he have special reason for congratulation? Verse 12.

11. What did he complain about to the assembled family? Verse 13.

12. What counsel did his wife and his friends give him? What should then be his attitude in going to the banquet the next day? What action did he immediately take? Verse 14.

NOTE.—Commenting on the latter verses of this chapter, Clarke says, "Pride will ever render its possessor unhappy. He has such a high opinion of his own worth, that he conceives himself defrauded by everyone who does not pay him all the respect and homage which he conceives to be his due. . . . How distressing are the inquietudes of vanity! And how wretched is the man who has not the God of Jacob for his help, and in whose heart Christ dwells not by faith!"

Celebrate your birthday by a Sabbath school "Thank Offering."

Lesson 10 for September 3, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH
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Mordecai Is Honored

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 6.

MEMORY VERSE: "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Esther 6:13, last sentence.

SEED THOUGHT: "The Bible has little to say in praise of men. Little space is given to recounting the virtues of even the best men who have ever lived. This silence is not without purpose; it is not without a lesson. All the good qualities that men possess are the gift of God; their good deeds are performed by the grace of God through Christ. Since they owe all to God, the glory of whatever they are or do, belongs to Him alone; they are but instruments in His hands. . . . It is impossible for us, in our own strength, to maintain the conflict; and whatever diverts the mind from God, whatever leads to self-exaltation or to self-dependence, is surely preparing the way for our overthrow. The tenor of the Bible is to inculcate distrust of human power and to encourage trust in divine power."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," p. 717.

THE KING'S SLEEP IS TROUBLED

1. When the king could not sleep the night following Esther's banquet, what did he do? Esther 6:1.
2. As the courtiers read, of what outstanding incident was the king reminded? Verse 2.

NOTE.—An interesting side light on the chronicles for which King Ahasuerus called, is given in Clarke's Commentary on chapter 6, as follows:

"It may be well asked, Why should the king, in such a perturbed state of mind, wish such a dry detail, as chronicles afford, to be read to him? But the truth is, as chronicles were composed among the Persians, he could not have brought before him any work more instructive, and more entertaining; because they were all written in verse, and were generally the work of the most eminent poets in the empire. They are written in this way to the present time; and the famous epic poem, of the finest Persian poet, Ferdoosy, the Homer of India, is nothing else than a collection of chronicles brought down from the creation to the reign of Mohammed Ghezny, in the beginning of the tenth century. After thirty years' labor, he finished this poem, which contained one hundred and twenty thousand lines; and presented it to the Sultan Mahmoud, who had promised to give him a dinar (eight shillings and sixpence) [two dollars U. S. currency] for every line. The poem was finished A. D. 984; and was formed out of compositions of a similar nature made by former poets. This chronological poem is written in all the harmony, strength, and elegance of the most beautiful and harmonious language in the universe; and what adds greatly to its worth is, that it has few Arabic words, with which the beautiful Persian tongue was loaded, and in my opinion corrupted, after the conquest of the major part of Asia by the Mohammedans. The pedants of Hindustan, whether they speak or write, in prose or in verse, affect this commixture of Arabic words; which, though they subjugate to Persian rules, are producing a ruggedness in a language, which in Ferdoosy, flows deep and strong, like a river of oil, over every kind of channel. Such, I

suppose, was the chronicle that was read to Ahasuerus, when his distractions prevented his sleep, and his troubled mind required that soothing repose which the gentle though powerful hand of poetry is alone, in such circumstances, capable of affording."

3. What question did the king ask of his chroniclers? What was their reply? Verse 3.

NOTE.—It seems strange that so outstanding an experience in the life of the king had gone unrewarded. It may be that the enmity of Haman had kept it covered, or more likely that God had reserved the reward for this time when it would most suitably turn the king's mind against the wicked designs of one who would destroy God's chosen people.

THE UNWILLING DISPENSER OF HONORS

4. For what purpose had Haman just come into the court? Verse 4.

5. What permission was granted him by the king? Verse 5.

6. On Haman's arrival, what question did the king put to him? What thought was in Haman's heart as he replied? Verse 6.

7. What suggestion did Haman make relative to the apparel of the man to be honored? Verses 7, 8.

NOTE.—"Pride and folly ever go hand in hand. What he asked would have been in any ordinary case against his own life; but he wished to reach the pinnacle of honor; never reflecting that the higher he rose, the more terrible would be his fall. The royal apparel was never worn but by the king; even when the king had laid them aside, it was death to put them on."—*Clarke*.

8. Who was to carry out the king's desire? How was public honor to be done to the man whom the king desired to honor? Verse 9.

9. What imperative command did the king lay upon Haman? Who was the man to be honored? Verse 10.

NOTE.—How astonishing is this reversal of all that the proud and wicked Haman had hoped for himself. Plotting the destruction of another, proud of his honors, his family, his influence and power in the kingdom, he sees himself suddenly demeaned to a position of service to one whom he regarded as his greatest enemy. The honors that he would have had bestowed upon himself and in imagination had seen himself enjoying, he must see showered upon this man whom he despised. As *Clarke* remarks, "From it we plainly see that there is neither counsel nor wisdom against the Lord; and that he who digs a pit for his neighbor, is sure to fall into it himself."

10. How fully did Haman carry out the king's commands? Verse 11.

11. To what place did Mordecai humbly return? Where did Haman immediately go? What were his feelings? Verse 12.

NOTE.—It is well to note in this verse the attitude of the two men in honor and in adversity. They well illustrate the characters of humanity in that Mordecai was not puffed up by the honor placed upon him, but quietly returned to his place, an apparently humble one, at the king's gate. Haman, who, had these honors been bestowed upon him, would have exulted in them before the public and his friends, went instead to his house "mourning, and having his head covered." He was already recognizing what his family and friends soon told him would be: he was to fall before Mordecai whom he had sought to destroy.

12. Whom did Haman call immediately to him? For what purpose? Verse 13, first part.

13. What disconcerting statement did they make concerning his future? Verse 13, last part.

14. While still discussing the situation, what call came to Haman? Verse 14.

NOTE.—In the hour of Haman's humiliation came the messengers of the king to call him to Queen Esther's second banquet. Small joy could have been his, knowing what he must face there, and the fears and accusations of his own conscience.

Drawing a lesson from this chapter, Dr. Adam Clarke closes his notes with this significant paragraph:

"One grand design of this history is, to show that he who lays a snare for the life of his neighbor, is most likely to fall into it himself; for, in the course of the divine providence, men generally meet with those evils in life which they have been the means of inflicting on others; and this is exactly agreeable to the saying of our Lord: 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you withal.'"

Lesson 11 for September 10, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

The Second Banquet—Rescue for Israel

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 7; 8.

MEMORY VERSE: "How can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" Esther 8:6.

SEED THOUGHT: "In the service of God there need be no despondency, no wavering, no fear. The Lord will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom their varied necessities demand."—"Prophets and Kings," p. 387.

THE SECOND BANQUET

1. When at the second banquet Queen Esther was requested to state her wishes, for what did she petition? Esther 7:1-3.

2. Under what conditions would she not have appealed to the king? Verse 4.

NOTE.—Wisely Esther placed her plea before the king. He had made her a very definite promise, one customary in those days. Quoting from the decree Haman had prepared and the king had sealed, she not only brought home to his mind in a few well-chosen words the danger facing her people, but she also covertly revealed that her own life was involved in Haman's plot against the Jews. The damage to the empire of a wholesale slaughter of the Jewish people had not been understood by the king, who had blindly yielded to the evil plotting of his prime minister. But a divine providence was watching over both His people's lives and the course of empire.

3. What direct question concerning leaders of the plot did the king ask? Verse 5.

4. Whom did Esther directly accuse? With what result? Verse 6.
5. Where did the king go? What did Haman do? When the king returned, what further incident settled Haman's fate? Verses 7, 8.
6. When only was the wrath of the king pacified? Verses 9, 10.

NOTE.—This entire scene enacted in the queen's private rooms, sealed the fate of Haman and paved the way for the saving of the Jews. As Haman stood up to plead for his life (for he knew too well how far his overreaching pride and wickedness had led him), the king, greatly angered, left the room. Haman's attempt to plead with Queen Esther provided the final excuse for the words which in effect were a death sentence. In accord with the custom of the time when a death sentence was pronounced, Haman's face or head was immediately covered. Apparently also his plans for Mordecai's hanging were common knowledge in the city.

THE RISE OF MORDECAI

7. To whom did the king give Haman's house? Before whom was Mordecai brought? What position was given him? Where was he set to reside? Esther 8:1, 2.

NOTE.—“As Haman was found guilty of treasonable practices against the peace and prosperity of the king and his empire, his life was forfeited, and his goods confiscated. And as Mordecai had been the means of preserving the king's life, and was the principal object of Haman's malice, it was but just to confer his property upon him, as well as his dignity and office, as Mordecai was found deserving of the former, and fit to discharge the duties of the latter.”—*Clarke*.

QUEEN ESTHER'S SECOND AUDIENCE

8. For what purpose did Esther again venture unbidden into the king's presence? Verses 3, 4.
9. What specific request did the queen make? What reason did she give for her request? Verses 5, 6.
10. To how many leaders, and for what purpose did the king grant the use of his name and seal? Verses 7-9.

NOTE.—The same power which this autocratic king had given on the previous occasion to Haman, he now places more definitely in the hands of Queen Esther and Mordecai. The making out of the proclamation was in their hands, and being sealed with the king's seal, it would have the force of law wherever it should come.

11. What specific power of defense did the king through Mordecai and Esther give to the Jews? Verses 10-12.
12. For what purpose were the Jews to be ready on that occasion? Verses 13, 14.

NOTE.—“To destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish.’ The same words as in Haman's decree: therefore the Jews had as much authority to slay their enemies, as their enemies had to slay them.

“Little ones and women.’ This was the ordinary custom, to destroy the whole family of those convicted of great crimes; and whether this was right or wrong, it was the custom of the people, and according to the laws. Besides, as this edict was to give the Jews the same power against their

enemies as they had by the former decree against them, and the women and children were there included; consequently they must be included here."
—Clarke.

13. As Mordecai left the royal palace, what brought joy to the populace? Verse 15.

14. What spirit took possession of the Jews when the edict of the king came to them? Verses 16, 17, first part.

NOTE.—There are those who may wonder at the spirit of rejoicing which came over the Jews on receipt of this proclamation from the king. Into their hands had come permission to defend themselves where before, helpless and unarmed, not only were they condemned, but their wives and their little ones also. It is no small wonder that in contrast with their previous hopelessness they now had "light, and gladness, and joy, and honor."

15. What was the result of the fear of the Jews upon the populace? Verse 17, last part.

NOTE.—"These were a species of converts not likely to bring much honor to true religion; but the sacred historian states the simple fact. They did profess Judaism for fear of the Jews, whether they continued steady in that faith or not.

"It is only the gospel which will not admit of coercion for the propagation and establishment of its doctrines. It is a spiritual system, and can be propagated only by spiritual influence. As it proclaims holiness of heart and life, which nothing but the Spirit of God can produce, so it is the Spirit of God alone that can persuade the understanding and change the heart. If the kingdom of Christ were of this world, then would His servants fight. But it is not from hence."—Clarke.

Lesson 12 for September 17, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

Defeat Turned to Victory

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Esther 9; 10.

MEMORY VERSE: "Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." Esther 10:3.

SEED THOUGHT: "God wrought marvelously for His penitent people; and a counter decree issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives, was rapidly communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers, who were hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment."—"Prophets and Kings," p. 602.

A REVERSED ORDER IN PERSIA

1. When the day arrived for the slaying of the Jews in Persia, what changed conditions existed? Esther 9:1, 2.

2. What attitude was taken by the king's officers both in the palace city and the provinces? Verse 3.

NOTE.—"Mordecai being raised to the highest confidence of the king, and to have authority over the whole realm, these officers assisted the Jews, no

doubt, with the troops under their command, to overthrow those who availed themselves of the former decree to molest the Jews. For it does not appear that the Jews slew any person who did not rise up to destroy them."—*Dr. Adam Clarke*.

3. What changed status had come to Mordecai? Verse 4.

4. What was the result of the Jews' defense in Shushan? Verses 5-11.

NOTE.—"It is remarked here, and in verse 16, where the account is given of the number slain in the provinces, that the Jews laid no hand on the spoil. They stood for their lives, and gave full proof that they sought their own personal safety, and not the property of their enemies, though the decree in their favor gave them authority to take the property of all those who were their adversaries."—*Clarke*.

5. What further request was made by Queen Esther of King Ahasuerus? Verses 12-15.

NOTE.—"Esther had probably been informed by Mordecai, that there were still many enemies of the Jews who sought their destruction, who had escaped the preceding day; and, therefore, begs that this second day be added to the former permission. This being accordingly granted, they found three hundred more, in all eight hundred. And thus Susa was purged of all their enemies."

"They [the ten sons of Haman] had been slain the preceding day, and now she requests that they may be exposed on posts or gibbets, as a terror to those who sought the destruction of the Jews."—*Ibid*. This practice was in vogue for many years among European nations and up to as late as the past century. It is still followed in some parts of Asia as a crime deterrent.

THE DANGER PAST—REJOICING

6. After standing for their lives, what did the Jews in the provinces do? Verses 16, 17.

7. Because of their great deliverance, what did the Jews make of these two days? Verses 18, 19.

8. How were their spontaneous actions officially approved by Mordecai? Verses 20-22.

9. What was the reason for Haman's deep hatred of the Jewish people? Verse 24. (See 1 Samuel 15.)

NOTE.—Haman was the "son of Hammedatha (Esther 3:1). His father bore a Persian name, but Haman was none the less an Agagite (Esther 3:1; 9:24), which, if it is not a local or obscure family name, may mean that he was of Amalekite descent and of the royal family of that Arabian tribe."—*A Dictionary of the Bible, J. D. Davis, p. 285*.

A YEARLY MEMORIAL ESTABLISHED

10. What name was given to this special feast of the Jews? Verses 24, 26, 28.

NOTE.—"They had already kept the fifteenth day, and some of them in the country the fourteenth also, as a day of rejoicing; Mordecai wrote to them to bind themselves and their successors, and all their proselytes, to celebrate this as an annual feast throughout all their generations; and this they undertook to do. And it has been observed among them, in all places of their dispersion, from that day to the present time, without any interruption."—*Clarke*.

11. By whose letter and decree was this custom confirmed among the Jews of Persia? Verses 29-32.

12. Where are recorded the acts and might of Ahasuerus and Mordecai's greatness? Whose interest did Mordecai constantly seek? Esther 10.

NOTE.—One thing of special note enters into this last brief chapter of the book of Esther. It is the loyalty and devotion of Mordecai to the welfare of his people. Accepted of the multitude of his brethren, with position and power in the world's then mightiest empire, Mordecai's first interest lay with the people whom God had chosen to represent Him in that dispensation. Such devotion to the heritage of the Lord might well be emulated by every child of God. In the building up of God's kingdom, in the prosperity and progress in the lives and hearts of men, lie man's greatest task and his supreme happiness.

Lesson 13 for September 24, 1938

DAILY LESSON STUDY: Place a check mark in the proper space.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SABBATH

The Christian's Relation to Civil Government

MEMORY VERSE: "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Matt. 4:10.

LESSON HELPS: "The Great Controversy," pp. 613-652; "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 57-69; 77-86.

SEED THOUGHT: "The people of God will recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and will teach obedience to it as a sacred duty within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, the word of God must be recognized as above all human legislation."—"Testimonies," vol. 6, p. 402.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS NEIGHBOR

1. From earliest times, what instruction was given to Israel concerning their relation to their neighbors? Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39.
2. What rule of Christian conduct did our Saviour state to His disciples? Matt. 7:12.
3. In the Christian's life and purpose, what principle is to be dominant? Mark 10:42-45.

NOTE.—One of the first lessons that the Christian learns is consideration for and service in behalf of others. While he must stand firmly for the principles of his faith, not wavering or flinching, not retaliating when ridiculed or railed upon, manifesting the spirit of love as did his Master, yet he must go further and be in this world, as was Christ, who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He must be "servant of all."

"No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men, is not a true disciple of Christ. . . . In his zeal he might even meet a martyr's death, yet if not actuated by love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite."—"The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 318, 319.

THE CHRISTIAN AND CIVIL AUTHORITY

4. What should the Christian recognize in civil governments? Rom. 13:1, 2.

NOTE.—“We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s word must be recognized as above all human legislation. . . . We are not required to defy authorities. Our words, whether spoken or written, should be carefully considered, lest we place ourselves on record as uttering that which would make us appear antagonistic to law and order.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*,” p. 69.

5. What is the province of civil government? Rom. 13:3, 4.

NOTE.—“In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.”—*Education*,” p. 175.

It is later stated that it is “the character of a government that fulfills God’s purpose,—a government that protects and upbuilds the nation.”

6. What do the apostles teach concerning the relation of the Christian to civil authorities? Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Rom. 13:6, 7.

NOTE.—“Obedience is to be rendered to all human governments, in subordination to the will of God. These governments are a recognized necessity, in the nature of the case, and their existence is manifestly in accordance with the divine will. Hence the presumption is always in favor of the authority of civil law, and any refusal to obey must be based on the moral proof that obedience will be sin. . . . It is still true that obedience to human law often involves sin against God and man. There are cases so clear that no one can question the duty to refuse obedience. In all times and in all lands such cases have arisen.” “It is too obvious to need discussion, that the law of God, the great principle of benevolence, is supreme, and that ‘we ought to obey God rather than men’ in any case of conflict between human law and the divine.”—*Moral Philosophy*,” James H. Fairchild, pp. 178-181.

TWO REALMS—GOD’S AND CAESAR’S

7. How does the Saviour differentiate between our duty to God and civil authority? Matt. 22:17-21.

NOTE.—“When the Pharisees heard Christ’s answer, ‘they marveled, and left Him, and went their way.’ He had rebuked their hypocrisy and presumption, and in doing this He had stated a great principle, a principle that clearly defines the limits of man’s duty to the civil government and his duty to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*,” p. 602.

“Christ’s reply was no evasion, but a candid answer to the question. Holding in His hand the Roman coin, upon which were stamped the name and image of Caesar, He declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as this did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God.”—*Ibid.*

8. To whom alone is worshipful obedience due? Matt. 4:10.

9. In the Babylonian captivity, how is this principle illustrated? Dan. 3:4-6, 16-28; 6:5-22.

10. What specific command has God given to the remnant church? Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 14:6.

NOTE.—“The forces of the enemy of all righteousness are strongly entrenched; only by the power of God can the victory be gained. The conflict before us calls for the exercise of a spirit of self-denial; for distrust of self and for dependence on God alone; for the wise use of every opportunity for the saving of souls. The Lord’s blessing will attend His church as they advance unitedly revealing to a world lying in the darkness of error the beauty of holiness as manifested in a Christlike spirit of self-sacrifice in an exaltation of the divine rather than the human and in loving and untiring service for those so much in need of the blessings of the gospel.”—*“Prophets and Kings,”* p. 74.

11. When civil authorities would hinder, what is the duty of God’s servants? Acts 4:18-21.

NOTE.—“In the history of prophets and apostles are many noble examples of loyalty to God. Christ’s witnesses have endured imprisonment, torture, and death itself, rather than break God’s commands. The record left by Peter and John is as heroic as any in the gospel dispensation. As they stood for the second time before the men who seemed bent on their destruction, no fear or hesitation could be discerned in their words or attitude.”—*“The Acts of the Apostles,”* p. 81.

When charged with disobeying the commands of the priests Peter replied, “‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’ It was an angel from heaven who delivered them from prison, and bade them teach in the temple. In following his directions they were obeying the divine command, and this they must continue to do, at whatever cost to themselves.”—*Id.*, p. 82.

ACCOUNTABLE FIRST TO GOD

12. To whom must every soul eventually give account for his life and acts? Rom. 14:12.

13. When will be the day of accounting? 2 Cor. 5:10.

NOTE.—As in every other question pertaining to our relationship to the law of God, our attitude toward civil laws and civil governments will be brought before the judgment seat of God. Every Christian should know how to relate himself to those in authority—know very definitely and clearly his duty to God, lest he confuse the one with the other, and have to account for his wrong course in the day of judgment. In this, as before the law of the land, and with even greater justice, ignorance of the law will be no excuse. The opportunity to know the requirements of the God of all the earth is ours, and His laws are so simply written that even the child least educated may understand them. The line of duty is clearly marked for the servants of Christ. That which in human law conflicts directly with God’s requirements or precludes obedience to God, must take second place.

FACING THE FINAL CONFLICT

14. What decree of earthly governments will go forth in the last days? Rev. 13:15-17.

NOTE.—The powers brought to view in verses 15-17 are the same ones presented throughout the chapter. The ultimate aim of the beast and his image is the destruction of all who do not submit to their dictation, even though their will is in direct opposition to the laws of God. Those powers, the papacy and the image, seek through civil power to control the whole world.

“When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce

their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result."—*The Great Controversy*," p. 445.

In the final conflict only those whose dependence is on God, who have "fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible" will stand true and loyal to the Almighty.

15. In these testing times, what are God's children counseled to do? What promises are made? Rev. 2:10; Matt. 24:13.

NOTE.—In these closing days of earth's history men and women will be called individually to answer for their faith. Life itself may be the price paid for loyalty to God and to His law. Yet in the hour of final conflict, when the decree goes forth that all who will not worship the beast shall be killed, we are told:

"The eye of God, looking down the ages, was fixed upon the crisis which His people are to meet, when earthly powers shall be arrayed against them. Like the captive exile, they will be in fear of death by starvation or by violence. But the Holy One who divided the Red Sea before Israel, will manifest His mighty power and turn their captivity. . . . Christ has spoken: 'Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.' Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming, and whose names are written in the book of life."—*The Great Controversy*," p. 634.

16. What glorious picture does God give of the rewards of those who remain true and faithful? Rev. 7:9-17.

NOTE.—"The heirs of God have come from garrets, from hovels, from dungeons, from scaffolds, from mountains, from deserts, from the caves of the earth, from the caverns of the sea. On earth they were 'destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Millions went down to the grave loaded with infamy, because they steadfastly refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By human tribunals they were adjudged the vilest of criminals. But now 'God is judge Himself.' Now the decisions of earth are reversed. 'The rebuke of His people shall He take away.' 'They shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord.' He hath appointed 'to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' They are no longer feeble, afflicted, scattered, and oppressed. Henceforth they are to be ever with the Lord. They stand before the throne clad in richer robes than the most honored of the earth have ever worn. They are crowned with diadems more glorious than were ever placed upon the brow of earthly monarchs. The days of pain and weeping are forever ended."—*The Great Controversy*," p. 650.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING

September 24, 1938

CHINA DIVISION

The overflow is to be used for the work among the peoples of the western portion of China in what is known as the West China Union.