

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER: STUDIES IN EARLY CHURCH HISTORY.

A. D. 54. LESSON XI. PAUL AT EPHESUS; or, The Gospel of the Holy Ghost. Acts 19, 1-12. September 9.

EXPLANATORY.

APOLLOS. We have his former history in part in chapter 18, 24-28. Eloquent, learned, thoroughly conversant with the Scriptures, fervent in spirit, he had heard the story of Christ, and had known of the baptism of John. Like any earnest man, he went immediately to work teaching as much as he knew, but gladly received instruction from the humble tent-makers. He became a powerful worker. See 1 Cor. 3, 3-23. Ephesus. The capital and chief city of Asia. Its temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the world. It is now an utter desolation. Disciples. Thank God, perfect knowledge is not necessary, to discipleship. These were doubtless the result of the preaching of Apollos. Have ye received. The personality of the Holy Ghost, and the importance of his dwelling with every disciple, is plainly taught. Have not so much as heard. Alas! too many still know not the power and presence of the Holy Ghost.

UNTO WHAT? If they had not heard of a Holy Ghost they could not have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, (Matt. 28, 19.) yet Paul acknowledged them as Christians, an example of liberality worthy to be followed. Repentance. Mark the difference between repentance for sin, and the acceptance of salvation through a crucified Redeemer. We must repent and believe.

WHEN THEY HEARD. Readiness to accept the truth is evidence of true discipleship. Baptized. This instance of rebaptism has given rise to much discussion. It would seem to show that only baptism in the name of Jesus, and with a full knowledge of its meaning, is "Christian baptism." Laid hands. See similar instance in chap. 8, 17. Tongues. Whether this was in other languages as in Acts 2, 4-7, or in unintelligible words, as in 1 Cor. 14, we cannot say, but, like them, it was an evidence of the Holy Spirit. Twelve. A striking coincidence with the twelve apostles, once also disciples of John. We have, however, no record of their rebaptism.

BOLDLY. Much is made of boldness in this history. It required courage to face such opposition and hatred. Despising. Paul was ever ready for discussion, but mark the subject. He had no time for less weighty matters. Hardened. As the finger by repeated pricks of the needle becomes callous, so the conscience, by repeatedly rejecting the word, becomes insensible to its power. Lange translates "hardened themselves." Separated. He withdrew the disciples from those who would infect them with their own infidelity. Tyrannus. A Greek philosopher, or sophist, otherwise unknown. Here Paul disputed daily, whereas the synagogue had been open only on the Sabbath; and, as this continued for two years, we may well conceive that the Gospel was preached to all in Asia. "Asia" here means "Proconsular Asia," which included the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia. The "seven churches of Asia" (Rev. 1, 11) are all within one hundred miles of Ephesus.

SPECIAL MIRACLES. That the great apostle was also a great miracle worker, we know from incidental references, like 2 Cor. 12, 12; Rom. 15, 18, etc.; but here God wrought "uncommon works of power" in attestation of his apostleship, mainly by the laying on of the hands of Paul, and also by means of his handkerchiefs by which he had wiped the sweat from his brow, and the aprons used in his days toil. See chapter 20, 24. These miracles have no parallel except the healing of the sick woman by touching the hem of Christ's garment. They are characterized as special or extraordinary.

GOLDEN TEXT.—For our gospel came not unto you in word only, etc. 1 Thess. 1, 5.

DOCTRINE.—The baptism of the Holy Ghost. The next lesson is Acts 19, 17-28.

ALWAYS SERENE.

Whether the excitement be a war, or a funeral, or a comedy, or a confata, there is one person who may sit serene amidst it all, because each alike brings grist to his mill, and money to his till—that is the PUBLICAN.—The Devil's Chain. "True politeness is one of the rarest things; it may be met with in the hut of the Arab, in the courtyard of the Turk, in the cottage of the Irishman, and it is excessively rare in ball-rooms. It is independent of accent, and of

form; it is one of the constant and noble attitudes of men, wherever and howsoever developed. We venture to define it thus: Politeness is natural, genial, manly deference, with delicacy in dealing with the feelings of others, and without hypocrisy, sycophancy or obtrusion. Politeness is the last touch, the finishing perfection of a noble character. It is the gold on the spire, the sunlight on the corn-field, the smile on the lip of the noble knight lowering his sword-point to his lady-love. It results from the truest balance and harmony of soul."—P. Bayne's "Life of Hugh Miller."

HOW DYING MEN THINK OF IT.

From white lips and palsied tongues they give us their testimony. They say, "my head on this wet pillow, I look one way, and I look the other way; I see Time: I see Eternity. How brief the one! How long the other! I never saw it so before:—hand-breadths against leagues—seconds against cycles. I put my wasted and trembling hand—my left hand—on the world that I am leaving, and I put my wasted and trembling hand—my right hand—on the world that I am entering; and, for the first time, I see how small is the one, and how vast is the other." Minutes; minutes; minutes: Ages; ages; ages. Like the flight of a shuttle on the one side; on the other—for ever, for ever. This is like a vapour that appears for a little season, is gone; that—Eternity.

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