

## Sabbath School Lessons.

Dec. 11. The APOSTOLIC Church. A.D. 50.  
Lesson, Acts 15:12-29 Golden Text, Acts 15:11  
Memory vs. 8-11. Catechism Q. 107.

From the wonderful missionary journey on which Paul and Silas had been sent forth from Antioch, they returned and told to the gathered church the story of their mission, and then they remained working in Antioch.

After a time, some false teachers came from Judea, and said to these Antioch Christians, "The Apostles at Jerusalem teach that men are not saved unless they be circumcized and keep the old ceremonial law."

Paul and Barnabas held that these men were wrong. But the church was troubled, and anxious to be certain in so important a point, they decided to send up to Jerusalem and find out the truth of the matter. Starting on their slow and tedious journey of 300 miles, the deputation at length reached Jerusalem. First there was a conference with the leaders, then a synod meeting was called and its proceedings are the present lesson.

1. Hearing the missionary delegates v. 12.
2. The speech of James, v. 13-21.
3. A deputation appointed, v. 22.
4. The Synod's decision, v. 23-29.

I. vs. 12. *Kept silence*—You have seen large congregations listening spell-bound to a returned missionary telling his story, what signs and wonders God had wrought among the heathen. This was among the first of such scenes.

II. Vs. 13-21. *James*—The brother of our Lord. See Gal. 1:19; 2:9. *Symeon*—Peter. See chap. XI, 2-13. James took Peter's experience at Cæsarea where the Spirit had been poured upon the Gentiles, as a proof that circumcision was not necessary, and confirms his statement by the words of prophecy. *Trouble them not*—with these burdensome rites. *Pollutions*—put idols from their homes and keep from their temples and worship. *Fornication*—very common around them. They had been trained to regard it as no worse and might easily fall into it. *Strangled*—Strangled food had the blood in it. *Blood*—was a delicacy among the gentiles but unclean and abhorrent to a Jew. *For Moses, etc.*—The idea is that the Jews being scattered in every land, having their synagogues, and the law of Moses on these points being kept constantly before them, it was better that the Christians should avoid that which the Jews were so constantly taught to avoid as unclean.

III. *Sermed good*—The resolution was unanimous. *Wrote*—so that the message could not be mistaken.

IV. Vs. 23-29. *Subverting your souls*—Doctrine has an important place. It saves or sinks the soul. *Hazarded*—What a contrast between the false teachers who went to Antioch and Paul and Barnabas who withstood them. What joy the message would bring to the church at Antioch to find that these old time ceremonies were not necessary to their Salvation.

1. "No matter what a man believes, provided he is sincere" is "the biggest lie the devil ever got up."

2. We should, by a careful study of God's word seek to find out the whole truth of God, and should hold fast to it.

3. Dependence upon form and ceremony ever tends to "subvert the soul" to lead it away from Christ. A spiritual system and worship has usually but little of ritual.

4. The great truths should be carefully guarded.

Dec. 18th, QUARTERLY REVIEW.

FOR HOME STUDY.

The Christian church may be said to date its birth from Pentecost, A.D. 30, a few days after the ascension of Christ, on the completion of his work, and the sending, according to His promise, of the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of the world's redemption.

The lessons of this quarter from chapters 9 to 15 of the Acts, take up the history of that church when it is seven years old, 37 A.D., and carry it on for 14 years, to 50 A.D. These years have been an eventful time, the gospel has spread widely. It has had great trials and great triumphs.

*Places*—The following are the places in alphabetical order. Follow them in historical order, finding them on the map, and naming the events in each:—Antioch in Syria, Antioch in Pisidia, Cæsarea, Cilicia, Cyprus, Cyrene, Damascus, Derbe, Iconium, Jerusalem, Joppa, Lycaonia, Lydia, Lystra, Pamphylia, Paphos, Perga, Phenice, Pisidia, Seleucia, Tarsus.

*Persons*—Tell where they lived and the history of the persons mentioned in the quarter:—Agabus, Ananias, Bargesus, Barnabas, Cornelius, Dorcas, Elymas, Eneas, Herod, James the Apostle, James the brother of our Lord, John, Mark, Judas Barsabas, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, Paul, Peter, Rhoda, Sergius Paulus, Silas, Simeon Niger, Simon the Tanner, Stephen, Tabitha, Timothy, Titus.

*Obstacles*—The Gospel of Christ has ever had to make its way against hindrances. The chief of these during these 14 years were, persecution from both Jew and heathen, opposition from the Phariseism of Jews and the corruption of morals among the heathen.

"We have exemplified in the early church the power of the Gospel to triumph over all circumstances. It commenced in an age of universal corruption. Outside of Judea, idolatry reigned supreme; gods and goddesses representing every phase of vice, were worshipped in magnificent temples and at costly shrines; licentiousness prevailed; human sacrifices were offered; murder and suicides were frequent.

The mass of the people were without means, without learning, without protection, and a large part were held in serfdom or slavery.

Parents were often suffered to die of starvation. Children were exposed and murdered; men fought as gladiators for the amusement of others; and every precept of the moral law was violated.

Outside of Palestine and Jewish families no Sabbath was observed, and no revelation revered; yet in the midst of all these vices, without a Bible in the hands of the people, without a Sabbath and without a church building, the Gospel preached by the Apostles made wonderful conquests. So universal was its success that Paul exclaims "Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

Nor were these triumphs secured by any external aid. The disciples received no assistance from governments or from established institutions. They were without even ordinary protection. They were reproached, reviled, and persecuted, subjected to exile and death. The literature, the schools, the influence of society, were against them. Yet through the divine influence accompanying their efforts they triumphed. The power of God made them heroes and conquerors.

The picture is reproduced in some measure in nearly all of our mission fields to-day and yet in some of them the Gospel has already wrought great triumphs and in others the triumph is sure to come. How strange to be living over again to-day the experiences of the early church more than eighteen centuries ago.