



LESSON I.—JANUARY 5, 1902.

The Promise of Power

Acts i, 1-11. Memory verses 8-11. Read Acts i, 1-26; Matt. xxviii., 19-20.

Golden Text.

'While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.'—Luke xxiv., 51.

Daily Readings.

Monday, (Dec. 30, 1901).—Acts i, 1-14.
 Tuesday, Dec. 31.—Luke xxiv., 44-53.
 Wednesday, (Jan. 1, 1902).—Matt x., 1-15.
 Thursday, Jan. 2.—John xiv., 1-19.
 Friday, Jan. 3.—John xiv., 20-31.
 Saturday, Jan. 4.—John xv., 17-27.
 Sunday, Jan. 5.—John xvi., 1-14.

Lesson Text.

(1) The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, (2) Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: (3) To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: (4) And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, 'saith he, ye have heard of me. (5) For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (6) When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (7) And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. (8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (9) And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. (10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; (11) Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (12) Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (13) And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son, of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. (14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Suggestions.

Luke, the 'beloved physician' as Paul called him (Col. iv., 14), was a man of great literary ability, and is also said to have been a painter. He wrote in the common Greek that was spoken then, not the language of the classics. The book was evidently written while Paul was still in prison at Rome, about A.D. 63. The book is a sketch of the acts or deeds of the members of the Christian church for the first thirty years of its existence. The chief actor in the book humanly speaking is Paul, but the book might better be called the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles,' for they could do nothing until they received the power of his indwelling presence.

Luke dedicates the book of Acts to the same noble friend to whom he had dedicated his story of the gospel (Luke i., 3). The gospel told simply of the beginning of all

that our Lord Christ taught by precept and example here on earth, his great work is still going on through his true-hearted followers. The gospel closes with a brief account of the day when Jesus was taken up to heaven, the book of Acts opens with a more detailed account of the ascension. After he had given commandments to them (Matt. xxviii., 18-20; Mark xvi., 15-18; John xxi., 15), through the Holy Ghost (John iii., 34) he gave them the promise of the same power which he had had to overcome the world, the power of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ghost is the old English word for spirit, and its former meaning is still retained in this title of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is one of the three Persons of the Godhead.

During the forty days after the resurrection of Jesus, he showed himself ten or eleven different times to the disciples, and gave them many indisputable signs of his being still alive. He told them a good deal about the kingdom of God, that they might understand a little of what their work was to be after his departure, but their minds were so fixed on material interests that it seemed almost impossible for them to grasp the idea of a spiritual kingdom. The kingdoms of the earth are temporal, the kingdom of God is eternal and ever increasing. The human minds of the disciples longed for the outward show of the restoration of Israel's ancient glory. They had hoped that the 'Son of David' would set up a kingdom far more glorious than even Solomon's splendor. They had not yet learned to compare rightly the earthly glory with the spiritual, the very last question they asked Jesus was about his setting up an earthly kingdom. Jesus replied with the promise which he had often told them before, the promise which God himself had sent to them (John xiv., 26-16-17; xvi., 7-13), the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Paraclete or Advocate (meaning one who stands by to help).

The Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, and as the disciples stood gazing upward, straining their eyes to catch the last glimpse of him whom they loved so well, two angels suddenly stood beside them with a message of comfort and the promise of the return of Christ at some future date. Comforted and reassured, the disciples returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, the scene of the Ascension, and in a large upper room they met and for ten days waited on God in prayer and supplication. They did their part in perfect obedience, then God fulfilled his promise to them when his own good time came. No time is wasted with God. Time spent in sharpening the axe is time gained in chopping. Time spent in finding out God's will is time gained in doing his work.

Questions.

By whom was the book of Acts written?
 When?
 How is it connected with the gospel?
 During how many days did Jesus show himself alive after his Resurrection?
 What question did the disciples ask just before the Ascension?
 What was the reply?
 What wonderful promise did Jesus give?
 Where were they to witness for him?
 Describe the Ascension?

C. E. Topic.

Jan. 5.—That which Comes First. Matt. vi., 33; Gen. xii., 7-8; Matt. viii., 22.

Junior C. E. Topic.

PUTTING OFF.

Mon., Dec. 30.—The man who put off.—Luke ix., 59-60.
 Tues., Dec. 31.—The hand on the plough.—Luke ix., 61-62.
 Wed., Jan. 1.—A sad halt.—I. Kings xviii., 21.
 Thu., Jan. 2.—An important choice.—Josh. xxiv., 15.
 Fri., Jan. 3.—A hearty choice.—Col. iii., 23.
 Sat., Jan. 4.—A proud choice.—Rom. i., 16.
 Sun., Jan. 5.—Topic.—Putting off and the result.—Acts xxiv., 24-25.

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How to Conquer Sin.

(Arthur C. Perriam, in 'The Christian.')

One afternoon I was trudging up the hill from Gallows Inn to Ilkeston, a thriving little town in Derbyshire, when a seedily-dressed working man accosted me. I was behind time, hurrying to keep an appointment, and as he looked like a tramp I offered him a penny, without waiting to hear what he had to say. My charity was rejected.

'I don't want your money, sir.' There was a slight accent of contempt in his tone. 'I want your help.'

'It isn't quite clear what you mean,' I replied. 'How can I give you help?'

'You see that?' He pointed angrily to a roadside inn about a hundred yards from where we stood, an attractive little hostel, with a gay sign suspended over the invitingly open door. 'Take hold of my arm tight, will you? I want to get to my lodgings sober this time. Lead me past that public-house.'

I laughed; the request was absurd, and the situation altogether ridiculous. I began to chide the dejected one for his weakness. 'Haven't you a will of your own? Surely you can walk straight on if you try. The landlord will not throw a rope round your body and drag you in by main force. Be a man! Act with resolution!' The poor fellow was disappointed. I saw in a moment that I had hurt his feelings. It was sympathy he needed, not reproof; so I changed my manner, and proceeded in a more persuasive way:—'Well, I really think, if I were you, and the drink had become so very masterful, I would give it up. Whatever may be said for those who are able to take the stuff in moderation, there is no sense in "you" having anything to do with it.' Then I commenced cautiously to descant upon the advantages of total abstinence. With ebullient impatience he stopped me.

'I know all about it, gov'nor; mayhap, I know more nor you can tell me. I've come from Whitby, and when I was there, for seven months I was teetotal; yes, for seven clear months.'

'And did you get a notion that teetotalism wasn't agreeing with your health, or anything of that sort? If you had persevered, your system would soon have become accustomed to it, and you would have picked up your strength again quickly.'

'Stay, you are wrong again; them was the seven blessedest months of my life!'

'By all that is strange, then, why did you break?'

'I'll tell you. It was company what did it. Yes, I was all right at Whitby; there was guardian angels at Whitby! There was a church parson and his wife and daughter, and they kept a sort of open house for us, with papers and games, and sometimes a bit o' singing! It was like as though someone was always at your elbow to keep you straight, and there was no getting away from them neither. I remember, one night, a feeling came over me that I'd like a sup o' whiskey—just threepen'orth on the sly—but as I was turning into the "Goat and Compasses," I felt a pull at my sleeve, and looking round, who should I see but Miss Lucy! It fairly knocked me over; it was like magic. Read this!'

I took from the hand of the inebriate a soiled letter; it was produced from many wrappings, and looked like a missive that had been read through and wept over again and again. It ran somewhat as follows:—

'Dear John,—You will be sorry to learn that my loving mother has passed away. She has gone to be with Jesus. It was on the last day, and while she was waiting for the Saviour to come and take her to himself, that she thought about you. She said, "I wonder how John is getting on. I have often prayed for him. I do hope he is keeping his pledge." Then she asked me to find your address and see you, or write you. I am keeping my promise to her, John, by sending this letter. Never drink again. May the thought of my mother recur to you when you are tempted. I shall be glad to