

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—THE TWELVE SENT FORTH.—DEC. 16.

Matt. x: 5-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Matt. x: 7.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—“As ye go, preach.”

ANALYSIS.—THE MISSION, v: 5-8.
MEANS, v: 9-10.
METHOD, v: 11-16.

HARMONY.—Mark vi: 7-11; Luke ix: 1-6.

TIME AND PLACE.—Autumn of A.D. 28, in a town of Galilee, exactly where is not known.

THE MISSION, v. 5-8.—Of the choosing of the twelve we had an account in the sixth lesson for the quarter; in to-day's lesson we are told of their being detailed by the Master for active work in the preaching of the kingdom. This makes a new departure in Christ's methods of work; hitherto He had kept the disciples constantly with Him, but now He puts their faithfulness and ability to a test by sending them forth, two by two, independently, to spread His message and exhibit the power of His name. He sent them first to the Jew. As yet the time had not come to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; the lost sheep of the house of Israel must first be given an opportunity to return. The message they were to carry was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The King was there, and all that remained to bring about the kingdom was his acceptance at the hands of the nation. To acknowledge Him as sovereign they were given opportunity, but they instead rejected Him and put Him to a shameful death. Thus the institution of the kingdom of heaven was suspended until the Son of Man should return in power to inaugurate His millennial reign. In expectation of this the cry goes forth to-day, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Beside preaching they were to heal the sick and cast out devils. This power, now specially delegated to them, was afterwards bestowed upon all believers, (see Mark xvi. 17-18).

THE MEANS, v. 9-10.—The Master said, “Provide nothing.” They were to go just as they were, with no special preparations for the tour; no money, no change of garments, no staff; in simple dependence on Him by whom they were sent. This is only reasonable. If you are doing God's work, it is His part to care for you and see that you are fully provided with all you need. It was this trust that Christ wanted to teach His disciples, who could thus go forth on their work free from worry or care about their temporal wants. The lesson from this for mission work to-day, is the need of more entire confidence in God's willingness and ability to supply the requirements of His own work. If our missionary boards would look more earnestly and believingly to the Lord's riches and less trustfully to the bank accounts of the wealthy members of their church, we would hear less of the mission fund being behind.

THE METHOD, v. 11-16.—On entering a city the twelve were to seek out the man of most piety at whose house they could abide without bringing scandal on their Master's name. Here for not longer than three days, according to Oriental customs, they might dwell. Upon such an house peace should come as a result of their presence; but upon an house that refused them admittance no peace could be; if the city as a whole rejected them, in striking symbolism, they were to shake from off their feet its dust, an indication that in its sin and judgment they had no share, and a warning to its people of their folly and danger. Of such a rejection Christ speaks with terrible solemnity. It would be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for any city that in the face of much brighter light, refused to hear the message of the Kingdom. In their manner, as sheep among wolves, the twelve were to be wise as serpents but as harmless as doves. The Egyptian symbol of wisdom was a serpent, and it is known to be exceedingly cunning in avoiding danger. Thus the disciples were to be in full and active possession of all their faculties, and at the same time as harmless as the proverbial dove.

NOTES ON THE TEXT.—V. 5. *Samaritans*.—A mixed race of Gentile origin. V. 7. *Kingdom of Heaven*.—Distinct from the Kingdom of God. V. 10. *Scrip*.—A bag for provisions. V. 12. *Salute*.—“Peace be unto you.”

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

Daily Readings.

First Day—Diotrephes—3 John 1-14.
Second Day—Herod—Luke xxiii. 7-12.
Third Day—Judas—Mark xiv. 32-45.
Fourth Day—The Jews—Luke xxiii. 13-25.
Fifth Day—The Philippians—Acts xvi. 16-24.
Sixth Day—The Church of Sardis—Rev. iii. 1-6.
Seventh Day—DIFFERENT WAYS OF REJECTING CHRIST—Mark xv 6-14; Heb. vi. 4-6.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, Dec. 16.—“Different ways of rejecting Christ.” Mark xv. 6-14; Heb. vi. 4-6. By far the larger number who reject Christ do so through indifference. They find it easier, and, as they short-sightedly suppose, more advantageous to drift with the crowd careless of the interests of eternity. One can entertain some respect for the man who deliberately weighs the pros and cons and decides to reject the Christ as his Saviour, but not so is it with those who out of pure indifference or cowardice remain unidentified with Him. The writer remembers having met a young fellow who rejected Christ quite openly, and apparently out of simple bravado. He said in language, the awfulness of which he did not seem to realize, “I know that my only hope of salvation is in accepting Christ, but I don't choose to; if I die to-night I will go to hell.” All that is necessary for the rejection of Christ, is that you should remain as you are—unsaved; you need not take a pronounced stand against the Saviour, you need not sever your church connection, you need not burn your Bible, just remain as you are, ununited by saving faith to Him, and you have rejected the Master, you are in danger of an eternal sin. Scripture references:—Isa. liii. 1-3; Matt. viii. 34; xi. 16-24; xii. 38-42; xix. 16-22; xxi. 42, 43; xxii. 9-14; xxviii. 11-15; Luke iv. 16-29; xix. 12, 14, 27; John i. 11; v. 33-40; Acts ii. 22-24; xiii. 46; xxiv. 24, 25.

The legend of St. Macarius of Alexandria runs thus: One day as Macarius wandered among those ancient Egyptian tombs, wherein he made himself a dwelling-place, he found the skull of a mummy, and turning it over with his crutch, he inquired to whom it belonged, and it replied, “To a pagan.” And Macarius, looking into the empty eyes, said, “Where, then, is thy soul?” And the head replied, “In hell.” Macarius asked how deep, and the head replied, “The depth is greater than the distance from heaven to earth.” Then Macarius asked, “Are there any deeper than thou art?” The skull replied, “Yes; the Jews are deeper still.” And Macarius asked, “Are there any deeper than the Jews?” To which the head replied, “Yes, in sooth; for the Christians whom Jesus Christ hath redeemed, and who show in their actions that they despise his doctrines, are deeper still.”—Our Bible Teacher.

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