

Sunday School Department.

International Bible Lessons, 1877.

STUDIES IN THE ACTS.

AUG. 19.—Thessalonians and Berea.—
Acts xv: 1-14. A.D. 52.

BEREAN READING.

Monday. Searching the Scriptures.—Acts xv: 1-14.
Tuesday. The Earliest Scriptures.—Deut. v: 1-3.
Wednesday. The Book of Scriptures.—Ivett, xxvi: 1-14.
Thursday. The Scriptures Discovered.—2 K. xl: 1-23.
Friday. The Scriptures Read.—Neh. viii: 1-14.
Saturday. The Scriptures Explained.—Luke xv: 1-32.
Sunday. The Scriptures Freely.—Psa. cxix: 97-112.

GOLDEN TEXT.

There were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.—Acts xv: 13.

INTRODUCTORY.

As Luke, the writer of the Acts, does not use the word "we" again until chapter x: 5, it is probable he remained at Philippi, where Paul, Silas and Timothy, pushed on in a south-western direction, passing "through Amphipolis and Apollonia,"—in neither of which towns there appears to have been any synagogue, and in which their stay was very transient, and the work done (if any) unimportant;—"they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews."

Trace on a map, before the class, the places mentioned in the lesson; or what is better, construct a map to show only these places apart. V. 1.—Amphipolis—thirty miles north-west from Philippi, on the river Strymon, which nearly surrounded the town, (hence the name *amphi* around, and *polis* the city). The ancient name of the place was "Nine-days," from the great number of roads which met at this point.

Apollonia—about thirty miles south-west of Amphipolis. It was an inland town, the exact situation of which is not now known.

Thessalonica—about 37 miles due west from Apollonia, at the head of the Thracian Gulf, and the north-western extremity of the Egean Sea; the principal and most populous city of Macedonia.—*Brown*. More anciently it was called Therna; at the present day it is known as Saloniki. In Paul's time it was a large maritime city, and the seat of a Roman governor. It retained its old laws, which were administered by its own magistrates; it was therefore a "free city."

Synagogue—the first one reached in Europe. V. 2.—As his manner was.—See Acts ix: 20; xii: 5, 14; xiv: 11; xvi: 19, 17; xvii: 4; xix: 8, &c., and compare Luke ix: 16.

Three Sabbath Days may refer only to the time he labored specially among the Jews. However, that Paul stayed longer than this in Thessalonica is evident from 1 Thess. i: 9, 10; ii: 9, 2; 2 Thess. iii: 8; Phil. iv: 16.

Reasoned—expounding, persuading (see chap. xxvii: 23). Scriptures—that is, the old Testament Scriptures.

V. 3.—Opening—explaining, unfolding. Alleging—maintaining, affirming. That Christ, that is, Messiah (see John iv: 25). Must needs have suffered.—See Gen. xli: 15; Ps. xlii: 1-18; Isaiah liii: 3-12; Dan. ix: 26; 2 Zech. xli: 6, 7; Luke xxiv: 26, 46; Gal. iii: 1; Matt. xxi: 21.

Risen again: see Ps. xvi: 9, 10; Acts ii: 25-35; Rom. i: 4; 1 Cor. xv: 15-20; Matt. xxv: 21. Whom I preach with Christ: Paul argued in succession the two following points: 1st. Certain things were predicted of Messiah in the old Testament. 2d. These predictions were peculiarly fulfilled in Jesus.

But these were not the only truths taught here

by Paul, as witness 1 Thess. i: 10; ii: 19; iii: 13; iv: 13-17; v: 1-3; 2 Thess. i: 8-10; ii: 1-12.

V. 4.—Some of them believed—that is, some of the Jews. (See chap. xiv: 1; xvii: 16). Consorted—cast in their lot with, (see verse 34 also) 1 Peter v: 3; 1 Thess. i: 5, 6; 2 Cor. viii: 1, 5. Devout Greeks—these were pious proselytes, who, no doubt, read the Scriptures in the Septuagint, or Greek version. Chief women—see verse 12, also, chap. xiii: 50. They were women of high standing.

V. 5.—Moved with Envy—see chap. vii: 9; xiii: 45. Those Jews "which believed not" could not endure to be happy effect of Paul's preaching upon the others, and the prophets; their influence was undermined. Lewd fellows—idle loungers about the market place; see Matt. xx: 3.

Gathered a company—rather, raised a sect. Jason, (Rom. xvi: 21), supposed to have been related to Paul.

To the people—that is, to a regular popular assembly of the citizens, to which offenders would be amenable for any breach of the peace.

V. 6.—Found them not. Paul and Silas had no doubt been enjoying Jason's hospitality, (v. 7) but on timely warning had withdrawn, and found refuge elsewhere, (see v. 10.)

Turned the world upside down—thrown the world into confusion. Chap. xxi: 28; xvi: 20; Luke xiii: 5; Acts xvii: 5; xviii: 22.

V. 7.—Do contrary to the Decrees—These Jews were some of them of the old of the Roman rule themselves; but, how very loyal they have become now!—See chap. xvi: 21.

V. 8.—Rulers—*patribus*, the very names given to the magistrates of Thessalonica, in an inscription on a still remaining arch of the city—so minute is the accuracy of this history.—*Brown*. It is an entirely different word to "magistrates" in chap. xii: 20, for Thessalonica enjoyed the right of self-government, and was free from control of the provincial governor.

V. 9.—Security—probably a money pledge of some kind that the public peace would not again be endangered by the missionaries; or perhaps a pledge that they should be sent away from the city.—See chap. xvi: 39.

V. 10.—Sent away.—See Matt. x: 23.

LINES OF APPROACH.

Review last lesson briefly, with a few words on concluding verses (35-40) of the chapter. Notice the points of resemblance in Paul's experience at Thessalonica and Berea. The parallel is very interesting and instructive.

TOPIC.—The Gospel Earnestly Studied.

1 Peter ii: 21; 2 Tim. iii: 14-17; 1 Peter ii: 21; 2 Tim. iii: 14-17; 1 Peter ii: 21; 2 Tim. iii: 14-17.

We have here the

REMARKS.

V. 10.—Berea was also, like the other places in this lesson, a city of Macedonia, 50 miles north-west from Thessalonica. It is a town even now of considerable population and importance—the modern Verria.

V. 11.—Received—attentively listened to. The word—the truth Paul preached. With all readiness of mind—compare Acts ii: 41; James i: 21; 1 Peter ii: 2; 2 Peter i: 9.

21. SEARCHING.—V. 11.—SEARCHED.—examined.—Scriptures—Old Testament, of course (John v: 39). The word "search" means to dig diligently, after the manner of miners, who search for precious metals. Dan. x: 21; Psalm i: 2; xvi: 27; 2 Tim. iii: 16; Isaiah xli: 10; Luke xvi: 29; xxiv: 44. "Whether" were so, 1 Thess. v: 21; 1 John iv: 13 (here "spirit" is equivalent to "teacher").

22. BUT NOT.—V. 12.—Therefore many of them (see v: 4) believed. (See

Rom. x: 17). Honourable women—influential; compare with verse 4.

4. PROTECTING. V. 14.—The brethren sent away Paul.

5. MORE NOBLE. V. 11.—Berean disposition. Palm cxix: 99-100; Prov. i: 5.



"Search the Scriptures."

AUGUST 26.—Paul at Athens.—Acts xv: 22-34. A.D. 52.

BEREAN READINGS.

Monday. The unknown God.—Acts xv: 22-34.
Tuesday. The only God.—Isa. xlv: 1-18.
Wednesday. The Invisible God.—Job xli: 1-12.
Thursday. God the Creator.—Gen. i: 1-27.
Friday. God the Father.—Gen. i: 1-27.
Saturday. God the Son.—John i: 1-18.
Sunday. God the Judge.—Isa. xli: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men; the man Christ Jesus.—1 Tim. ii: 5.

The close of our last lesson left Silas and Timothy at Berea. Paul had been sent away by the brethren, "to go, as it were, toward the sea." Those that conducted Paul brought him to Athens, a distance of about 250 miles by land, for a little further by sea. Having arrived there, he sends a message back to Silas and Timothy to come to him "with all speed" (v. 15). There, in Athens, surrounded by science, art, literature, wealth, refinement and idolatry, stands this lone missionary of the Cross. As he passes from street to street, everywhere heathen temples, altars and idols meet his gaze; and so anxious are the devotees of idolatry that no divinity shall be overlooked that they have erected an altar to AN UNKNOWN GOD. (v. 23). How could one possessing the burning love of Paul resist so grand an opportunity to preach from such a text? His heart was not within him, while he was musing, the fire burned, (Ps. xxix: 3). But, first of all, he must go to the synagogue, as was his wont, to reason with the Jews, who had a sort of zeal for that God unknown to the heathen, but a zeal "not according to knowledge" (Rom. x: 1-2). Finding them and the proselytes apathetic, he, the still lone man, goes forth to the "market," where he finds an audience ready to discuss any topic, especially if it be "some new thing." (v. 21). Here he encounters representatives of two different schools of philosophy, the Epicureans and the Stoics. By them the new doctrines are treated somewhat jestingly (v. 18); but as Paul appears "to be a setter forth of strange gods," they invite him to Aropegus of the *Areopagus*; that is, to the rocky eminence a little to the west of the Acropolis. The object was to place the Apostle where he could be heard by the multitude to greater advantage.—*Hackett*. Here, in fact that pre-eminent characterized him, (chap. i: 1-3), commenced his address by saying, "Ye men of Athens, all things which I behold, bear witness to your carefulness in religion." &c.

(Compare translation) v. 22, 23.