

that which was lost" was our Saviour's mission from heaven to earth, and is now our Saviour's commission to every believer, given from heaven to be carried out on the earth.

Interest in missions is not an immaterial, accidental feature in the life of some churches, which other churches may or may not feel, as they may choose. On the contrary, an interest in missions is the test of the life of a Church.

Without an interest in missions, no Christian Church has the true life of Christ. To say that such or such a church "is a strong church, but takes no interest in missions," is like saying that such a man "is a strong man," but has only one lung and a weak heart! If a Church is the Church of Christ, it has life eternal. It knows Him whom to know is life eternal. If we know Him, if we know how He blesses and enriches life, we cannot rest content and inactive while so many of our fellow men are without the precious and enriching knowledge. In proportion as a Church of Christ knows the Saviour of men and His Spirit, it uses every means He has given it to make Him known to others. If our Churches do not fully use their means for this most Christian end, they are not giving evidence that they have in them the life of Christ. No other form of activity can be substituted for this, the essential work of the Church. So to hold up Christ before the world that the presentation of Christ's life and teachings through the life and work of Christians shall perpetually draw men to Christ, is the first great duty of the Church.

Who has ever known a Church which was weakened, spiritually, morally, or financially, by giving too much to missions? Who has not known many a Church which has been dwarfed in growth, chilled and killed (if it ever had true life) because a small, self-centred view in their giving has limited its members to the "maintenance of its own ordinances?" There is no fear for the other financial interests of a Church which gives generously to missions.

No sign of the times is more encouraging than is the growing interest in mission work on the part of the great body of members of the Christian Endeavor societies. The world seems smaller in its distances to those whose memory does not reach back to a time when the continents were not traversed by time-annihilating trains, when electric cables did not underlie the oceans where lines of swift steamers ply so constantly that a visit to antipodal mission fields is now a mere pleasure excursion. The world seems smaller, and yet the value of each man upon it seems greater, we trust, to the younger members of our Christian Churches, as the heart-beat of love for Christ is felt in the thrill of Endeavor round the globe. Each new generation comes into the life of the Church as God's divinely commissioned re-enforcement for all good causes.

And in that mission work which we must believe to be supremely important in the plan of Him who made the missionary commission His parting message and command to His Church, we look to the societies of Christian Endeavor to give steady support and new impulse to the efforts of Christ's people. It was my privilege but three years since to be present at the annual sessions of one of our national missionary societies, at a meeting which Dr. F. E. Clark in addressing it characterized as the first meeting at which any one of our general missionary societies had planned to put its mission work before the Christian Endeavor societies in a meeting called especially for them. How steadily the missionary interests has spread among Christian Endeavor societies within these last three years!

Will not these young Christians assume a work of their own, in helping to pay off the debts that cripple our missionary boards? And shall not the systematic benevolence (the giving from principle, as an act of worship, which makes Christian Endeavor efforts), turned toward our mission boards, be accompanied by those larger, freer, more generous visions of what is possible which mark the divine power of youth, and by Christian Endeavor shall not our mission work be broadened, deepened, and enriched?

second imprisonment of Paul. It was written after Paul's imprisonment before the destruction of Jerusalem. It was probably written at Rome under Paul's direction. Paul and Luke were companions and fellow-laborers.

THOUGHTS.—Christ's ministry upon earth was a life-long example of the way to live acceptably before God. Teaching was not His first or chief office. He first lived in the most diligent practice of all the duties which He afterwards set forth to others, when He had entered the Office of Teacher. He lived His own doctrine, lived as He taught, performed all that He commanded. He is not only our divine Master but our divine example. Luke's first history to Theophilus was the Gospel concerning Christ, His Person, and His Work, and this knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ was the best and right instruction for a teacher to give first. The history of the apostolic church occupied the second place, and rightly so. As Jesus began, so would he teach us: First, to be in life what God commands; then are we free to declare the same unto others. We must first know God, then witness for Him. After a good beginning a glorious progress may follow. Before His death, Jesus prepared His disciples for that advent, and talked with them of the "promise of the Father," telling them that except He went away the Comforter would not come. From the words of prophecy, the words of John, and the words of Jesus, the disciples were assured that the Holy Ghost should be sent to them. When Christ triumphed over death, and came forth a risen Saviour, He made Himself known to His followers. He walked, talked ate and drank with them. When once assured that their Saviour was risen, they again heard Him speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; but now He directed His instructions and commands to prepare them for their more extensive work. It was the last stay of the Shepherd among His sheep, time enough to remove every doubt of His resurrection, and to direct them in their preparation for their apostolic mission, when they should be guided by Him through the Holy Spirit; when His physical presence should give place to the indwelling presence of the Comforter; and when they should carry the message of salvation to all nations, thus building up Christ's kingdom from every land. The forty days before the ascension were chosen by the Saviour in which to let His disciples more into the nature of the kingdom of God, as a kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. This would prepare them to receive the Holy Ghost. "The promise of the Holy Ghost was the most important communication which the Lord made to His apostles before His ascension."

The ascension of Jesus did not throw over the apostles the sadness which they experienced at His crucifixion. He ascended a living Saviour, leaving them assured that they were not to live without His care, but should be assisted by the Holy Ghost to carry out His commands. And before their eyes were turned from gazing upward toward heaven, the angel-messengers brought a sweet message of hope and comfort, declaring that Jesus should return in like manner as He went, not changed but as they last saw Him. Their next earnest desire was to receive the promised baptism, which would qualify them to go forth to spread the gospel truth. Nothing could be done until they received the baptism. Then most gladly would they return to Jerusalem, and seek the upper room where they might wait. The ascension was a fact. They were eye-witnesses to that fact. It was an epoch in their history, and in the world's history. From that time Jesus took His seat on the mediatorial throne. The time was at hand when the Gentiles should receive the offer of salvation; when all lines of distinction between nations and races should be destroyed, and the gospel should be preached to the uttermost parts of the earth. The ascension is a doctrine. It is the crowning point of the atonement; for when Christ returned to the Father He had completed all His earthly mission. He made the path from earth to heaven complete. He then began the work of an intercessor, and made the way for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

FIRST QUARTER.

- I. Jan. 3. Christ's Ascension. Acts 1. 1-14.
- II. " 10. The Holy Spirit Given. Acts 2. 1-13.
- III. " 17. A Multitude Converted. Acts 2. 32-47.
- IV. " 24. The Lame Man Healed. Acts 3. 1-16.
- V. " 31. The Boldness of Peter and John. Acts 4. 1-14.
- VI. Feb. 7. True and False Giving. Acts 4. 32 to 5. 11.
- VII. " 14. The Prison Opened. Acts 5. 17-32.
- VIII. " 21. The First Christian Martyr. Acts 6. 8-15; 7. 54-60.
- IX. " 28. The Disciples Dispersed. Acts 8. 1-17.
- X. Mar. 7. The Ethiopian Converted. Acts 8. 26-40.
- XI. " 14. Saul, the Persecutor, Converted. Acts 9. 1-12, 17-23.
- XII. " 21. Christian Self-Restraint. 1 Cor. 9. 19, 27.
- XIII. " 28. Review.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON I.—CHRIST'S ASCENSION.—JANUARY 3.

(Acts i: 1-14.)

GOLDEN TEXT:—"While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.—Luke xxiv. 51.

TIME AND PLACE.—A.D. 30. Mount Olivet.

PERSONS.—Jesus. Eleven Disciples. The Women and Mary.

INTRODUCTION.—The Acts was written by Luke. It contains the history of Christ's infant Church, and is the connecting link between the Gospels and the Epistles. It has been called The Gospel of the Holy Spirit, and The Gospel of the Resurrection. It covers a period of thirty years, from the Resurrection to the