



LESSON V.—MAY 4.

## The Church of Antioch in Syria.

Acts xi., 10-30. Commit to memory vs. 22-44. Read Isa., lxii.

### Golden Text.

'The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.'—Acts xi., 21.

### Home Readings.

Monday, April 28.—Acts xi., 19-30.  
Tuesday, April 29.—Matt. x., 16-23.  
Wednesday, April 30.—Matt. xxviii., 16-20.  
Thursday, May 1.—Luke x., 17-24.  
Friday, May 2.—II. Cor. viii., 1-9.  
Saturday, May 3.—I. Peter v., 1-11.  
Sunday, May 4.—Rom. xii., 1-15.

### Lesson Text.

(19) Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews only. (20) And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. (21) And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. (22) Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. (23) Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they cleave unto the Lord. (24) For he was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord. (25) Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul; (26) And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. (27) And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. (28) And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. (29) Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: (30) Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

### Suggestions.

In the wide sweep of history shown in the book of Acts we lose sight of nearly all the apostles. The subject of the book is gospel expansion, that is, the spread of the church into new countries and among different peoples. As Peter and Paul had most to do with this, we hear most about them. We would like to hear more about the other apostles. Perhaps they spent their time in Palestine, going to places where they had been before with Jesus, and gathering into the Christian fold many who had been prepared by the Master's own words to believe in His redemptive death and glorious resurrection. Another preacher of whom we would like to hear more, is a certain Joseph of the tribe of Levi, who showed such gifts of persuasive eloquence that the apostles called him Barnabas, or 'the exhorter.' We hear of him first as giving a large sum of money, the price of a farm, to the Apostles, for the poor (Acts iv., 36, 37). Then when Saul came to Jerusalem, a converted man, but still suspected by those who had known him formerly as a persecutor, Barnabas introduced him to the apostles, and told them the story of how Saul on his journey had seen the Master, and how the Master had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out

fearlessly in the cause of Jesus' (Acts ix., 27, 'Twentieth Century' version). Again, Barnabas is spoken of in connection with to-day's lesson, and later on we find him, true to his generous nature, keeping hold of his nephew John Mark to make a man of him in spite of discouragements.

The persecutions in which Stephen was martyred, and in which Saul was so cruel and violent (Acts iii., 8), had the good result of scattering the believers and so scattering the gospel. Probably many of those who had been converted in Jerusalem returned to homes in Gentile countries, where Jewish fanaticism would be less likely to molest them. It is supposed that Luke as well as Nicholas, the deacon, came from Antioch originally. Very likely they both returned there. Some also who were born in the island of Cyprus, and others from Cyrene in Africa, went to Antioch instead of taking the longer journey to their old homes. Antioch was a city of splendid buildings, 'bright with Greek frescoes, and adorned with every refinement which Roman wealth had borrowed from Ionian luxury' (Farrer). Its inhabitants were Syrians, Greeks and Jews. Its wickedness was proverbial, but wicked people are not beyond the reach of the gospel. Some of the disciples who went to Antioch began to proclaim the good news to the Greek-speaking population. These zealous preachers were not Jews born in Palestine, but Jews born in Cyprus and Cyrene, where they had mixed in business with a good many Gentiles, probably and knew that Gentiles were very much like themselves. So they did not need a special vision, as Peter did, to show them that the Greeks could be saved. Perhaps they had heard of Peter's experience, but preaching to the heathen was still a new thing in the church. When the church in Jerusalem heard that many heathen had turned to the Lord through the testimony of the believers, the eloquent preacher Barnabas was sent to aid the work, and perhaps to oversee it. This broad-minded man was glad indeed to see what God had done. His preaching was to the effect that all disciples of Christ, whatever they may have been in the past, were now to cleave to Christ alone (v. 23). Barnabas, 'full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,' did not think himself qualified to manage the whole of such a rapidly growing work. He sought out the talented Saul, who seems to have retired to his native city of Tarsus. Barnabas had befriended Saul before and took this opportunity to bring him into the most aggressive work of the whole field, a work that needed vigorous men. Here Saul had a year's experience of Christian work, and proved at once his sincerity and his value as a worker.

Now, when these Christian Jews preached in Antioch, they still spoke of Jesus as their Messiah, or 'anointed one.' Prophets, priests and kings were anointed in former times, Jesus is our prophet, priest and king, so the title was most appropriate. Speaking in Greek, the disciples used the word 'Christos' for 'anointed,' and the people of Antioch noticed, probably, how often they used this strange name. So they called the followers of Jesus 'Christ people.' Perhaps they meant it as a jest or jibe, but the name has become one which nations are proud to bear. 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye' (I. Peter iv. 14).

### C. E. Topic.

Sun., May 4.—Topic—Prayer a necessity. Matt. xxvi., 36-46.

### Junior C. E. Topic.

#### CARE FOR OUR BODIES.

Mon., April 28.—Consecrated bodies. Dan. iii., 28.

Tues., April 29.—Holy bodies. Rom. viii., 12, 13.

Wed., April 30.—Pure bodies. Heb. x., 22.

Thu., May 1.—Bodies full of light. Matt. vi., 22, 23.

Fri., May 2.—Anxiety for the body. Matt. vi., 25.

Sat., May 3.—Redeemed bodies. Rom. viii., 23.

Sun., May 4.—Topic—How Christ wants us to care for our bodies. Rom. xii., 1; I. Co., vi., 19, 20; ix., 24-27.

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## A Very Old Temperance Pledge.

On the blank leaf of an English Bible, which has been transmitted from father to son through many successive generations, and appears as the property of Robert Bolton, B.D., and preacher of God's Word at Broughton, Northamptonshire, is inscribed the following pledge:—

'From this day forward to the end of my life, I will never pledge any health or drink a carouse in a glass, cup, bowl, or other drinking instrument, whatsoever it be, from whomsoever it come; not to my own most gracious King, nor any of the greatest monarch or tyrant upon earth; nor my dearest friend, nor all the gould in the world shall ever enforce me. Not angel from heaven (who I know will not attempt it) shall persuade, nor Satan, with all his oulde subtilties, nor all the powers of hell itself, shall betray me. By this very sinne (for sinne it is, and not a little one), I doe plainly find that I have more offended and dishonored my glorious Maker and merciful Saviour, than by all other sinne I am subject unto; and for this very sinne it is my God hath often been strange unto me, and for that cause and noe other respect have I thus vowed, and I hereby beg my good Father in heaven of his great goodness and infinite mercy in Jesus Christ to assist me in the same, and be so favorable unto me for what is past. Amen.

R. BOLTON.

Broughton, 10th April, 1637.'

## A Champion's Testimony.

A champion cyclist was asked: 'Do you ever take spirits of any kind? I mean whiskey or brandy.'

'No; they cut the breath short. You can't race and take brandy. It may help a little, but it leaves you worse. I believe that if five or six men were together in a race, say two miles from the tape, and one was handed a drink of brandy, it might let him break away and win easily; but if he had ten miles, or had a long race before him, he would find great difficulty in riding. His breath would be cut short. The man who drinks brandy or whiskey will soon be broken-winded.'

'So you don't believe in brandy?'

'No; it may help for a short spurt, but it is no good for a long run. Only a temperate man can be a good racer.'—Temperance Record.'

## A Short Decisive Alcoholic Summary.

(By Dr. Sir B. W. Richardson.)

1. That alcohol, habitually used, can of itself produce disease from which the abstainer is exempt.
2. That it will aggravate diseases to which all are liable.
3. That it renders those who habitually use it more open to attacks of various forms of illness.
4. That the alcoholic has a worse chance of recovery from a fever or an injury than the abstainer.

If these propositions are established the case stands thus: That there is always risk in the use of alcoholic liquors, but this risk is entirely absent in those who abstain.

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