

SCHOLARS' NOTES

(From Westminster Question Book.)

LESSON IV.

April 22, 1883.]

[Acts 9: 19-31.]

SAUL PREACHING CHRIST,

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 20-22.

(Revised Version.)

And he took food and was strengthened. 19 And he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway 20 in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. And all that heard him 21 were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priest. But Saul increased 22 the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

And when many days were fulfilled, the 23 Jews took counsel together to kill him; but 24 their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him; but his disciples took 25 him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

And when he was come to Jerusalem, he as- 26 sayed to join himself to the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took 27 him, and brought him to the apostles; and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them 28 going in and going out at Jerusalem, preach- 29 ing boldly in the name of the Lord; and he spoke and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they went about to kill him. And when the 30 brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

So the church throughout all Judaea and 31 Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."—Gal. 1: 23.

TOPIC.—The Convert's Early Experiences.

LESSON PLAN.—1. AMAZED HEARERS, vs. 10-22. 2. CONSPIRING ENEMIES, vs. 23-25. 3. DIS- TRUSTFUL BELIEVERS, vs. 26-31.

Time.—A. D. 37-40. Places.—Damascus—Jerusa- lem.

INTRODUCTORY.

Our lesson to-day follows in close connection with the last, but its events cover a period of more than three years. Saul was now a humble disciple, forgiven and baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Weak from his long fast, he re- ceived food and was strengthened. At once he began to preach Jesus, whom before he had per- secuted. It soon appeared that it would not be safe for him to remain at Damascus. Accord- ingly, he left the city and went into Arabia. Gal. 1: 17. Then he returned to Damascus, and preached boldly in the name of Jesus. Our les- son continues his history from this point.

LESSON NOTES.

V. 19. MEAT—food. V. 20. PREACHED CHRIST—Revised Version (following the oldest man- uscripts), "Jesus." The new man began a new work. V. 21. THIS NAME—the early Christians were designated "callers upon Christ;" they prayed directly to him, invoked his aid and paid him divine honors. Clearly, it is right to pray not only to the Father, but also to the Son. V. 22. VERY CHRIST—the true Messiah. V. 23. MANY DAYS—this includes the time he spent in Arabia. Gal. 1: 17, 18. On his return he at once resumed his ministry, to the great peril of his life. V. 23. TOOK COUNSEL—plotted together. The greatness of his danger appears from his own account, 2 Cor. 11: 32. V. 25. BY THE WALL—through the window of a house upon the city wall. 2 Cor. 11: 33; Josh. 2: 15. The first of many hair-breadth escapes. V. 26. ASSAYED—attem- pted. This was the year after his conversion. AFRAID OF HIM—suspicious, and slow to believe in the reality of the change. There are some stains it is very hard to wash out. Men are very slow to trust those who have been notoriously wicked or have treated them badly. V. 27. BARNABAS—this man's high standing (ch. 4: 36; 11: 23) gave his word great weight with the apos- tles. Stand by your friend when he is under a cloud and you know him to be trustworthy and true. To THE APOSTLES—to Peter and James. Gal. 1: 18, 19. DECLARED—gave a full account. V. 28. COMING IN—during fifteen days. Gal. 1: 18. V. 29. GRECIANS—Jews and proselytes speaking the Greek language. WENT ABOUT—endeavored. V. 30. SENT HIM FORTH—he wanted to remain at Jerusalem, but received ex- press command from the Lord to go elsewhere. (See ch. 22: 17-21.)

TEACHINGS:

- 1. God can change his bitterest enemy to his most devoted friend.
2. Young Christians should begin at once to testify for Christ.
3. Christian strength is gained by Christian service.
4. Faithfulness to Christ often provokes hatred and opposition.
5. A holy church will be a growing church.

LESSON V.

April 29, 1883.]

[Acts 9: 32-43.]

PETER WORKING MIRACLES.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 32-35.

(Revised Version.)

And it came to pass, as Peter went through- 32 out all parts, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a 33 certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years; for he was palsied. And 34 Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee: arise, and make thy bed. And straightway he arose. And all that dwelt at 35 Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple 36

named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it 37 came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. And as 38 Lydda was nigh unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, intreating him, Delay not to come on unto us. And Peter arose and went with 39 them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them 40 all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, 41 and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it be- 42 came known throughout all Joppa: and many believed on the Lord. And it came to 43 pass, that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."—Acts 9: 34.

TOPIC.—Christ the Giver of Health and Life.

LESSON PLAN.—1. THE HEALING OF AENEAS, vs. 32-35. 2. THE MOURNING FOR DORCAS, vs. 36-39. 3. HER RESTORATION TO LIFE, vs. 40-43.

Time.—Probably about A. D. 40. Places.—Lydda and Joppa.

INTRODUCTORY.

Luke, having carried the history of Saul to a convenient resting-place, now goes back to take up another thread of history. The persecution that arose at the martyrdom of Stephen had carried the gospel throughout Palestine. What threatened to be its destruction had given it new vigor. The blood of the first martyr was the seed of the Church. Peter undertook an apostolic visitation for oversight and instruction. Our lesson to-day tells us of two events that took place during the journey. It was not until Peter's return from it that Saul came from Damascus to Jerusalem, as related in our last lesson, and spent fifteen days with him (Gal. 1: 18), coming in and going out at Jerusalem. v. 28.

LESSON NOTES.

V. 32. LYDDA—about ten miles east of Joppa. V. 33. AENEAS—probably a Greek-speaking Jew. V. 34. JESUS CHRIST—Peter was careful to show that this miracle was wrought by the power of Jesus Christ. IMMEDIATELY—with the believ- ing effort came the strength to obey. V. 35. SHARON—Sharon, a fertile plain along the coast north of Joppa. V. 36. JOPPA—an ancient sea- port town on the Mediterranean, about forty miles north-west of Jerusalem; now called Jaffa. TABITHA—an Aramaic name; in Greek, Dorcas, each meaning "gazelle." Among East- ern poets the gazelle was a favorite emblem of a beautiful woman. FULL—her heart and life, her time and strength. V. 38. SENT UNTO HIM TWO MEN—as more urgent and respectful than one. V. 39. WEeping—there is no epithet so expressive as the tears of the poor. WHICH DORCAS MADE—while Jesus lived women min- istered to his personal comfort; when he was gone they ministered to him in the person of his poor ones. Dorcas has given her name to female societies that do a work like hers. V. 40. PUT THEM ALL FORTH—after Christ's example. Luke 8: 51. So also did Elijah. 1 Kings 17: 19. PRAYED—he looks to God for the working of this great miracle of mercy. ARISE—the command which alone could raise the dead. V. 41. IT CAME TO PASS—providentially, as a part of the divine plan. God had a purpose, as we shall see in our next lesson, in having Peter tarry longer at Joppa. MANY DAYS—literally, "sufficient days"—just as many as were needed to carry out God's plan.

TEACHINGS:

- 1. True piety sinks self and exalts Christ.
2. It is full of unselfish kindness and charity.
3. Women have a work to do for Christ and his people.
4. The death of the good is a loss to the living.
5. It is the life of Christ that gives life and healing to the world.

LESSON VI.

May 6, 1883.]

[Acts 10: 30-44.]

PETER PREACHING TO THE GENTILES.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 42-44.

(Revised Version.)

And Cornelius said, Four days ago, unto this 30 hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, and said, Cornelius, 31 thy prayers is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth in the 32 house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now 33 therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord. And Peter 34 opened his mouth, and said,

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respect- 35 er of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. The word which he sent 36 unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know, which 27 was published throughout all Judaea, begin- ning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: even Jesus of Nazareth, how 38 that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. And we are 39 witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave 40 him to be made manifest, not to all the people, 41 but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he 42 charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him 43 bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

While Peter yet spake these words, the 44 Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"On the Gentiles was also poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."—ACTS 10: 45.

TOPIC.—The Gospel for the World.

LESSON PLAN.—1. THE CENTURION'S VISION, vs. 30-33. 2. THE GOSPEL FOR ALL NATIONS, vs. 34, 35. 3. CHRIST'S LIFE MISSION, vs. 36-44.

Time.—Probably about A. D. 40, soon after the last lesson. Place.—Caesarea, on the Medi- terranean coast, in the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion.

INTRODUCTORY.

Hitherto only Jews and Jewish proselytes had been received into the church. In our lesson to-day we have the first recorded instance of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, a devout man, who had learned to worship the one true God, was told by an angel to send to Joppa for Peter, who would tell him what he ought to do. While his messengers were on the way, Peter had a vision to prepare him for their coming. By God's command he went with them to Caesarea. There he found Cornelius in the midst of rela- tives and friends whom he had brought to- gether to listen to the apostles' words. How Peter preached to these Gentile hearers, and how the Holy Spirit fell upon them while he was preaching, we are told in to-day's lesson—a les- son of special interest to us Gentiles, since it shows that Jesus came to save not the Jews only but Gentiles also.

LESSON NOTES.

V. 30. THE NINTH HOUR—three o'clock in the afternoon. A MAN—an angel of God (v. 3); a heavenly messenger in human form. Heb. 1: 14. V. 33. BEFORE GOD—with a sense of his pres- ence and expecting a message from him. COM- MANDED THREE—Cornelius did not doubt that God, who had told him to send for Peter, had told Peter what to say to him. V. 34. OF A TRUTH—clearly, no longer dimly and uncertainly. NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS—he does not accept a Jew just because he is a Jew, nor reject a Gentile because he is such. (See Col. 3: 11; Rom. 2: 28, 29.) V. 36. THE WORD—the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. PREACHING PEACE—peace with God. Zeel. 6: 13; Eph. 2: 14-17; Col. 1: 20; Rom. 5: 1. LORD OF ALL—both Jew and Gentile. V. 38. ANOINTED JESUS—set him apart and furnished him to be the Saviour of men. Peter confines himself in his preaching to the person, offices and work of Christ, WITH POWER—the Holy Ghost was given without measure to him. WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD—a short statement of our Lord's life and labor of love. We should try to be like him. FOR—his miracles proved that God was with him. V. 39. WE—the apostles. V. 40. RAISED UP—from the dead. SHOWED HIM—Revised Version, "gave him to be made manifest"—caused him to ap- pear openly. V. 41. NOT TO ALL—only to his chosen disciples. WHO DID EAT—and thus were able to witness that it was the very same person with whom they had been familiar. Luke 22: 18; 24: 41-43. V. 42. COMMANDED—Mark 16: 15, 16. QUICK—living. He is Lord of all (v. 36), Judge of all, and Saviour of all, in all nations, whosoever (v. 43) believe in him. Ob- serve how Peter dwells on the four great doc- trines of the gospel—the mission of Christ, his death, his resurrection and the final judgment. V. 44. FELL ON ALL THEM—this "Gentile Pen- tecost" was very much like the giving of the Holy Ghost at the Jewish Pentecost at Jerusa- lem. While Peter was speaking these words of a gospel for all nations and for WHOEVER WILL, the Holy Spirit fell on them all. Whether there was any outward visible appearance—any rush of wind or tongue of flame—we are not told; but the result was that they began to speak with tongues.

TEACHINGS:

- 1. Christ came to be the Saviour of Gentiles as well as Jews.
2. He is to be our Judge as well as our Saviour.
3. We should hear the gospel with a desire to learn all that God has commanded.
4. We must both hear and believe if we would be saved.
5. While we speak for Christ we should expect that the Holy Spirit will touch the hearts of hearers.

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