

LESSON VIII—February 21st, 1897.

The First Christian Martyr. Acts 6: 8-15; 7: 54-60.

(Commit to memory verses 57-60).

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."
Rev. 2: 10.

PROVE THAT—We should forgive our enemies. Acts 7: 60.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Question 89. *How is the word made effectual to salvation?* A. The Spirit of God maketh the reading but especially the preaching of the word an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

LESSON HYMNS. *Children's Hymnal*—Nos. 36, 69, 188, 192.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday.* The first christian martyr. Acts 6: 8-15. *Tuesday.* The first christian martyr. Acts 7: 51-60. *Wednesday.* The roll of honor. Heb. 11: 32-40. *Thursday.* Our example. Heb. 12: 1-6. *Friday.* More than conquerors. Rom. 8: 31-39. *Saturday.* The eternal glory. 2 Cor. 4: 7-18. *Sabbath.* A crown of life. Rev. 2: 1-11. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections*).

HELPS IN STUDYING.

INTRODUCTORY. The distribution of the common fund to which Barnabas and Ananias had been contributors was a very delicate business. The apostles were unable to give it their personal supervision and it was not always judiciously managed. Accordingly at their suggestion seven men were chosen who should act as "Deacons" and attend to the department of church charity and finance, allowing the apostles to give themselves exclusively to their spiritual duties. Of these new officers Stephen seems to have been one of the ablest and he was soon singled out by the Jews as a special object of hatred. Our lesson contains the story of his martyrdom and the cause of it.

LESSON PLAN. I. Faithful unto death. vs. 8-15. II. The Crown of Life. vs. 54-50.

8. Full of grace and power (R. V.)—He was a very good man, and full of spiritual power both in speaking and working miracles. **9. The synagogue of the Libertines**—or "the freedmen." These were the children of Jews who had been carried captive to Rome, but who had been freed by their masters and now dwelt at Jerusalem. They had a "church" by themselves. The Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and the province of Asia, also had each a separate congregation and place of worship. **10. The Spirit**—The Holy Spirit which gave power to his words. **11. Suborned men**—Bribed men to bear false witness against him. They knew that they were misrepresenting Stephen's words. This was a very serious charge (Deut. 13: 6, 10). **12. Stirred up the people**—There was nothing that would rouse the people like an insult to their temple and religion. The words imply that Stephen was treated with great roughness. **13. A half-truth** is sometimes the blackest kind of a lie. Stephen had perhaps repeated Christ's words to the woman of Samaria (John 4: 21; Acts 7: 48). **14. This Jesus of Nazareth**—Spoken with the utmost contempt. Change the customs—Do away with the whole ceremonial law. This most glorious truth was accounted blasphemy. **15. The face of an angel**—A supernatural radiance appeared

upon it. **Cut to the heart**—This was not the penitent grief of those who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost (2: 37), but a frenzy of rage, like a wild beast grinding its teeth at him (Job 16: 9; Ps. 35: 16; 37: 12). **55. Saw the glory of God**—Some visible sign of God's presence. The brightness which conceals the Deity from mortal eyes. Jesus standing—in the place of dignity and power. The glorified Jesus is generally represented as "sitting" to denote his victorious rest and permanent position (Matt. 26: 64; Eph. 1: 20; Mark 16: 19). Here he appears as if risen to welcome the first martyr of the church. **56. Son of man**—This name is nowhere else (except in Dan. 7: 13) applied to Christ by any person other than himself. **57. Stopped their ears**—His words appeared to them the height of blasphemy. **58. Stoned him**—The person to be stoned was thrown down, with his hands bound, from an elevation, then a large stone was rolled down upon him by the witnesses, after which all the people present cast stones at him until he was dead. **60. Calling upon the Lord (R. V.)**—He asks Jesus to receive back the spirit which he had created and redeemed (Ps. 31: 5; Luke 23: 46). **60. Lay not this sin**—Only Jesus could teach such a prayer (Luke 23: 34). Perhaps this prayer was answered in Paul's conversion.

LESSONS. 1. We must speak for Christ even if it excites opposition. 2. We may expect to be misrepresented by enemies. 3. God will give courage and peace in trials. 4. Christ is very near his suffering servants. 5. To die is to fall asleep in Christ.