

The Sunday School

BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

Second Quarter, 1902.

APRIL TO JUNE.

Lesson VII. May 18. Acts 13:1-12.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations—Matt. 28:19.

EXPLANATORY.

I. A MISSIONARY CHURCH.—Vs. 1, 2. 1. NOW THERE WERE . . . AT ANTIOCH. On Antioch, see Lesson V. PROPHETS. The prophet is one who speaks for God, the interpreter of God; one who brings a message from God, inspired by God. The forthtelling may be to announce future events, or to declare truth and duty. These were men of insight and foresight, with minds especially susceptible to divine influences. TEACHERS. Instructors in truth and duty; those who studied God's Word and his providence, and the nature of men, and instructed the church.

BARNABAS. Mentioned, as is Saul, without remark because he has just been named in the narrative. SIMEON. Another spelling of Simon and "Symeon," R. V. CALLED NIGER, i. e., black. The name had no more to do with his race or color than now you can tell the color or race of Mr. Black, or Mr. Brown, or Mr. White from his name. Simon Black was a useful, worthy saint, a power in Antioch, but unknown to history. LUCIUS (not Luke, Greek, *Lucas*, but a different name) of CYRENE, a province of northern Africa. He may be the same person as is described by Paul as his kinsman (Rom. 16:21) and one of the men of Cyrene mentioned in Acts 11:19, 20, as carrying the gospel to Antioch. MANAEN. The same as Menahem, one of the kings of Israel. WHICH HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP WITH. One word in the Greek, either the "comrade," or the "foster-brother" of HEROD THE TETRARCH (Antipas.)

AND SAUL. Mentioned last as the latest comer, perhaps the youngest, and as Luke was writing probably what Paul himself told him, he would naturally place himself last.

2. AS THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD. "Here the context seems to point to some unusual public religious service." Ramsay translates, "As these were leading a life of religious duties and fasts." AND FASTED. Fasting would seem to have its basis in, first, a grief over sin so deep and intense that all desire for food is taken away; or such a strong desire for holiness, for the progress of God's work, for the removal of all hindrances to, that we forget to eat. Therefore it implies that we

PUZZLED.

Hard Work Sometimes to Raise Children.

Children's taste is oftentimes more accurate in selecting the right kind of food to fit the body than that of adults. Nature works more accurately through the children.

A Brooklyn lady says, "Our little boy has long been troubled with weak digestion. We could never persuade him to take more than one taste of any kind of cereal food. He was a weak little chap and we were puzzled to know what to feed him on. One lucky day we tried Grape-Nuts. Well you never saw a child eat with such a relish, and it did me good to see him. From that day on it seemed as though we could almost see him grow. He would eat Grape-Nuts for breakfast and supper and I think he would have liked the food for dinner.

The difference in his appearance is something wonderful.

My husband has never been known to fancy cereal foods of any kind, but he became very fond of Grape-Nuts and has been much improved in health since using it.

A friend has two children who were formerly afflicted with the rickets. I was satisfied that this disease was caused by lack of proper nourishment. They showed it. So I urged her to use Grape-Nuts as an experiment and the result was almost magical. They continued the food and today both children are well and strong as any children in this City, and, of course, my friend is a firm believer in the right kind of food, for she has the evidence before her eyes every day.

When I have some task to perform about the house and don't feel very strong, a saucer of Grape-Nuts and cream stimulates me and I am able to do the task at hand with ease.

We are now a healthy family and naturally believe in Grape Nuts." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

are doing that which fasting expresses. It is saying, I desire this good gift of God more than food, more than bodily pleasure, more than all else besides.

II. THE FIRST FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.—Vs. 2, 3. THE HOLY GHOST SAID. In answer to their prayers, and to their spirit of service. It is not stated by what means the Holy Spirit voiced his will, whether through prophets or through a general simultaneous impulse pervading the church. We must be careful not to limit the ways in which the Holy Ghost speaks to us. Impressions on the feelings are not the only language of the Spirit. He speaks to us by conscience, by reason, by providence, by his work, and by inspiration, by speaking unmistakably within our souls, and within the church as a whole. SEPARATE ME, i. e., set apart for this special work FOR THE WORK WHEREUNTO I HAVE CALLED THEM. Paul was called definitely at the time of his conversion, Barnabas perhaps in a more general way, by fitness, by providence, by an inward call, by spiritual longing.

3. AND, rather, "then." In response to the command of the Holy Spirit. WHEN THEY (the church) HAD FASTED AND PRAYED, indicating a special meeting held for the purpose. AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM. By representatives of the church; thus recognizing their commission as from the church, guided by the Holy Spirit; expressing the fact that the prayers, the sympathies, the authority of the church were communicated to them. The church thus accepted them as their missionaries, and pledged themselves to sustain them by their sympathy, their prayers, and whatever aid they might need.

III. THEIR FIRST MISSION FIELD. THE CONTEST FOR A SOUL.—Vs. 4-11. 4. SENT FORTH BY THE HOLY GHOST, as related above. Luke keeps before our minds the fact that the origin of the missionary work was the Holy Spirit. The disciples before had been urged to go by persecution; now they went spontaneously under the influence of the Spirit. DEPARTED (went down from the higher land to the sea) UNTO SYRACUS. The seaport of Antioch, sixteen miles away down the river Orontes. SAILING TO CYPRUS. A voyage of eighty to one hundred miles.

5. SALAMIS was on the eastern extremity of the island, the nearest port to Antioch. THEY PREACHED THE WORD OF GOD. God's message of love and salvation through Jesus the Christ. IN THE SYNAGOGUES. As was their invariable custom to do at first. For the Jews were most easily reached, since they believed the Bible and expected the Messiah. AND THEY HAD ALSO JOHN. John Mark, author of the Gospel according to Mark, cousin of Barnabas, and son of Mary of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25). TO THEIR MINISTER. For their assistant or attendant. He probably was anxious to go, and could in many ways be of excellent service, while at the same time he was in training for further usefulness.

6. GONE THROUGH THE ISLE. The "whole island." The word for "gone through" is one used, not merely to express travelling, but "the process of going over the country as a missionary for the purpose of evangelizing." UNTO PAPHOS. Now Baffo, at the western end of the island. A CERTAIN SORCERER, magician, wizard, (wise-ard.) sage, the name given to the wise men from the East (Matt. 2:1, 7, 16). The Magian represented in his single personality both the modern fortune-teller and the modern man of science." A JEW. Luke uses "the triple beat, Magian, false prophet, Jew." BARNABAS. Son of Jesus, or Joshua.

7. WHICH WAS WITH THE DEPUTY. As one of his train which always accompanied a Roman governor; a friend and associate. "This position was an honorable one, gratifying at once to ambition, to vanity, and to worse passions."

DEPUTY. Greek, "proconsul," that is, the governor of a province under the senate at Rome. This was formerly regarded as a mistake, because Strabo, the historian, says that Cyprus was an imperial province, under the emperor, and therefore the governor would be called a "propraetor," not a proconsul. But it was discovered that Augustus (B. C. 22) transferred Cyprus to the senate, and Luke uses the right word—proconsul. This is confirmed by a Greek inscription at Soloi in the north of Cyprus, found by General Cernola, and dated "in the proconsulship of Paulus." A PRUDENT MAN. R. V. "a man of understanding;" of practical ability, of good common sense and judgment. CALLED FOR BARNABAS AND SAUL. This shows his sound mind. He would search wherever there was hope of more light. "That Paul got a hearing with the consul, Professor Ramsay suggests, was because he appeared in the character of a travelling teacher of moral science, such as were common in that age."

8. BUT ELYMAS. Not necessarily a proper name. It is simply Aramaic for

Magian, magician, sorcerer. WITHSTOOD THEM. Opposed them, because he saw that his influence and power and the emoluments of his place were gone if Sergius Paulus accepted the gospel. TURN . . . FROM THE FAITH, from believing the gospel. The action of Elymas shows that Paul had made no little impression on the sorcerer.

9. SAUL (WHO ALSO IS CALLED PAUL.) This connects the two names with the same man. In the story of his life among the Jews he is called by his Jewish name Saul. Now that he is beginning his labors among the Roman Gentiles, his Roman name is used from this time on.

10. FULL OF ALL SUBTILTY. Deceit, guile, underhandedness. AND ALL MISCHIEF. CHILD OF THE DEVIL. And like his father. He had been adopted by Satan by his own choice; an immense fall from his child name "Bar-jesus," son of Jesus, or Joshua. "Paul was not flinging bitter words at random, or yielding to passion, but was laying the black heart bare to the man's own eyes, that seeing himself as God saw him might startle him into penitence." DEVIL, slanderer, false accuser, and therefore the ENEMY OF ALL RIGHTeousNESS, and therefore opposed to Jesus, who is the son of righteousness. PERVERT THE RIGHT WAYS OF THE LORD. Referring not to perverting men, but God's ways with men to save them,—his truths.

11. THE HAND OF THE LORD. not of Paul. Paul announced the fact, but did not produce it. Hand is the instrument by which a work is performed. AND THOU SHALT BE BLIND, NOT SEEING THE SUN. This phrase indicates total blindness. A MIST AND A DARKNESS. Expressing the gradual process of the loss of sight, ending in complete blindness.

12. THE FIRST CONVERT (so far as the history relates).—Vs. 12. THEN THE DEPUTY, WHEN HE SAW WHAT WAS DONE, BELIEVED. The miracle was not his only reason for believing. The apostles had been teaching and preaching, and this miracle completed the evidence and turned the scale. BELIEVED. Became a disciple of Christ. BRING ASTONISHED AT THE DOCTRINE (the teaching) OF THE LORD, both at the manner of teaching, thus confirmed by miracle, and at what was taught about the Lord. The new truths from heaven, the new views of the love of God, the promises and blessings of the gospel, forgiveness of sin, new life, the presence of the Holy Spirit, were a new and marvelous revelation to the governor, and far more astonishing than the miracle.

COULDN'T.

A few days ago we noticed a little boy amusing himself by watching the frolicsome flight of birds that were playing around him. At length a beautiful bobolink perched on a bough of an apple tree near where the urchin sat, and maintained his position, apparently unconscious of his dangerous neighbor.

The boy seemed astonished at his impudence, and after regarding him steadily for a minute or two, obeying the instinct of his baser part, he picked up a stone and was preparing to throw it, steadying himself for a good aim. The little arm drawn backward without alarming the bird, whose throat swelled, and forth came nature's plea: "A-link, a-link, a-link, bob-o-link, bob-o-link, a-no-sweet, a-no-sweet. I know it, I know it, a-link, a-link, don't throw it, throw it, throw it," etc. And he didn't throw it. Slowly the little arm fell to its natural position and the stone dropped harmlessly. The minstrel charmed the murderer.

Anxious to hear an expression of the little fellow's feelings we inquired: "Why didn't you stone him, my boy? You might have killed him and carried him home." The little fellow looked up dolefully, as though he suspected our meaning; and with an expression half shame, half sorrow, he replied: "Just couldn't, because he sung so." Kindergarten Magazine.

Many of us find life hard and full of pain. The world uses us rudely and roughly. We suffer wrongs and injuries. Other people's clumsy feet tread upon our tender spirits. We must endure misfortunes, trials, disappointments. We cannot avoid these things, but we should not allow the harsh experiences to deaden our sensibilities, or make us stoical or sour. The true problem of living is to keep our hearts sweet and gentle in the hardest conditions and experiences.—J. R. Miller.

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