

## LESSON NOTES.

## SECOND QUARTER.

## STUDIES IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

A. D. 37.] LESSON II. [April 8.

## PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN.

Acts 8. 26-40. Commit to memory verses 35-38.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

And he went on his way rejoicing.—Acts 8. 39.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

God will lead step by step to the light each earnest seeker after Christ.

TIME.—A. D. 37. Early summer. Immediately after last lesson.

PLACE.—Southwestern Judea, in the sparsely-inhabited region between Jerusalem and Gaza, which lies to the south-west, near the Mediterranean coast.

CIRCUMSTANCES.—Philip having preached in Samaria, was sent upon another mission, by which the Gospel would be carried to the distant heathen. As Simon Magus was an example of false conversion, so now we have an example of true conversion.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—26. *Go toward the south*—i.e., from Samaria. *Unto the way*—By going south he would strike the road which ran south-west from Jerusalem to Egypt through Gaza. *Which is desert*—i.e., the part of the road to which he was to go. 27. *Ethiopia*—All the African lands south of Egypt, especially Nubia, Senar, Kordofan, and part of Abyssinia. The people were black and large—the land was wealthy. *Candace*—Candace was the general name of the queens of Ethiopia, as Pharaoh was of the sovereigns of Egypt, and Caesar of the Roman emperors. *Jerusalem to worship*—He was a native Ethiopian, who had been converted to Judaism, and hence made a visit to Jerusalem. 28. *Read Isaiah*—i.e., Isaiah. He probably was reading aloud. 32. *The place of Scripture*—Isaiah 53, perhaps suggested by the discussions he must have heard at Jerusalem about the Messiah. 35. Philip preached unto him Jesus—He showed how this prophecy of the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus. 39. *The Spirit... caught away Philip*.—Either miraculously bore him, or led him by a sudden impulse to go away. 40. *Azotus*—Ashdod, twenty miles north-east of Gaza. *Preached in all the cities*—On the road along the coast, as Ezron, Rama, Joppa, Lydda. *To Caesarea*—The capital of the Syrian province, seventy miles north-west of Jerusalem, on the Mediterranean, south of Mount Carmel.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Philip.—Ethiopia.—The road from Jerusalem to Gaza.—Isaiah's description of the Messiah as fulfilled in Jesus.—The Ethiopian's faith.—Profession of Christ by baptism.—Rejoicing in believing.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What had given a new impulse to the spread of the Gospel? In what country had Philip preached? What example of a false conversion was given in our last lesson? Of what have we an example in the present lesson?

## SUBJECT: THE PROGRESS OF A SOUL TO CHRIST.

1. FROM IMPENITENCE TO WORSHIP (vs. 26, 27).—Where was Philip? To what place was he sent? By whom? Where is Gaza? What was desert? Would one expect to do good in such a place? Do we often find our work in unlikely places? Whom did Philip meet there? What was his business? Where was Ethiopia? Was this man a heathen or a Jew? Why had he gone up to Jerusalem? How far was it? Does this show his desire to know the truth and to do God's will? What are we taught here about the first duties of any one who wants to become a Christian?

2. FROM WORSHIP TO THE WORD (v. 28).—What was the Ethiopian doing while travelling? What does this teach us? Will all who really want to become Christians read the Bible? How will such persons read it? Is there any other place where we can learn how to be saved?

3. FROM THE WORD TO PERSONAL INQUIRY (vs. 29-35).—How could Philip hear the Ethiopian read? What led Philip to go to him? In what way are we led by the Spirit? What did Philip say? The Ethiopian's reply? To whom should you go to get expla-

nations of the Scripture? Where was the Ethiopian reading? How could Philip preach Christ from this? Why should all inquirers be pointed directly to Christ?

4. FROM INQUIRY TO FAITH (vs. 36-37).—What suggested baptism to the Ethiopian? Does this show that he believed? What must he do before he could be baptized? What was his confession of faith? Why does this belief fit one to unite with the Church?

5. FROM FAITH TO CONFESSION OF CHRIST. Why did the Ethiopian want to be baptized? Does every true Christian want to confess Christ? What does Paul say of confession in Romans 10 9, 10? What good does baptism do? What became of Philip? Why did the new convert rejoice?

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. God gives us work sometimes in most unexpected places.
2. It is worth while to go far and do much to become a Christian.
3. If we take each step as we come to it, we will soon be led to Christ.
4. We should use every opportunity for reading and meditation.
5. We should read the Bible even if we do not understand it all.
6. We should get help in our religious life.
7. Confessing Christ naturally follows believing in Christ.
8. It is a matter of great rejoicing to become a Christian.

## REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in Concert).

7. Where was Philip next sent? ANS. To convert an Ethiopian to Christ. 8. What was the inquirer's first step? ANS. To go to the house of God to worship. 9. What was the next step? ANS. Reading the Bible! 10. What was the third step? ANS. Seeking help of older Christians. 11. What did he then do? ANS. He believed in Jesus Christ. 12. What followed when he believed? ANS. He was baptized and went on his way rejoicing.

A. D. 37.] LESSON III. [April 15.

## SAUL'S CONVERSION.

Acts. 9. 1-18. Commit to memory vs. 1-6.

## GOLDEN TEXT.

And he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.—Acts 9. 18.

## CENTRAL TRUTH.

Jesus Christ changes the heart and life.

TIME.—Midsummer of A. D. 37. Paul 35 years old.

PLACE.—Near Damascus. 140 miles north-east of Jerusalem.

RULES.—Caligula, emperor of Rome (1). Vitellius, governor of Syria. No governor at Jerusalem. Jonathan, son of Annas, was high priest.

SAUL.—(1) Parentage. His parents were pure-blooded Jews, of the tribe of Benjamin, were of good rank, and Hellenists, or Greek-speaking. (2) Birth. At Tarsus, capital of Cilicia, A. D. 2. (3) Names. Saul was his Hebrew name, Paul his Roman name. (4) Education. Tarsus was the seat of one of the three great universities of the world. He was taught there and at home till ten years of age. Learned the trade of tent-making. Spoke naturally Greek and Hebrew. Went to Jerusalem when ten or twelve years old, and studied with Gamaliel. Became a Rabbi and member of the Sanhedrin. Was a very talented and promising young man.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. *Breathing out*—His vital breath was threatening. *High priest*—Who by Roman permission had authority over foreign Jews in matters of religion. 2. *Of this way*—Of Christ's way of religion and worship. 3. *As he journeyed*—On horseback; it was nearly a week's journey. *Damascus*—The oldest city in the world. It then contained 50,000 Jews. *A light from heaven*—It was midday (Acts 26. 13). In this light he saw Jesus himself (v. 7; ch. 22. 14). 5. *Kick against the pricks*—The ox-goats. Oxen kicking against the goad hurt themselves and gained nothing. So Paul in resisting the truth, and disobeying conscience. 7. *Stood speechless*—They had fallen at first (26. 14) and had risen up. Or it may mean simply "they remained speechless." *Hearing a voice*—i.e., the sound, but not understanding the words (22. 9). The words were in Hebrew. 9. *Three days without sight*—He was blinded by

the light. In these days he had his great conflict. 11. *Strait*—Then the main street of Damascus, 100 feet wide. Saul before his conversion was sincere, moral, religious, conversion (1) made him more truly sincere; (2) filled his soul with love to God and man, making him truly moral; (3) changed his feelings toward Christ; (4) brought the forgiveness of sins; (5) changed his life-purpose.

## QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What was Philip doing in our last lesson? What was Saul doing at the same time?

## SUBJECT: A MARVELLOUS CONVERSION.

1. BEFORE CONVERSION (vs. 1, 2).—Who was Saul? His parents? When was he born and where? What were his names? Where was he educated? What trade did he learn? What languages did he speak? Of what powerful body was he a member? How old was he at the time of this lesson? What kind of a young man was he? What do we first hear of him? (8. 1-4). What did he still continue to do? Meaning of "breathing out threatenings"? What persecuting tour did he go on? By whose authority? What authority had the high priest over Jews in Damascus? Give some account of Damascus.

2. A SUDDEN CONVERSION (vs. 3-9).—How long was the journey from Jerusalem to Damascus? What suddenly stopped Saul in the way? What time of the day was it? (Acts 22. 6). What was the effect of the light on the company? Whom did Saul see in this glory? (v. 7; ch. 9. 27). Who spoke to him? Did the others hear this voice? (v. 7; ch. 22. 9). What did the voice say? How was Saul persecuting Jesus? Meaning of "hard to kick against the pricks"? What was Saul told to do? Why? To whose house in the city did he go? (v. 11). What was the effect of the sudden light upon his eyes? How long did he remain blind? What was his state of mind during this time? Had the martyrdom of Stephen anything to do with Saul's conversion? At what point in this account was Saul converted? What was his character before conversion? (Acts 22. 3. Phil. 3. 4-6). Why did such a man need conversion? What were the changes wrought in him by conversion? Are there such marvellous conversions in our day? Are they any more real or powerful than the gentler conversions, as that of the Ethiopian?

3. INCREASING LIGHT (vs. 10-18).—Whom did the Lord send to Saul? How did he prepare Saul for this visit? Is this a good example of the workings of God's providence? What did the fact that Saul prayed show? What was the difference between this and his former praying? Why did Ananias hesitate? Was his hesitation wrong? What two blessings were given to Saul through Ananias? Are these the two we most need? How may we obtain them? How did Saul confess Christ? Was this an example for us? What work had God for Saul to do?

## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. If the moral Saul needed conversion, surely we all do.
2. God has many ways of converting men; each one has his own experience.
3. Conversion is a very great change, from self-righteousness to love, from wrong to right, from the service of self to the service of God.
4. When we see Jesus as he is, we will be convicted of sin.
5. The first duty in reply to Christ's invitations is to say "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"
6. We can get much help from the experience of others.
7. Our two great needs,—more light, and the Holy Spirit.
8. God has some special work for each converted person to do.

## REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in Concert).

13. Who was Saul? ANS. Saul, called also Paul, was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, born in Tarsus, educated at Jerusalem, and now thirty-five years old. 14. What was he now doing? ANS. Persecuting the Christians. 15. What befell him on the way to Damascus? ANS. Jesus appeared to him at midday, in a great light. 16. What was the effect of this? ANS. He was converted, and became a disciple of Jesus. 17. What three things followed? ANS. He received his sight; he was filled with the Holy Ghost; and he was baptized.

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