

attracted to itself the brightest minds in the empire. In this respect the council seems to have exercised some restrictive power. The address, of which an abstract is given by Luke, moved on a different plane from those reported in other circumstances. It shows the marvelous versatility of the Apostle in adapting himself to all classes of men. Without attacking the pagan divinities whose shrines surrounded him on every side, and thereby closing the ears of his auditors to his message, he skillfully recognized every element of truth in the Athenian religion. He assumed that his hearers were sincere seekers after God, whom they ignorantly worshiped, and whom they recognized as in some sense a Divine Father. In their art they sought to depict that perfection of humanity, which to them existed as yet only as an ideal. This God for whom they sought, the Creator and Upholder of the universe, the Father of men, Paul now proclaimed as One near to every one of them. This dream of an ideal human perfection, he announced as realized in the Divine perfection of the Son of man, who had conquered death, and given to humanity the boon of immortal life. At this mention of Jesus and the resurrection, the lofty theme was interrupted. His unanswerable argument was met by mockery, or polite indifference. On the whole the efforts to meet the wisdom of the world on its own plane seems to have been regarded by Paul himself, if we may judge from his subsequent feelings, as a failure. Some few believed, but Paul soon felt that his work here was ended, and in deep depression of spirit hastened on to Corinth.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON VI.—PAUL PREACHING TO THE JEWS—MAY 9.

(Acts xiii. 26-33.)

GOLDEN TEXT—"Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

TIME AND PLACE. A. D. 46. Antioch in Pisidia, Asia Minor.

INTRODUCTION. In our last lesson we left Paul and Barnabas at Perga, in Pamphylia. It does not appear from the narrative that they tarried any time there, but it is probable that they continued their journey northwardly until they reached Antioch, in the northern portion of the province of Pisidia. Antioch was a city far inferior in size and population to Antioch in Syria, but it was a commercial centre and military colony of much importance. Saul and Barnabas, as usual, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and were invited to address the assembly. Paul, after recalling briefly the leading points of Israel's history, and directing attention to God's promise to raise unto Israel a Saviour, showed that the promise was fulfilled in Jesus, and then in our lesson shows how the prophecies were fulfilled by the Jewish rulers in the death of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 26. "Of the stock of Abraham."—Jewish people descended from Abraham. "Whosoever among you feareth God."—There were probably some among Paul's hearers who were proselytes to the Jewish faith, but not Jews by birth. "This salvation."—The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. 27. "Their rulers."—Those who formed the Sanhedrin, by which Jesus was condemned. "Knew Him not."—There was no good excuse in this, because the voice of the prophets, that is, the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, were read every Sabbath. "Have fulfilled them."—The prophecies, that is, about Christ. "Condemning Him."—Condemning Jesus to death.

V. 28. "Found no cause."—This refers not to the rulers, but to Pilate, who was the Roman governor, and who sentenced Jesus to death while declaring him innocent.

V. 29. "Was written."—In the prophets. "They."—Not the Jewish rulers, who had condemned Him, but his friends.

V. 31. "Was seen many days."—Forty days He was seen by many witnesses. The witnesses were the apostles whom He had chosen and a numerous company of disciples, to all of whom the duty of bearing witness to this great fact was entrusted.

V. 32. "Glad tidings."—That the promises were now fulfilled and salvation was offered to them through a risen Jesus.

V. 36. "David . . . fell on sleep."—That is, he died, so that the prophecy could not relate to him, but in Jesus the promise was fulfilled.

V. 38. "Through this man."—That is, through Jesus, through the merit of His atoning blood. "Is preached."—They preached in the name of Jesus. "Forgiveness of sins."—Through Christ our sins are blotted out, covered, remembered no more against us.

V. 39. "All that believe."—Believe in Christ and accept Him as a Saviour from sin. "Justified."—Meaning to hold as just, or to acquit of guilt.

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

DAILY READINGS.

First Day—God Raised unto Israel a Saviour. Acts xiii. 14-25.

Second Day—Paul preaching to the Jews. Acts xiii. 26-43.

Third Day—His sorrow for the Jews. Rom. ix. 1-33.

Fourth Day—His zeal for their salvation. Rom. x. 1-21.

Fifth Day—Moses a servant, Christ a Son. Heb. iii. 1-19.

Sixth Day—Christ's sacrifice complete. Heb. ix. 1-28.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, May 9.—THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY—Deut. vi. 1-9; Acts xv. 1-5. Question 101.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

BY W. MORTIMER CLARK ESQ., C. C.

The Westminster Assembly did not profess to be an Ecumenical Council, nor to assume the functions of a synod or General Assembly. It was merely a council of divines, called by the Long Parliament of England, to advise it at a critical time, when the affairs of the nation were inseparably associated with religious questions, and when the country was attempting to right itself after the conflict with absolutism in Church and State, which sent Charles I and his political adviser Steafford, and his ecclesiastical counsellor Archbishop Lurd, to the scaffold. The Assembly was the creation of the civil government, and although the method of convoking it, was abnormal, yet the selection of persons summoned, was perhaps as fortunate as if it had been made in a more strictly ecclesiastical manner. The members were 151 in number, and included 10 lords, 20 commoners as assessors, and 121 divines. The Scottish church was invited to send representatives, and with most cordial congratulations to their English friends, the General Assembly sent as their commissioner's Messrs. Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Baillie and George Gillespie, with the Earl of Cassilis, Lord Maitland, and Sir Archibald Johnston, as lay assessors. The Assembly met on 1st July 1643 and held its first sessions under the marvellous arches of the chapel of Henry VII at Westminster. As the sittings were protracted, and winter approached the future meetings were held in the Jerusalem chamber, "a fair room in the Abbey of Westminster" probably so named because of ancient tapestries representing views in Jerusalem, just as the Antioch chamber in Westminster palace was so called from its pictures of scenes in Antioch. This chamber was at one time the drawing room of the Abbot and contained a fireplace. This fireplace was the reason why Henry IV died in it. A prophecy foretold his death at Jerusalem, and as the sovereign was very sick, preparations were hurriedly made for his journey to Palestine. Henry had gone to pay his parting devotion at the shrine of Edward the Confessor, when he was suddenly taken ill and hurriedly carried into this apartment and laid before the fire. When after some days he revived a little, he asked where he was, and on his attendants informing him that he was in a chamber called Jerusalem he replied "Laud be the Father of Heaven, for now I know that I shall die in this chamber, according to the prophecy made of me beforehand, that I should die in Jerusalem."

The divines came to the meetings, not in canonicals, but in blackcoats and bands, to show their unity with continental Protestants. The spectacle of this body of grave and reverend divines, with the peaked beards and large mustaches, then in vogue, and wearing the double ruff of the period, must have been singularly imposing, not only from their appearance, but from the high purpose of their meeting. The political results of this Assembly lie outside our consideration for the present, and we can regard only the influence of their work on our present religious life. That work, although differences of opinion may exist as to some of their conclusions regarding the relation of the civil magistrate to the church, has been momentous in its results, and the standards compiled in the ancient and dingy abbey, have influenced and moulded the belief of whole churches, and have done much to establish millions of our race in the knowledge of divine truth. Like the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, and the Synod of Dort in 1618, this Assembly is a landmark on the history of Protestantism, and in the assertion of the doctrines of evangelical Christianity as against sacerdotalism and sacramentalism. The grave men in the black coats, bands and ruffs, have vanished, but they, being dead, yet speak, in words as needful for ourselves as for our ancestors. The Assembly sat altogether five years, six months and twenty two days, during which they held 1163 sessions. The prelatic members withdrew when the solemn League and Covenant was adopted and then the Assembly with the exception of about seven Independents, became practically Presbyterian. The attendance of members varied from 60 to 80 at each sitting and they divided themselves into three committees for the furtherance of their business. Work could not however have progressed very