

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

QUARTER: STUDIES IN EARLY CHURCH HISTORY.

A. D. 60. LESSON VII. ALMOST PERSUADED; or, Decision Delayed. Acts 26, 21-29. November 18.

EXPLANATORY.

FOR THESE CAUSES. Literally, "on account of these things," that is, Paul's proclaiming, especially to the Gentiles, the Gospel of Christ. The Jews caught me in the temple. As related in Lesson II. Even God's house is not too holy for the plots of the wicked. Went about. Or rather, "undertook." Having... obtained help of God. He who is supported by divine allies can stand opposition from all the world. Witnessing. The gospel preacher never speaks by his own authority, but is simply a witness-bearer. To small. Like the Master, the apostle did not disdain the lowly. And great. Such as were now in his presence, and as their emperor at Rome, before whom he was destined to speak. None other things than... the prophets and Moses. How great the crime of those who would silence the voice which only uttered their own Scripture in their ears!

THAT CHRIST SHOULD SUFFER. Such predictions stand recorded on the pages of Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah as well as in the Psalms. The first that should rise from the dead. First not in time, but in character of his resurrection, which was by his own power, and foretold by his own lips. To the Gentiles. The proclamation of Gentile equality in gospel privilege always aroused fiercest hate on the part of the Jews. Festus. The Roman governor, who ruled in Judea from A. D. 60 to 62. In general, a just and capable ruler. Beside thyself. He had no conception of the truths of Christianity and deemed Paul an enthusiast. Much learning doth make thee mad. Hearing the reference to "prophets and Moses," he imagined Paul's brain turned by over study. The worldling who cannot comprehend the earnestness of the Christian, often looks upon him as "fanatical."

I AM NOT MAD. Paul answers the imputation firmly, yet respectfully, without showing temper. Let Christians, when wrongly accused, follow his example of moderation and courtesy. Most noble. The usual title applied to a Roman Governor, Truth and soberness. "The words were true, and the manner of presenting them sober and thoughtful."—Besser. The king in the night. Agrippa was a Jew, and his acquaintance with Scripture, and with the well known facts in the life of Jesus, might be taken for granted. This thing was not done in a corner. The publicity of the events of Christ's death and resurrection, thus appealed to by one who lived in their era, is a strong evidence of the gospel's truth. King Agrippa. He pauses in his address to pin a personal application of the gospel to the heart of his hearer. Believest thou the prophets? He who believes the Old Testament can have no excuse for rejecting the New.

ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST. Was this a mere sarcasm? "Do you think you can make a Christian of me?" Or was it the better nature, the conscience of the king breaking forth for the moment? We know not, but the latter seems the more natural view. He spoke sincerely, realizing the powerful logic of the apostle's language. Paul said. Lifting his fettered hands, which added a solid emphasis to his earnest words. Almost and altogether. What a vast difference between the two conditions? Paul would fain lift him out of the treacherous almost upon the everlasting rock of the altogether. Except these bonds. He wishes for his hearers all his liberty in the gospel, and none of his chains; all his joys, and none of his sorrows.

GOLDEN TEXT: Then Agrippa said unto Paul. Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Acts 26, 28. DOCTRINE: The truth of Scripture. The next lesson is Acts 27, 14-26.

SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

Few church-goers can be strangers to the disagreeable sensation which meets them on entering a church in the afternoon. A choking feeling of stuffiness, a powerful odor of dusty clothes and moist flannel, and a prevailing element of peppermints and perspiration form the more marked features of the atmosphere. Who ever saw a church in process of being ventilated? How many churches even have a window open from one year's end to another? There should be no surprise that our churches are unfilled in the afternoons. Of those who go few remain awake, and in the evening naps are equally prevalent. Most of us have at some time or other

been present at an open air sermon. The language may be poor, the train of thought weak, but who ever saw any of the audience asleep? Many worthy people feel troubled over this failing, and accuse themselves of moral apathy and other sinfulness. But given the vitiated air, and sleep on the part of those who breathe it is inevitable. It is a law of nature and not a matter of conscience, it is no more a question of moral responsibility than is being burned when the lightning strikes a person. Sleep is the warning that signals the decrease of the life-giving oxygen in the air. In vain the ecclesiastical unfortunates struggle against their fate. Pins, scent-bottles, and friendly nudges are resorted to, but all in vain. And when the prickings of a faithful conscience have impelled him to try if a change to the sanctuary of some reputedly more "rousing" preacher, or some more airy tabernacle, will not enable him to keep awake, he finds that the change has been made too late. Man is the creature of habits, and especially of bad habits. Such was the experience of the convivial doctor who found that on those rare occasions when he went to bed sober he was unable, from habit, to go up stairs in any other way than on all fours. Bad air could explain not only many a fit of illness, but a great deal of "spiritual deadness" and positive wickedness. Corruption and carbonic acid always go hand in hand. There can be no holy living without holy breathing,—that is, breathing the pure air of heaven.—Home Journal.

TEN RULES—NEVER TO BE OBSERVED AT CHURCH.

- 1. Never open your pew door to a stranger wanting a seat. He may have designs on your purse.
2. If the sexton brings a stranger to your door, look daggers at him, and make him just as uncomfortable as you can.
3. Take out your watch several times during the sermon, and if it is a hutting case, shut it with a sharp snap. It will hurry the preacher.
4. When you return your hymn-book to the rack, let it go down with a bang; it enlivens the service.
5. Wear the most stylish dress you have. It shows you don't care for the proprieties.
6. Rush to the door on the instant of the last amen. You are glad it's over.
7. Stop in the aisle to salute all your friends, and turn about, if possible, in the crowd, it makes you conspicuous.
8. Tread on as many of the dresses of the ladies as you can, and make them look around.
9. In the door stand still and have a chat, so as to hinder all behind you from getting out.
10. Then light your cigar and go.—Herald and Prebyter.

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