

BEREAN NOTES.

D. 41. LESSON IX. PETER'S VISION. November 26.

HOME READINGS. MONDAY—The Lesson. Acts 10. 1-20. TUESDAY—The Vision of Cornelius. Acts 10. 21-33. WEDNESDAY—The Promise to Abraham. Gen. 15. 1-21. THURSDAY—The Vision of John. Rev. 1. 10-20. FRIDAY—"The King of kings." Rev. 19. 11-21. SATURDAY—The Third Heaven. 2 Cor. 12. 1-10. SUNDAY—Heaven Opened. Acts 7. 54-60. DOCTRINE—The Gospel for the world. Mark 16. 15. TOPIC—New Proofs of Gospel Grace. GOLDEN TEXT—God is no respecter of persons.

GENERAL STATEMENT. The glad tidings have thus far been carried only to Jews and proselytes. The time is come when the door of the church is to be opened to the Gentiles, and Peter is the chosen messenger, chap. 15. 7. The apostles' commission was, "Go, teach all nations." Matt. 28, 19; literally, Go, disciple all the Gentiles; but they supposed the Gentiles must first become proselytes to Judaism before they could come into the Christian Church. This was a vital question, not for Judaism only, but for even us in this nineteenth century, and in this land of America; must we be circumcised Jews in order to be Christians? So believed the first Jerusalem Church; so, at first, Peter held. "Wholeness of Jews." But Jesus will now teach Peter that salvation is for the Gentile, on simply believing, as well as for the Jew. One of the means employed was the vision in our lesson; hence the Title given it of Peter's Vision. The great truth taught is expressed in the Golden Text, God is no respecter of persons, furnishing, as in the Topic, New proofs of Gospel grace. It means that God intends Jesus and his salvation for every one who reads this lesson. As the Outline shows, we have the vision 1. Of Cornelius; 2. Of Peter; and 3. The visions solved. The Doctrine is, The Gospel for the world.

BEREAN NOTES.

1-8. THE vision of Cornelius. 1. CESAREA—On the Mediterranean, about seventy miles from Jerusalem, or forty-seven in a straight line. The city was built by Herod the Great, and named by him in honor of the emperor Augustus Cesar. It was the Roman capital of Palestine, and the residence of the procurators, or governors, Pilate, Felix and Festus. Chap. 23. 23, 24. CORNELIUS—Of the noble family of the Gens Cornelia. Julian the Apostate says he was one of the few men of distinction who became Christians. CENTURION—Captain of a hundred soldiers. BAND—Cohort composed of several companies, like our regiments. It was the governor's body guard, and levied in Italy.

2. DEVOUT—Worshipped the true God. Probably he had come to Palestine a sincere pagan, and doing the best he knew, but unsatisfied, and longing for something better. Gropping in his darkness for light, he learned from the Jews of Jehovah, and received him as the true God. FEARED GOD—Reverently obeyed his law. ALL HIS HOUSE—He carried his children with him in the same service. Many Christian parents may learn from this heathen. ALMS—Liberal in charities to the Jewish poor. PRAYED ALWAYS—Continually; a man of prayer. He hoped in this way to find peace to his soul. Multitudes to-day would regard him as a first-class Christian; yet he was not a Christian, and without peace, and an uncircumcised Gentile, who was serving God according to his best light, and praying for more. There are many of like spirit now in heathen lands, waiting for the Gospel and its salvation, as Cornelius was. His prayer is now to be answered.

3. VISION—This was no dream, no trance, but an actual occurrence. EVIDENTLY—plainly; when awake. NINTH HOUR—Three o'clock in the afternoon, one of the Jewish hours of prayer. Cornelius had fasted all day, verse 30, and was, doubtless, praying for his soul's salvation. AN ANGEL—Known to be such by his shining raiment.

4. AYPATH—Because he saw a supernatural being, and feared he might be come in displeasure. But he was a messenger of grace instead. MEMORIAL—This was the effect of his prayers and alms; they kept God in remembrance of him.

5, 6. JOPPA—Thirty miles to the south, where Peter was still tarrying. chap. 9. 43. SHALL TELL THEE—Why could not the angel tell? Because God's plan in having revealed the truth, to employ men in publishing it. Why not use Philip, who was, doubtless, on the spot laboring with the Jews? chap. 6. 40; 21, 8. Because the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles, must have apostolic sanction; and the apostles were yet to be shown that this was in God's plan. Even the rulers of the church, did not know all at once the fulness of truth.

whole story of the vision, to the servants and soldier, and sends them away.

9-16. THE vision of Peter. 9, 10. HOUSETOP—See how God prepares their way by a double vision, as in the case of Saul and Ananias. About noon, Peter went upon the flat roof of Simon's house to pray, and fell into a trance, a state of ecstasy, in which the Lord caused his mind to vividly conceive what occurred as if it were a reality. Yet it was not real, as was the vision of Cornelius.

11, 12. HEAVEN—Showing the source. VESSEL—Seeming a great sheet of white linen let down to the earth by ropes at its four corners. From the roof Peter could look into it. ALL MANNER—Not all sorts of animals, but clean and unclean of the classes named. Lev. 11.

13. VOICE—He seemed to hear it. KILL He was hungry, verse 10, and the vision is adapted to his mental state. EAT—Making no distinction between clean and unclean. This distinction was intended (1), to teach the difference between the morally pure and impure, and (2) by preventing Hebrews and heathen eating together, to keep the former a separate people. God will now abolish it.

14. NOT SO—By no means. Peter is a positive Jew. COMMON—Not set apart, and so made lawful. UNCLEAN—Ceremonially.

15. CLEANSSED—Made clean, and so lawful. CALL COMMON—Better, make common, and so unlawful. The Lord is commanding him to eat showed that he had made all in the sheet clean, and Peter was continuing a distinction where God no longer made one.

16. THREE—Three is a sacred number, meaning God. The vision, then, was from him, and the thing taught was certain.

17-20. THE vision solved. 17, 18. PETER DOUBTED—Perplexed in his own mind as to its meaning; but that it was from God, and meant something, he knew. God will himself explain. The men sent in consequence of the command of the angel had found Simon's house and were even then before the gate, the entrance into the court, calling the porter, and inquiring if Peter lodged there.

19. THOUGHT—He was revolving the matter in his mind, ignorant of the occurrence at the gate. THE SPIRIT—The Holy Spirit. There was no audible voice, THREE MEN—Finding them, as told he would be, if possible, better prepared to accompany them.

20. GO—The divine command. DOUBTING NOTHING—Although they were Gentiles. I HAVE SENT THEM—By the angel sent to Cornelius, of which Peter was yet to learn. The story he heard at the gate. Then he knew the great lesson (1) by the vision; (2) by the Spirit's command; (3) by the double vision, that it was MAN whom he must no more hold common or unclean.

LESSONS. 1. God's plans develop slowly but surely. He always meant his truth for the world, but the world compelled him to give it to the Jews to keep it from destruction until the Christ should come. We now know that the Gospel is for the world, yet the church has awaked to the great fact only for the last hundred years. Does she fully realize it now? Is it not time to send it to the world? Isa. 11. 9; 49. 6; 60. 3; Luke 13. 29; Acts 1. 8; Rom. 10. 13-15; Gal. 3. 19, 22. 2. It is not enough that the church shall be a missionary church; every disciple must be a missionary disciple, going personally to the heathen if the Holy Spirit calls, and, if not, sustaining those who do go by sympathy, money and prayers, and laboring personally at home. Isa. 60. 1; Acts 9. 15; 13. 24; 10. 20; 2 Cor. 11. 8, 9; Eph. 6. 18-20; Phil. 4. 15. 16; Col. 4. 8; 2 Thess. 3. 1.

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