



LESSON,—SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 1909.

The Beginning of the Christian Church.

Acts ii., 32-42. Memory verses 32, 33. Read Acts ii., 22-47.

Golden Text.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts ii., 42.

Home Readings.

Monday, January 11.—Acts ii., 22-36.
 Tuesday, January 12.—Acts ii., 37-47.
 Wednesday, January 13.—Psalm 16.
 Thursday, January 14.—Hebrews 1.
 Friday, January 15.—Isa. lv., 6-13.
 Saturday, January 16.—Rom. x., 1-13.
 Sunday, January 17.—Eph. iv., 1-15.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

You all of you come to Sunday School regularly, don't you? and some of you come to church regularly, too. When you get older you will all come to church as well as Sunday School, won't you? What book do you study at Sunday School? The Bible, of course. That is divided into two parts, what we call the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was written by men who lived hundreds of years before Christ came to earth, and the New Testament was written after Christ died and had gone to Heaven. Do you know about how many years ago it was that Christ came and taught on earth? The date of our new year is 1909, so, as we date time from the birth of Jesus, it is about 1900 years since then, isn't it? For the last two Sundays we have been studying, then, about what happened nearly 1900 years ago, after Christ had gone into Heaven and the disciples were left on earth. They didn't have churches like we have, then, and they didn't have a Bible like ours except just the Old Testament part of it, but they had been Jesus Christ's friends when He was here on earth; they had walked about with Him and seen all the wonderful things that He did and how good and kind and powerful He was, so they used to tell all about Him and it is from what they wrote and taught others that we get what we call our New Testament. Last Sunday's lesson told about the coming of God's Holy Spirit to help the disciples, and then Peter preached the first sermon that we have any record of, and we learn that thirty thousand people were converted, that is, they believed in Jesus as their Saviour, were sorry for their sins, wanted to live a new life in God's service and were baptized. Here were all these people, but they didn't have any church or Sunday School, they didn't have any story of Christ's life to read as we have in our Bible, and they had only heard one sermon, so what did they do to learn more about Jesus? Why, they used to come to the disciples to be taught just as you come to Sunday School, and they used to come regularly, too, for that is what our golden text tells us. Don't you think it would have been very interesting to have Peter sitting there and telling you about how Jesus fed five thousand people one time on a mountain, or any of the other wonderful stories we have in the Bible?

FOR THE SENIORS.

A study of that first marvellous sermon in the history of the church, spoken under the direct and fresh impulse of God's Holy Spirit, never fails to induce admiration for its power, its appositeness, its strict grasp of the subject, its fearlessness. There is little wonder that such a preacher and such a sermon reached the hearts of the people. Christ had

said 'and I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me.' Peter here showed Him 'lifted up' not only on the cross by the hands of wicked men (verse 23), but by God's right hand to the place of power in Heaven (verses 32, 33). It was Christ and Him crucified, Christ the fulfiller of prophecy, Christ the Son of God, Christ the Lord of all, whom Peter again lifted up before the eyes of the people, and the Word of God, indeed, proved itself 'sharper than a two-edged sword' pricking the hearts and consciences of the people and stirring them to repentance and acknowledgement of their new found Lord. The early church is still the ideal. There was union, study, prayer, generosity, love, and public avowal of their faith. No matter how far we may have advanced beyond the stage of development of the world at that time, we have not found any weapons more true and powerful than these in the work of the church; we have not 'advanced' without them except to our own serious hurt and weakness. The apostolic church of simplicity, earnestness, and missionary zeal is the church that would triumph over all obstacles to-day, and give us indeed 'the world for Christ' if we would only take it for our example. Had the development of the church continued along the lines upon which the enthusiasm and love of the apostles started it, we would not to-day sorrow for a 'darkest Africa' speak of the 'yellow peril,' or see in our own Empire the distress and trouble of a heathen India. The church has the remedy for the world's ills in her hands. God has placed it there in trust, yet for centuries she has only grudgingly stirred herself to give it out to the nations lying in darkness. Now we are in a better day. The last century has been one of triumphant missionary endeavor. Let us see that we are in line, that we once again live and work in the spirit of the early church.

(SELECTIONS FROM TARBELL'S 'GUIDE.')

Verse 38.—Says an Old English Homily: 'The first thesis of the famous ninety that Luther nailed to the door of the church at Wittenberg declared that 'When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, says Repent, He means that the whole life of the believers should be a constant and perpetual repentance.' It is not enough to say of a past that has been full of rebellion and selfishness, that we are sorry; the after life must unceasingly bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

Repentance is a true turning unto God whereby men, forsaking utterly their idolatry and wickedness, do with a lively faith embrace, love, and give themselves to all manner of good works, which by God's word they know to be acceptable unto Him. Now there be four parts of repentance: contrition, confession, faith, amendment of life.'

42. 'They continued in the apostles' teaching.' The prominence of teaching among the Jews was due to their possession of written scriptures. The scriptures contained their law and rule of life, social and civil, as well as religious, and so their interpretation was a matter of supreme importance. Learned students of the law became rabbis or teachers, who expounded the scriptures and taught publicly; they were surrounded by classes of disciples and formed different schools of interpretation. The Christian society first appeared as such a school. The Lord was a great Teacher or Rabbi who taught with authority. He was the Master surrounded by His pupils. And when He was taken away the apostles took His place as teachers. They taught publicly, having a place of teaching in the temple, and were recognized as rabbis, although they taught in an untechnical manner.—R. B. Rackham, in Commentary on the Acts.

It is estimated that there are to-day fifteen hundred million people in the world, and that about one-third of them are Christians. Of course these five hundred million nominal Christians are not all loyal followers of Christ, but the figures show how the knowledge of Christ has been extended over the earth. The work yet to be done is enormous, but far less difficult than that already accomplished. Protestant missions are only a century old. After a half century of work there were few mission stations far from the coasts of foreign fields. Now, according to Beach's 'Geography of Protestant Missions,' there are about six thousand principal mission stations and twenty-two thousand out-stations, with over six-

teen thousand missionaries, and the number has been increased in the years since that book was published. In September, 1807, Robert Morrison landed in China, the first Protestant missionary there. In all that vast country there was not one native Christian; to-day there are three-quarters of a million Christian Chinese. Similar has been the work accomplished in other lands.

Whoever introduces into the public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will change the face of the world.—Benjamin Franklin.

A new life is the best and most sublime penitence.—Martin Luther.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Sunday, January 17.—Topic—The story of the day of Pentecost. Acts ii., 1-11.

C. E. Topic.

Monday, January 11.—The burden of sin. Ex. v., 4-9.

Tuesday, January 12.—The awakened conscience. Acts ii., 37-42.

Wednesday, January 13.—The flight from danger. Gen. xix., 15-22.

Thursday, January 14.—Grace opens a way. Matt. xi., 28-30.

Friday, January 15.—What a pilgrim gives up. Phil. iii., 4-11.

Saturday, January 16.—What a pilgrim has in view. 1. Pet. i., 3-9.

Sunday, January 17.—Topic—Pilgrim's Progress Series. 1. Leaving the City of Destruction. Acts xvi., 25-34.

I believe we are making progress in Sunday School work. If the crude past is an indicator for the future, if the future lines of progress are to be judged by the success of the past, then we need not be alarmed with regard to the future of the Sunday School movement. A careful observer cannot fail to have seen that the Divine hand is holding the reins, therefore there is nothing to fear.—'S. S. Teacher.'

Proper system of grading. A friend wrote me recently, saying: He has three children attending Sunday School. All are placed in the baby class. One child is in the third grade in the day school, the other in the second and the third is the baby. Imagine the system,—all in the baby class.—'S. S. Teacher.'

Urge the importance of a definite aim. Do not be satisfied with simply getting through with the lesson during the thirty minutes assigned but have a definite aim with each lesson and concerning each pupil. Remember always that you are seeking to win souls for Christ. The work the Master has assigned us is indeed a most beautiful and inviting one, the work of carrying life to others. He has made their hearts receptive and has commissioned us to take to them the life-giving Christ. Shall these lives have no future promises because of failure on our part?—'S. S. Teacher.'

FORWARD EVER

The boys who have sold the Christmas Number of the 'Pictorial' have made a 'good thing' of it for themselves—and for their friends. Those who did not miss a good opportunity. But once gone, it never comes again. The next thing is to look forward to the next opportunity and seize it ere it passes. The January Number of the 'Pictorial' will be a very attractive one—with a crisp, snappy winter atmosphere about it, and as such a capital New Year's greeting to send abroad.

A good old rollicking English song (words and music) and a \$1,500.00 prize story should make it a splendid seller at the old price of Ten cents a copy. A package of only six copies sold would secure a nice premium—a watch for twenty, etc., etc. Boys (or girls, if they choose), who have never tried to earn any of our splendid premiums can have a package of the January Number to start their sales on as well as our full premium list of cameras, knives, watches, etc., etc. by sending a postcard to JOHN DOUGALL & SON, 'Witness' Block, Montreal, Agents for the 'Canadian Pictorial.'