

LESSON NOTES. FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE ACTS AND EPISTLES. A.D. 51.] LESSON VIII. Feb. 24. THESSALONIANS AND BEREANS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts 17, 11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The true Church searches the Scriptures as I think the Christ.

TIME, A. D. 51. The three or four months immediately following the last lesson.

PLACE.—1. Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, 100 miles west of Philippi, on the bay of Thermae, an arm of the Egean Sea, the chief city of Macedonia, full of Jews. It is now called Salonica in Turkey, and has 70,000 inhabitants, of whom 35,000 are Jews. 2. Berea, a walled town, 60 miles west of Thessalonica. Little is known of it.

PERSONS.—1. Paul, aged 44, on his second missionary journey. 2. Silas, from Jerusalem, Paul's companion. 3. Timothy, from Lystra, who either accompanied them from Philippi, or followed soon after.

INTRODUCTION.—Paul, having been released from prison at Philippi, went about 100 miles to Thessalonica, the capital lake, as we see by the change of person in the pronouns used (Acts 16:16-17; 17:1), was left at Philippi. We now study the founding of two new Churches.

HILLS OVER HARD PLACES.—1. Amphipolis. About 33 miles from Philippi, toward Thessalonica. 2. Apollonia, 30 miles farther on, from Amphipolis; 37 miles from Thessalonica. 2. The Scriptures. The Old Testament. 3. Opinions. Unfolding their meaning, as we see into a room when the door is opened. Jesus as Christ. Jesus was the Messiah foretold in the Scriptures. His life and death exactly fulfilled the prophecies. 5. Moved with envy. Because they drew away men from the Jewish party, lessened their power and popularity, interfered with long held opinions. 6. Turned the world upside down. In a wicked world the Gospel must make changes and disturbance. Wherever wrong is uppermost and popular, it must be overthrown. And no political or social question can be settled till it is settled right. 7. King. Jesus.—Because Paul preached Him as the spiritual and moral King, and laboured that His kingdom might come. 11. More noble. In character, because more candid, more sincere, more earnest for the truth. These elevate and ennoble the soul. 12. Honourable men.—Of rank and influence.

SEARCHERS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Thessalonica.—Berea.—The true foundations of a Church.—Jesus as fulfilling the predictions of the Messiah.—Effect of opposition on the Church. The Gospel turning the world upside down.—How to search the Scriptures.—Why the Bereans were more noble.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTION.—In what city was Paul in our last lesson? How did he escape from prison? Why did he leave Philippi? For what place did he then set out?

I. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA (vs. 1-9). (1) Sabbath-Workshop.—Through what places did Paul pass on his way from Philippi to Thessalonica? How far was it? In what direction? In what place did Paul first preach the Gospel there? Why in the synagogue? Why should we worship God in the church on the Sabbath? Is going to Sabbath-school a proper substitute for the church service? Why not? (2) Preaching Christ.—What was Paul's aim in preaching? What is meant by "opening" the Scriptures? What was it necessary that Christ should do in order to be the Saviour? Why is it necessary? Did Jesus in His life and death fulfill the prophecies of the Bible as to the Messiah? (3) Union and Numbers.—What was the result of Paul's preaching? What three classes are mentioned as becoming Christians? (1) Opposition.—Who opposed the new movement? What was their motive? What kind of people made this uproar against the Gospel? Are such still its leading opponents? What two charges did they make against Paul? Were they true? In what sense does the Gospel turn the world upside down? Is there need of this change? Why? Has the Gospel succeeded in doing it? Did the apostles preach

that Jesus was King? Was this contrary to Caesar? Why were the rulers troubled? How does opposition help to spread the truth?

II. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH AT BEREA (vs. 10-14). (1) The Study of the Scriptures.—Why did Paul leave Thessalonica? Where did he go next? How far was it? How did the Jews of Berea compare with those of Thessalonica? How did this show a nobler mind? Why should we search the Scriptures? How often should we read the Bible? What are the best ways of reading and studying it? (2) In contrast of Numbers.—What was the result at Berea? Will those who sincerely study the Bible become Christians? Why are "honorable" or "chief" men mentioned twice in this lesson? What can women do now for the Gospel? What opposition arose at Berea? With what result?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. The Progress of the Gospel. (1) By keeping the Sabbath; (2) by regular worship; (3) by preaching Christ; (4) by study of the Scriptures; (5) by the opposition of bad men; (6) by turning a wicked world and the sinful heart upside down.

2. Searching the Scriptures. (1) Daily; (2) by sincere study; (3) by reading all the Scriptures; (4) by comparing Scripture with Scripture; (5) by the use of helps and commentaries; (6) by meditation and prayer; (7) by learning many passages by heart.

REVIEW EXERCISE (For the whole School in concert.)

12. Where did Paul and Silas go next? Ass. To Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia. 13. What did they do there? Ass. They founded a large Church. 14. Why did they leave? Ass. Because wicked men stirred up a mob against them. 15. Where did they then go? Ass. To the city of Berea, and founded a Church there. 16. What does Luke say of the Bereans? (Repeat the Golden Text)

A. D. 51.] LESSON IX. (March 2. PAUL AT ATHENS.

Acts 17: 22-31.] Commit to mem. vs. 29-31. GOLDEN TEXT

In him we live, and move, and have our being. Acts 17: 28.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

This is eternal life, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ his son.

TIME.—A. D. 51. Late in the autumn.

PLACE.—Athens, the capital of Attica, in Greece, and the most renowned city in the world for literature and art.

THE JOURNEY FROM BEREA.—Paul was driven from Berea in Macedonia by persecution, and leaving Silas and Timothy there in his hasty escape, was taken by some Christian brethren 17 miles to Dium, the nearest seaport, and thence probably by sea to Athens.

THE CITY OF ATHENS.—So named from the goddess Athena, or Minerva. It is five miles inland from the Saronic Gulf, an arm of the Egean Sea. It was founded by Cecrops, 1556 B.C., and 100 B.C. contained 120,000 to 150,000 inhabitants. Four famous hills lie within the city: (1) The Acropolis, a high rock in the heart of the city, on whose top were magnificent temples, especially the Parthenon, and a multitude of statues, of which that of Minerva was 75 feet in height, and was made of armor captured at the battle of Marathon. (2) The Areopagus (from Are, Mars, and pagus, a hill), a rocky elevation just west of the Acropolis. Here was held the famous court of the Areopagus, before which Paul spoke the lesson of to-day. (3) The Phnyx, a hill still farther west, where Demosthenes spoke to great assemblies; and (4) the Museum, south of the Areopagus. (5) The Agora, or Market-place, was the plain surrounded by these hills.

THE RELIGION OF ATHENS.—Athens was a city of statues and temples. They crowned the hills and lined the streets. There were statues of marble, bronze, gold, silver, and ivory, of every size, and in every place. The Greek religion was a deification of nature. The worship of even beautiful idols debased the mind and corrupted the people. The two leading schools of religion were (1) the Epicureans, disciples of Epicurus, who were really atheists, believing in no personal God, nor in the future life. Their highest aim was pleasure. (2) The Stoics, disciples of Zeno, who sought to be indifferent to pain or pleasure. They were pantheists, and believed that at death we returned to the original matter, as a drop of water is absorbed in the ocean.

INTRODUCTION.—Paul came to this Athens

to escape from persecution, and to rest while he was waiting for his helpers and maturing his plans. But when he saw the idolatry of the people, he began to discourse with the people in the market. The philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics hearing him, brought him before the famous court of the Areopagus, where he could more quietly, and before a more-learned audience, propound his truths.

HILLS OVER HARD PLACES.—22. Paul stood in Mars Hill before the court there, consisting of the best blood of Athens, the lawyers, philosophers, and learned men of the city. Too superstitious. Rather, "very religious." 23. Your devotions.—This means their objects of devotion, as idols and temples. Ignorantly worship. Not knowing the nature of what you worship. 26. Determined the times.—Better as in the New Version, "determined their appointed seasons of prosperity and the limits of their territory." 30. God winked at.—Overlooked; i.e., the idolatrics and false worship they employed in their ignorance of the truth. 31. Assurance, etc. Christ's resurrection proved (1) that Christ was divine, and therefore judge; (2) that His teachings were true; (3) that men should be raised, and therefore could be judged in the other life. 34. Areopagus.—A member of the court of Areopagus, before which Paul had spoken.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—The city of Athens.—The idols and temples of the city. Their religion. Paul's coming to Athens.—His first discourse. Epicureans.—Stoics.—Mars' Hill.—Characteristics of Paul's speech. All nations of one blood.—God near us.—Ignorance. "God winked at."—Paul's success at Athens.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTION.—Why did Paul leave Berea? To what place did he then go? Where were Silas and Timothy? (v. 14.) Why did Paul remain at Athens? (v. 15.)

I. ATHENS, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH PAUL PREACHED (vs. 22).—Where was Athens? For what was it renowned? Give some account of the city and its chief places. What was the Religion of Athens? What can you tell about the idols and temples in the city? What were the leading schools of philosophy and religion? What was one characteristic of the people? (v. 21.) Where did Paul first speak of religion here? In what place next? What is meant by "the market"? (v. 17.) Who were the Epicureans? The Stoics? Who did these take Paul? What was Mars' Hill? What famous court met there?

II. PAUL'S SERMON TO THE ATHESIANS (vs. 22-31). What were Paul's first words? Meaning of "too superstitious" here? Were the Athenians very religious? Did their religion make them good? Can any false religion save people from their sins? What had Paul seen in the city? Meaning of "devotions" here? Were there many in the city? What God did Paul declare unto them? Is God unknown to us? What did he say about God? In what temples does God dwell? (1 Cor. 3: 16; 2 Cor. 6: 16) How is God to be worshipped? What can we give to God? How are all men shown to be our brethren? What does this teach us as to our treatment of them? In what way is God near to every one of us? Why do not all find Him? (Prov. 1: 24-30; 8: 17; Jer. 29: 13.) How may we be said to live and move in God? What blessings follow from our being the offspring of God? (Rom. 8: 16-18.) What is meant by "the times of this ignorance God winked at"? What is our first duty? (v. 30.) What reason is given for this duty?

III. THE THREE EFFECTS OF THE SERMON (vs. 32-34).—How did the Athenians receive Paul's teaching? Name the three different effects? How did it oppose their tenets? What unwelcome duty did it impose on them? What converts are named? Why were there no more?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. Men may be very religious, with a false religion, and yet not be made good by it. 2. Literature, art, culture, are not enough to save men. 3. Since all men are brethren, we should treat them as brethren, love them, help them, lead them to Christ. 4. The blessing of an ever-present God (1) to keep us from evil; (2) to help us in need; (3) to be our nearest friend. 5. Our first duty,—to repent of our sins. 6. A motive for doing it,—the judgment to come. 7. It is not always the fault of the teacher when people are not converted. 8. The meanest way to treat religion is to mock at it.

REVIEW EXERCISE.—(For the whole School in concert.)

1. Where did Paul go from Berea? Ass. To Athens, the chief city of Greece. 2. What kind of a city was Athens? Ass. It was the most famous city in the world for literature and art. 3. What was their religion? Ass. They were idolaters, and their city was full of magnificent temples and idols. 4. What did Paul do when he saw these? Ass. He preached to them the one true God. 5. What was the result? Ass. Some mocked, some put him off till another time, some believed the Gospel.

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