

James ii. 18-26. Sa.—Acts iii. 12-26. S.—Matt. xii. 22-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.—Acts viii. 21.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—“The conscience of the wicked is defiled.”

TO THE SCHOLAR.—Notice that Simon's profession seems to have been a false one, and that he did not pray for himself, nor show any true godly sorrow for his sin.

NOTES.—Simon, called “Simon Magus”—that is, Simon the magician or sorcerer. He is said to have been of Gittion, a town of Samaria; probably educated at Alexandria; practised magic in Samaria; professed to believe at Philip's preaching; rebuked by Peter. Some say he again opposed Peter at Rome, and was defiled there; others that he killed himself.—Samaria, a noted city of Palestine, about 35 miles north of Jerusalem, and about midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the river Jordan. It was founded by Omri about 925 B. C.; twice besieged in vain by the Syrians (1 Kings xx. 1; 2 Kings vi. 24; vii. 20); captured by the king of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 9, 10); again taken by Hycranus 109 B. C.; improved by Herod; began soon to decay on the rise of Neapolis or Nabus, and is now only a mass of ruins.—Philip. See Part V., p. 73.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

Lesson Topics.—(I.) SIMON'S SUCCESS. (II.) SIMON'S PROFESSION. (III.) SIMON REBUKED.

I. SIMON'S SUCCESS. (9.) sorcery, practised by one who pretended to be very wise as fortune-tellers now do; bewitched, charmed, deceived; great one, or some “great being”—that is, more than a mere man. (10.) least . . . greatest, all ranks of people; great power, is some divine person.—(Alexander.) (11.) had regard, respect, believed in his wisdom and power.

I. Questions.—Who was preaching in Samaria? Was it Philip the apostle? What power attended his preaching? How was the city moved by his work? Who had misled the people there before Philip came? How? What was Simon called? What attention did he receive? Why?

II SIMON'S PROFESSION. Simon himself—that is, he as well as his followers; wondered, for Philip did real miracles, while Simon's were only pretended ones. (14.) apostles. See v. 1. (18.) offered . . . money, or “brought them moneys.” (19.) this power, this religious power, or right.

II. Questions.—Who first believed at the preaching of Philip? What shows that Simon believed because others did? At what did he wonder? Why? Who heard of this in Samaria? Whom did they send there? For what purpose? What blessing did Peter and John seek for the Samaritan converts? With what success? What power did Simon wish? How did he propose to get it?

III. SIMON REBUKED. (20.) perish, literally, “May thy money with thee be to destruction!” gift of God—that is, of the Holy Ghost. (21.) partner lot, no share in any way; not right, Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. (22.) Repent, his sin might be forgiven. (23.) gall of bitterness, the poison of serpents was thought to be in their gall, hence Simon was in the deepest sin; bond of iniquity, sin a bondage. 2 Tim. ii. 26. (24.) Pray ye, he does not appear to have prayed for himself; none of these things, punishment is what he fears, but no true fear of God. (25.) testified, borne witness, reported; returned to Jerusalem, or toward Jerusalem, doubtless preaching as they went.

III. Questions.—Why did Peter reprove Simon? What was the thought of Simon's heart? What more was wrong with Simon? Why was it wrong of Simon to make the offer of money? State the two things he was to do. Why? In what sorrowful state was he now? How far did he regard Peter's command? Why did he wish to be prayed for? Where did the apostles preach the gospel on their way to Jerusalem?

What does this lesson teach us— (1.) As to the hypocrite's love of applause? (2.) As to the true way to gain the gift of the Holy Ghost? (3.) As to the need of sinners to repent and pray for themselves?

Illustrations.—Paying for the Place. Two monks came one day to William Rufus, king of England, to buy an appointment to an abbey's place, bidding over each other in the sums offered for the favor. The king said to a third monk who stood by, “What wilt thou give for the place?” “Not a penny,” answered the third, “for it is against my conscience.” “Then thou deservest it,” replied the king, and at once gave it to him.—Biblical Museum.

Genuine Conversion. Fish sometimes leap out of the water with greater energy, but it would be foolish to conclude that they will live out of it; in a moment they are swimming in it again as if they had never left the stream. Indeed, it was only a fly that tempted them to this sudden freak; the water is their home. So sinners sometimes make a sudden leap at religion. We are not to be too sure they are true Christians; but if they are, they will not soon be back again at their old sins. Genuine converts do not return to their old ways like fish to the water.—Spurgeon.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—While Peter and John were preaching in the villages of Samaria, on their way to Jerusalem, Philip was called of the Lord to go toward Gaza to talk with an officer of Ethiopia.

LESSON V.

OCTOBER 29.]

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN. [About 36 A. D.]

READ Acts viii. 26-40. RECITE vs. 34-37.

DAILY READINGS.—M.—Acts viii. 26-40. T.—Ps.

Ixviii. 18-35. W.—Isa. liii. 1-12. Th.—Luke xxiv. 13-27. F.—Rom. x. 8-21. Sa.—Rom. v. 1-21. S.—Ps. ix. 1-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.—Mark xvi. 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—“To him that hath shall be given.”

NOTES.—Gaza (strong), capital and stronghold of the Philistines, in the south-west corner of Palestine, toward Egypt; a very old city (Gen. x. 19), taken by Judah (Judges i. 18); its gates were carried away by Samson; the place of Samson's imprisonment and death; taken by Solomon (1 Kings iv. 24), by Pharaoh (Jer. xlvii. 1, 5); destroyed 96 B. C.; rebuilt; destroyed by the Jews A.D. 65; again a chief city of Syria in the reign of Titus, now called Ghazeh, and has about 15,000 inhabitants. Ethiopia (burned faces—that is, blacks), a country of Africa, south of Egypt, and probably included the present countries of Nubia, Abyssinia, etc. Candace (Can-da-ce), a general name for the queens of Ethiopia, as Pharaoh was for the kings of Egypt. Azotus, Greek word for Ashdod (castle), one of the five cities of the Philistines (Joh. h. xiii. 3), about three miles from the Mediterranean, south of Joppa, and about halfway from it to Gaza. It was noted for the worship of Dagon (1 Sam. v. 1, 2); was destroyed by Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6), and again by Tartan (Isa. xx. 1); Jews found wives there (Neh. xiii. 23) was taken by the king of Egypt (Jer. xxv. 20); destroyed by the Maccabees (1 Macc. v. 68); visited by Philip; is now a poor village. Casarea, a noted town on the road from Egypt to Tyre, and south of Mount Carmel. It is about forty-seven miles in a direct line and sixty-eight miles by road from Jerusalem. In the days of Herod it was a magnificent city, as its ruins now show. Wild beasts and reptiles are its only inhabitants.

EXPLANATIONS AND QUESTIONS.

Lesson Topics.—(I.) SALVATION DESIRED. (II.) SALVATION PREACHED. (III.) SALVATION ACCEPTED.

I. SALVATION DESIRED. (26.) angel (Luke i. 13, 28); Philip, not the apostle, but one of the seven (Acts vi. 5); Gaza. See Notes. (27.) Ethiopia (see Notes); eunuch, literally a “chamberlain,” an officer having charge of the royal house and of the treasury also; worship, either as a foreign Jew or a convert to the Jewish religion. (28.) chariot, riding; as an officer of rank; Esaias; Greek word for Isaiah. (29.) Spirit, the Holy spirit. (30.) ran, obeyed with haste; understand, v. 31; Rom. x. 14, 15. (31.) guide (Ps. xxv. 9); desired, invited.

I. Questions.—What command did Philip receive? By whom? Where was Gaza? Give a brief history of the town. Whom did Philip meet on his journey? What is said of the rank of this man? Where had he been? Why at Jerusalem? What was he reading? Why did Philip go near the chariot? State his question. The reply. What invitation was given to Philip?

II. SALVATION PREACHED. (32.) Scripture, the Old Testament, the Greek version; was led Isa. liii. 7, 8. (33.) declare, describe the wicked people among whom he lived. (34.) of whom, a time now to preach Christ. (35.) preached, proclaimed, told the story of Jesus.

II. Questions.—What was the Ethiopian reading? Where is the passage to be found? Isa. liii. 7, 8. What question was asked of Philip? Who was the prophet describing? How did Philip explain it?

III. SALVATION ACCEPTED. (36.) hinder me, why can I not be baptized? Acts x. 47. (37.) If thou believest. See v. 12. (38.) caught away, see John vi. 15. Acts xxiii. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 2; either the Spirit carried him away bodily or moved him to depart at once, as in v. 29; saw him no more. “and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went,” etc.—(Alexander.) (40.) Azotus, Ashdod (see Notes); preached, as Peter and John had done in Samaria, v. 25.

III. Questions.—What question shows that the Ethiopian understood Philip's sermon? v. 36. How did Philip answer? What confession did the Ethiopian make? With what act was this followed? How did Philip leave the Ethiopian? Where was he next seen? Where did he further preach Christ? Which verse of this lesson teaches us—

(1.) The advantages of studying our Bible? (2.) The importance of speaking to those needing Christ? (3.) That we ought to confess Christ now?



ANCIENT CHARIOT.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

ISA. 40: 31.

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The NORTHERN MESSENGER is printed and published on the 1st and 15th of every month, at Nos. 218 and 220 St. James street, Montreal, by JOHN DOUGALL & SON, composed of John Dougall, of New York, and John Redpath Dougall and J. D. Dougall, of Montreal.