

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER: STUDIES IN EARLY CHURCH HISTORY. LESSON XVII. POWER OF THE WORD; or, The Gospel Sword. Acts 19, 17-28. September 16.

EXPLANATORY.

KNOWN TO ALL. The very effort to debase the name of Jesus into a magical charm served only to call greater attention to the Gospel. Fear fell. A vague, indefinite awe of that mighty name overspread the hearts of the masses. A sense of danger leads many to seek for safety. Fear often opens the door to obedience and love. Many that believed, came and confessed. There were disciples who still leaned toward superstitious practices; their eyes not being fully opened to their wickedness, and their faith in Christ not complete. Even through the Christian centuries there has run a streak of this same paganism. Dr. Whedon. Their conduct finds its counterpart at the present time in those church-members who visit spiritualistic seances, and consult clairvoyant fortune-tellers.

CELESTIAL ARTS. Magic or sorcery; the employment of the famous "Ephesian letters," said to be copied from the characters engraved on the image of Diana, and possessing magical power. These were written on parchment, and worn as amulets, to ward off danger and give success. [See Freeman's Manners and Customs, 845.] Whoever seeks to communicate with the spiritual world by some outward act, apart from the character, whether by charm or ritualistic form, errs with these superstitious Ephesians. There is only one way to God, through Christ, bringing man into communion with the Father. Burned them. The books were costly and scarce, bringing profit to their possessors, yet they cast them to the flames. Better burn a bad book and sacrifice an unrighteous occupation, than sell them to destroy other souls. Book-sellers and proprietors of circulating libraries should ponder this text. Besse. Fifty thousand pieces of silver. Various estimates at from \$7,000 to \$10,000. It was a time when money would buy ten times as much as now. They did not ask, "What will it cost?" but, "Is it right?" Grew the word. In the notice and respect of the world, and in the number of its followers. Prevalled. In its power to cast out demons and break bonds of sin; in awakening slumbering consciences, prompting true repentance, calling forth the spirit of sacrifice for Christ and his cause. Such effects as these could not fail to excite the attention of the world.

PURPOSED IN THE SPIRIT. A determination of the human will, indorsed by the voice of the Holy Ghost. Through Macedonia and Achaia. Two provinces in Europe, opposite to Ephesus, where Paul had already planted churches. Aware of the trials in store, and not expecting to meet his converts again, he prepares to bid them farewell. Go to Jerusalem. He had a threefold object in visiting the mother-church, namely: 1.) The churches in Judea were poor, and Paul was bearing the contributions of the Gentile disciples for their relief. 2.) They were strongly prejudiced against him, by reason of false reports, and he wished to prove his loyalty and win their confidence. 3.) They were narrow in their views of the Gospel, being influenced by Jewish exclusiveness, and he wished, if possible, to reconcile them to Gentile Christianity. See Rome. Each journey of the apostle has carried the Gospel into wider fields and greater centres of influence. Now, without a thought of repose, he aims at Rome itself, the imperial city, and metropolis of the Gentile world. His purpose was accomplished. He entered the gates of the capital, but it was as a prisoner in bonds.

INTO MACEDONIA. Probably to inspect the churches and collect the contribution for the oppressed Judean Christians. Ministered unto him. Not in services to his person, but as helpers in his work. Timothy. A young disciple of Lystra, and one of Paul's dearest friends. Erastus. The chamberlain or treasurer of the city of Corinth. Rom. 16, 23. Perhaps appointed for the purpose mentioned above, as being accustomed to moneyed transactions. That way. A term by which the Gospel and its followers had now become known, "the way." It was a way of salvation to many, but opposed to the interests of a few.

SILVER SHRINES. Pilgrims to the temple of Diana were accustomed to carry away as a memorial of their visit a small model of the temple or of its central sanctuary, containing an image of its patron goddess. These "shrines" were placed in the household for worship. As the pilgrims were almost innumerable, the trade of shrine-making was very profitable. Diana. The goddess Artemis, to

whom the temple and city of Ephesus were devoted. Her image, the object of great veneration, was a rude wooden figure, of female form above, terminating in a shapeless block below. It was very ancient, and was believed to have dropped down from the skies. The most magnificent temple of the ancient world was consecrated to the honor of this stick of wood.

WORKMEN OF LIKE OCCUPATION. Workmen in shops around the temple, sculptors, artists, and all whose business interests depended upon the idol-worship. By this craft. How much strife, in politics and religion, is kept alive by self-interest. Abuses in State and Church are upheld, reforms opposed, and the general good restricted for the sake of private gain. The salvation of the world must be stopped that Demetrius may continue to sell his shrines. F. W. Robertson, This Paul. Literally, "Paul, that fellow." How easy to look with contempt upon one who represents an opposing influence. Throughout all Asia. As before not referring to the continent, but the district of country on the sea coast of which Ephesus was the principal city.

OUR CRAFT IS IN DANGER. There could be no higher tribute to the success of the apostle's labors than this confession from the lips of an enemy. Even allowing for a margin of exaggeration in the assertion of the shrewd image maker, there is evidence here that the new faith was making swift progress on the shores of Asia. The temple of the great goddess Diana. The largest and most magnificent of the Greek temples, and one of the "seven wonders of the world." It was four hundred and twenty-five feet long, by two hundred and twenty-seven columns, sixty feet high, each the gift of a king. They cried out. Noise will sometimes accomplish more than argument; loud shouts of applause may stay up for a time (but only for a time) a falling cause. Read the rest of the chapter for an account of the great riot and its peaceful ending.

GOLDEN TEXT.—For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Heb. 4, 12. DOCTRINE.—Repentance from sin. Acts 17, 30; Matt. 9, 13; 2 Cor. 7, 10. The next lesson is Acts 20, 17-32.

Dr. Stuart Robinson's deliverance at the "Pan" meant the eldership furnishes considerable amusement to our foreign papers. The redoubtable Doctor finds elders and presbyteries everywhere in the Bible. Of course, that settles the question—the Presbyterian Church is certainly the Church. It reminds us of the Baptist who turned down the Methodist, because "Baptist" is found in the Bible, but Methodist is not! Q. E. D. A Romish priest, however, as the story goes, finds the Methodists in the New Testament, but it is over the left shoulder: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"—in the Greek, methodeias of the devil—a diabolical set, you see! But another story puts us poor Methodists in better company. An old German, replying to the twitting of the aforesaid Baptist, finds his Church in Rev. xii. 21—the twelfth foundation of the New Jerusalem being anathema, which he made to spell Methodist! He might have strengthened his argument against the Baptist by denying that "Association" is found in the Bible, and affirming that "Conference" is—see Gal. ii. 6, where Paul speaks of what took place "in Conference"! By the way, that is an offset to "the General Assembly," which looks Presbyterianish, in Heb. xxi. 23. As to "elders," pahaw! we have thousands of them, travelling and local, and are making more every day. The Doctor cannot crow over us! We are the true Church—no mistake!—Nashville Advocate.

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