

WORD AND WORK

WORDS IN SEASON.

R. H. B.

SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY ON ACTS.

In the next six months lessons from the Book of Acts will be studied in Sunday morning classes all over this country and all over the world—among our readers also, and in many congregations of Christ. The Word and Work this month contains an article on the Book of Acts—its accuracy and reliability, judged even from a human standpoint. The said article reprinted by permission from the Sunday School Times, is from the pen of Sir William Ramsay, universally acknowledged as chief authority in his realm of scholarship, which includes the archeology, ancient history and geography of near-eastern countries which were also the scenes of Paul's travels. The article therefore carries great weight; all the more so since the author was not prejudiced in favor of the Book of Acts, but rather against it, and step by step, was compelled to own the marvellous accuracy of all its statements so far as they relate to the times and places and circumstances which are involved in Luke's story. No one but an eyewitness, and a very able and careful one at that, could, according to Professor Ramsay's verdict, possibly have written the account found in the Book of Acts. A specially striking expression in Professor Ramsay's article is "*the ignorance of the modern scholar.*" Careful and painstaking personal research, conducted with all scientific impartiality, revealed that "ignorance of the modern scholar," on matters in which they spoke with great confidence. It was the fashion only a few years since to ridicule and speak contemptfully of the Book of Acts, as a fabrication of men who concocted the story to reconcile Peter and Paul. But even so radical a critical as Adolf Harnack, of Berlin, had to confess his error, and declare, in the light of the facts, that "Luke was a first-class historian."

I do not say that Christians need such testimony. The word of God witnesses its own power and truth. Nevertheless it is gratifying to see scholarship compelled to bow before the truth of that lowly little book, the New Testament, the word of our salvation.

JEWS AND ISRAELITES.

The attempt to force a distinction between "Jews" and "Israelites," (based on nothing more solid than the etymological derivation of the name "Jew" from "Judah") seems to be a great hobby with some anti-Jewish writers—no doubt because they

would think that their hate and enmity would be more excusable if vented against a "Jew" and not against an "Israelite."

But the distinction is not justified by the facts. After the return from Babylon the name "Jew" became general for all Israelites, whether of Judah or of whatever tribe; and "Jew" became the designation not of those only who returned to their land, but for those who remained in the land of their captivity and of the dispersion generally, as well. (See "Esther.") The contention that Jesus was not a Jew, that Paul was not a Jew, that none of the apostles were Jews, except (of course) the traitor Judas; or, perhaps, as some argue, that the "Levys" and "Cohns" or "Cohens," are not Jews because they were of the tribe of Levi, and such like claims, are only silly and require no serious refutation. It is again coming to pass that those who are ignorant of the prophets are fulfilling them, in their mistreatment of this people. Poor Israel! Sinning and sinned against, they can find no rest; nor shall they until they shall turn to Him whom they rejected. "My people have been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray. . . . they have forgotten their resting-place. All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, *We are not guilty, because they have sinned against Jehovah.*" (Jer. 50:6, 7).

JEWISH OFFENDERS.

That a people who were ordained of God to be a blessing in the earth should in their disobedience become a curse and trouble (Zech. 8:13) is not unnatural. A blessing they have been and are yet. "Salvation is from the Jews," said the Lord Jesus. (John 4:22). And even in worldly matters, all things weighed up, it would be found that the world is greatly indebted to them in many ways. Away out of proportion to their numbers they have furnished the world leaders in commerce, finance, industry, and various enterprise. Statesmen and literary men and artists and musicians, Jewish geniuses of many sorts have enriched the life of humanity. They have made many a brick for the Gentile nations among whom they have sojourned and have builded many a fair city the while they had no threshold of their own. But their very energy and enterprise and ambition and the restless power that works in this remarkable people, will, when not controlled by the fear of God, run into wrong channels. That the Jew's quick eye should not perceive the goldmine in the pleasure-traffic of this fun-mad generation, for example, was not to be expected. That some of them are unscrupulous enough to cater to the prurient tastes of the lower populace, is not too strange. Many "Gentiles" have done the same; and many would have who couldn't. It is not just a case of Jew as contrasted with the rest of men; but a case of fallen human nature, of both Jew and Gentile. And God will render judgment upon every evil deed, "to the Jew first," because of his peculiar position and privilege, "and also to the Greek," for "there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom. 2:6-9). But it is not good—especially not for Christians,

to condemn "Jews" as Jews for their crimes. In this good country it is a principle not to rate men by racial or other antecedents, but to deal with every man as a man, giving him fair showing and equal rights. If Jews do wrong let them be handled as all other wrong doers. But it is too easy to create race-feeling (*especially* against the Jew!) and to throw an undeserved stigma on those (and there are many) who among them endeavor to live uprightly and honorably before their fellow-men. Which is a shame. Moreover God resents it. Even in their rejection, and laboring under the wrath, His eye is upon them, to preserve them a remnant in the earth. "Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He is not done with them. The day is coming, behold it hasteth, and their veil will be lifted amidst terrific distresses, and Israel shall become a joy and a praise in the earth. "For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of." (Rom. 11:29).

"OF ONE ACCORD."

Unity in Christ is the concord of many varying sounds. It is a "harmony of differences." It does not consist merely in sameness and uniformity, but also in mutually supplementing powers and gifts. We are not one because we have identical conceptions of the truth, but because each has his share in the same Life and in the same Truth and contributes his part to the building up of all. The whole truth is with the whole Body, and no one member has it except as he is perfected in the fellowship of all the rest. It is in our peculiar differences that the possibility of mutual helpfulness lies. Not because we are of the same mould and type, and thought and talent, and manner of expression and ability of perception, and turn and temper, but because we differ in these things, we are bound and welded together into one organism. It is because each supplies what others need and what all have not got, the members of the Body are mutually interdependent. They are also mutually corrective and balancing. Thus they grow up into Him who is the Head "even Christ, from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love." (Eph. 4:15, 16). This is the unity of God's intention, the symphony of a multitude of instruments under the direction of the Spirit of truth and love in Christ Jesus.

"The most dangerous thing that can happen to people, is not the chastenings of the Lord, not necessarily His judgment, but simply to be forsaken of the Lord, to be left to themselves; to be permitted to have their own way; to do as they please, to drift, to be without God; and this will verily come to pass with any people who persistently refuse the truth, reject the gospel, and trample upon the divine commandments."

WORD AND WORK

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO DECLARE THE
WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

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NEWS AND NOTES.

From Jacksonville, Fla.: "We closed a two-weeks' meeting with Bro. N. B. Hardeman doing the preaching. His sermons were forcefully delivered and nine were added, six baptisms."—H. N. Rutherford

"I wish you would say to readers of Word and Work that I have some choice time open for meetings this spring and summer."—A. N. Kennedy, Memphis, Texas.

"Bro. Clark of Lyons, Kentucky had his store burned and almost all his goods; no insurance."—W. J. Brown

"We have moved to Lubbock, Texas to labor with the church here. The work is moving off fine. Additions nearly every Sunday, and the prayer meeting was attended by more than 150 last Wednesday night. We expect to get in our new house about Sunday-week. It will seat twelve hundred people."—R. R. Brooks.

From Port Arthur, Texas: "The work here is fine and growing. Eight added last Sunday and four the Sunday before that. We have had new pupils in our Bible study each Sunday for the last 16 months except one Sunday, regardless of weather conditions, sickness and opposition. This is the result of having a definite goal and aim to hold up to the people."—L. E. Carpenter

"Please address my copy of Word and Work to Avon Park, Fla., again, as formerly. The Dasher Bible School is closing the present session and we plan to move back to Avon Park, Fla. where we did live."—H. C. Hinton.

"Had a very profitable meeting at Camp Taylor last night, the first since Bro. Clymore left for Pulaski."—O. S. Boyer.

From Toronto: "I am now laboring with ~~Stanhmore~~ Stanmore Boulevard Church, and we are full of hope. We had delightful meetings at Fern Avenue through February—my last month there. Fine audiences, five baptisms, the best spirit manifest. Brother W. D. Campbell preached at Fern, March 1st."
D. H. Jackson.

Brother and Sister H. C. Shoulders are now located with the Orphan Children at the Potter Home, Bowling Green.

J. W. Shepherd's address is now, 7 East Grace St., Richmond, Va.

Sister Dickson, of Tennessee Mountain Mission, Sneedville, has been visiting in Louisville, and reports the Sneedville work growing slowly but surely.

H. L. Olmstead began a meeting with the church in Sherman, Texas, March 29.

Nine additions on Lord's Day, and nine more on his next visit, two weeks later, is the good report of Brother Ottis Scott's labor at Bedford, Ind.

D. H. Friend is holding a week's meeting in Dayton.

Please say in the Word and Work, next issue, that I am open for protracted meeting work from the third Sunday in July on through the summer and fall. I had planned to hold but one meeting this summer, but I have changed my plans this week and must now begin to map out a program of work. Any places wanting my services after July 1 write me at Temple, Texas.—John E. Dunn.

I wish to call the attention of the churches to the announcement made in other papers of the work of Brother James Salmon, of Franklin, Ky., as leader of song. Brother Salmon is an efficient leader and deserves to be called out into a wider field of service in this line by preachers and congregations. He is a man of family and has chosen to develop this talent for the service of our God and is mature enough in years and experience to make him a safe and true yokefellow for any New Testament evangelist."

The meeting at Valdosta closed with eight or ten additions. Brother Hardeman's sermon on "Worship" was especially fine, setting forth the true worship as opposed to vain and ignorant worship.

Brother Hardeman began here on Sunday night, March 1. He preached the second sermon in the new house. I preached the first sermon, on the subject "Make me a Sanctuary." I baptized a young man in the jail, March 1, and another young man made the confession yesterday, and will be baptized soon.

Our new Church-house seats about 450 people, and we had it full at both services yesterday; 189 in Sunday school.—H. N. Rutherford.

FUNDS FOR MISS KENNEDY.

February, 1925.

Brought forward from last month	\$ 2.50
Olive E. Williams, Augusta Maine	2.50
C. D. Levan, Pekin, N. Y.	10.00
Church of Christ, Uikeville, Tennessee.	5.00
Mr. and Mrs. R. G. Schell, Portland, Maine	6.00
Lillian Thompson, Portland, Maine	7.00
By Brother Chas. M. Neal:	
Church of Christ, Dugger, Indian	10.00
Church of Christ, Ellis, Indian	2.00
New Union Church of Christ, Spencer, Indiana	1.00
Miss Mamie Davis, Spencer, Indiana.	1.00
E. E. Peck and family, Chicago, Illinois	5.00
Mr. and Mrs. Glessie Eades, Sullivan, Indiana.	2.00
Church of Christ, Portland, Maine	6.00
Total	\$60.00
Sent to Miss Kennedy by New York draft	\$60.00
Thanks to all for their generous support.	

R. G. Schell.

581 Forest Avenue, Portland, Maine.

METHODS OF TEACHING.

STANFORD CHAMBERS.

Jesus and the Apostles made use of various methods in teaching the Word. They taught both publicly and privately. They taught in buildings and in the open air. They taught sitting down and standing up. They taught by making speeches to the people and they taught by asking and answering questions. And as for the apostles and other New Testament teachers, they taught not only by word of mouth but by word of pen also. They used illustrations, object lessons, quoted poetry and philosophers, made free use of the Old Testament writings and read or had read Epistles, some of which have become a part of the New Testament.

The methods of teaching pursued by New Testament teachers it is our privilege likewise to pursue, and no man has Scriptural right to forbid. Yet in some places there are to be found those who forbid the adoption of one or more of the divinely approved methods of teaching. In some places the method of teaching by writing is virtually "taboo." What a man of God has wrought out by hard prayerful study of the Word is all right if spoken in public and all wrong if read from his pen. And yet a moment's reflection will enable anyone to see that a man can teach much more carefully in his writing than in his speaking. He has more time to consider and weigh, and can therefore be more accurate. He who objects to this method of teaching robs the church of God of the benefit it might be receiving from men whom God has given it.

Another extreme position is taken by some in that they object to the question and answer method of teaching. Usually those who object to this also try to argue against the teaching of children by the church. They say that only the parent is authorized to do that. Leave out the word only and the assertion is true. The parent is also authorized to feed and clothe the child, but our children have been fed many times by others and most of them have received articles of clothing. And should you be *unable* to feed and clothe your children, then the church would have a responsibility in that respect. The same would be true should you *neglect* to feed and clothe them. Now the church has not less but even greater responsibility on the spiritual side, and the truth is, there is none of us who does not need the help of the church as to the spiritual care of our children; and, in these times, *all the help* it can give. As to the many who are neglecting the teaching of their children the church should certainly have something to say. It has some rights as well as some responsibility. The church that is not helping parents in this all-important matter is failing to serve its full purpose. Sad to say there are some churches yet as well as some parents that are falling far short of their duty and responsibility along this line. He is doing a real service who is helping them out of such fatal neglect.

As to the method of teaching by asking and answering questions, the objection to that has no foundation whatsoever. It is a divinely approved method and no man has the right to forbid it. God expects us to teach in the most effectual way possible as determined by the occasion according to the conditions and circumstances attending. Let hobbies be put out of the way.

THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM.

D. H. JACKSON.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Evangelism is the most popular word in the Church today. It is sounded forth from the pulpits. It has become the key-note of conversions, and it is gripping the hearts of Christian men and women and sending them from the congregations in which they live to win souls for Jesus Christ. What the mainspring is to the watch, evangelism is to the Church. There are three methods used by men that have been successful in winning souls to Christ, three methods of Evangelism. There is the mass evangelism when we invite all our friends to come together in one place, and night after night proclaim the story of Jesus and his love. Then there is personal evangelism—the heart to heart talk with our friends, with our neighbors and with those who are out of Christ. Then there is educational evangelism; and these find their examples and models in the New Testament. On the Day of Pentecost, the people assembled together and Peter preached unto them. Philip went down into the desert and had a heart to heart talk with the Ethiopian Treasurer—personal evangelism. The Apostle Paul talked with Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailer and his household—personal evangelism. And then the Apostle Paul tarries for two long years and teaches in the school of one Tyrannus—the educational method. I am sorry to say, but it is nevertheless true, that Christians have lost the spirit of evangelism. Christians are no longer on fire for God. They are not searching to the depths for their fellowmen who are out of Christ; but I believe, beloved, that we are at the dawn of a new day. Every church communion and every denomination has awakened to the fact that if that communion grows, if the churches are to be developed there must be in those churches the spirit of evangelism. In other words, there must be the evangelistic spirit, the desire to win the man who is out of Christ to Him. If the local congregation is to grow, it must be

constantly recruited. As I look over the audience this morning and think back only five years, what a change there is! Among the people who sat to my right, those who sat to my left and those who sat in the center, what a change! Some have finished their course and have gone home to their reward and we rejoice in their victory. Others have moved away and, thank God, they have gone into other communities to serve in their respective congregations and have become a blessing and are blest. Then there are those who have become careless and indifferent, who have fallen by the wayside, or who have become engrossed with the things of this world. And, beloved, let me say this morning this defection must be overmatched by an ingathering, or the church will die. We must constantly recruit; we must constantly win souls for Christ. We must constantly add members to our congregation because day by day for one cause or another men are leaving us to move into other communities, perhaps passing off the stage of action. We must catch the spirit of Jesus Christ whose commission was to seek and to save the lost. When He commissioned His Church, He gave it power for conquest and for victory. And if we are to be known as God's people—followers of the Christ, upholding His Word—we must make that impression upon the people of this community. We must let them know that we are in earnest about their souls. Up and down the street of this neighborhood hundreds of men and women have never bowed the knee to Jesus Christ. What are we doing to save the lost? To save those, who are unchurched? At a Sunday school meeting on Friday afternoon after Mr. Hall had given a very inspiring address, I asked this question: "Will you tell me, Mr. Hall, how we are going to hold the young people of our Sunday school and win them to Christ?" Mr. Fletcher arose and said: "Oh, that is a serious question." He said, "Our hearts ache when we think that 80% of the boys and girls go from our Sunday Schools unsaved. 80% of the boys and girls that we are teaching, that Christian communities are teaching—80% of them go out unsaved and perhaps never to be reclaimed." And then Mr. Fletcher made this statement: "94% of the boys and girls who go out from the Sunday schools of our land do not accept Jesus Christ up to the age of 15, and then only 4% up to the age of 25 are ever won to Jesus Christ." We must get the evangelistic spirit. We must have the passion and purpose of the organization of Jesus Christ. We talk about going back to Christ: the spirit of the Christ was to seek and to save the lost. For that purpose He came; for that purpose He died and for that purpose He established His church. Go back to the Apostolic Church. It was the burden of their hearts to spend and be spent for the unsaved of the community from day to day. "Go," said Jesus, and make disciples of all nations." Go and win them to Jesus Christ.

I want to say that every service should be an evangelistic service. When we teach the boys and girls in the Sunday

our object should be to convince them that Jesus is the Christ of God and that they need Him as their own personal Savior. When we have our social gatherings, the one main purpose and object should be to hold and win them for the Christ. Our Prayer Meetings and our Sunday night services should have the evangelistic ring. If you go back to the life of Christ, you will find that Jesus so far as the record states, only once rejoiced in the spirit, only once gave expression to His feelings, and that was when the seventy came back and reported what they had accomplished in His name. Jesus rejoiced and God will rejoice when we catch the spirit of the early disciples.

There are some things about Pentecost that we may well learn. Peter upon that day was mighty. Peter upon that day was bold. Peter upon that day proclaimed the truth without fear or favor. You say, because the Holy Spirit was upon him. Separate and apart from the Spirit of God, He had, beloved, 120 men, godly men, men consecrated to the service of God, standing by Him. Think of having 120 men of like purpose! Peter, we are behind you. Peter, we will back you up. Peter, you have our prayers. Peter, we are here. And Peter proclaimed the gospel with boldness and power.

Fort Newton, who was called to minister at the City Temple, London, gives his experience the first morning he entered that church. Rather he was in the vestry and he was walking, or pacing as he says, up and down the vestry, and his wits and his sermon had left him. He was very, very nervous, wondering what kind of reception he would receive, then he saw a basket of roses. He went over and buried his face in the basket of flowers and saw a note addressed to Dr. Fort Newton, and he said he opened it and read: "Welcome. God bless you. We have not come to criticise you; we have come to pray with and for you. Welcome. City Temple." He said his nervousness left him, his sermon thoughts came back to him and he found immediately that he was among friends. He said they had a very helpful service. He found that he was among friends, men who were sympathizing with him, men who were praying with and for him, and asking that he might deliver the right message.

A noted evangelist, one of our brethren, was holding a meeting, and noticed that the young people on this special Sunday morning were absent. When he gave the invitation, scores came forward, took his hand and gave their hearts to Jesus. At night, he went into the pulpit and found a note addressed to him. "Dear brother: While you were preaching this morning, the young people of the church were in the basement praying for you. While you preach tonight, we will be doing the same thing, and praying that God may bless and strengthen you. We are behind you." No wonder that man could preach with power and with might, and no wonder souls were brought to Jesus. We are with you. We are with you. We are praying for you.

And then you will find that when the Day of Pentecost was

come, they were all with one accord in one place. Oh, what a revival we could have if the membership would rally around us and say, we are with you, we are praying for you, we are upholding your hands. In due time the Spirit came, and Peter proclaimed the gospel with power, might and love. It remains yet to be seen what God will do with and for us as we consecrate now to the work and service of winning souls to Jesus Christ. I need not remind you that the Church is the only institution fully equipped for this task of saving souls. It is the only organization that has the divine Spirit working through and co-operating with it. It is the only institution that has the pure and simple message of salvation.

There was the spirit of expectancy. We have a gospel that will melt the hardest heart, the heart of stone. We have a loving Christ to bring men to. Shall we expect souls to be won? Spurgeon was talking to a young, discouraged brother one day, and he said, "Why, son, you do not expect conversions every time you preach, do you?" And he said, "Why no." And Spurgeon said, "Well, you will never get them then." The spirit of expectancy! Pardon this personal reference, but I was holding a meeting in St. Catharines years ago, and one Wednesday night I went down to the meeting house and the baptistry was open, and there was a fire built, the clothes were out and everything was ready for a baptism. I said to the brother, "Why, what does this mean, are you expecting anyone tonight?" and he said, "Yes, I have prayed earnestly. It has been the burden of my prayer that some one will come tonight in answer to the invitation call," And when the invitation was given, a young man, a friend of mine, came forward, gave me his hand and God his heart. The spirit of expectancy. These people upon the Day of Pentecost were waiting, expecting God to shower some blessing upon them; and they did not wait in vain. Let us pray.

In one of his widely-read editorials, Arthur Brisbane smiles at Governor Peay's banishment of the doctrine of Evolution from Tennessee schools. King Arthur of the dashing pen, thinks that a three-months old human embryo is such a horrible object to look upon that he would as lief have descended from a monkey as from a thing like that. He probably thinks he has descended from both. But the brilliant Brisbane is wrong. He confuses between descent and development. An embryo is not a separate being, and has no independent existence, and nothing can be said to "descend" from it.

Governor Peay is not ruling that this or that pseudo-scientific infidelity shall not be taught; but that such teaching shall not be supported with the money of a people who are overwhelmingly opposed to it.

"Why Not be Just a Christian," and "The Church I Found and How I Found It," are great tracts. 5c, 50 for \$1.00, \$15 the thousand.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

R. H. B.

SIGNS IN ISRAEL.

“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” This sentence upon the holy city fell from the lips of the Savior, in His prophetic sermon on the Mount of Olives. What He had uttered concerning Jerusalem’s destruction was soon literally fulfilled; and ever since that destruction at the hands of the Romans in A. D. 70, Jerusalem has been “trodden down of the Gentiles.” But that state of affairs shall not continue forever—only “until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” What is meant by “the times of the Gentiles”? (Luke 21:24).

The term “times of the Gentiles,” can mean only the space during which the Gentiles have their day of supremacy or special advantage, the while Israel is relegated to the rear. Just as we speak of men, or a people, having their day—a time when they have their way and prosper, so the times of the Gentiles is the period in which they are foremost and uppermost, and have their way and power to do their pleasure.

Ever since the Babylonian captivity, have “the times of the Gentiles” been running. The people whom God had destined to supreme place and dominion in the earth, the nation of Israel, were, because of disobedience, turned over to be themselves ruled over by the Gentiles. That began in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, and has continued all along until yet. To Nebuchadnezzar in his dream (Dan. 2) and to Daniel in prophetic vision, was given a view of the course of the Gentile empire down to its close, when the Kingdom under the whole heaven should be turned over to “the people of the saints of the Most High.” Never since Nebuchadnezzar has Israel been a free and independent nation. With the exception of the brief space when under the Maccabees they revolted against the Gentile’s tyranny, they have been under the yoke and overlordship of the Gentiles. And so shall they continue until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. Then God shall break the oppressor’s yoke from off their neck, and strangers shall not make Israel their bondman any more, but they shall rule over them whose servants they were.

Yet during all that time previous to the destruction foretold by the Lord Jesus, Jerusalem had some autonomy. She was at least a Jewish city. But the Lord Jesus stated that even this was to cease. Never again, from the destruction of the city to the end of the times of the Gentiles, should Jerusalem, though rebuilt and inhabited by men, be a Jewish city and the Jewish national center; but Jerusalem should be “trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” And so it came to pass, and so it has been all along these well-nigh nineteen centuries, just as our Lord foretold.

Yet, mark that “*until*.” The sentence upon Israel always

has a limiting *until*. Thus, in our present day, "a hardening in part hath befallen Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. 1:25). Then comes a turn in their national affairs. Now what was the "until" of which the Lord spoke, which would terminate the "times of the Gentiles"? "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24).

For many a hopeless century has Jerusalem been trodden down. Vainly in their exile her scattered sons and daughters wept when they remembered Zion. Vainly from year to year in their Passover-ritual did they repeat the pathetic utterance of their forlorn hope: "This year in the foreign land; next year in Jerusalem." Vainly did the few miserable survivors in the city itself repair at stated seasons to the wailing-place, to mourn her vanished glory, and to move the compassions of heaven for her with their tears and cries. First the Roman had her in his iron grasp; then she became a "Christian" city; then she fell into the hands of the Mohammedans; then for a brief while to the crusaders; and again to Saracen and Turk, whose despotic heel ground her heavily. It was a long, long lane without a turning.

Yet the lane at last has turned. On December 17, 1917, General Allenby, the English commander, marched quietly into the city, which but a few hours earlier had been vacated by the Turkish garrison, and took possession. It was the Gentile still, but a very different sort of Gentile, that got control of Jerusalem; a Gentile moreover who was under state-promises to give the Jew an equal showing in the land and the city of his fathers. A new era was begun. The Gentile heel was lifting, and is lifting. The *until* is almost reached. The times of the Gentiles are all but fulfilled. Israel's day is slowly dawning. *This is the great sign of our times.*

Since then the Jew has settled in rapidly increasing numbers in Jerusalem and Palestine. A greater number are back in the city and the Land now than returned from the Babylonian captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah. A Jewish governor, Sir Herbert Samuels, administers government there on behalf of the Gentile government. Despite the opposition of Arab and Syrian natives the Jewish settlers are becoming more and more securely established. The colonies that dot the land from Dan to Beersheba are prospering. Everything is up-to-date in modern dwellings, improvements, methods, schools. The children on the streets talk Hebrew—the ancient classical tongue of Isaiah and Genesis. On the summit of the Mount of Olives a great Jewish university has arisen. Every day sees new immigrants—above 800 in January—of the most desirable sort; the restrictions being very severe, lest unmanageable multitudes of Jews pour in.

This is not to be reckoned as the fulfilment of the glorious restoration promises to Israel. It is a preliminary, preparatory movement, comparable to the first stirring and gathering to-

gether of the dry bones in the valley of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek. 37). For when Israel is nationally restored she will be a righteous nation, renewed, forgiven, saved, and purified in the hottest fires of trial she has ever yet passed through. Nevertheless this is the first token of her spring-time. And as, when we see the fig-tree budding we know that the summer is nigh, so do these marvellous signs of awakening from a sleep of exile unbroken for nineteen centuries, proclaim Israel's new time of visitation.

It is the greatest and most striking of the signs of the times which we are witnessing.

With the return of the season when the birds of passage migrate to their southern winter-home a strange nervous flutter and restlessness takes possession of them. Even the captives flutter to and fro in their cages and fly up against the bars, under the mighty and mysterious impulse that would gather them to the host of their clan and kindred. So is Israel. Dormant and abject for centuries, sinking deeper in indifference and national hopelessness, the race is suddenly stirred by an unseen signal. Years before the war Theodore Herzl started the Zionist movement, which since has spread and set on fire the hearts of the whole scattered people. "I will hiss for them," said the Lord. "Ho, ho—flee from the land of the North!" In thousands of hearts arose the urge to the ancient homeland and even before the war many went back. During the world-conflict the state of the Jews in the land of Palestine was extremely pitiable. But an eminent Jew of Austria, Chaim Weizman, (who at this writing is visiting this country on behalf of his countrymen and this Zionist movement) professor of Chemistry, discoverer of the powerful explosive known as "T. N. T." was approached by the British government. "Name your price," they told him: we must have the formula of the T. N. T." He could have asked millions, and could have got them as he well knew. But—"I will give it free," said Weizman, "and personally superintend the manufacture of it. Only one condition would I ask." "Name it." "When the war is ended and the Allies victorious, when peace-terms are made, will England lend her weight and authority to open Palestine to my people, to give them at least equal place and opportunity there?" The "Balfour Declaration" of Britain's intentions to that effect was published soon afterward. The same has since (and quite lately) been confirmed and upheld by the League of Nations. So was the way opened for Israel to go back to that land which God by ancient, oath-bound covenant had granted to their fathers for a perpetual inheritance.

It is not, as before said, the fulfilment of their restoration-promise. When the Lord turns again the captivity of Zion, and when He that scattered Israel shall gather him again and bring him back to his own land to possess it, they will not go for money nor for reward; for they were sold for naught, and they shall be redeemed without price. They will not go back through the patronage of any nation, nor under the protection of the armies

of any world-power, nor will they be vassals of any Gentile government. But Jehovah alone will bring them back with a high hand and plant them in their own land to be rooted up no more for ever, when the times of the Gentiles shall have been fulfilled. Till then Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles. Israel returning to fill Jerusalem with their numbers, and obtaining power in the ancient mother-city is the outstanding sign of our times. The "Times of the Gentiles" are nearing their close.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

That he is good is generally admitted, but the question is: Do we feel and know the grand truth in hearts that freely overflow with appreciation of, and thanksgiving for, this priceless attribute so freely manifested toward us? Do we credit God with being good merely upon the testimony of our teachers, or have we something more than that? Is it a mere theory with us or a substantial fact? The flock that has trustingly followed the Good Shepherd into "green pastures" "beside the still waters," and has been comforted by his rod and staff has an *experience* which ranks above bare *theory*. What does the worldly botanist know of "the Lily of the valley," and what does the unconverted geologist know of "the Rock of ages," or the mere archeologist understand of "the Ancient of days?" "The Sun of righteousness" is not discerned by any astronomical telescope.

From out the depths of a trustful and responsive heart, the Psalmist could say:

"Oh how great is thy goodness,
Which thou hast laid up for them
that fear thee,
Which thou hast wrought for them
that take refuge in thee
Before the sons of men!" Psa. 31:19.

And again, "Thou crownedst the year with thy goodness." Psa. 65:11. Well might such an appreciative soul invite us out of fancy into fact, from here profession to joyful possession: "Oh, *taste* and *see*—that Jehovah is good." Psa. 34:8. If we have food instead of famine; if we have refinement instead of barbarism; if we are civilized instead of savage; if we have hope instead of gloom ahead, let us recognize the goodness of God and be thankful. "Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his loving-kindness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psa. 107:8.

DON CARLOS JANES.

"A book has changed, in a few hours, the life of many a man and woman. A bad book has sent many a soul on the way to death, a good book has sent them on the heavenly way. Think of the Bible! What a change that book has wrought in the lives of countless thousands."

HOW THE BOOK OF ACTS ROUTED ITS CRITICS.

Archeology discovers that the writer of the Acts was "there when it happened."

BY SIR WILLIAM M. RAMSAY, D.C.L. LL.D., LITT.D., D.D.

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The present writer's opinion with regard to the character and trustworthiness of the historical statements in the Acts of the Apostles have changed greatly in the course of life. As an undergraduate at college, naturally very much under the influence of the printed authority of the "Doctors of the Law," I was taught that the Acts was a work concocted about A. D. 150-200 for the sake of influencing contemporary opinions and conduct amid the discussions and controversies that were raging in the Christian church at that time. In the course of a life determined by considerations unconnected with the study of the New Testament, my lot was cast in circumstances in which it became necessary to study carefully the Acts of the Apostles, and in which also unique opportunities for judging and controlling the historical statements in this work were granted me. Gradually the opinions formed at the dictates of great and famous writers on the New Testament were changed under the compulsion and experience in the country where the action described in the Acts lay.

To describe step by step the change of opinion would be pedantic and egotistical, but it may not be presumptuous to mention the first step.

There is a statement made in Acts 14:5 that Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium to the cities of Lycaonia and the country round them. This clearly implies that there was a frontier which had to be crossed between Iconium and Lycaonia. Take a parallel case. Suppose that a tramp came to beg at your door and told a piteous story of his sufferings at the hands of an infuriated crowd of rioters in Chicago, saying that he had barely succeeded in boarding a freight train and getting away into the State of Illinois. You would feel at once that he was an impostor who never had been in that part of the United States; otherwise he would know that Chicago was itself in Illinois.

WAS LUKE LIKE THE "CHICAGO TRAMP"?

Now, just so it is with that verse in the Acts. Every modern authority and every dictionary or treatise of ancient geography laid it down as definite and certain fact that Iconium was the capital of Lycaonia, and that there was no frontier to cross between Iconium and the cities of Lycaonia. I confess that this had seemed to me a proof that the incident recorded in that passage of Acts rested on no good authority, and that it did not originate from any person who knew the geography of Lycaonia; and just as you would condemn as an impostor the tramp who did not know that Chicago was in Illinois, so one supposed that he must condemn the historian who wrote that passage in the Acts as a pretender to knowledge, detected because he made a mistake like this.

If this inference seemed unavoidable and inexorable when one accepted the geographical statement made by every modern authority, a profound difference was caused in one's judgment and point of view when it was found that Iconium was *not* in Lycaonia. Authority after authority of all kinds, literary and epigraphical, mention that Iconium was a city of Phrygia. These authorities stretch in a continuous series from about 400 B. C. till about 300 after Christ. There is no city whose political and linguistic and racial connection is more clearly proved than Iconium; Lystra and Derbe are equally well known to have been cities of Lycaonia; and therefore it is clearly established that there must have been a frontier between Iconium and Lystra which Paul and Barnabas had to cross in their flight.

Here was a case in which an argument that had seemed conclusive against the trustworthiness of the author of this book was transformed by a little better knowledge into an equally conclusive proof that in this detail at least he was correct. The matter seems a trivial detail, and yet it is not trivial; because such a reversal of judgment, in respect of any one point, implied the duty of re-examining the whole work, without prejudice.

As a traveler in the country, having for my object the determination of the ancient geography, I now found it necessary to study the narrative of Acts, in so far as it is concerned with Asia Minor, with the same care that a self-respecting scholar must bestow upon every authority. Beginning with a strong prejudice that Acts belonged to the second century and was not an adequate authority, I found that it had to be taken into account, along with others. I had at the time only the one absorbing and overmastering interest, namely that of making the map of Asia Minor in ancient times. I took every ancient writer simply at his value in respect of this purpose; and, if the writer of the Acts proved serviceable in one detail, I had to examine all that he said in his narrative about the travels of the Apostles in the country. As I read more I found—just as many scholars even in the last thirty years have been discovering, but perhaps a little more thoroughly than any of the rest—that wherever Luke says anything with regard to the constitution, the condition and the administration of towns and provinces, he is always right to a degree of exactness that is quite remarkable, and which can be explained only on the supposition that the narrative rests on the authority of some person who had been there and knew exactly what was happening.

Take, for example, the matter of the boundaries of the great provinces of the east, and the titles of the Governors of these provinces. Now this is a very complicated and difficult subject. I should find it difficult to name any modern book in which there are not serious errors made in both respects. I could name books published in the last few years by distinguished and honored scholars, in which titles of the Governors of Provinces in the east are misstated. That is never the case with Luke. He is al-

ways correct. He knows that a *Pro-consul* governed Cyprus and Achaia and Asia, while a *Hegemon* (authorized by the Emperor) governed Palestine.

So also in the case of cities, there was a bewildering variety in the titles of the officials of the many cities of that country, and it is most difficult to avoid errors in this regard. Luke never makes a mistake. He knows that the magistrates at Thessalonica were called *Politarchs*, and at the neighboring town of Philippi *Strategoï*. He knows that at Ephesus there would be a body of persons of high influence called *Asiarchs*, and that in Athens members of the High Council of the state were called *Areopagites*.

MEETING MOBS AND MAGISTRATES.

At Iconium, which was a Hellenic city and therefore somewhat unruly, with a mob which made its power felt according to caprice, Luke describes how events were influenced greatly by the riots of the mob. On the other hand, in the neighboring city of Pisidian Antioch, where Roman magistrates exercised Roman order and discipline, and where the mob consisted of an inferior order of slavish Phrygians, such action was impossible: the fate of Paul and Barnabas is described as depending there entirely on the magistrates.

But even Roman magistrates are only human beings; they all had wives and mothers, and like people in other countries they were open to influence from the members of their household; accordingly, we hear that the course of events in Antioch is determined by the influence which the ladies of the principal families were able to exert on the members of the governing body. The ladies in their turn were exposed to the influence of the Jews, partly because the Jews, on the whole, represented a high standard of morality and character and religious feeling, and so came to exercise much influence with the thoughtful people of all the cities of this country: partly for a less worthy reason, that the Jews were artful, wealthy, and serviceable in many ways to the ladies of the aristocracy. This aristocracy was not one of high education. The Jews were able to use their knowledge in various directions with great skill, influencing the minds of the Antiochian ladies. Thus comes about the denouement in Antioch: the Jews influence the ladies, the ladies influence the men of their households, and the fate of Paul and Barnabas is decided.

Thus in two neighboring towns belonging to the same region, and in close relations of commerce and government with each other, the treatment of Paul and Barnabas turns on totally different considerations. There is not the slightest resemblance between the action in the one case and in the other. Such accuracy of description can only proceed from first-hand knowledge. An inventor of a story, or even a narrator of a story which had been handed down to him in its general details, could not relate it with such marked diversity in the two cases. No reason for this diversity appears until you examine minutely the character

of the two cities, and then you realize that it would be the most improbable thing in the world that the two apostles should be treated in the same way in both.

PAUL'S TRIALS ON TRIAL TODAY.

Time after time Paul was tried before different courts for misdemeanor. There is the infinite variety of truth and real life in the trials. The form of the accusation is different in every case; the judges who try the case have different powers and authority; the result of no two trials is ever exactly the same. Take every trial that is recorded in the book of the Acts; examine it as minutely as you please; pull it about; test it and try it; and, if you do this with proper knowledge and insight, you must be struck with the accuracy of the picture. Of course with the inadequate knowledge, defective insight, and lack of sympathy, such as have characterized most German critics in the last fifty years, any amount of faults have been found; but these faults are only conjured up by the ignorance of the modern scholar. The scholar who really has studied the character of Roman administration as it adapted itself to the various cities of the east sees, as he examines each scene, that it all hangs together, that every part contributes to the total effect, and that each detail is true. A narrative like this cannot be invented. In the Acts of the Apostles there stand out before the reader's eyes and mind real life and the action of real men and women.

It is no exaggeration to speak of the wonderful variety in the character and circumstances of the different cities appearing in the record in Acts. This variety arises from several causes.

In the first place you have a very large number of different peoples speaking different languages, thinking in different fashion, and inheriting a different kind of administration. The very language of neighboring cities was different. We are informed that in Lystra they spoke in familiar intercourse the Lycaonian tongue. We can prove by discovered inscriptions that at Iconium they used to some extent the Phrygia language. The population in the one case was Lycaonian and in the other case Phrygian by nationality.

But there was a veneer of similar education, more or less deep, over all the cities of Western Asia. Practically all who learned to read and write learned Greek. The sole language of education was Greek, all the sources of knowledge about history and philosophy were accessible only in Greek books, and thus you have as a general rule bi-lingual cities in Asia Minor. In the case of a town like Pisidian Antioch, about one hundred miles from Iconium by road, there were actually three languages spoken, Phrygian and Greek and Latin. The mass of the population was Phrygian, for Antioch, distinguished by the epithet Pisidian from the many other cities of the same name, was Phrygian by race, and situated in the Phrygian land (as Strabo says about 19 A. D.). Yet the governing aristocracy was Italian by origin and spoke Latin; for this was a Roman colony. The mass of the un-

learned population, the Plebs (called correctly by Luke *ochlos*, "multitude," which is the proper rendering of the Latin word), spoke in their homes the Phrygian language. But both among the aristocracy and among the plebeians those who stood for the sources of knowledge and the advantages of education learned Greek. Accordingly there is no reason to think that Paul in addressing his audiences in Antioch and Iconium and Lystra spoke any other language than Greek.

In Ephesus, which was almost a purely Greek city on the coast of the Ægean Sea, Paul spent three years. He had there to discuss philosophy with classes of very various education. We know that he was a friend of the Asiarchs, the highest and most educated class of the whole province. The Asiarchs interfered so far as they dared to save him from the danger to which he was exposed at the hands of the rioters. At Athens again he was in the very center of Greek education, in the University of the world, where he had to speak to people of many different classes, high and low, all of whom prided themselves on having at least a touch of culture. These are two Greek cities, and yet how totally different are the fortunes of Paul in the two.

Athens was a city of discussion and conversation, where the custom from the time of Socrates was that all questions should be submitted to the Dialect of oral discussion. In Ephesus, on the contrary, we have no reason to think that oral discussion and dialectic had ever been of any great importance. But we do know that lectures in philosophy had flourished for centuries there. Accordingly you find that at Athens Paul, like another Socrates, discusses philosophic questions in the market-place with all comers—such had been the Socratic method and such was the taste of the Athenians. In Ephesus he delivered lectures regularly in the philosophic school of Tyrannus.

A little detail with respect to this school is found in one of the manuscripts, a detail which there is every reason to regard as true to life. Paul lectured regularly in the school from the fifth to the tenth hour. Now, why did he choose that time?—from about eleven in the forenoon till four or five in the afternoon. Of course he chose that time because the school was vacant then. According to Ephesian custom he must lecture regularly in a proper place, but he had no school of his own, no building where he might deliver formal lectures to an audience, and accordingly he made arrangements (probably by paying a certain sum monthly) for the use of this school while it was unoccupied. It is well known that social and public life began extremely early. Every one rose then, just as every one rises now, at dawn of day, except a few Europeans, who lie for an hour or two longer though even the laziest of them rise at an hour which would astonish society in Great Britain. The school was required in the forenoon, but nothing was doing there after about eleven o'clock. People went home to the midday meal, and the afternoon was devoted to amusement. This time then remained for Paul.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE BIBLE.

I.

All the blessings which the Word of God brings to a man (and they are many and great,) are within reach of the open ear and willing heart. Anyone who willeth to do God's will and is therefore anxious to know God's ways is fitted to become a first-class Bible scholar. Assuming, dear reader, that you are such a man or woman, poor in spirit, truly wishing to know the will of God that you may do it, I offer you some fundamental instruction concerning the Bible; yet not instruction of mine but instruction drawn from the Bible itself, to meet the greatest difficulties in the Bible student's way.

Let us suppose that you open the Bible for the first time, and, convinced that it is God's word, you seek to find there God's will concerning you. You are on the right track so far, for this is the word that is a light to men's feet. You may also, because of your pure motive, count upon the blessing of that wonderful God the Bible speaks of, for "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6.

Naturally you open the book at its first page. The head lines say: "The First Book of Moses, called Genesis." It is the beginning book of the Bible, the book of beginnings. There is the creation of the earth, of all living things on it, of the first man also and the first woman. The curtain rises upon a scene of perfect peace and cloudless happiness. God beholds and pronounces it as "very good." Then comes the beginning of sin, and with it the beginning of thorns and thistles; of toil and suffering and death; of enmity and jarring discord instead of peace and harmony; sorrow instead of joy; burdens, diseases, miseries upon man and beast. There also the beginning of the work of redemption of what was lost. (The last two chapters of the Bible show the accomplishment of this end.) On Abel's altar lies a slain lamb, and its blood flowed, we cannot guess for what, until later in the Bible the idea of sacrifice is explained. A flood destroys all the earth, one family excepted. The earth is populated again, and a man of Chaldea, Abram, is chosen to be chief factor in God's purpose, and to him God promised that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Now the rest of Genesis deals with this man and his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons, particularly Joseph.

You stop now to think. You have learned many things which are intensely interesting. But you are perplexed. Has God told me here how to serve and worship Him? Shall I offer up animals upon an altar like Abel and Noah? Shall I circumcise my children like Abraham? If not, why not? Or, if yes, why is there not some clear indication that this is applicable to me, and that I am to follow it?

You are ready to see a second important truth; namely that

although all the Bible is God's word, some distinction must be made between what directly applies to you and what does not. Looking over the index you become aware that the Bible is really a library—not simply one book, but a collection of books, sixty-six in number. These were written by the inspiration of God, by different men in different portions, during a time of 1,600 years, to different peoples in different languages: (the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, the New in Greek), and covering in the extent of its application all time, from the dawn of creation to the "ages of ages." Different methods of worship and service, arranged by Jehovah, succeed one another. We would like to go patiently from book to book and watch the development of God's plan until it reaches us—but is there no readier way for me to learn God's will concerning me today? The study of all else in the Bible must be profitable, but tell us how to be saved now, and then at our leisure will we return to trace the paths of God in past and future.

DIVIDING THE WORD.

If then I may distinguish between the parts of the Bible and direct my attention at once to that which concerns me, I must learn how to divide it, and divide it without fail or mistake. (II Tim. 2:15. "Rightly dividing the word of truth"). God alone can direct me in this matter; for while my judgment is unreliable and inadequate, God can make, and surely has made a clean, clear, division of His own word. Let us turn then to Hebrews 1:1, 2, and read:

"GOD WHO AT SUNDRY TIMES AND IN DIVERS MANNERS SPAKE IN TIME PAST UNTO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS, HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON."

Here in one swift stroke God cuts His Book into two parts; that which was spoken in times past, and that which was spoken in these last days; that which was spoken to the fathers on the one hand; and that which was spoken to us on the other. The messengers in the one case were the prophets; the messenger in the other is God's own Son. In order to present the contrast of the two portions to the eye let us diagram it.

GOD SPOKE.

In times past,	In these last days,
Unto the Fathers;	Unto us,
By the prophets,	By His Son.

Now the portion on the right hand concerns me directly. I set aside then for the time, all the Old Testament which was written by the "Prophets" from Moses on, and go straight to that portion of the Scriptures where the Son of God appears on the scene. In the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, commonly called the four gospels) I find the earthly life-story of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Lord from His birth in a stable, to His death upon the cross. Here He lives, acts, walks and talks. He is the one who is to deal with

us, and to whom we must come for information, yea, and for salvation itself. Of Him God said: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17). In Luke 1 (78-79) he is called "the day-spring from on high"—the spring of day, the source of light—"to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace."

A most remarkable event transpired upon the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). In the presence of three chosen disciples Jesus was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared in glory talking about Jesus' decease which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter, apparently dazed with the scene, proposed to remain on the mount forever and to build three tabernacles, one each for Christ, Moses and Elijah. And it was "while he said these things there came a cloud and overshadowed them. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen; hear ye him. And when the voice came Jesus was found alone." It is not hard to see that this vision looked toward the abrogation of the former dispensation in which Moses and Elijah were noted and chief messengers of God, and the placing of everything into the hands of Jesus; so that He might be the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one could come to the Father but by Him. (John 14:6).

(To be Continued)

AN OFFERING OF STRANGE FIRE.

MRS. M. R. EMMONS.

For some time the impression has been deepening in me that in the celebration of "Mother's Day," the church is again culpable in offering "strange fire." How often the god of this world has dimmed the spiritual ear and understanding of God's children by some sentiment that has not the backing of God's Word! Any subterfuge the enemy will use to get the eye off Christ and rob Him of His honor. All mothers who are in Christ must resent this infringement on His day when they pause to think. The Lord will see to it that godly mothers will be honored, but He does not call for the church to give His day to their homage. To add a day for celebration looks like flagrant insolence to the teaching of the precious Book, where we are told in all things He shall have the pre-eminence, and again, "my glory and honor will I not give to another."

The music alas, is too often not worship, but strange fire. To the ear tuned to hear His praise, it must sound like blasphemy when the soloist in the choir sings,

"I know whose prayer can make me whole,
Mother o'mine, Mother o'mine!"

I believe the Lord would have attention called to this new apostasy on the part of the church, for He is grieved that those called by His name do not yet understand that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day and not "Mother's Day."

ON FOREIGN FIELDS.

MISSIONARY NOTES.

DON CARLOS JANES.

A *small* church can give to missions. Proof: East View with but five members averages above \$5.00 a month. ** The business world believes in missions and has a great army of missionaries called "drummers." ** "The new slogan of the Anglo-American Tobacco Co., is: 'A cigarette in the mouth of every man, woman and child in China.'" ** A *weak* church can give to missions. Oak Grove is weak, but they send a monthly collection to the mission field. ** Lynnville, Tenn., gives \$15 a month to the Lawyers; Bowling Green, Ky., sends to Bro. Sherriff; Mangum, Okla., to Bro. Langpaap; Paragould, Ark., to Bro. McCaleb. ** A *poor* church without a meeting house can give to missions—and get a good house besides. Proof: Camp Taylor, Louisville, was paying \$20 a month rent for a dingy room and had not the means to buy a lot, though they wanted to build. The first time it was suggested that they give to missions, they took to it favorably and began promptly. Then they got a better lot for \$200 than the one that had been priced at \$700 before, and they received so much volunteer labor that they opened their house with a furnace and full basement on an outlay of \$300 of their own money and a loan of only \$1,000. See 2 Cor. 9:8, 10.

A church that is still *in debt* can give to missions. Gallatin, Tenn., owing \$5,000, pays \$25 a month on Bro. Bixler's home; Joseph Ave., Nashville, Tenn., is \$6,000 behind on the new house, but gives to a number of missions and helps a sister church build a house! ** "The missionary work is going forward by leaps and bounds."—*B. F. Rhodes*. So it seems. There would be far more "leaps" and a great many more "bounds," if more of the teachers of the church would find and use some of the great amount of God's Word bearing on this subject. ** *Young people* can give to missions. A week-night class at Sellersburg, Ind., was asked for \$10 a month, but surprised their teacher and themselves by averaging \$25 toward Bro. Herman Fox's work. ** An excellent sister on the mission field wants and needs a knitting machine. "Yesterday the book and papers about the knitting machine came. I am just crazy about it. That is, if the Lord wants us to have it." She asks about putting an ad. in the paper asking for a loan of \$90 for a year. "I want the machine awfully bad." And you shall have it without any loan. Brethren, send in your gifts at once and I will send you her name. She will receipt you personally—and thus we will have it over. ** Almost any church can be led to give to the foreign mission work. The writer has visited 16 on this trip—all of which have begun. C. T. Clay has enlisted three or four in his county in about 30 days. *Forward, all along the line!*

The Lord's Day Lessons.

The Scripture Text used in these lessons is the American Standard Revised Version, Copyright, Nelson & Sons.

FIRST LORD'S DAY LESSON OF APRIL.

Lesson 1.

April 5, 1925.

THE BLESSING OF PENTECOST.

Golden Text.—Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.—Acts 2:38.

Lesson Text.—Acts 2:36-47.

36. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. 40 And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. 41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. 46 And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

Read the Introduction first!

Verse 36. To whom was this proclamation made? Who made it? (v. 38). What did Peter want the house of Israel to "know assuredly"? What had they done to Jesus? What had God done with Him? What is meant by "Lord?" (Phil. 2:9-11). What is "Christ?" (See John 1:41, with Rev. Vers. margin).

Verse 37. What effect did Peter's speech have on them? Why? (Heb. 4:12). What question did they ask? Do you consider this a very important question? Why? Was it put to the right party? Did the apostles have the right to answer it? (John 20:21, 22; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20). Did they have the power to answer? (Acts 1:8).

Verse 38. Who was the first to answer the question of these Jerusalem sinners? Why Peter? (Matt. 16:19). Did he speak of himself or "as the Spirit gave him utterance?" In his answer—what two commands? What two promises? What is repentance? (Matt. 12:41 and Jonah 3:10). What is baptism? (Acts 8:36-39; Rom. 6:4). To what does repentance and baptism look? Does repentance and baptism precede remission of sins? In whose Name should they do this? What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5:32; 1 John 3:24). Was this a plain and definite answer to their question? Is it just the answer to give an inquiring sinner today?

Verse 39. What promise? To whom was it? Who are they "afar off"? (Eph. 2:11-13, 17). How does God call them? (2 Thess. 2:14).

Verse 40. What was the sum of Peter's many words of exhortation? How could they save themselves?

How save themselves from this crooked generation? (Cp. Num. 16:25, 27).

Verse 41. What did they who received Peter's word do? (What of those who were not baptized? Compare Luke 7:30). How many were added that day? Added to whom or what? (Verses 1, 7, 15). Who added them? (V. 47).

Verse 42. How did this newly-formed community maintain its new-found life? What was the apostles' teaching? What is fellowship? (Comp. 1 Cor. 12:25-27). What the "breaking of bread?" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23, 24). What fourth item is mentioned? What is meant by "they continued," and "stedfastly?" Is it still necessary for the church to continue stedfastly in these four things?

Verses 43-47. What is meant by "fear?" (Heb. 12:28). What was the purpose of the signs and wonders done by the apostles? (Heb. 2:4). How did the new life and love and fellowship of the first church express itself? Did they have the good will of the people? Was there a continuous daily increase?

NOTES ON LESSON 1.

INTRODUCTORY.

We begin a series of studies in Acts. No other book in the New Testament is so indispensable as this. Between the four gospels, the story of the Lord Jesus, on the one hand, and the "epistles," the letters to churches and Christians on the other, there is a great gap, which only the Book of Acts fills. In this book we have the inspired record of the continued work of the risen and ascended Lord; the sending of the Holy Spirit; the work of the Apostles under the Holy Spirit's direction and control; the first public proclamation of Jesus, crucified, buried, raised from the dead, as Lord and Christ—the first preaching therefore of the gospel; the first establishment of the church also; and the progress of the gospel, beginning from Jerusalem, into Judea, Samaria, and on to the metropolis of the world, whence it could spread "unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

In Acts we see the salvation, prepared and first spoken by the Lord Jesus (Heb. 2:3) carried out and by inspired messengers applied to the needs of lost and sinful men. Here we see the suffering and labor of our Savior come to fruit. The book of Acts is a record of conversions. Anyone can unerringly learn from it today how sinners became Christians under apostolic teaching; and the record is given that men may follow the same teaching and example now.

PENTECOST AND PETER'S SERMON.

1. **The Descent of the Spirit.** Acts 2:1-4. This was Christ's promise and nothing could be done by the apostles until the Spirit came. (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:4, 5, 8). Now at last it was fulfilled, and all things were ready.

2. **The Audience.** A multitude of Jews from distant lands came to Jerusalem for the Passover and remained over for Pentecost. (Lev. 23:5, 15; Deut. 16:16). The dwellers in Jerusalem heard the sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, and a multitude ran together to the place where the apostles were gathered.

3. **The Sermon.** Note that Peter was the speaker, and see Matt. 16:19 for the reason. In the first part he explains what had happened with a quotation from Joel (Verses 14-21). Next, he takes up his subject—Jesus; as a man approved of God; as crucified, raised from the dead, and exalted by the right hand of God. From the scriptures and by the testimony of the eye-witnesses, Peter proves that this same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was made Lord and Christ. (Verses 22-36).

4. **The Great Question and Peter's Reply** is next. This is covered in the Lesson. (Verses 37-40).

5. **The Church in its Beginning.** The response to Peter's sermon (v. 41); the four things by which the spiritual life of the church was maintained (v. 42); the fellowship and brotherly love of the new-born church (vs. 43-47).

TEACHING POINTS.

- 1.—The Book of Acts—its importance—the gap it fills—the contents of it: (a) viewed as the work of the ascended Lord; (b) as the record of the Acts of the Holy Spirit; (c) as the history of the spread of the gospel (1:8); (d) as he record of conversions. (See "Introductory.")
2. Pentecost: what it was (50th day from the Passover, Lev. 23:15, etc). What promise was fulfilled to the disciples. (See Notes on Pentecost).
3. Peter's Sermon. See Notes.
4. The Sinners' Anxious Question, and Peter's full and plain reply.
5. Repentance.
6. Baptism.
7. Remission of Sins.
8. The Gift of the Spirit.
9. The Results of the Sermon.
10. How the Church was formed and how it was kept up.
11. The brotherly love and fellowship.

SECOND LORD'S DAY LESSON OF APRIL.

Lesson 2.

April 12, 1925.

THE CRIPPLE AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

Golden Text.—I am Jehovah that healeth thee.—Exod. 15:26.

Lesson Text.—Acts 3:1-11.

1 Now Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. 2 And a certain man that was lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3 who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. 4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. 5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. 8 And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10 and they took knowledge of him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11 And as he held Peter and

Verse 1. To what sort of prayer meeting did Peter and John go?

Verse 2. How long had this man been lame? How old was he at this time? (4:22). How often was he at the gate called "Beautiful?" Why was he carried there daily? Was he a well-known, public figure?

Verses 3-6. How did the lame man first get the attention of Peter and John? What had the Lord taught His disciples about that? (Matt. 5:42). Did Peter or John have any silver or gold to give? But what did they have? How did they, in turn, rivet the man's attention on themselves? What did the lame beggar expect from them? What did Peter say to him? What form did the gift take when offered to the lame man? Do God's gifts and promises often come to us in the shape of a command? How could this man obey such a command as this? Did the power to perform come with the command? Is the same true in the spiritual life? (John 5:25). Someone has said that "God's biddings are enablings"—is that true?

Verses 7, 8. Did Peter merely utter the Divine command? What help did he extend to the lame man? Can we give a lift to spiritual cripples likewise? What happened when Peter raised him up? How did the man on

John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. his part, respond to this? How did he exercise his new-found power? Why did he praise God? Of what old promise was this a foretaste? (Isa. 35:6).

Verses 9, 10. Was this miracle "done in a corner?" (Acts 26:26). In what respects did this differ from alleged miracles of healing in these days? Was this the first or only miracle? (2:43).

Verse 11. Why did this miracle create such a sensation? What purpose did it serve? Did it give Peter an audience? What was the object of the apostolic miracles? (Heb. 2:4; Mark 16:20).

NOTES ON LESSON 2.

CONNECTION WITH THE PRECEDING LESSON.

Some time must have elapsed since Pentecost. This is shown by the closing verses of the preceding chapter. (2:42-47). The fact that the newly formed church continued steadfastly; the selling of possessions and distribution to the needy; the picture of the daily life; and the statement that the Lord was adding to them "day by day"—all this marks the passing of time. During this time much preaching and teaching was done by the apostles, of which God deemed it not necessary to preserve a record for us; many miracles and signs also were done by the apostles of which we have no special mention. (2:43). This miracle is recorded because it was specially significant and important. It led to a sermon in the Temple-gate (comp. Jer. 7:1, 2); and that sermon brought about the first persecution. (4:1, etc.)

THE SERMON THAT FOLLOWED.—(Acts 3:11-26).

A great and astonished crowd gathered around Peter and John and the restored Lame Man. Then Peter began his sermon, in the beginning of which he first of all turned their attention away from the healed man, and from himself and John, to God who glorified His Servant Jesus. (Vs. 12, 13). He sets forth their guilt in the denial and murder of the Prince of Life whom God raised from the dead (Vs. 13-15), and declares that through faith in His name alone was this lame man made whole.

But the climax of the sermon is reached in verses 19-21, which should be read aloud in the class. There is a twofold command with a threefold promise attaching.

The Command: Repent ye therefore and turn again.

The First Promise: Your sins shall be blotted out.

The Second Promise: Seasons of refreshing from the presence of God.

The Third Promise: He will send you (penitent Israel) your Christ (Israel's anointed King) who for the present has His abode in heaven until the great long-promised restoration-time. The healing of this hopeless cripple was an earnest and foretaste of what this great Christ can and will do—for men spiritually now; and for the whole world in the restoration times. (Cp. Isa. 11; 35).

The "repent and turn" in verse 19 has a power behind it to those who will respond to it, just as the command "Walk" in verse 6 had. For God, in fulfilment of the promise of a universal blessing through Abraham's Seed, sent His Son to Israel (first) to bless them in turning them from all their iniquities. (Acts 3:26).

TEACHING-POINTS.

1. The Special Importance of this Miracle. (See Notes on Connection.)
2. The Greatness of this Miracle. Vs. 2; 4:22.
3. What the Apostles did not have, and what they did have. V. 5. Comp. Eph. 3:8. 2 Cor. 4:7; 6:10.
4. The Emphasis on the Name. Vs. 6, 16. Also Acts 2:38; 4:10, 12; 8:12; 10:43. Comp. John 1:12; 20:31. What is His Name?
5. The Spiritual Meaning of the Miracle. Are people spiritually crippled and disabled? By what are they made whole? Was this miracle a

picture of what Christ can and will do for spiritual wrecks? Is there any place for a friendly lifting hand? What response must they give? (Compare v. 19 with v. 26).

6. The Purpose of Apostolic Miracles. Heb. 2:3; 2 Cor. 12:12. Their publicity and power. How they differ from alleged miracles of today.

7. The Sermon. What are the main points? What lesson in this incident and sermon to us?

THIRD LORD'S DAY LESSON OF APRIL

Lesson 3.

April 19, 1925.

LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

Golden Text.—The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul.—Acts 4:32.

Lesson Text.—Acts 4:32-37; 5:1-5.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave to the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need. 36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, 37 having a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up

For Connection, see Notes.

Verse 32. How many were the believers at this time? (v. 4). What is meant by "one heart and soul?" Who had prayed for such a state? (John 17:20, 21). How far did their brotherly love and fellowship go? (vs. 34, 35).

Verse 33. What did the apostles consider their chief business? (Acts 1:21, 22; 2:32; 3:15. Comp. 1 Cor. 9:1; 14:4-8). Can the word be spoken with greater or less power, depending on the speaker, and circumstances? Would the unity, love, and abundance of good works of a church add weight and power to the preacher's testimony? Could the unworthy conduct of the church or the preacher deprive the message of power?

Verses 34, 35. Was this selling of their goods and distributing of the proceeds to the needy a compulsory thing? (See 5:4 below). Under what influence did they do this? (Gal. 5:6).

Verses 36, 37. What man, a landowner, who so disposed of his possession is specially mentioned? Why is he specially mentioned? (Because he comes to the front later. 9:27; 11:22, 30, etc.)

Chapter 5:1, 2. Was every individual in the church true and good? Who are mentioned here of the other sort? Of what does that remind us? (Matt. 13:25, 26, 38). What trick had they decided to play upon the church and the apostles? What could they have gained by that?

Verse 3. How was Peter able to discern their hypocrisy? Who spoke through Peter? To whom had Ana-

the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard it. Ananias attempted to lie? Who moved him to do it? (Comp. John 13:27).

Verse 4. Was he at all obliged to do this thing? Could he honorably have kept his house, or his money after it was sold? Did he go out of his way to do this unnecessary, uncalled-for wickedness? (Jer. 9:5). Had Ananias lied to men only? Why was this lie regarded as against God? (1 Tim. 3:15).

Verse 5. What retribution came to Ananias? Has the word of God power to kill as well as to heal and make alive? (Heb. 4:12). How did this event affect all that heard of it? What befell Sapphira, Ananias' wife, about three hours later? (Vs. 7-11).

NOTES ON LESSON 3.

LINKING WITH LAST LESSON.

Peter's sermon preached after the healing of the Lame Beggar resulted in many more conversions. It also occasioned the first persecution. (Acts 4:1-4). After a night in jail, Peter and John were next morning presented before the august council, the Sanhedrin, and examined on the charge of having done "a good deed to an impotent man." The holy boldness of the two Spirit-filled men astonished the court. The restored Lame Man stood there by them. So, seeing no opportunity to do more, they threatened the apostles that they should never again speak to anyone in this Name, and let them go.

They came to their own company, and reported what had happened; and the assembly, sensing the approaching storm of persecution, united in a prayer to God for boldness. The answer came at once, and with outward demonstration: the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they (who had once before been baptized with and filled with the Holy Spirit) were filled with the Spirit and, as a result, they spake the Word with boldness. "There is one baptism, but many fillings." Through the Holy Spirit all spiritual needs are supplied.

THE JERUSALEM CHURCH.

In this great first church, for a brief time, the ideal of our Lord Jesus Christ was realized. In love and power and unity they measured up to His will. It was a Spirit-filled church; and the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace . . . was manifest. (Gal. 5:22). It thus had "the unity of the Spirit," which they took heed to keep, in the bond of peace. Their brotherly love distinguished them. (John 13:35) and they had "fellowship one with another" because they walked in the light. (1 John 1:7). "And great grace was upon them all."

"THEY HAD ALL THINGS COMMON."

The love and fellowship of the Jerusalem church took on a form here, which, so far as the record shows, was never again so seen in any other church. All held all they had for the common good. Owners of land and houses sold, and laid the money at the apostles' feet; and out of the fund thus created the need of the needy was supplied. All this was done voluntarily and spontaneously. But this was a vastly different thing from the schemes of Socialism and Communism. It has been pointed out that Socialism says, 'What is thine is mine'; but Christianity says, 'What is mine is thine.'

Although we may not consider it feasible to follow the example of the Jerusalem church in this matter, it is certain that Christians should be more free-hearted, liberal, generous, unselfish, self-sacrificing, one toward another, than is commonly the case—for such is the will of God in Christ Jesus to usward. "But whoso hath the world's goods and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

TEACHING-POINTS.

1. What followed Peter's Sermon in Acts 3.
2. The Church in Jerusalem: (a) How it came into existence. (b) How men became members of it. (c) How it was spiritually sustained—

Acts 2:42. (d) Its unity—its love—its fellowship and brotherly kindness—its power.

3. (For Discussion) How Unity is Attained and Kept.

4. The Community of Goods. The selling of possessions and laying the money at the apostles' feet. How do we know that this was never demanded, but purely voluntary? How was the money administered? What important limitation in 2 Thess. 3:10? Read also vs. 11, 12, 13.

5. Ananias and Sapphira. Wherein did their sin consist? What was its purpose? To whom did they lie? Did they show any respect for the apostles? for the church? for God? What was the effect of the fate of these two, upon the whole church? Was that wholesome? Do I respect the church as I should?

Have I learned any truth for my personal use from this lesson?

Have I formed any purpose on any line suggested in this lesson?

FOURTH LORD'S DAY LESSON OF APRIL.

Lesson 4.

April 26, 1925.

STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR.

Golden Text.—Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.—Rev. 2:10.

Lesson Text.—Acts 6:8-15; 7:54-60.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people. 9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, who said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, 13 and set up false witnesses, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: 14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us. 15 And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

54. Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the

See Notes, on Connections.

Verse 8 combining verses 3, 5, and 8—mention five things Stephen was full of.

Verse 9. Will a spirit so earnest and aggressive as Stephen's create opposition on part of some?

Verse 10. What promise was fulfilled to Stephen? (Luke 21:15). Did that make his adversaries love him any better?

Verse 11. When enemies cannot meet you on fair terms, will they often resort to foul means?

Verse 12. Were some of these very honored and influential enemies? When so many, and such distinguished parties are against a man, is it a sure sign that he is wrong?

Verses 13-15. If the simple truth had been sufficient to condemn Stephen, would they have gone to the trouble of getting false witness against him? What consolation therefore, has a man who is slanderously accused? What two charges were trumped up against Stephen? Were they true charges? But had Stephen said some things along that line that would lend color to the accusation?

On Stephen's Speech, see Notes.

Verse 54. What awful effect did Stephen's speech have on them? Can the word of God madden and harden men's hearts as well as melt them?

Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he knelt down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Verses 55, 56. At that moment, being full of the Holy Ghost, what did Stephen see and declare?

Verses 57, 58. Could they endure that? What wild mob-spirit seized them? Has that same murderous hate of Satan against God's people been witnessed at other times? Where first? (1 John 3:11, 12). Mention other instances. What great man is here mentioned the first time?

Verses 59, 60. What did Stephen say when they were stoning him? What was the last prayer? What beautiful term is used to describe his death? Is this expression ever used (in the N. T.) to describe the death of the wicked? (Never).

NOTES ON LESSON 4.

NEW HONOR AND POWER OF THE APOSTLES.

The sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira had consequences. First it filled all with a new respect for God's church. It also resulted in a peculiar reverence and regard for the apostles, Christ's ministers and representatives: the people stood off from them, fearing a too familiar contact with men in whom such supernatural power worked. But all the more they honored the apostles and heeded their word, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women; and signs and wonders were multiplied.

THE SECOND PERSECUTION.

But as the prestige and power of the apostles grew, grew also the mad jealousy of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They seized the apostles again (all of them this time) and put them in prison. But once more God signally interfered (it should have brought the Jews to their senses!) by a miraculous deliverance of the apostles from the prison. Again the Sanhedrin convened; this time in murderous rage; and they would no doubt have taken steps to slay them, but for the calm counsel of Gamaliel, who advised caution and patience. Even then they must at least give the apostles a public flogging. But they went away rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of the Lord Jesus.

THE CHOOSING OF SEVEN.—(Acts 6:1-7).

A new crisis, the greatest of all, was to follow.

In the new community, hitherto untroubled, a murmur arose. With or without good reason the Grecian-Jewish believers complained against the Hebrew brethren that the Grecian widows were neglected by them in the daily ministrations. When this was brought to the attention of the apostles, they refused to take charge of this work; but suggested the selection of seven men "of good report, and full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom," whom they would appoint over this matter. The seven selected all bore Grecian names—an indication of the loving tact that prevailed in the church. Upon one of these—Stephen—the coming crisis turned.

STEPHEN'S DEFENSE.—(Acts 7).

The printed lesson omits Stephen's speech. They had accused him of two things: (1) that he had spoken against the Temple; (2) that he had spoken against the Law. He was charged with saying that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the Temple, and would change the customs which Moses had delivered them to keep.

In his reply Stephen went over Israel's history, and showed (1) that God was never confined to any single "holy place": He appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia and in Haran; to Moses in the burning bush in the wilderness; and although He had chosen the Tabernacle and the Temple, He also told them that they could build Him no house for a dwelling-place. (2) As for Moses and the Law—they rejected Moses from the beginning and had never been obedient to the Law, nor to the Prophets. He so implied that their pretended zeal now was mere hypocrisy, and of a piece with all their former doings.

Stephen's speech was not so much a defense of himself as a summary indictment of the nation of Israel. It issued in his death and a persecution that scattered the whole church.

TEACHING-POINTS.

1. The Course of Events between the lessons. (See Notes).
- a. The growing power of the apostles after the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira.
- b. The second persecution: imprisonment of the apostles; miraculous deliverance; trial before the Sanhedrin; Peter's speech; the counsel of Gamaliel; the apostles beaten and dismissed.
- c. The choosing of the Seven. Why they were chosen. Who was chosen.
2. Stephen. A "full" man; full of five things (faith, grace, wisdom, power, the Holy Spirit.) Try to picture what such a life would be. Can it be had today?
3. The Opposition Against Stephen. Distinguish two stages: 1. Disputation. 2. Accusation. Of what did they accuse him?
4. Stephen's Speech. See Notes. Read Acts 7.
5. Stephen's Vision and Death.

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