

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, July 1st, 1877.—Paul in Cyprus.—Acts xiii. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 8-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”—Acts xiii. 12.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts xiii. 1-13. Tuesday, vs. 2; Acts xxvi. 9-21. Wednesday, vs. 2; Hebrews v. 4-14. Thursday, vs. 5; I Corinthians xii. 4-31. Friday, vs. 6; Acts viii. 9-25. Saturday, vs. 11; Mark xvi. 9-20. Sunday, Psalm lxxii.

ANALYSIS.—I. Paul and Barnabas set apart. Vss. 1-3. II. First stages of their journey. Vss. 4-6. III. A sorcerer at Paphos punished. Vss. 6-12. IV. Journey continued. Vs. 12.

QUESTIONS.—About what does the first part of the Acts teach us?—About what does the second part? Who is prominent in the first part? Who in the second? What was the local centre of the church in the first part? From what city did Christianity now set forth? What did it propose to accomplish? Will you describe the strength of paganism then? Will mere human power overthrow it? Zech. iv. 6; 2 Cor. x. 4.

What was the synagogue? How generally was it in use among the Jews? What did the synagogue do for the world besides preserving the Jewish faith? To what persons did it offer a pulpit and an audience? What language did the synagogue furnish to Christian teaching? What may be said of the synagogues as employed by the providence of God? What is meant by special providence? For whom are all things created? Col. i. 16, 17.

Vs. 1. Why is it correct to say “the church that was at Antioch”? Why is it wrong so say the church of Boston, of New York, or of New Orleans? What was the difference between the “prophets” and “teachers” spoken of in this verse? What have we learned of Barnabas? Where did we first find Saul? Acts vii. 58. Where have we seen him since then?

Vs. 2. What was this ministering to the Lord? Ought fasting to be so neglected as it is? What Being now directs the cause of Christ in the earth? When may men run into the ministry of the gospel before they are sent? What is a call to the ministry? To what special work were these two men called? Chap. xiv. 26, 27.

Vs. 3. Does “the laying on of hands” convey any new spiritual gift? Of what is it symbolic?

Vs. 4. Where was Seleucia? Why did these men sail thence to Cyprus? In what direction was their course? How far was the island from Seleucia? How long was this island? How wide?

Vs. 5. At what port did they land? Where was this city? In what place did the apostles at once preach? Why in the synagogues? Who was their assistant? How was he related to Barnabas? Ans. A cousin, not “sister’s son,” as in Col. iv. 10. See Alford.

Vs. 6. What is the literal of “through the isle”? Who resided at Paphos? Who was the Paphian goddess? What was the special business of this sorcerer referred to in this verse? By whom was this class patronized? Are all such “fools” dead?

Vs. 7. What was a “deputy of the country” then? What is meant by “a prudent man”? Why did he call for Barnabas and Saul?

Vs. 8. What is the meaning of Elymas? Why did he withstand the apostles?

Vs. 9. Why is Saul now and hereafter called Paul? With what is Paul filled?

Vs. 10. In what respect was Elymas a child (son) of the devil? John viii. 44.

Vs. 11. Why was this punishment inflicted upon him to be suffered for a season only? Ans. The design was not so much to punish as to convert.—Chrysostom.

Vs. 12. What effect did this miracle produce upon the pro-consul? What was there in the doctrine of the Lord to astonish him?

Vs. 13. Whither now do these missionaries take their course? How far away is Perga? How far inland? Who breaks away from the missionary party? Why? What verse is suggested? Luke ix. 62.

In reviewing the lesson, who, as we have learned, calls men to Christian work? How does the Holy Spirit teach us our duties now? Will you state the places already passed in Paul’s first missionary tour?

The book of the Acts of the Apostles naturally falls into two parts, the former of which, studied last year, relates to the formation and early progress of the church, chiefly among the Jews, by the ministry of Peter (chaps. i-xii.); the

latter part, to be studied this year, relates to the extension of the church among the Gentiles, principally by the ministry of Paul (chaps. xiii-xxviii.) The centre of Peter’s ministry was at Jerusalem. Now, however, the historian transfers the centre of the aggressive church to Antioch, in Northern Syria. From this city it is to take its departure for the conquest of Paganism. The magnitude of the endeavor is evident from the strength of ancient polytheism. It is the established religion which it is the avowed purpose of Christianity among the Gentiles to overthrow. The people are attached to it by local and national vanity; build temples; hold festivals cruel and sanguinary; employ jugglers, diviners, magicians, to impose upon the credulous; utilize the trades, as that of Demetrius at Ephesus; teach mysteries, to excite the hopes of the pure and lofty minded, all for the perpetual maintenance of the established polytheistic religion.

The synagogue was the great characteristic institution or miniature temple of the later phase of Judaism. The Jews had one or more synagogues in well-nigh every town and city of their dispersion. It was in the synagogue of Nazareth, our Saviour in youth and opening manhood, went to worship. The synagogue preserved the Jewish faith and order. But it did more. In the providence of God it prepared the way for the introduction of Christianity to the Gentile world. To the first preachers of Christianity the synagogue afforded a pulpit and an audience. See Acts xiii. 15. The synagogue service brought together not only Jews, but Gentiles in no small number—proselytes, more open than the Jews, however, to the principles of Christianity. It was under the influence of the synagogue that the Greek language assumed the peculiar character which fitted it so wonderfully to be the vehicle of Christian teaching; hence, the idiom of the New Testament writers, and the new words in new connections and senses which the language of Xenophon could not well express.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—At Antioch. The capital of Syria, on the river Orontes. As to the church, see xi. 19-26. Prophets and teachers. See I Cor. xii. 28. The prophets gave new revelations (see xi. 27; xxi. 10, 11); the teachers expounded for edification truth already revealed. Barnabas. See iv. 36; ix. 27; xi. 19, 26-30; xv. Lucius of Cyrene. See Rom. xvi. 21; Acts ii. 10. Manaen [Menahem, 2 Kings xv. 14-22], which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. Either as companion, or as a foster brother, that is child of his nurse. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, and the murderer of John the Baptist, formerly tetrarch, now in exile. Saul. Mentioned last because not yet known as an apostle.

Verse 2.—As they ministered, etc. This “ministering” was the public religious service. The “fasting” implies a season of one or more days set apart for a special purpose—the further spread of the gospel, especially in heathen lands. “The Lord” here is Christ, and they looked to him for guidance. The Holy Ghost [Spirit.] Through whom, and in whose person, Christ reveals himself and his will. John xvi. 14. This was in answer to the prayers then going up. Separate me, etc. That is, “Set apart to me, the Holy Spirit,” through whose agency missionaries preach, and heathen believe.

Verse 3.—And when they had fasted and prayed. “They,” that is, all mentioned in verse 1, doubtless including “the church.” The fasting was another season than that of verse 2. The imposition of hands was not to impart, but to betoken and supplicate grace.

Verse 4.—Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost [Spirit.] See verse 3. The church sent them, but the Spirit directed the church to send them, and directed them to go as sent. A great crisis in the gospel’s history, and a good point at which to renew our New Testament study. Seleucia? “West of Antioch, on the sea coast, five miles north of the mouth of the Orontes.” By the windings of the river it was forty-one miles from Antioch; but by land only sixteen and a half miles. From thence they sailed to Cyprus. “The island is less than one hundred miles from Syria,

and more than fifty from Cilicia; is one hundred and forty miles long, and about fifty miles wide at the widest part. A chain of mountains extends through the northern part. On the south are plains of great fertility.”

Verse 5.—Salamis. A large city toward the east end of the island, on the sea-shore, containing at this time many Jews—so that they had more than one synagogue (“synagogues”)—who, about seventy years after this visit, “rose and massacred two hundred and forty thousand of the Greek inhabitants. In consequence, the entire Jewish population were afterwards either expelled or put to death.” John also. In addition to themselves. His other name was Mark (xii. 12, 25). He was the author of the Gospel of Mark. To their minister. Better “as minister,” or helper, subordinate to them. On the preaching in the synagogues see verses 14, 15.

Verse 6.—Paphos. At the southwest extremity of Cyprus, about one hundred miles from Salamis. This Paphos was on the coast, had a tolerable harbor, and was about ten miles northwest from old Paphos, famous for the worship of Venus. A certain sorcerer. The prevalence of divination, and eastern diviners throughout the Roman Empire, was at this time great. xix. 19.

Verse 7.—With the deputy. Or, more exactly and technically, “pro-consul”; that is, governor chosen by the Roman Senate and people, and not by the emperors. Governors appointed by the latter were called pro-prætors, military commissioners, or legates. Profane history shows that a short time before the missionaries’ visit, Cyprus had been assigned to the Senate. Prudent. That is, intelligent. Called for Barnabas, etc. He had doubtless heard of their preaching in the synagogue, and of its effects. The message of the missionaries is called “the Word of God,” from Luke’s point of view as historian.

Verse 8.—Withstood them. See on Peter’s encounter with Simon. viii. 18-24. Elymas feared that the pro-consul would adopt the Christian faith, dispense with his services, and so end both his power and his profits.

Verse 9.—Saul (who also is called Paul). Paul is the apostolic name, related to Saul as Peter to Simon. The Spirit now brought him to the first place, which he, not Barnabas, henceforth holds. Prophecy and miracle attested the title. Saul may have borne the two names before this. Full of all subtilty, etc. “Full,” of every kind of deceit used in his art. “Mischievous” is literally “ready working.” Pervert the right ways of the Lord. The same word is here translated “pervert,” and in verse 8 “turn away.” Here it was to misrepresent the right or straight ways, to make them appear crooked.

Verse 11.—The “mist” was the dimness preceding the “darkness,” or total blindness.

Verse 12.—Believed, etc. Namely, that Elymas was a pretender, and the missionaries true; and also an acceptance of salvation. He had “an honest and good heart.”

Verse 13.—Loosed. Literally, “led up,” a technical term for “put out to sea,” as the sea from the shore seems to rise. Note Paul’s precedence here and henceforth. Perga. The chief city of Pamphylia, in Asia Minor, on the river Cestrus, about seven miles from its mouth, and about one hundred and fifty miles northwest across the bay of Pamphylia. Mark leaves, perhaps from love of home, dread of dangers to come, or dissatisfaction with his subordination to both the others, and now his cousin’s to Paul.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, July 8th, 1877.—Paul at Antioch.—Acts xiii. 26-41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And we declare unto you glad tidings.”

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.
DORA’S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXIII.—MATTHEW’S CHAMPION.

Matthew’s sense of relief, when that ordeal with Dorothy was over, was so great [that he felt, as he expressed it to himself, “made over again”: his depressed spirits rose at a bound, and he began whistling a lively tune, which set many of his birds singing and the parrot chattering, so that when Hugh returned there was quite a chorus of joy for a greeting to him.

He had remarked Matthew’s exceeding quietness, absent manner, and dejected countenance that morning and the day before, and he felt concerned about it and quite depressed. For he knew nothing of Matthew’s circumstances so as to be able to guess at a reason for it; he did not like to ask questions; and his sensitive spirit began asking itself whether Matthew regretted having taken him in, and whether he wished to get rid of him. His heart was rather heavy when he started out on his errand after breakfast, and the out-door exercise

did nothing to remove the burden from it. But when he re-entered the shop and caught sight of Matthew’s florid face beaming like a sun, and heard the jocund whistling of himself and his feathered tribe, the boy’s spirits rose as suddenly and as high as Matthew’s had done half-an-hour before, and the anxious weight rolled away from his heart. He looked up into Matthew’s face, and reflected back his broad smile as he replied to his words of greeting, “Yes, sir, I found the way easy enough, and it’s all right, they said.”

“Cleverly done, my lad!” exclaimed Matthew, patting him kindly on the shoulder. “It’s the first long errand you’ve done for me, but it won’t be the last, you bein’ sech a smart stepper. And, ye know, you must do something to wear them strong boots out: we don’t want ‘em to last for ever, do we, little chap? He! he! he!” And, at that exceedingly small excuse for laughing, Matthew burst out into a perfect tempest of merriment, which rocked his portly body and brought a rain of tears from his eyes, and a succession of screams from the parrot, “enough to take the roof off the house,” said Mrs. Sarah, who presently came to see what was the matter. Hugh joined in the laughing for very sympathy, though he did not know why they were so amused; but it was as great a relief to his feelings as to Matthew’s, and did him as much good.

Then they sobered down, and were prepared to go through the day calmly and comfortably as usual. “Storms often clear up with a good thunder-clap and a smart shower, and so have that un of ourn,” remarked Matthew, sentimentally. But Hugh could not see the force of the remark, knowing nothing of Matthew’s recent stormy experience. Dorothy did not hear it; for, having come to ask what was the matter, and receiving no reply but peals of wild laughter, she turned back crossly to her work again, muttering that it was astonishing to her how Matthew could make such a fool of himself, grinning away like that: he’d be sure to make that boy as bad as himself, setting him such an un-Christian example.

But Matthew had, in reality, more concern about shielding Hugh from bad example than might have been expected of him. Whenever any of the “fancy” came into his shop on business, he invariably sent the boy into the kitchen to do some little job, and shut the door upon him, that he might not hear the slangy and foul language in which those gentlemen were accustomed to transact their business. It so happened, that on that particular morning two of these fellows called in about some pigeons which had to figure in their Sunday sports on the following day; and Matthew hurriedly sent Hugh out into the back kitchen, giving him a gracious permission to peel some potatoes for dinner. This was just the opportunity that Dorothy was wishing for, to make her grandson’s acquaintance without having Matthew as onlooker and listener.

“Well, little boy,” she said, in a tone that the “little boy” thought anything but pleasant, “so you’ve come to live with Matthew Pedder, have you?” “Yes, ma’am,” answered Hugh, looking up into her face, with a clear, direct gaze, which she was obliged to avoid, though she wanted to scrutinize him closely. She wished to say many things and ask many questions which she dared not, feeling sure that Matthew would require from his protégé a full and particular account of this interview. So she put a curb upon her curiosity, and upon her desire to hold Matthew up to him in what she considered were his true colours; and her next words, spoken graciously, were, “I suppose you like Mr. Pedder pretty well?”

“Yes, very much, ma’am,” answered Hugh, warmly. “He’s so kind.” “Folks may be kind without being wise,” observed Dorothy, to which Hugh made no reply, but turned away to get a bowl of potatoes. Dorothy had “had a good look at him,” as she called it, and mentally pronouncing him “a decentish-looking boy, but dreadfully like his father,” she turned away, and resumed her sweeping of the kitchen, leaving the scullery-door open so that she might talk to him, and glancing now and then into the shop to see that Matthew’s ears were engaged.

“You’re an orphan boy, Mr. Pedder tells me?” she began.

“Yes, ma’am.” “And your father died first?” “Yes, ma’am.” “Did your mother fret much about it?” “Yes, ma’am; she was never the same after!”

“I s’pose he was very good to her, then?” “Yes, very, I think: she often talked about him being so good when he was alive, and she wanted me to grow up like him.”

“Humph! Well, she knew best about him, of course. And I s’pose he thought she was good, too?”

“Yes, and everybody did, except bad unkind people, and I dare say they thought it in their hearts: they couldn’t help it,” said the boy with enthusiasm that brought tears to his eyes. “I think mother was something like what angels must be.”

“Tush! what d’you know about angels? talking of a mortal sinner like that!” exclaimed Dorothy impatiently. “I’ve heard about them,” said Hugh, colouring at her rebuke.

“Well, you ain’t with an angel now, as you’ll find before you’ve been with Mr. Pedder very long,” said Dorothy.

Hugh grew more flushed with eagerness to defend Matthew. Scarcely knowing what he said, he exclaimed, “Well, I think he’s like an angel—for his goodness, I mean,” he quickly added, as Dorothy burst into a laugh.

“Ay, as much like as a carrion-crow is like a turtle-dove!” she said.

“Well, he’s the only friend I’ve got, and he’s been awfully good to me,” said Hugh, warmly.

“And of course he’s got good reason for it,” said Dorothy, sharply. “He knows which side his bread’s buttered, and being a ‘oute one can see with half a eye as you’re going to be useful to him. Why, you’ll soon pay back all he does for you, by helping him and making yourself useful.”

“But I shall pay him in real money, too, when I grow old enough to earn some,” said Hugh, as he diligently peeled his potatoes.

“But p’raps you’ll have something else to do with your money,” answered Dorothy. “Haven’t you got any relations?” “Yes, I’ve got a grandmother; and mother wanted me to find her as soon as ever I could.”

“Oh don’t be in a hurry,” advised Dorothy. “You must make yourself useful to pedder while you’re a little lad; and when you get old enough to earn money for yourself and be independent, that’ll be time enough to find your grandmother,—when you can do something to make her comfortable, I mean. Was she your father’s mother, or your mother’s?” “My mother’s.”

“Well, look at that now!—your own dear mother’s mother. Of course you ought to do something handsome for her, and keep her in comfort in her old days. Set your mind on this, instead of spending good money on Matthew Pedder, as don’t want a farthing from you, but has got enough to keep him independent as long as he lives, I dare say. But of course you won’t say a word to him as I’ve gave you this good advice: it might offend him if he thought as you thought more about your relations than him, and he might cast you off, you know!”

“I shan’t need to tell him, because I intend to pay him as soon as I can,” said Hugh, with quiet determination. “And I shall try to find grandmother as soon as I can, too, because mother told me to.”

“I s’pose she wanted you to get the poor old body to keep you?” said Dorothy, with a disagreeable manner.

“She said she thought I might be a comfort to her, ma’am,” said Hughie. “She is a lonely old woman, and I don’t think she’s very happy, because she isn’t very kind and loving; but mother used to say she hoped she’d be different sometime, and she thought if I found her and loved her very much, she might love me and get very happy by-and-by.” Dorothy set her lips grimly together for a minute. Then she said, “That’s fine talk about love; but love don’t pay rent, and keep folks in food and firing and clothes. No; take my advice as is sound, and stick to old Matthew till you can help your poor grandmother in a substantial way. And now if you’ll look sharp at them potatoes, I’d like you to clear out o’ that back-kitchen for me to come and sweep.”

(To be continued.)