

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

FIRST QUARTER.

The lessons for this quarter are drawn from the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle of James, and the Epistles to the Thessalonians. This selection of lessons is made in accordance with the plan of giving the student of the New Testament the Acts and the Epistles, as far as possible, in chronological order. In carrying out this plan, the study of the Acts is broken, and lessons from those Epistles introduced which were written about the same time. The Epistle of James is supposed by many scholars to have been written very early in the history of the church—in all probability about the time of the Conference at Jerusalem. After the lesson on that Conference, therefore, we have three lessons from James. The Epistles to the Thessalonians were written, it is believed, while Paul was living at Corinth. Accordingly, when that part of the Acts of the Apostles has been studied which describes Paul's life in Corinth, two lessons are drawn from the Epistles to the Thessalonians. This plan will be continued during the next three years, and until the study of the entire New Testament has been completed.

That portion of the Book of Acts which we have to do during the present quarter, covers about four years of the great Apostle's history, extending from A. D. 50 to A. D. 54. It comprises the Conference at Jerusalem and Paul's Second Missionary Journey. This is a most important period in the history of the early church, and should be studied with the greatest care.

We resume, in this lesson, the study of the Acts of the Apostles, interrupted by lessons from the Old Testament during the last six months. The scene of the lesson is the city at Antioch, in Syria, where a flourishing church had been gathered through the labors of unknown but faithful men, who were driven thither by the force of persecution at Jerusalem. The best introduction to the study of the lesson will be found in reading Acts xi. 19-30; xiii. 1-4; xiv. 24-28.—Senior Quarterly.

Lesson I.—JANUARY 6, 1884.

THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM. Acts xv. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 8-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they."—Acts xv. 11.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Conference and its Decision, Acts xv. 1-21.
T. The Covenant of Circumcision, Gen. xvii. 1-27.
W. Paul's Account of the "False Brethren," Gal. ii. 1-10.
T. Peter's Wavering about the Law, Gal. ii. 11-21.
F. Law and Grace, John i. 11-17.
S. Deliverance from the Law, Rom. vii. 1-6.
S. Security in Christ, Rom. viii. 33-39.

ANALYSIS.—I. The Yoke of the Law, Vs. 1-5. II. The Journey to Jerusalem, Vs. 2-4. III. The Conference in Session, Vs. 6. IV. The Address of Peter, 7-11.

QUESTIONS.—Who wrote the Book of Acts? What is the general subject of the first division? To what nation was the gospel first preached?

Vs. 1-5.—Who were the certain men? What does Paul call them? From where did they go down to Antioch? Why? Was their teaching a slight mistake, or a great error?

Vs. 2-4.—Who met the false brethren in discussion at Antioch? Did Paul and Barnabas give way? Gal. ii. 5. Why did they go to Jerusalem? Who sent them? Who went with them? To whom was this great question referred? What apostles were in Jerusalem at this time? Gal. ii. 9.

Vs. 6.—Who came together to consider the question? State the question brought before them.

Vs. 7-11.—Did the subject excite much discussion? What is the first point of Peter's address? How had God settled the whole matter? Where is Peter's mission to the Gentiles recorded? x. 20-24. What is Peter's second point? What witness did God give to them? Was the gift conditioned upon circumcision? What is Peter's third point? How are Gentile hearts purified? What does Peter say the teaching of the Pharisees would do?

Lesson Proving.—Where, in this lesson, do we find—1. That the gospel is for all men? 2. That all are saved in the same way? 3. That salvation is by grace alone? 4. That we receive it through faith?

The arrival of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, at the close of their First Missionary Journey (as seen in our last lesson in Acts, in 1883), was followed by a controversy which involved the

most momentous consequences to the church for all time, and which led to their visit to Jerusalem, recorded in this lesson. The controverted question was a fundamental one; it being nothing less than whether the observance of the Jewish Law was necessary to salvation.

Notes.—Vs. 1.—Certain men. Paul in Gal. ii. 4, calls them false brethren, and says they came down from Jerusalem to Antioch as spies, "to spy out our liberty, &c. From Judea. They were probably members of the Jerusalem Church. Came down. Not sent; but of their own accord, and bent on mischief. Except ye be circumcised, etc. They did not merely recommend that, for prudential reasons, certain ceremonies be continued, but boldly declared that the observance of the Jewish Law was a condition of salvation—thus, virtually, making "the cross of Christ of none effect." They substituted the law of works for the gratuitous justification by faith in Jesus Christ. This was an utter subversion of the whole scheme of salvation, as taught in the gospel.

Vs. 2.—No small dissension and dispute. Paul and Barnabas, with the full authority of the Holy Spirit, opposed these false teachers with great energy. "To whom," says Paul (Gal. ii. 5), "we gave place by subjection, not for an hour." Still, as coming from Judea, these Judaizing teachers would seem to the Church at Antioch as clothed with some authority; and the brethren were perplexed. Hence, they, i. e., the church, determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them (of whom Titus was one. See Gal. ii. 1), should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders, about this question. Paul was not only sent by the church, but by the Holy Spirit as well, through a special revelation (Gal. ii. 2). He, certainly, had no doubt on the question; and may not have gone to consult the Jerusalem Church, but for this direction from the Lord. It is not implied that the Jerusalem Church had authority over doctrines, or other churches; but it was natural that the Antioch Church should seek their counsel. It was wise, also, to meet the question in the church from which the false teachers came.

Vs. 3.—Brought on their way by the church. The route of the apostles lay through Phoenicia and Samaria, where they spread the joyful news of the conversion of the Gentiles; and the fact of Gentile conversion was itself a settlement of the question.

Vs. 4.—Received of the church, etc. That is, heartily received. According to Gal. ii. 1, Paul at first privately communicated with the leaders of the church, telling them the gospel which he preached to the Gentiles; and then they more publicly declared all things that God had done with them. They gave an account of their call by the Holy Spirit to their missionary work, and how it had prospered in the countries visited. It was not a story of what great things they had done, but what God had done, who himself had opened the door to the Gentiles.

Vs. 5, 6.—Yet in the face of this, there rose up (in opposition) certain (in the assembly) of the sect of the Pharisees which believed. These demanded that the Gentile converts, of whom they had just heard, should be circumcised, and put under the whole ceremonial law—that they should pass through Judaism in order to be Christians. The question was a fundamental one; and hence the apostles and elders came together to consider of this matter. The apostles and elders are specially named, the church ratifying the sentence which James, as President of the Conference, announced (vs. 19).

Vs. 7-9.—Much disputing. The matter was debated with great earnestness. Peter rose up. His address would have great weight on the right side, not only because of his prominence, but also because of his former well-known Jewish prejudices. Good while ago. Assuming that the conversion of Cornelius, to which Peter here refers, took place about the same period of Paul's conversion, the "good while" would be fourteen years. See Gal. ii. 1. God made choice, etc. Peter shows that the giving the gospel to the Gentiles was not a new thing; that it was God's doing—Peter, himself, being first chosen to preach to them, and made the subject of a special revelation in order to open the door to them; that the same terms were presented to them as to the Jews; i. e., to the Jews, the Holy Ghost was given, which was the true test of their acceptance with God; that God looked at their hearts, and based his gift of the Spirit upon their true repentance and faith, and not upon any outward ceremony; and that in all this matter he put no difference between Jew and Gentile. Purifying their hearts by faith. Not by the circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart. See Jer. ix. 26; Col. ii. 11. Not by outward rites, but

by the inner application of the blood of atonement.

Vs. 10, 11.—Why tempt ye God? To demand, in view of all this, that the Gentiles should submit to Jewish rites as necessary to their salvation, was to set themselves presumptuously against God. It was to insist not only upon what he had not required, but upon what he had rejected. It was to bring them into bondage instead of freedom. The yoke was not simply the attention to ceremonies as such, but the endeavor to save themselves by their own obedience and by ritualistic observances. The law was not meant to give life, but a knowledge of sin; and thus to lead to Christ. Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his finished work. Jews and Gentiles alike are saved through what Christ has done. Even the Jew must renounce dependence upon his own law, because it is "weak through the flesh." Why compel the Gentile to seek salvation from what has failed the Jew, when "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth?"

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

We are greatly indebted to these brethren for the occasion of the definite settlement of a question which is world-wide in application and fundamental in importance. The Lord knows how to bring good out of evil.

Paul and Barnabas had but one theme. It was "what God had done with them."

The peril of the church of Christ is not from outside enemies, but from the bigotry of those within it, who desire to substitute law for grace.

The cry of the ritualist to-day is that of the Pharisee brethren—salvation through rites and ceremonies.

Let us bless God for a gospel which breaks every yoke, brings us from bondage into liberty, and saves Jew and Gentile alike through the grace of Christ.

We are not saved by "the mystical washing of baptism"; nor are infants "made regenerate" by infant baptism.

The Gospels, and Acts, and Epistles are the ultimate standard of appeal. "To the law and to the testimony" is the demand of Baptist churches. The question with us is, what is the inspired example of the Church at Jerusalem, and what are the inspired directions that are given us by the holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Christians would resolve to be guided by New Testament teachings.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class. The Jews had so many, many hard rules; yes, more than a thousand! How many had God given on the mountain? Only ten. Yet they had made more than three hundred out of those ten! The teacher might show briefly how foolish and how hard to remember some of these were, by showing about the washings, hands held in one position at one time, and in another for something else—sometimes wetting only the fingers, sometimes plunging up to the elbows. You could walk so many yards on the Sabbath, but no further, etc. Or, if the children know about sacrifices, you might show how burdensome they were; or the feasts, how difficult to come from far-away homes to Jerusalem, leaving business and little children for so long.

Briefly tell of the church of Gentiles who were Christians, but had never learned all those laws. Would it be easy to learn them? Or to keep them? Picture some Jews who had been very strict in keeping them, having been taught from babyhood, coming from Antioch, and saying: "You cannot be saved, unless you do as we do." How troubled the Gentiles were! They thought: "We never can do it; there is no use in trying," and hurried to ask their teachers if it were true. Who were their teachers? Paul and Barnabas. This is what they taught. Acts xvi. 31.

At length they tell the story in Jerusalem. Some Pharisees interrupt: "Yes, that is all very well, but it is not enough. They must keep the law of Moses besides." Call out the names of some whom they know in Jerusalem—Peter, James, John—it will seem more real to them. A little sketch of the party setting out with the letter, and the joy it caused, may be given.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

If there were but one general truth I could lodge in the mind of any one or all men, it would be this: that true life consists in the fulfilment of relations. We are born into relations; we never get out of them; all duty consists in meeting them. The family, the church, the state, the humanity at large, these are the sources of our primary and abiding duties, as well as of our happiness, the sum-total of ethics and religion.—Theodore T. Munger.

Boys' Department.

Original and Selected. Bible Enigma.

No. 257.

Find the answers to the following, and the initials, it will be found, give an important command of our Lord and Saviour:

- 1. What was the name of the first king of Israel?
2. Who was the father of Methuselah?
3. What was the name of the brother of Moses?
4. Give the name of Jacob's eldest son.
5. Who was the first convert to Christ from the Gentile world?
6. Who was king of the Jews at the time of our Saviour's birth?
7, 8. What were the two mountains referred to in the twenty-ninth Psalm?
9. Where did our Saviour make Himself known to two of His disciples on the day of His resurrection?
10. What woman accompanied Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus on the morning of the resurrection?
11. Who was the high priest of the Jews at the time of our Saviour's trial?
12, 13. Give the names of the mother and father of Jacob and E-au.
14. Name the deacon who baptized a rich traveller.
15. Give the name of the woman who was miraculously returned to life by Peter.
16. Where was the birthplace of Abraham?
17. In what city was Paul imprisoned?
18. Who was the mother of Timothy?
19. Who was the first Christian martyr?

OURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 170.

A Charade.

Badly feel the printers, When the types they first; But the blunder off will happen, Though in printing they be versed. "Come, my second," said the father, To his only boy; "Put away your slate and pencil, And a boat-ride we'll enjoy." Within the holy Bible, This river's name is found; It helped to water Paradise, That well-known holy ground.

No. 171.

Find the name of a piece of furniture in each of the following sentences:

- 1. Mary is just over her long illness.
2. Will you take up a new cap to Annie?
3. There is too much air in this room.

No. 172.

Form a diamond of words:

- 1. The head of Tom.
2. One and one.
3. Twisted thread.
4. A unit.
5. Two-thirds of an eye.

No. 173.

A nautical-word enigma.

Build up a sentence of three words letter by letter. Go from the last letter of each word on to the first. The first word has six letters, the second three and the last five.

- 1. May be found in the wind, but not in the gale That sweeps the ocean and tatters the sail;
2. Next lives in the anchor, not in the mast;
3. The hurricane holds the next terribly fast.
4. Look well in the boat that hangs on the davit; If rightly you look, you surely will have it.
5. I'm part of the rigging, but never in chain.
6. The captain has held the first over again.

- 7. I'm not in the hold, tho' seen in the keel;
8. I'm nothing to steer by, but found in the wheel.
9. Without me, no captain could venture to sea; Tho' never on board of his ship may I be.
10. Let's try it again: I'm found in each rope.
11. And safe in the locker you'll see me, I hope.
12. I'm always abroad, yet never no deck;
13. I help at the anchor, but not at your beck;
14. And if there's anything yet you may see, Examine it close—it's me to a T. Now mind your letters, arrange them well, A pleasant circle then you can spell.

Find answers to the above—write them down—and see how they agree with the answers to be given next week.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 256.

- J osh u A
A minada B
C aso R
O raph A
B eso M

JACOB—ABRAM.

ANSWERS TO OURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 165.

Jonah's Gourd.

No. 166.

- J O N I A
O P E N S
N E E D S
I N D I A
A S S A Y

No. 167.

A pair of shoes.

No. 168.

- 1. Might—mite; 2. Rhyme—rime;
3. Flour—flower; 4. Night—knight;
5. Bite—bight; 6. Freeze—frieze; 7. Waive—wave.

No. 169.

Double Acrostic.

- A l m S
L a s T
L e O
C o G
H e m I
R e a R
I l l
S e a S
T e A
M a N
A d d
S o B
J n O
O n l Y
Y e S

Our wish for all our youthful readers; "All Christmas joys To girls and boys."

The Rich and the Poor Man.

A WONDER-STORY FOR THE LITTLE FOLKS, ADAPTED FROM THE GERMAN.

A long time ago a good angel lived among men. He sometimes went about in disguise, and then he appeared very much like a man so that those who saw him supposed not that he was an angel, but simply a man. It happened one evening that he was tired from travel, and the night came on before he could reach an inn. Along the road were two houses, one large and handsome, which belonged to a rich man, the other small and humble, whose owner was poor. Then he thought, "I will seek shelter at the rich man's door, for to him I will be no burden." The rich man, when he heard the knock at his door, lifted the window, and asked the stranger what he wanted. He replied, "I am seeking shelter for the night." The rich man looked at the traveller from head to foot, and because he was clothed very plainly, he shook his head and said, "I can not let you in; my rooms are full, and if I lodged every body who knocked at my door, I might myself take the beggar's staff in my hand. Go elsewhere." With that he shut his window and left the weary traveller standing at his door.

Then he went to the little house and knocked. The poor man at once opened the door and bade the traveller come in. "It is already dark," said he, "you can not go farther, lodge with us for the night." So he became their guest. The good wife baked some potatoes in the fire, milked the goat, and set the table for the evening meal. As the night wore on, a bed was spread for the tired stranger, and soon slumber closed all eyes, both in the poor man's cottage and the mansion of his rich neighbor. Early next morning, after partaking of a breakfast with the humble pair, their guest said, as he was about to leave them, "Because you are pious, and of a pitiful heart, make three wishes, and I will fulfil them all unto you." Then said the poor man, "What should I wish but for everlasting blessedness, and that we two, while we live, may have our strength and daily bread; I desire no more."

The stranger asked, "Would you not like a new house for this old one?" "Yes," said the man, "if it could be so."

Accordingly the old house was changed into a new one, and afterwards their guest went on his way. It was full day when the rich man woke and looked out of his window. There he beheld a pretty new house with red tiles and bright windows, where before the poor hut had stood. He was amazed, and called to his wife, "Run and see how this wonderful thing has come to pass." His wife hastened over the way, and on inquiry, learned that the stranger who had lodged with them had offered to fulfil three wishes for them, and it was he who had changed their old house into a new one. This news she brought back to her husband.

The rich man was in a great rage when he saw what he had lost in turning away the stranger from his door. "Make haste," said his wife, "saddle your horse, and overtake him and ask that he will grant to you also three wishes." This he did.

When he came up with the traveller he said to him, "I hope you will not think evil of me, I tried last night to find my door key, but when I found it you had gone away." Then he asked if three wishes might be granted him, as for his neighbor.

"Yes," said the stranger, "but it were better for you not to ask." Then he added, "Ride home, and whatever you wish for shall come to pass."

Riding homeward he pondered what great things he should wish for; but his horse startled by some object sprang to the side road. "Softly pony," said he, "go softly." The horse jumped and pranced the more until its rider became

impatient and an cry, and cried out, "I wish your neck was broken." Scarce were the words spoken when plucked, down fell the horse dead with a broken neck. His first wish was fulfilled. He took off the saddle and bridle and throwing them over his shoulders began to plod homeward on foot. The day was hot, the load heavy and the way long. He thought of his wife at home sitting in her easy chair while he was suffering from the heat, the dust and his burden. The thought made him angry and he said, "I wish she was on this saddle and had to stay there." Immediately the saddle was lifted from his shoulders, and it vanished from his sight. He walked on till he reached his home, thinking all the time what he should desire in the last wish, when lo, there upon the saddle sat his wife, crying piteously because she could not get off from it. "Be content," said he, "I will wish for you all the riches of the world, only stay where you are."

"What are they worth to me," said she, "if I have to sit here forever? You have wished me on, now you must wish me off again." So he did.

When she rose up she said to him, "You sheephead, I could have done better myself."

Thus he had nothing but vexation, trouble and harsh words, and a lost horse. The poor couple however lived content, quiet and pious until the end of their lives.

A correspondent writing to an American contemporary on the state of the weather, said: "The showers last week, though copious, were not sufficient to supply the wants of the millmen, but the wag of a competitor set it up 'milkmen.' Surely this is a libel."

1884.

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1884.

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