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The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter Lesson for March 9 1902 THE DISCIPLES SCATTERED.—Acts 8: 1-13.

Study verses 3-17. Read Acts 8: 18-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.—Acts 8: 4

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The month following the last lesson, A. D. 35-37

Place.—The city Samaria, the capital of the district of Samaria.

THE GREAT PERSECUTION AND ITS UNINTENDED RESULTS.—vs. 1-4 The martyrdom of Stephen was the beginning of the first general persecution of Christians. This persecution was by the Jews, not the heathen

The severity of the persecution is seen in the activity of Saul, who (3) made havoc of the church, as wild beasts ravage a garden. Entering into every house. No place was safe from the persecutor. Hailing Old English for hawling, dragging out by violence. He shut up many of the saints in prisons. Women also suffered. Stephen was not the only one who suffered death. Scattered abroad. They went through Samaria, Galilee, and as far as Phoenicia, Antioch, and Cyprus. Preaching the word. The persecution not only sent them over the country, but opened the way in each town or village for speaking about Jesus and his gospel. Their persecution would excite the sympathy of many.

First. Persecution, opposition, difficulties, ridicule, are a sifting process. They keep away most hypocrites.

Second. Such things reveal us to ourselves. Serving God when it costs to serve him prove to ourselves that we love him.

Third. Persecution is often one of the means God uses for the spread of the gospel. That is not saying that persecution is ever right. It is always wrong.

Fourth. It enlarges the church in its quality, character, and power. New work and new circumstances would develop new graces and new powers, and complete their Christian character.

Fifth. Many were set to work who would otherwise have remained comparatively useless.

THE WORK OF DRAGON PHILIP, THE HOME MISSIONARY.—vs. 5-8. Not the apostle of that name, but the evangelist, one of the seven deacons chosen to aid the apostles. Of his previous history we know nothing. We find him later a resident of Caesarea, with four daughters. Paul and Luke visited them at their home, and Luke may have learned about his work from the evangelist himself. The city of Samaria, the capital of the district of Samaria. And preached Christ the Messiah, unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed.

It is possible that Philip may have reaped a harvest from the seed sown by Jesus himself, nearly ten years before. Hearing the gracious words of eternal life, and of the effects of the gospel upon those who had embraced it at Jerusalem. Seeing the miracles. The signs of their divine authority, the helpful nature of the gospel they preached. Unclean spirits. So called because they defiled and degraded both the body and soul of those they possessed. Palsies. Cases of paralysis. These miracles delivered from very real and great evils; they were object-lessons of the work of the gospel.

THE UNWORTHY CONVERT, SIMON MAGUS.—vs. 9-24. A certain man, called Simon. Used sorcery. Simon doubtless exercised the same arts as the modern fortune-teller, with perhaps, a knowledge of chemistry and the powers of hypnotism, mesmerism, and of our spiritual mediums, together with the slight-of-hand performances. Many of these effects are very wonderful, and it is not strange that he amazed them. And bewitched he confounded their judgment. That himself was some great one. Simon claimed to combine in himself the Three Persons in the Trinity, alleging that he appeared to the Jews as the Son, to the Samaritans as the Father, and among the Gentiles as the Holy Ghost. It may be that he set himself up for the Messiah. This man is the great power of God. Powers was a word current to express angelic or heavenly influence. To him they had regard. In the hope that he might be the long-looked for deliverer. But when they believed Philip. When they saw the true light. Philip's teaching met their needs, brought forgiveness and salvation. Philip's works were not only more wonderful, but more gracious, more divine; and they were such that all possibility of deception was removed. Simon's produced wonder, but he

did not bring religion. He touched the mind, but left the heart as it was. Simon was selfish, seeking money and honor; Philip sought nothing for himself, but only the good of others. They (the believers) were baptized. According to the command of Christ. No better way of public profession of Christ can be found than by this of Christ's own ordaining. Then Simon himself believed also. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah. But his faith was only historical and intellectual, without having as its result a change of the inner life; hence, he was soon afterwards capable of what is related in vs 18, 19. He was baptized. Perhaps he was self-deceived.

The delegation from Jerusalem. The apostles... sent unto them Peter and John. The object of the delegation seems to have been to obtain a true report of the strange doings in Samaria. Were these true conversions? Should the Samaritan converts be received and welcomed in spite of the barrier between Jews and Samaritans? Besides this, Peter and John could give wise counsel to the new converts, and further instruction in the teachings of Jesus.

The Pentecostal Gift. The two apostles found that the conversions were real, but that the converts had received only a portion of the blessings of the gospel. Prayed for them. The best spiritual gifts come from prayer. That they might receive the Holy Ghost, special gifts of the spirit for power in service as Jesus had promised (Acts 1: 8), and in fuller degree, the "divine indwelling of the Spirit." Then laid their hands on them, to express that the gift came from God through his apostles. And they received the Holy Ghost, probably with the outward manifestations of Pentecost, and the inward grace which they represented. The special reasons for this gift were much the same as on the first bestowal at Pentecost:

(1) It expressed clearly the inward grace and power, so that both those who received it, and all others, might realize the fact of the unseen gift. (2) The new church needed the power. (3) It proved to the Jewish disciples that the Samaritan movement was from God.

The Samaritan bridge from Jews to Gentiles. The greatest epoch in the early church, and one essential to the gospel, was to be the reception of the Gentile Christians without their first becoming Jews. A great gulf lay between them which it seemed impossible to bridge. All were willing enough that Gentiles should become Jewish Christians, but they did not see how to welcome them as Gentile Christians. How could they join in eating and in social life with those whose food was forbidden, with whom an intermarriage was against their law?

Thus the reception of the Samaritans, who were half Jews (2 Kings 17: 24-29) and accepted the Mosaic books, but not the interpretation of the Elders, prepared the way for the wider opening of the door to the Gentiles. Simon. Trying to buy spiritual gifts with money. Simon Magus offered to buy this power of the two apostles, just as magicians bought secrets of one another, an act which gave his name, simony, to the crime, not new in the world, but new in the church, of obtaining spiritual things by money. This showed that he was no real Christian, and the apostles condemned him. In the gall of bitterness. He was still in aggravated depravity. And... bond of iniquity. Hemmed around by habits and principles of iniquity.

Note 1. How little of the best things can be bought for money! Wisdom, spiritual power, sound judgment, character, love, peace, forgiveness, communion with God, heaven, are as possible to the poorest man as to the richest.

2. The apostles reproved the richest and most powerful man in the church. The church was stronger without him than with him, so long as he was not a real Christian.

3. Even in the first church we have met with three spurious disciples, Judas, Ananias, Simon Magus; and yet only three out of many thousands.

4. Evil done in the name of religion does not make real religion any the less desirable.

On Drinking Water.

A noted physician said in my hearing that if people drank water at the right time and in the right quantity we doctors would have to go out of business.

There are so many things which if we would do them just right life would be greatly simplified. It is overwhelming to glance over the list of specialists who do not retire because we make our lives so unnecessarily complex.

First, water should be drunk between meals only Thirst and hunger are different calls to supply different needs.

As we chew the moisture necessary to shape our food for swallowing will form. How unreasoning, not to say foolish, to drink food down, washing away the saliva, which causes the flow of saliva, checking the salivary, without which the food will be deprived of a digestant, and for the time being paralyzing the digestive glands. Nature is gentle in her operations, seldom clamorous or insistent, except when abused, and when the precious fluids seem not to be wanted the little cells cease the supply.

If we partake of a small portion of food and chew it slowly, every particle will become a sweet morsel under the tongue, with no need of water to wash it down, and indigestion and dyspepsia will disappear.

Water is the first requisite in the morning before food. If only we would start our bodies, inside and out well washed on the way of life, how responsive would they be, even to forced marches!

Insomnia is often the result of insufficient water. The natural thirst ceases to be felt as thirst, but comes as a general sign of restlessness—the nerves crying for water, instead of food and sleep.

A certain proportion of our weight should be water. Ascertain from your physician the proper adjustment, then sip the water at intervals between digestion and the hours for repose, and the drough habit will disappear—and appendicitis with it, likely—that is, the tendency to appendicitis.

The equilibrium of the body must be maintained with proper food, in season. To be one-sided in anything a great man has said, is to be lopsided. And we would not be waterlogged!

It is not every one who can endure the morning bath and the morning exercise. The sick require special care, and we commend them to their physicians and nurses; but every one who would live must awaken, and if water in the night will help us sleep, water in the morning will also help us awaken—fresh and bright—and prepare the digestive tract for its work.

Ice water, however, is not to be considered. To put our living stomachs in cold storage is slow suicide and a crime against health and common sense.

What the Spider Told

I was spinning a web on a rose-vine, said the spider, and the little girl was sewing patchwork on the doorstep. Her thread knotted, and her needle broke, and her eyes were full of tears. I can't do it, she cried; I can't! I can't!

Then her mother came and told her to look at me. Every time I spun a nice thread and tried to fasten it to a branch the wind blew and tore it away. This happened several times; but at last I made one that would not break, and fastened it, and spun other threads to join it. Then the mother smiled. What a patient spider! she said.

The little girl smiled, too, and took up her work. And when the sun went down there was a beautiful web in the rose-vine, and a square of beautiful patchwork on the step.—Babyland.

The one thing needful in this nation is a reverence for law because it is law, a reverence for the author of law and a reverence for him whom we adore as the ruler of nations.

Never criticize the church in any point until you have done your best to remedy that defect, for after that you will not want to criticize.

Not until you make men self-reliant, intelligent and fond of struggle—fonder of struggle than of help and not till then have you relieved poverty.—Phillips Brooks.

Sleeplessness is due to nervous excitement. The delicately constituted, the financier, the business man, and those whose occupation necessitates great mental strain or worry, all suffer less or more from it. Sleep is the great restorer of a worried brain and to get sleep cleanse the stomach from all impurities with a few doses of Parnee's Vegetable Pills, gelatine coated, containing no mercury, and are guaranteed to give satisfaction or the money will be refunded.

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GASTRIC TROUBLES.

"I had suffered three years at least from gastric troubles. I could not sleep at night. My head ached and my feet would be cold as ice. My bowels were not regular and I would have such cramps from gas forming on my stomach that I would faint away. I was in such distress that I would have sooner died than live. About three months ago I was suffering and felt so that my body was tied up inwardly. My brother recommended Ripans Tablets to me. My husband obtained some for me from the nearest drug store and I would not use it without them. They relieved me of all the foul gases that formed in my stomach and they were my bowels regularly, for which I had been taking physics all the time. I have no more gas, my bowels were regular, I have no more headaches and can sleep well. In fact, I feel as light as the air which I breathe, and that is saying a good deal for a woman who weighs 100 pounds. I am sorry that I did not commence using the Tablets a year ago, for they would have saved me a great deal of pain and suffering."

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