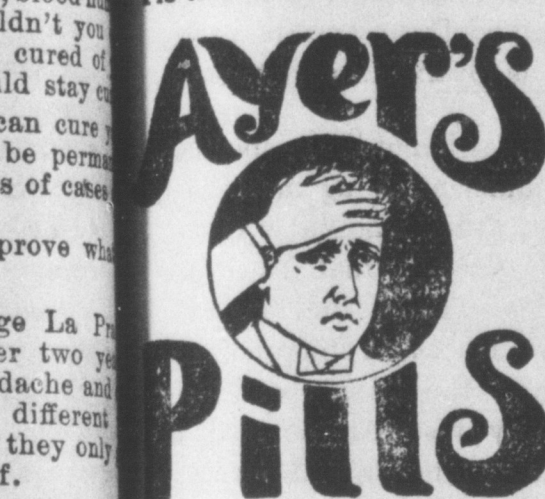


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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter Lesson 10. June 9 1901

JESUS APPEARS TO PAUL.

—Acts 22: 6-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—He was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.—Acts 26: 19.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—A. D. 37. About mid-summer. Most authorities place the conversion of Paul in this year. But Professor Ramsay makes it about 33; and Professor Thatcher, in 34 or 35. There is a space of time unaccounted for, and some place more before his conversion, and others more afterwards.

Place.—Near Damascus, one hundred and forty miles northeast of Jerusalem.

THE WORK OF CHRIST IN CONVERSION.—Vs. 6-16. Saul was his Hebrew name, Paul his Greek name. Paul was born at Tarsus, in Asia Minor, probably about A. D. 2. His parents were Jews of pure descent, strict observers of the law, and of the sects of Pharisees. He had a sister and a nephew at Jerusalem (Acts 23: 16), and the names of six kinsmen are given in Rom. 16: 7, 11, 21. His family was one of wealth, influence, and refinement.

As was the custom for every Rabbi, Paul learned a trade, that of tent-making.

Tarsus ranked among the first cities of the world. It was one of the busiest mercantile ports of the Mediterranean. It had schools to which young men from all parts of the world came to complete their education.

At an early age Paul was sent to Jerusalem, where he studied the law under Gamaliel (22: 3; 5: 34). He was an excellent scholar, a courteous gentleman, an orator, a religious man, sincere, strictly moral according to the Jewish law, proud, very devoted, and zealous.

He was very bitter against the church of Christ, persecuting Christians. He "delivered into prisons both men and women." At the same time he was exceedingly strict in observing the Jewish law and ritual. It came to pass... as I made my journey to Damascus to a rest Christians, under the authority of the Jewish rulers. Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. It was above the brightness of the sun (26: 13). There can be no doubt as to the origin of that light—it came from the face of the glorified Saviour. It is stated over and over again that Paul actually saw Jesus (1 Cor. 9: 1; 15: 8; Acts 9: 17, 27). How bright the glory of Christ must be to outshine the sun! And I fell unto the ground. He was dazzled by the intense brightness and overpowered. And heard a voice. In the Hebrew tongue. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? The name is repeated for emphasis. It is evident from v. 7 and Acts 26: 14, that there was an audible voice. Observe the form of the question. Why persecutest thou me? not my disciples, not my church. Christ speaks of himself as persecuted by Paul, because "in all the affliction of his people he is afflicted" (Isa. 63: 9), and "whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye." (Zech. 2: 8. Who art thou, Lord? Paul seeks to know more about his duty. He asks for more light. I am Jesus of Nazareth. The one you have despised as a Nazarene. Whom thou persecutest. This showed Paul's guilt. Paul had not cared so much about the people, but he had hated Jesus and the religion he taught, and the kingdom he had founded.

Christ calls us as he called Paul. He asks sinners now why they hate him and his kingdom; why they reject his offer of salvation. They that were with me... heard not the voice. They heard a noise (9: 7), but did not hear the words, nor recognize them as conveying a meaning. What shall I do, Lord? Paul was now willing to obey, and asks the Lord to show him. Go into Damascus. He went to the house of Judas on the street called Straight (9: 11). And there it shall be told thee. He was not yet prepared for the full revelation of his duty. God leads us step by step. And when I could not see. He was blind for three days, and "did neither eat nor drink" (9: 9). The state of his mind may be gathered from the fact that he took no food nor drink during that interval. These three days were a season of intense inward conflict. Could he give up all his ambitious hopes? Could he leave rank, wealth, honor, friends? Could he enter the service of one so despised, and suffer reproach and danger and death? And all for what?

And one Annias, a devout man, and a disciple (9: 10), but also a good Jew according to the law, having a good report. Such a man was the best one to receive the communication of the divine will. Brother Saul, receive thy sight. Annias was the means of giving him his sight.

The God of our fathers hath chosen thee. This was the announcement of his life work. That thou shouldst know his will. Christ imparted the knowledge of the gospel to Paul. He wrote more epistles than all the other apostles together. And see that Just one. That is, Jesus. Paul lays great stress on his having seen Christ (Acts 9: 17, 27; 1 Cor. 9: 1; 15: 8). That sight of Jesus was a perpetual blessing and power to him. For thou shalt be his witness. Here was something worth all his energies, and talents, and education, and ambitions. What thou hast seen and heard. He was to testify to what God had taught him, and what he had experienced. This is the duty and privilege of all Christians. Why tarriest thou? H-sitate no longer. Arise and be baptized. The appointed way of uniting with the church of Christ, and publicly professing faith in him. And wash away thy sins. Baptism presupposes repentance, and he who repents and believes has the promise of the forgiveness of sins. Calling on the name of the Lord. Evidently Christ He was to live a life of faith and prayer and worship.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. There are many ways in which men become disciples of Christ. Note the great variety shown in the New Testament history. The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, and people can come into it from every direction, and in many ways. The one question is whether they enter at all. Paul's experience is a noble example of what Jesus is continually working on earth in the redemption of the human race.

The vision of Jesus convinced Paul of his sin and his need. It showed him his own heart. He saw that he was far from God. It is the vision of Christ, so holy and loving; is the perception of the goodness of God that leads men to see themselves as they are, and convicts them of sin.

Paul saw in Jesus his rightful Lord and Saviour, whom he ought to love and trust and obey.

Paul repented of his sins, his self-righteousness, his pride, his errors. He accepted of Jesus as his Lord and Teacher and Saviour. He believed in him with his whole heart.

He confessed Christ before men. He took sides for him at great cost. This was the beginning of a new life.

OTHER VISIONS OF THE LIVING LORD AND GLORIFIED SAVIOUR; AND THEIR MEANING.

The Vision in Jerusalem. In a trance Paul saw Jesus at Jerusalem, three years later (Acts 22: 17, 21; Gal. 1: 18), when Jesus commissioned him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The vision meant appointment to his life work.

The Vision in Corinth. In Acts 18: 9, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. Paul was in danger from the opposition in Corinth, and was in doubt as to his duty. Jesus bade him remain in the city, for there was a great work for him to do there. The vision meant safety and success.

The Vision in a Prison at Jerusalem. Acts 23: 11. When Paul was imprisoned in Castle Antonia at Jerusalem on account of the mob, his life being threatened, and a long imprisonment before him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." As a matter of fact his arrest and imprisonment in order to stop his career became the very best means of his accomplishing it. The Romans themselves carried him to Rome, and protected him there, giving him abundant opportunity to preach the gospel. This vision meant adversity compelled to be the means of carrying out his life-work. It was comfort in adversity.

Now all these visions of Jesus by Paul add to the proofs that Jesus is an ever-living Saviour, and show us what things he is doing for us even to this day.

A Victim of Bad Books.

I listened, a few years since, to a very interesting lecture by the chaplain of the Massachusetts State prison. What impressed me most, was the large number of young men confined there, and especially the causes that led to their fall. The chaplain said he had conversed with them all, and almost invariably they traced their ruin to the thunder and lightning literature, as he termed it, they read.

A little later one day, business called me to B—, a few miles from —, Mass. During my stay I had occasion to visit the agent of a factory there, and noticed he had lost both hands above the wrists, and from his manner and the sad expression he wore, it was evident some great sorrow was heavy on his heart.

From a lady who lived near his home, and was well acquainted with his family, I learned the following sad story.

It seems he had one boy upon whom father and mother had based many bright hopes. They were members of the Congregational church, and had ever thrown around the boy such influences as was for his best good, but he, with others had become interested in the kind of books referred to above, and the result was he lost his interest in school, became wild, and was expelled from his institution where he was in attendance. His one thought was to go out West to become a cow boy.

As he had become unmanageable at home, and hoping a few months in the wild West would have a salutary effect, they decided to give him a chance to see for himself. He had not been from home many weeks, when a letter came asking for funds to purchase a ranch. Money was sent him, but a little later the intelligence came that he was dead. Being anxious to recover the body of their wayward son, they decided to go in person and seek it. As the father could not feed himself, some one must accompany him, and the mother decided she would go. The locality in which they sought their son I have forgotten; but they travelled by rail and stage as far as they could. They were obliged to travel on horseback one hundred miles. This was a trying ordeal, as they were far past middle life, and unaccustomed to this means of conveyance.

On reaching the locality where they expected to find the object of the long and wearisome journey, they learned that their boy, on coming there, had joined a gang of horse thieves, and when caught, the first time, owing to his youth, was able, with the money received from home, to purchase his liberty. But, on being caught a second time for a similar offence, he and others were lynched. To add to this sad affair, they were obliged to return without the object of their search.—Selected.

A Bible Scholar in the Kitchen.

I know of one dear woman who had only a common school education, and a very common one at that, she used in her humility to say, who yet became so choice a Bible scholar that in her church and Sabbath school it grew to be a habit with the people to defer to her opinion, and who had had abundant opportunity for study learned to mark their own opinion with an interrogation when it differed from hers. To one who questioned her as to how it was possible in her narrow and wonderfully busy life to give the amount of study and thought that she evidently did to Bible themes, she made answer:

Why you see I had a great deal of time to myself. After the children are started for school I am alone all day. And I know that at six o'clock there will be eleven hungry people who will look to me for a good dinner; so of course I have to spend a good deal of my time in the kitchen. Years ago I forsook that the large portion of my waking hours would have to be spent there, and I felt lonely and wanted a companion. So I covered my Bible with slate-colored cambric and took it to the kitchen with me. After a while my husband put up a shelf on purpose for it, and made a little wire arrangement to hold it open, and we have had real good times together, my Bible and I. I can peep at a verse here and there and keep thinking it over as I go about my work, and think of all the other verses I know that throw light on it. It is wonderful how many verses one knows that fit in, if we just give them time to find their places! Ironing days were very nice, it was long, slow work, you see, that didn't take much thought, because I knew exactly how to do it, and I could give my mind to some subject that needed studying, and every once in a while find a verse that made it plainer. Then in the evening, when I had a quiet half-hour to myself, I'd look up things that I hadn't had time for during the day, and find out what others thought about the same verse. That would be sure to start me on some new verses, and maybe would go for weeks, my Bible and I, studying that one subject.—Pansy, in The World.

The Rule of Three.

Three things to govern—temper, tongue, and conduct. Three things to live—courage, gentleness, and affection. Three things to hate—cruelty, arrogance, and ingratitude. Three things to delight in—frankness, freedom, and beauty. Three things to wish for—health, friends, and a cheerful spirit. Three things to avoid—idleness, loquacity, and flippant jesting.

A Girl Heroine.

She knew something. That is a great thing to say of anybody. She knew something which was worth knowing. That made her a power in the world. It is a great thing to know and believe in a great man. But be sure he is great. Not a few men are held as great who are but roofs of mud. To believe in a mud-roof man is to rest under a curse. There is no telling when he will break as you trust in him. Such a fall hurts.

But the little maid. We do not know her name, but she is in heaven and we will see her and find out her name one day.

She did a simple thing, but simple right things often prove to be great. She had no idea anybody two the u

sand years further on would talk about her and make resolutions to hunt her up in heaven. No one can do through life doing the right things always no matter how simple they may seem without hitting on something that will result in something great. We will find many things out in heaven which nobody paid much attention to here.

It was great to get Naaman healed, but that was not as great as getting him and his people to know God. This little girl proved a great missionary. There is no telling how many bearing of God through that act of hers went to heaven. Then her influence is a power to-day.

Remarkable Ants.

A cook was much annoyed to find his pastry shelves attacked by ants. By careful watching it was discovered that they came twice a day in search of food—at about seven in the morning and four in the afternoon. How were the pies to be protected against the invaders?

The cook decided to make a circle round the pie with treacle and await the result. He did not have long to wait, for at 6:30 he noticed that off to the left corner of the pantry was a line of ants slowly making its way in the direction of the pies.

They seemed like a vast army coming forth to attack the enemy. In front was a leader who always kept a little ahead of his troops. They were of the sort known as the medium sized red ant, which is regarded as the most intelligent of its kind whose scientific name is *Formica rubra*.

About forty ants out of 500 stepped out and joined the leader. The general and his aids held a council and then proceeded to examine the circle of treacle.

Certain portions seemed to be assigned to the different ants, and each selected unerringly the point in the section under his charge where the stream of treacle was narrowest. Then the leader made his tour of inspection. The order to march was given and the ants all made their way to a hole in the wall, at which the plastering was loose.

Here they broke rank and set about carrying pieces of plaster to the places in the treacle which had been agreed upon as narrowest. To and from they went from the nail-hole to the treacle, until at 11:20 o'clock they had thrown a bridge across. Then they formed themselves in line again and marched over, and by 11:45 every ant was eating pie.

What the Bible Is

Some writer gives the following analysis of the 'Books of books,' the Bible:

It is a Book of Laws, to show the right from wrong.

It is a Book of Wisdom, that makes the foolish wise.

It is a Book of Truth, which detects all human errors.

It is a Book of Life, that shows how to avoid everlasting death.

It is the most authentic and entertaining history ever published.

It contains the most remote antiquities, the most remarkable events and wonderful occurrences.

It is a complete code of laws.

It is a perfect body of divinity.

It is an unequalled narrative.

It is a book of biography.

It is a book of travels.

It is a book of voyages.

It is the best covenant ever made, the best deed ever written.

It is the best will ever executed, the best testament ever signed.

It is a learned man's masterpiece.

It is the young man's best companion.

It is the schoolboy's best instructor.

It is the ignorant man's dictionary, and every man's directory.

It promises an eternal reward to the faithful and believing.

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He is without partiality, and without hypocrisy. With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

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