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The Sabbath School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON

Second Quarter Lesson 7 May 18 1902

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.

Acts 13: 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Go ye therefore and teach all nations.—Matt. 28: 19

LEARN BY HEART.

V. 2; Matt. 28: 19, 20; Rom. 10: 14, 15.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The beginning of the great missionary movement in behalf of the Gentiles, probably in A. D. 46 or 47. In the spring—Rendall, etc.

Place.—Antioch in Syria, and the island of Cyprus

Rulers.—Claudius Cæsar, emperor of Rome 41-54. Cuspius Fadus, governor of Judea. The Romans are in Britain, seeking to subjugate the country.

A MISSIONARY CHURCH.—Now there were... at Antioch. On Antioch, see Lesson V. Prophets. The prophet is one who speaks for God, the interpreter of God; one who brings a message from God. Teachers. Instructors in truth and duty, those who studied God's Word and his providence, and the nature of men, and instructed the church. Barnabas, Simeon. Another spelling of Simon. Called Niger, i. e., black. The name has nothing to do with his race or color. Simon Black was a useful, worthy Christian. Lucius, of Cyrene, a province of northern Africa. Menen which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch was, no doubt, a person of considerable influence and rank. But he must have become a Christian from out of the worst influence and he must have been a man of strong character and devoted piety.

It is worthy of remark how two men, brought up in the same family under the same influences, lived such different lives and reached such different ends as Menen and Herod. Compare Abel and Cain. No surroundings are so bad, but a child may grow into a saint from amidst them; and none so good, but a child may become bad in spite of them.

And Saul. Mentioned last as the latest convert, perhaps the youngest. As they ministered to the Lord. They were giving themselves up to special meetings for religious services. And fasted. Fasting would seem to have its basis in a grief over sin so deep and intense that all desire for food is taken away; or such a strong desire for holiness, for the progress of God's work, for the removal of all that hinders it, that we forget to eat.

Characteristics of the Antioch Church. (1) It was large; (2) deeply in earnest; (3) ready to learn from teachers; (4) guided by the Holy Spirit; (5) utilizing varied talent; (6) generous in giving; (7) broad-minded; (8) holding special meetings; (9) growing; (10) full of the missionary spirit.

THE FIRST FOREIGN MISSIONARIES.—Vs. 2, 3. The Holy Ghost said. In answer to their prayers, and to their spirit of service. It is not stated by what means the Holy Spirit voiced his will, whether through prophets or through a general impulse pervading the church. We must not limit the ways in which the Holy Ghost speaks to us. He speaks to us by conscience, by reason, by providence, by his word, by speaking unmistakably within our souls, and within the church as a whole. Separate me i. e., set apart for this special work. For the work whereunto I have called them. Paul was called definitely at the time of his conversion, Barnabas perhaps in a more general way, by fitness, by an inward call, by spiritual longing. Finding our Mission. God has called each of us to some special work in his kingdom. It is of the first importance that we find out what that work is, and enter upon it. We can find out in the same way that Paul and Barnabas did: (1) The Holy Spirit will teach us. (2) We shall find out the will of the Spirit by intensely earnest seeking, with a complete yielding to God. (3) The knowledge of our work will come gradually to us, as we prove our fitness, and are led on in the duties that come to us day by day.

And, rather "then." In response to the command of the Holy Spirit. When they (the church) had fasted and prayed, indicating a special meeting held for the purpose. And laid their hands on them. By representatives of the church; guided by the Holy Spirit. The church thus accepted them as their missionaries, and pledged themselves to sustain them by their sympathy, their prayers, and whatever aid they might need.

Practical Suggestions. 1. One of the first privileges and duties of

a strong church is to be a center of missionary influence.

3 The Holy Spirit guides the church as really now as it did then, and in many ways.

THEIR FIRST MISSION FIELD. THE CONTEST FOR A SOUL.—Vs. 4-11. Sent forth by the Holy Ghost, as related above. The origin of the missionary work was the Holy Spirit. Departed unto Seleucia. The seaport of Antioch. Sailed to Cyprus. A voyage of eighty to one hundred miles. Cyprus was the native island of Barnabas, who would gain a freer opening for his work through friends; it was on the way to Asia Minor and the regions beyond. Cyprus was about one hundred and fifty miles long and sixty miles wide. Salamis was on the eastern extremity of the island, the nearest port to Antioch. They preached the word of God. God's message of salvation through Jesus the Christ. In the synagogue. For the Jews were most easily reached, since they believed the Bible and expected the Messiah. And they had also John. John Mark, author of the Gospel according to Mark. To their minister. For their assistant. He probably was anxious to go, and could in many ways be of service, while at the same time he was in training for further usefulness. Gave through the island unto Paphos. Now Paphos, at the western end of the island. A false prophet. One who falsely pretended to influence the future, false in character and aims, misleading men, teaching false doctrine, false morality for his own profit. Bar-Jesus Son of Jesus, or Joshua. Which was with the deputy. As one of his train which always accompanied a Roman governor. Deputy the governor of a province under the senate at Rome. A prudent man of good common sense and judgment. Called for Barnabas and Saul. He would search wherever there was hope of more light. But Elymas. Not necessarily a proper name. It is simply Aramaic for Magian, magician, sorcerer. Withstood them. Opposed them because he saw his influence and power and the emoluments of his place were gone if Sergius Paulus accepted the gospel. Turned from the faith, from believing the gospel. Paul had made an impression on the governor. Saul, (who also is called Paul). This connects the two names with the same man. Set his eyes, looked intensely. Full of all subtlety. Deceit, guile, underhandedness. Child of the devil. And like his father. He had been adopted by Satan by his own choice. Devil, and therefore the enemy of all righteousness, opposed to Jesus, Pervert the right ways of the Lord. He slandered God and true religion by misrepresenting them. Perverted truths are the most dangerous of errors. The hand of the Lord, not of Paul. Paul announced the fact, but did not produce it. And thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun, total blindness. For a season. Until he should cease his opposition, and God sees fit to restore his sight. A mist and a darkness. Expressing the gradual progress of the loss of sight, ending in blindness.

THE FIRST CONVERT (so far as the history relates).—V. 12. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed. The apostles had been teaching and preaching, and the miracle completed the evidence and turned the scale. Believed. Became a disciple of Christ. The victory was won. Being astonished at the doctrine (the teaching) of the Lord, both at the manner of teaching, thus confirmed by miracle, and what was taught about the Lord. Practical. 1. The missionary, and every one who attempts to do good, must expect opposition, false charges, and every hindrance which the Bad interposes when the Good interferes with its gains. 2. As Paul and Elymas, the Holy Spirit and Satan, contended for the soul of Sergius, so there is a contest for all our souls. 3. The punishment of sin is often of the nature of the sin; blindness comes to the spiritually blind. The punishment is mingled with mercy; it is to lead them to repentance, to make them realize their blindness, and seek some one to guide them to the Light of the world.

THE MISSION OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL BY REV. J. M. COON.

No unprejudiced person accepts the recent caustic and reckless criticisms of the Sunday-school; but all intelligent and progressive Christians recognize its limitations and weakness. However, after all allowances, it remains that the Sunday-school is a most wonderful organization, and, in the rise of the international system of lessons, has been a fruitful source of church membership. It is claimed that about eighty-two per cent. of new members come by way of the Sunday-school. An enumeration of the favorable conditions will ex-

plain and justify this remarkable claim. The true worker in the Sunday school: (1) Uses chiefly the Word of God. (2) Is already a chosen expert—necessarily at least. (3) Has most favoring conditions as to time and environment. (4) Works upon the scholar at a susceptible age. (5) Is specially equipped for the work and guided in it. (6) Has the inspiration of past success and achievement. (7) Meets these who are favorable and appreciative, and open to conviction. (8) Is expected to question and teach with direct reference to personal salvation. (9) Has the help of the Holy Spirit to seal and fortify the truth.

The distinctive glory of the Sunday-school is this evangelistic spirit and purpose. Any departure from such a purpose is to be deprecated and, if possible, prevented. In some of the attempts to improve the Sunday-school a vital mistake is made. It is that of jostling and jarring the school from its spiritual method and aim. The tendency is to overload the school with that which is merely technical and critical. A common explanation and defense for this tendency is the assumed analogy between the secular school and the Sunday school. A true comparison, however, reveals contrasts and differences rather than similarities: (1) They differ as to time—one thirty hours per week; the other one hour. (2) They differ as to government—one authoritative, the other persuasive. (3) They differ as to purpose—the one culture; the other character. (4) They differ as to text-book—the one man's work; the other God's Word. (5) They differ as to the chief point of approach and appeal—the one to the intellect; the other to the heart, conscience, and will. (6) They differ as to method—one mainly instructional; the other largely inspirational. (7) They differ as to teachers—in one case paid, select and able; in the other case free, miscellaneous and often unqualified. (8) They differ as to parental attitude—in one case habitual co-operation and interest; in the other case, too often, neglect and indifference. By this comparison it will be seen how unreasonable, difficult and mischievous to urge the methods of the secular school upon the Sunday school.

Indeed, the differences are so radical that the methods of one could not be used in the other if we would, and should not be so used if we could. The comparison, instead of furnishing arguments for a change of methods in the Sunday-school, really suggests arguments against such changes. Now, in this position no disparagement is intended of historical, scientific and critical study of the Bible. The great importance and value of normal work and the study of all the externals of Scripture truth, are not for a moment questioned. The more of such study the better. But it is here urged that the Sunday-school, in the nature of the case, is not the place and time for such study, except in an incidental and subordinate way. The one predominant and supreme work of the Sunday-school is the spiritual teaching of the Word of God for the purpose of producing a spiritual effect on the heart and life of the scholar.—Journal and Messenger.

God graduates the trials of our life; He allows the lesser to precede the greater. He gives us the opportunity of learning to trust Him in slighter difficulties, that faith may become muscular and strong, and that we may be able to walk to Him amid the surge of the ocean.—Rev. F. B. Meyer.

We always under-estimate the love of God. We cannot say too often to ourselves, God love us.

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 Parmelee'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 could not eat much except from gastric burning on my stomach. I would faint every day. I was in such a state that I would have rather died than live. About three months ago I was suffering with it and I obtained some for me from the nearest drug store and I would not use it without them. They relieved me of all the gastric troubles that formed in my stomach and they were my friends. I feel for which I had been taking physics all the time. I have no more gastric troubles, my bowels are regular, I have no more headache and can sleep well at night. I feel as light as the air I breathe, and that is saying a good deal for a woman who weighs 150 pounds. I am very thankful that I have found something that will prolong my life."

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