SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON QUARTERLY

No. 182 ◆ FOURTH QUARTER, 1940

PETER AND JOHN HEAL THE IMPOTENT MAN. STANDARD PUB. C

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—I

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES—I

(From Christ's Ascension to the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus)

Lesson 1, for October 5, 1940

Jesus Ascends to Heaven; Disciples Tarry at Jerusalem

SCRIPTURE: Acts 1:1-26.

MEMORY VERSE: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 25-34; "Testimonies," vol. 8, pp. 19-23; "Early Writings," pp. 190, 191; "The Desire of Ages," pp. 829-835.

PLACES: The place of the ascension was Mount Olivet, near Bethany. The meeting place of the one hundred twenty disciples was an upper room in a house in Jerusalem, probably the "upper room" which was used by Jesus and the disciples for the Passover feast. (See Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12-14.)

PERSONS: Jesus; apostles; Matthias; disciples.

Setting of the Lesson

Jesus had spent about thirty-three years on this earth. He had fulfilled the prophecies concerning Him as to His earthly life. His work with and for the people, His death, His burial, and His resurrection, were well known to His disciples.

Jesus remained on earth for forty days after His resurrection. He was not with His disciples continuously during this time, but He appeared to them upon several different occasions, even convincing "doubting Thomas" that He had risen from the dead. He explained the Scriptures to them more fully, and also set before them the work He would leave to them.

The Parting Promise and Commission

1. Who was the writer of the Book of Acts? Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3.

NOTE.—In the Authorized Version, the title is given, "The Acts of the Apostles." The list of the apostles is given in Acts 1:13, but of these only Peter, John, and James are in later chapters mentioned by name. The James who figures prominently after the death of James the apostle is James the brother of the Lord. So the book is not an account of the doings of all the apostles. An African named the book "Words Concerning Deeds," which seems quite appropriate.

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Luke, or Lucas (Philemon 24), the evangelist, wrote the Book of Acts, also the "former treatise," the Gospel of Luke. Paul refers to him as "the beloved physician." Col. 4:14. Throughout the narrative he does not mention his own name. This narrative covers about thirty-two or thirty-three years of time, from the resurrection of Jesus to the imprisonment of Paul the apostle in Rome.

The Acts of the Apostles is the story of the development of the early church, not merely a biography of men.

2. What kind of proofs did Jesus give to demonstrate that He was truly the Son of God? Acts 1:3.

3. As Jesus met with His disciples upon one occasion, what special command did He give to them? Verses 4, 5.

NOTE—"The promise of the Father." Jesus refers to this "promise" in Luke 24:49. He explained it quite fully in John 14:16, 17.

4. What hope was still cherished by the disciples? How did Jesus gently reprove them for their question about the kingdom? Acts 1:6, 7.

NOTE.—"Let all our brethren and sisters beware of anyone who would set a time for the Lord to fulfill His word in regard to His coming, or in regard to any other promise He has made of special significance."—*"Testimonies to Ministers,"* p. 55.

5. What did Jesus promise that they should receive? For what purpose was the power to be given? Verse 8.

NOTE.—In His farewell Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem [at home], and in all Judea [neighborhood], and in Samaria [a near-by country], and unto the uttermost part of the earth [foreign mission fields]."

6. How extensive was the witnessing commission which was given to the apostles? Mark 16:15.

NOTE.—"The gospel commission is the great missionary charter of Christ's kingdom. . . . When Christ said to the disciples, Go forth in My name to gather into the church all who believe, He plainly set before them the necessity of maintaining simplicity. The less ostentation and show, the greater would be their influence for good."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 28.

"We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine."—*"The Desire of Ages,"* p. 347.

7. While Jesus was talking to the disciples, what took place? What assurance did the angels give to the believers? Acts 1:9-11.

NOTE.—"When the time came for Christ to ascend to His Father, He led the disciples out as far as Bethany. Here He paused, and they gathered about Him. With hands outstretched in blessing, as if in assurance of His protecting care, He slowly ascended from among them."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 32.

The cloud that hid Jesus from His disciples was a cloud of angels.

"All heaven was waiting the hour of triumph when Jesus should ascend to His Father. Angels came to receive the King of glory, and to escort Him triumphantly to heaven. After Jesus had blessed His disciples, He was parted from them, and taken up. And as He led the way upward, the multitude of captives who were raised at His resurrection followed. A multitude of the heavenly host were in attendance, while in heaven an innumerable

company of angels awaited His coming. As they ascended to the holy city, the angels who escorted Jesus cried out, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.' The angels in the city cried out with rapture, 'Who is this King of glory?' The escorting angels answered in triumph, 'The Lord strong and mighty! The Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!' Again the waiting angels asked, 'Who is this King of glory?' and the escorting angels answered in melodious strains, 'The Lord of hosts! He is the King of glory!' And the heavenly train passed into the city of God. Then all the heavenly host surrounded their majestic Commander, and with the deepest adoration bowed before Him, and cast their glittering crowns at His feet. And then they touched their golden harps, and in sweet, melodious strains, filled all heaven with rich music and songs to the Lamb who was slain, yet lives again in majesty and glory."—*"Early Writings,"* pp. 190, 191.

"The disciples and the mother of Jesus, who with them had witnessed the ascension of the Son of God, spent the following night in talking over His wonderful acts, and the strange and glorious events which had taken place within a short time."—*Id.*, p. 191.

A Work of Preparation

8. After the ascension of Jesus, where did the apostles go? Verse 12.

9. Into what room did they go? Who are mentioned as being together in this upper room? What prayer season then began? Verses 13, 14.

NOTE.—This is the last time that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned in the Scriptures.

"These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need, and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 37.

10. What did Peter do? What reference did he make to Judas? Verses 15-19.

11. To what scripture did Peter refer? Verse 20.

12. What business was necessary to be transacted at that time? What qualification was necessary in the one chosen to be a witness? Verses 21, 22.

13. By what method was the choice made? Who was chosen to complete the number of apostles? Verses 23-26.

NOTE.—After the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and His control of the work of Christ, we have no record of the casting of lots.

Think on These Things

The most precious promise to Christians in these days.
What we should be content not to know.
How we may "bear witness" for Jesus.

Lesson 2, for October 12, 1940

A Promise Fulfilled; The Holy Spirit Given

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:1-21.

MEMORY VERSE: "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2:21.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 35-41, 47-56; "Testimonies," vol. 7, pp. 31-33; "The Great Controversy," pp. 611, 612 (new ed., pp. 690, 691); "The Ministry of the Spirit" (Thompson), pp. 42-67.

PLACES: Jerusalem; an upper room in a house in the city; the temple.

PERSONS: The apostles, Peter specially mentioned; the multitude, composed of many from lands other than Palestine.

Setting of the Lesson

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. "The people looked on them, expecting to see on their faces expressions of sorrow, confusion, and defeat; but they saw there gladness and triumph. . . . They had seen the risen Saviour, and the words of His parting promise echoed constantly in their ears."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 35.

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

1. How was the unity of the believers on the day of Pentecost indicated? Acts 2:1.

NOTE.—From Acts 1:12-15 we learn that the company that came together "with one accord" was one hundred twenty in all—apostles and laymen, men and women. They were actuated by one desire, one purpose. It was "like many voices of differing qualities, singing different parts, united in one heavenly anthem."

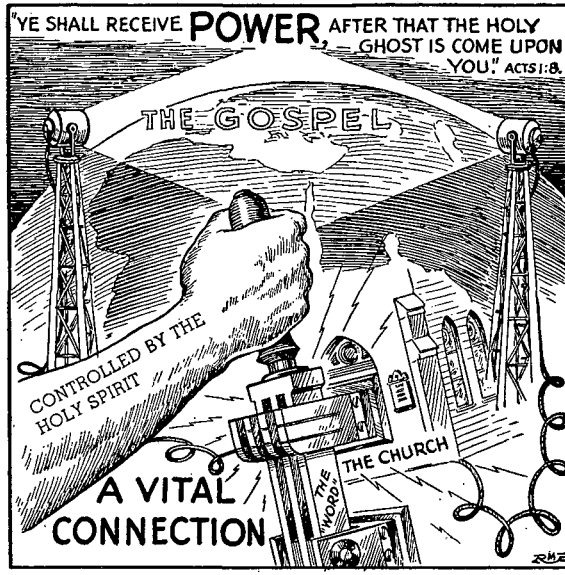
2. What had they been doing? Luke 24:51-53.

NOTE.—"In obedience to Christ's command, they waited in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father,—the outpouring of the Spirit. They did not wait in idleness. The record says that they were 'continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.' They also met together to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus. . . .

"As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance. . . . Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 35-37.

For ten days the disciples prayed, confessing their sins, making every wrong right, and seeking for the promised blessing. The feast of the harvest was celebrated each year. It occurred on the fiftieth day from the offering of the first fruits. The first fruits were offered on the second day of the feast of unleavened bread, and inasmuch as the feast of the harvest occurred fifty days later, it was called the day of Pentecost, as Pentecost means "fiftieth." The resurrection of Jesus took place on the day the first fruits were offered. Pentecost therefore came fifty days (inclusive) from the resurrection of Jesus, and ten days after His ascension. (See Lev. 23:9-16; Deut. 16:9, 10.)

3. What suddenly took place? Acts 2:2, 3.



NOTE.—The appearance is not called fire, but only compared to fire. The sound which was heard filled the house, and the appearance of the cloven tongues may have lingered for some time, for Peter seems to refer to it in his sermon. (See verse 33.)

4. As soon as the disciples were filled with the Spirit, what did they do? Verse 4.

NOTE.—"Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers, as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 38, 39.

5. What had Jesus said of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit? How long should the Spirit abide in His people? John 14:16, 17.

6. Where is God's earthly dwelling place now? Isa. 57:15; 2 Cor. 6:16.

The Gospel in Foreign Tongues

7. Who dwelt at Jerusalem when the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost? What caused great astonishment as the message was given to the people? Acts 2:5-8.

NOTE.—"During the dispersion, the Jews had been scattered to almost every part of the inhabited world, and in their exile they had learned to speak various languages. Many of these Jews were on this occasion in Jerusalem, attending the religious festivals then in progress. Every known tongue was represented by those assembled. This diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 39, 40.

8. How many nationalities are mentioned as hearing the gospel in their own tongue? Verses 9-11.

NOTE.—"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites." These were people living in the Persian Empire beyond the Tigris, and including Turkestan and Afghanistan to the border of India. They all spoke Persian, but in different dialects.

"Mesopotamia, between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The language was some form of Chaldee.

"Judea, speaking Aramaic in a different dialect from that used in Galilee.

"Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia. Not our Asia, but a small Roman province in what is now Asia Minor.

"Egypt, where the language was Coptic.

"Phrygia and Pamphylia. Here Greek, with different dialects. These regions were also in Asia Minor.

"Libya, in northern Africa, the portion referred to being Cyrene, on the Mediterranean. Language, probably Greek.

"Strangers ('sojourners,' A. R. V.) from Rome. Latin language.

"Jews and proselytes, meaning heathen who had accepted the Jewish religion. These were included in all the preceding nations.

"Cretes, from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean, now called Candia. They may have spoken Greek.

"Arabians, from the great peninsula which stretches between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. They spoke Arabic."—*Peloubet, abbreviated.*

9. What did all these say they heard? Verse 11, last part.

10. In their amazement, what question did they ask? What did some mockingly say? Verses 12, 13.

NOTE.—"The priests and rulers were greatly enraged at this wonderful manifestation, but they dared not give way to their malice, for fear of exposing themselves to the violence of the people. They had put the Nazarene to death; but here were His servants, unlettered men of Galilee, telling in all the languages then spoken, the story of His life and ministry. The priests, determined to account for the miraculous power of the disciples in some natural way, declared that they were drunken from partaking largely of the new wine prepared for the feast."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 40.

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Prophecy Is Fulfilled

11. How did Peter get the attention of the multitude? How did he reply to those who mocked? Verses 14, 15.

NOTE.—The "third hour of the day" was about 9 A. M. according to Jewish reckoning. This was the hour of morning prayer. Before this hour the Jews did not partake of food, and on festal days, such as Pentecost, they abstained from food and drink till the sixth hour, noon. Peter refers to the early hour as proof that the charge of drunkenness was contrary to all probability.

When the Lord is working in power, there are those who make light of His presence, and mock when they should pray. In the most solemn meetings, some will laugh, whisper, and in other ways show their contempt and indifference. It was so at Pentecost. There were those who said with a sneer, "It is nothing; these men are drunken."

12. What explanation did Peter give of what had come to pass? Verses 16-18.

NOTE.—"Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when, through a special endowment of spiritual power, they will receive a miraculous fitting up for soul winning, they are yielding themselves daily to God, that He may make them vessels meet for His use. Daily they are improving the opportunities for service that lie within their reach. Daily they are witnessing for the Master wherever they may be, whether in some humble sphere of labor in the home, or in a public field of usefulness."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 55.

13. Where did Peter say the signs mentioned by the prophet Joel would appear? Verses 19, 20.

14. What glorious promise is given? Verse 21.

Think on These Things

"To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs."—*"Testimonies,"* vol. 8, p. 20.

The Holy Spirit "awaits our demand and reception."

"It was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out."—*Ibid.*

Lesson 3, for October 19, 1940

A Multitude Converted

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:22-47.

MEMORY VERSE: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 41-46; "Steps to Christ," pp. 23-41.

PLACES: Jerusalem; in the temple, and from house to house.

PERSONS: Peter; other apostles; the multitudes from every nation; three thousand believers; reference is made to David, regarded by the Jews as one of the patriarchs of the nation.

Setting of the Lesson

During the Feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles. Every known tongue was represented in the multitude that had come to Jerusalem. This fact might well have been regarded as a great hindrance to the spread of the gospel, but the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak so that every man heard "in his own tongue" what was said. The priests and rulers tried to bring the apostles into disfavor by accusing them of drunkenness, but Peter began to speak to the people very earnestly, showing them the meaning of what had taken place. This lesson is a continuation of Peter's sermon.

Proclaiming a Risen Saviour

1. In speaking to the Jews, what does Peter say of the way God had shown approval of Jesus of Nazareth? Acts 2:22.

2. What did he boldly accuse them of doing? Verse 23.

3. What does Peter declare God had done? Why was it not possible for death to hold Christ captive? Verse 24.

NOTE.—"Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed. Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God."—*"The Desire of Ages,"* p. 761.

4. What assurance is given concerning the dead? John 5:24, 25.

5. How had David foretold the resurrection of Christ? Acts 2:25-28; Ps. 16:8-11.

NOTE—David here voices beautifully the hope of everyone who dies fully trusting. It was written beforehand of Christ, "My flesh also shall rest in hope," because it was impossible that He, the Life-giver, should be holden of death. He passed through the portals of the tomb, "that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But He arose triumphant over the foe of all mankind—death; and "at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15:52) He will call forth the sleeping saints, who shall arise from their graves "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: . . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isa. 35:10.

6. How did Peter apply this prophecy? Of whom was David speaking? Acts 2:29-32.

NOTE.—To show that this prophecy did not refer to David himself, but to Christ the "Holy One," Peter appealed to the fact that David was still dead and in his tomb. Jesus had been raised without seeing corruption, and was now exalted at the right hand of God, shedding forth the Pentecostal blessing which had been promised before His ascension.

"Peter did not refer to the teachings of Christ to prove his position, because he knew that the prejudice of his hearers was so great that his words on this subject would be of no effect. Instead, he spoke to them of David, who was regarded by the Jews as one of the patriarchs of their nation."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 41.

At the Right Hand of God

7. Where was Christ seated upon His ascension to heaven? Verses 33-35.

NOTE.—This was not merely an invitation to sit at the right hand of God,

the place of honor and glory. The thought includes that of a formal act, such as when we say that a delegate is seated. This is more than to sit down in a chair. It is a formal induction into an honored position, and denotes more than the act of sitting.

8. What further evidence did Peter give to prove that David was not the subject of this prophecy? Verses 29, 34, first part.

9. In closing his sermon, what assuring conclusion did Peter draw? Verse 36.

Responding to the Message

10. What effect did Peter's sermon have upon the people? What did they ask Peter and the other apostles? Verse 37.

11. What did Peter tell them to do? What would they then receive? Verse 38.

12. How inclusive is the promise of the gift of the Spirit? Verses 39, 40.

NOTE.—"To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs. God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word."—*"Testimonies,"* vol. 8, p. 20.

13. What harvest of souls was gathered that day? How did these newly converted persons show great faithfulness? What was wrought by the Holy Spirit through the apostles? Verses 41-43.

14. How did the believers relate themselves to their earthly possessions? Verses 44, 45.

15. What were believers doing daily? What response did the Lord make daily? Verses 46, 47.

NOTE.—Who were the eleven men who were to take up the work of the divine Son of God? Some of them were fishermen with not even what we would call a high school education. One of them was a taxgatherer, a calling that brought him into disfavor with the Jews. The others were plain men in the ordinary walks of life. With quarreling voices they had recently contended among themselves as to which should be the greatest. Yet Jesus left them clothed with the responsibility for the spread of the gospel which He had come to proclaim, and for which He died to make it sure. They were to give the gospel to the antagonistic Jews, and to the cultured Greeks with their great philosophers, also to the Roman world given over to idolatry. What were their chances of success? Humanly speaking, they had none. But when Pentecost came, the promise of power was fulfilled. Through the preaching of Peter three thousand were received into the church in one day. How tremendously important was this first step, the central event around which revolved all that followed.

Think on These Things

Gems From the "Testimonies"

"There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."—*"Testimonies,"* vol. 8, p. 19.

"Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out."—*Id.*, p. 20.

"Why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it? . . . For the baptism of the Spirit every worker should be pleading with God."—*Id.*, p. 22.

"The time is coming when there will be as many converted in a day as there were on the day of Pentecost, after the disciples had received the Holy Spirit."—*"Review and Herald,"* June 29, 1905.

Lesson 4, for October 26, 1940

At the Temple Gate

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:1-26.

MEMORY VERSE: "His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know." Acts 3:16.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 57-60; "Early Writings," pp. 192, 193.

PLACE: The outer court of the temple in Jerusalem; the gate Beautiful was the main entrance.

PERSONS: Peter; John; a lame man; the people.

Setting of the Lesson

"A short time after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and immediately after a season of earnest prayer, Peter and John, going up to the temple to worship, saw at the gate Beautiful a cripple, forty years of age, whose life, from his birth, had been one of pain and infirmity. This unfortunate man had long desired to see Jesus, that he might be healed; but he was almost helpless, and was far removed from the scene of the great Physician's labors. His pleadings at last induced some friends to bear him to the gate of the temple, but upon arriving there, he found that the One upon whom his hopes were centered, had been put to a cruel death.

"His disappointment excited the sympathy of those who knew for how long he had eagerly hoped to be healed by Jesus, and daily they brought him to the temple, in order that passers-by might be induced by pity to give him a trifle to relieve his wants."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 57, 58.

Healing the Impotent

1. To what place did Peter and John go on a certain day soon after Pentecost? At what time did they go, and for what purpose? Acts 3:1.

NOTE.—The Bible mentions three specific hours of prayer. The psalmist speaks of his own custom: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray." Ps. 55:17. Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day." Dan. 6:10. The hour of morning prayer was the third hour (9 o'clock). Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour (12 o'clock). The evening prayer (3 o'clock) was that to which Peter and John were going.

2. Who sat at the temple gate through which they passed? Why was this man there? For what did he ask? Acts 3:2, 3.

NOTE.—This gate which was called Beautiful had magnificent doors of Corinthian brass, seventy-five feet high and sixty feet broad, adorned with plates of silver and gold. When the sun shone upon it, it became a "glory" gate. Near by were signs warning strangers not to pass beyond this point upon pain of death. Contrast this with the gospel invitation "Whosoever will, let him come."

3. What shows the pecuniary poverty of Peter and John? What shows their spiritual wealth? How was the lame man healed? Verses 4-7.

NOTE.—"Such as I have give I thee." "If a man has money, he can give money. If he has truth, he can impart truth. If one has courage, hope, love, goodness, one can infuse them into other souls. If he has strength, he can use it for others. . . . Peter gave the lame man two things, each of which was worth far more than silver and gold. He gave him the power to earn his own living. . . . Then Peter bestowed a far greater gift than this—he brought him to the Lord Jesus, into the Christian life. Jesus in all His healings gave the higher blessing with the lower. He always did more than heal the body. That was the lesser part of the cure."—*Peloubet.*

There are men who have lost their faith and confidence in God and man, but no one has yet been found who is not responsive to a strong and lifting hand, and to acts of practical sympathy and helpfulness. "The Lord God through Jesus Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitation to the sinful and fallen. He will receive all. He welcomes all. It is His glory to

pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the lowest depths of human wretchedness, and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin."—*"The Ministry of Healing,"* p. 61.

4. How did the man show his joy and gratitude? Verse 8.

5. What caused the people to wonder? Verses 9, 10.

6. As the man who had been lame clung to Peter and John, what did the people do? Verse 11.

NOTE.—"The porch that is called Solomon's," was a spacious marble colonnade on the eastern side of the temple area. It was closed on the outer side, and was a favorite resort for public gatherings. It received its name from the tradition that it had formed a part of the temple built by Solomon.

Giving Christ the Glory

7. In what words did Peter disclaim all credit for this miracle? To whom did he direct the attention of the people? Verses 12, 13, first part.

8. What direct charge did he make against the Jews standing by? Who was the murderer referred to in verse 14? Verses 13 (last part), 14; Luke 23:18, 19.

9. What titles of honor did he use in referring to Jesus? Of what great fact were the apostles witnesses? Acts 3:14, 15.

10. By whom and how did Peter say the miracle of healing had been wrought? Verse 16.

An Appeal to Repentance

11. How did Peter seem to soften the charge against the Jews? Of what were the sufferings of Jesus a fulfillment? Verses 17, 18.

12. What did Peter then exhort the people to do? Do men need to repent of sin committed ignorantly? Verse 19; Lev. 4:27, 28.

NOTE.—"I saw that none could share the 'refreshing,' unless they obtained the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord, and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy, and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence."—*"Early Writings,"* p. 71.

13. Who will again be sent to this earth? How long will Jesus remain in heaven? Who has spoken of the time when all things will be restored? Acts 3:20, 21.

NOTE.—"All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life."—*"The Great Controversy,"* p. 483.

14. What had Moses said to the fathers? When that Prophet (Jesus) came, what should the people have done? What fate awaits those who refuse to hear Him? Verses 22, 23.

15. Who besides Moses had foretold what would come to pass? What was the relation of Peter's hearers to the prophets? Verses 24, 25.

16. How had God specially favored the Jews of Peter's day? Verse 26.

Think on These Things

The contrast between the attitude of Peter recorded in Matthew 26:69-75 and his experiences in this lesson.

What brought about the change?

What is of greater value than silver or gold?

Lesson 5, for November 2, 1940

Peter and John Brought to Trial

SCRIPTURE: Acts 4:1-31.

MEMORY VERSE: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 61-69; "Gospel Workers," pp. 389, 390; "Testimonies," vol. 6, pp. 394-401; "Early Writings," pp. 192-194.

PLACES: In prison, Solomon's porch in the temple; hall of the Sanhedrin; private meeting place of the apostles in Jerusalem.

PERSONS: The high priest; kindred of the high priest; captain of the temple; Sadducees; the Sanhedrin; Peter; John; lame man who was healed; company of Christians.

Setting of the Lesson

The lame man at the gate of the temple was healed about three o'clock in the afternoon. The people then gathered in Solomon's porch in the temple court. Peter preached to them there. In this lesson the story is continued, telling what occurred in the afternoon, and the next morning.

Arraigned Before the Sanhedrin

1. As Peter was preaching to the people in Solomon's porch, who interrupted him? Acts 4:1.

NOTE.—The Sadducees were not only a religious, but a political party. Some of their leaders were members of the Jewish Sanhedrin. They were the free thinkers of that day. They stood in direct opposition to the Pharisees. They believed that the Scriptures do not teach a future life, and that there could be no resurrection. They did not believe in angels and spirits and demons. They professed to believe that the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, was the only source and rule of the Jewish religion. They possessed wealth, influence, and power, and most of them lived a life of ease and luxury. The humble, self-denying life of Jesus did not appeal to them, and they despised Him and His followers.

2. To what did these men object? Verse 2.

3. What did they do with Peter and John? Verse 3.

4. What fruit was borne by Peter's sermon? Verse 4.

5. Who assembled in the morning at the trial of the apostles? Verses 5, 6.

NOTE.—This was the Sanhedrin—the highest council of the Jewish nation. It consisted of seventy-one members, but twenty-three formed a quorum competent to transact business. While in session, two scribes, one on each side, faced the members who were seated in a semicircle; one scribe registered the reasons for acquittal of prisoners; the other, the reasons for condemnation.

6. When the prisoners were brought before the assembly, what was the first question asked? Verse 7.

NOTE.—It may be difficult to understand the attitude of mind of an Eastern Jew of that day and time, when confronted with a miracle. "He did not deny the facts brought to his notice. He was too well acquainted with magic and the strange performances of its professors to do so. He merely inquired as to the sources of power" by which the strange thing had been accomplished.

Peter's Defense of Truth

7. By what spirit was Peter controlled when he made courteous and respectful reply? For what offense were they being tried? Verses 8, 9.

8. By whom did Peter say the lame man had been healed? Verse 10.

NOTE.—"In that very room and before some of those very men, Peter had shamefully denied his Lord. This came distinctly to his mind as he appeared for his own trial. He now had an opportunity of redeeming his cowardice. Those present who remembered the part that Peter had acted at the trial of his Master, flattered themselves that he could now be intimidated by the threat of imprisonment and death. . . . He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and by the help of this power he was resolved to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned. . . . The courageous defense appalled the Jewish leaders."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 62, 63.

9. What mysterious prophecy did Peter now apply to Christ? Through whom only can we be saved? Verses 11, 12.

NOTE.—"Peter here used a figure of speech familiar to the priests. The prophets had spoken of the rejected stone," and Christ Himself, talking to the priests and elders, had referred to it. See Matt. 21:42-44.

"There was no trace of fear in Peter's voice as he declared of Christ, 'This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.' "—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 64.

10. What surprised those who were examining Peter and John? By whom had the apostles evidently been instructed? Acts 4:13.

11. What prevented the Jews from denying that the power of God had been with the disciples? Verse 14.

NOTE.—"Close beside the disciple, as a convincing witness, stood the man who had been so miraculously healed. The appearance of this man, a few hours before a helpless cripple, but now restored to soundness of health, added a weight of testimony to Peter's words. Priests and rulers were silent. They were unable to refute Peter's statement, but they were none the less determined to put a stop to the teaching of the disciples."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 65.

Plotting to Stop the Work

12. When they had sent the apostles and the lame man out of the council, what did they discuss among themselves? How did they plan to stop the work of the apostles? Verses 15-17.

NOTE.—"God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people, can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. . . .

"God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front, and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God's means of provoking inquiry, and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber. . . .

"The efforts made to retard the progress of truth will serve to extend it. The excellence of truth is more clearly seen from every successive point from which it may be viewed. Error requires disguise and concealment. It clothes itself in angel robes, and every manifestation of its real character lessens its chance of success."—*"Testimonies,"* vol. 5, pp. 452-454.

13. In harmony with the decision of the Sanhedrin, what command was given to the apostles? What reply did Peter and John make? Verses 18-20.

NOTE.—"We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A 'Thus saith the Lord' is not to be set aside for a 'Thus saith the church' or a 'Thus saith the state.' The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 69.

14. What course did the council then take? Why did they not punish the apostles? How old was the man who was healed? Verses 21, 22.

Gathering Strength for the Future

15. Where did the apostles go when released? In the united prayer of the believers, what tribute did they pay to God? Verses 23, 24.

16. What prophetic scripture did they quote? What application of the prophecy is made in the prayer? Verses 25, 26.

17. How many did they mention as being involved in the death of Jesus? Verses 27, 28.

18. What special entreaty did the believers then make? How did God answer? Verses 29-31.

Think on These Things

What principle did Peter set forth regarding the Christian's relation to God and civil government?

In later years when Peter wrote an epistle to the scattered "strangers," he admonished them to be "ready always" in a very important matter. (1 Peter 3:15.) Of what value are his words today?

What may we learn from this lesson concerning the power of united prayer?

Lesson 6, for November 9, 1940

True and False Brotherhood

SCRIPTURE: Acts 4:32 to 5:11.

MEMORY VERSE: "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are His delight." Prov. 12:22.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 70-76; "Testimonies," vol. 5, pp. 148-150; "The Great Controversy," p. 44 (new ed., p. 49).

PLACE: Jerusalem; probably the usual meeting place of the disciples; reference is made to the island of Cyprus.

PERSONS: Apostles; disciples; Barnabas; Peter; Ananias and Sapphira; young men of the church.

Setting of the Lesson

"As the disciples proclaimed the truths of the gospel in Jerusalem, God bore witness to their word, and a multitude believed. Many of these early believers were immediately cut off from family and friends by the zealous bigotry of the Jews, and it was necessary to provide them with food and shelter. . . . Those among the believers who had money and possessions, cheerfully sacrificed them to meet the emergency."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 70.

Practicing Unity and Benevolence

1. What is said of the spirit of unity and benevolence of the early Christians? Acts 4:32.

2. What accompanied the preaching of the apostles? Verse 33.

3. How were the needs of the poor supplied? Verses 34, 35.

NOTE.—"Laid them down at the apostles' feet" is an expression arising from the ancient custom of laying gifts at the feet of kings, and merely meant that the money was placed in the control of the apostles.

4. Who is mentioned by name as having a part in this plan? From what island had he come? Verses 36, 37.

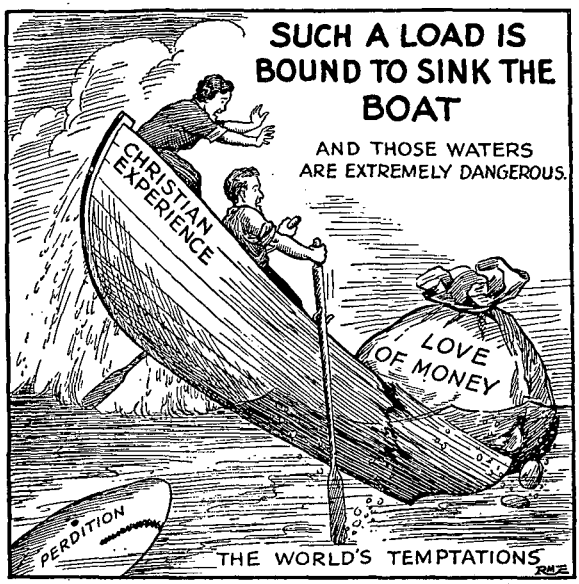
NOTE.—An ancient writer states that Barnabas was born in Cyprus, of rich parents, who sent him to Jerusalem for training under Gamaliel, the famous Jewish rabbi. The isle of Cyprus was celebrated for very rich copper mines.

Hypocrisy Is Punished

5. What case of deception occurred in the community of believers? Acts 5:1, 2.

6. How did Peter reason with Ananias about his act? Who did Peter say had put the plan into his mind? Unto whom had he lied? Verses 3, 4.

NOTE.—"In sharp contrast to the example of benevolence shown by the believers, was the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira. . . . Under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain property. Afterward, Ananias and Sapphira grieved the Holy Spirit by yielding to feelings of covetousness. They began to regret their promise. . . . They thought they had been too hasty, that they ought to reconsider their decision. They talked the matter over, and decided not to fulfill their pledge. They saw, however, that



those who parted with their possessions to supply the needs of their poorer brethren, were held in high esteem among the believers; and ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated to God, they deliberately decided to sell their property, and pretend to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to keep a large share for themselves. Thus they would secure their living from the common store, and at the same time gain the high esteem of their brethren.

"But God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their dealing with God; they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 71, 72.

7. When Ananias heard those words, what came to pass? How were all affected by this experience? What disposal was made of the body of Ananias? Verses 5, 6.

NOTE—"It was usual in Palestine to bury a corpse on the day of death. The heat of the climate, doubtless, had much to do with this custom; besides which, so far as the Jews were concerned, their law made anyone unclean for seven days who touched a dead body, or who was even in a house where a dead body lay."—*"Handbook of Bible Manners and Customs,"* p. 441.

8. Who came in about three hours later? Of what did she have no knowledge? Verse 7.

9. What question did Peter ask Sapphira? How did she reply? Verse 8.

10. In the power of the Spirit, what solemn words did Peter then address to her? How did Sapphira learn of the fate of Ananias? Verse 9.

11. What immediately took place? When and where was Sapphira buried? Verse 10.

The Sin of Covetousness

12. How was the church affected by these experiences? Verse 11.

NOTE.—"From the stern punishment meted out to those perjurers, God would have us learn also how deep is His hatred and contempt for all hypocrisy and deception. In pretending that they had given all, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, and as a result, they lost this life and the life that is to come. The same God who punished them, today condemns all falsehood. . . . Let truth-telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth, and dissembling to suit one's own selfish plans, means shipwreck of faith. . . . He who utters untruth, sells his soul in a cheap market."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 75, 76.

13. What is a root of all kinds of evil? What is the result of cherishing this love? 1 Tim. 6:10.

14. What definition is given of covetousness? Col. 3:5, last part.

15. What will be the fate of all liars? Rev. 21:8.

Think on These Things

The real sin of Ananias and Sapphira.
The motive for their deception.
The violation of the law of God in this experience.

Lesson 7, for November 16, 1940

Imprisonment and Trial of the Apostles

SCRIPTURE: Acts 5:12-42.

MEMORY VERSE: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 77-86; "Early Writings," pp. 192-197.

PLACES: Jerusalem; the preaching was in one of the porticoes of the outer court of the temple; the trial was in the hall of the Sanhedrin; the prison; the streets and houses in Jerusalem; near-by cities.

PERSONS: Angel of the Lord; apostles; multitudes; sick persons; priests; Sadducees; rulers; officers; Gamaliel.

Setting of the Lesson

After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the disciples continued to tell the story of Jesus. Priests and rulers were greatly surprised to hear the clear, bold preaching of the apostles. The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak with power, and their work was accompanied by signs and miracles. The number of believers increased daily.

Working Signs and Wonders

1. Following the experience recorded concerning Ananias and Sapphira, what works were wrought by the Holy Spirit through the apostles? Where did the believers assemble? What did others not dare to do? Acts 5:12, 13.

NOTE.—Great fear came upon all the church—the fear of doing wrong. No doubt the people understood that hypocrites were known, and if their hearts were not right they feared punishment. Though sins were secret, punishment might speedily follow. Only the honest in heart were brave enough to ask for admittance to church fellowship.

2. What shows that there were many who were sincere among the people? What miracles of healing were wrought? Verses 14-16.

NOTE.—"The crowds gathered round them [the disciples], and those who were healed shouted the praises of God, and glorified the name of the Redeemer. The priests and rulers saw that Christ was extolled above them."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 78.

Miraculous Deliverance and Renewed Witnessing

3. What was the feeling of the rulers concerning the work of the apostles? What did the rulers do? Verses 17, 18.

4. Who visited the prison during the night? How were the apostles set free? What were they bidden to do? Verses 19, 20.

NOTE.—"There was to be no attempt made to conceal their escape. They were to go back to the same place where their most frequent teachings had been given before, and they were to continue the same teaching. They are not directed to appeal to the multitude for sympathy, nor to try and excite any feeling against those who had arrested them."—*The Cambridge Bible,* p. 63.

5. What events occurred on the following morning? Verses 21-23.

6. What effect did these things have upon the Jewish officials? What disquieting message came to them? Verses 24, 25.

NOTE.—"The priests and rulers had decided to fix upon the disciples the charge of insurrection, to accuse them of murdering Ananias and Sapphira, and of conspiring to deprive the priests of their authority. They hoped so to excite the mob that it would take the matter in hand, and deal with the disciples as it had dealt with Jesus. . . .

"When they sent for the prisoners to be brought before them, great was their amazement at the word brought back, that the prison doors were found to be securely bolted, and the guard stationed before them, but that the prisoners were nowhere to be found."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 80, 81.

Meeting Charges of the Council

7. Who then went to the temple to get Peter and John? What did the people threaten to do? Verse 26.

8. When brought again before the council, what question did the high priest ask? To what extent were his charges true? Verses 27, 28.

NOTE.—"To bring this Man's blood upon us," no doubt refers to Peter's accusation in Acts 3:14, 15. In answering the question of the high priest, Peter now accuses them again, verse 30.

9. What reason did Peter give for disregarding the command of the council? Acts 5:29.

10. Is this statement of Peter's in the memory verse true under all circumstances? (See Acts 4:19.)

NOTE.—"Although the apostles were miraculously delivered from prison, they were not saved from examination and punishment. . . . By sending an angel to deliver them, God had given them a token of His love, and an assurance of His presence. It was now their part to suffer for the sake of the One whose gospel they were preaching.

"In the history of prophets and apostles, are many noble examples of loyalty to God. Christ's witnesses have endured imprisonment, torture, and death itself, rather than break God's commands."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 81.

The following extracts from "The Great Controversy" concerning the causes of persecution indicate that the same spirit that controlled the priests and rulers in the days of the apostles, will actuate professors of religion in the closing work.

"As the controversy extends into new fields, and the minds of the people are called to God's downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light, lest it should shine upon their flocks."—Page 607.

"Those who honor the Bible Sabbath will be denounced as enemies of law and order, as breaking down the moral restraints of society, causing anarchy and corruption, and calling down the judgments of God upon the earth. Their conscientious scruples will be pronounced obstinacy, stubbornness, and contempt of authority."—Page 592.

"In legislative halls and courts of justice, commandment keepers will be misrepresented and condemned. A false coloring will be given to their words; the worst construction will be put upon their motives."—*Ibid.*

"Persecution in its varied forms is the development of a principle which will exist as long as Satan exists and Christianity has vital power."—Page 610.

"The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third angel's message, is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of world-wide extent and unwonted power is here foretold. . . . The work will be similar to that of the day of Pentecost."—Page 611.

11. In what stirring way did Peter again set forth the truth concerning Jesus? What did Jesus wish to give to all? Acts 5:30, 31.

12. Who was a witness with the apostles? To whom is the Holy Spirit given? Verse 32.

Gamaliel Advises Moderation

13. What effect did the words of Peter have upon those who heard? Verse 33.

NOTE.—These men were not "cut to the heart" on account of their sin in persecuting the disciples, but they were filled with anger that these humble men dared oppose them.

14. What warning was given by Gamaliel? What did he say of the experience of Theudas? Verses 34-36.

NOTE.—Gamaliel was a celebrated rabbi having much influence with the Jews. He was a teacher of the apostle Paul in his youth. He gave good advice upon this occasion.

15. To whom else did he refer in illustration of his point? Verse 37.

16. What was Gamaliel's counsel concerning Peter and John? Verses 38, 39.

17. What decision did the council reach? But strange as it seems, what did they do to the apostles? Verse 40.

NOTE.—"When the Jews inflicted this punishment the culprit was tied to a pillar in the synagogue; the executioner, armed with a scourge of three distinct lashes inflicted the punishment; while an official standing by read selected portions of the law between each stroke. Thirteen strokes of the threefold scourge was equivalent to the thirty-nine stripes. This was the flogging the apostles suffered on this occasion."—*The Expositor's Bible.*

18. What cause for rejoicing did the disciples find? What did they continue to do? Verses 41, 42.

Think on These Things

Is 1 Peter 3:15 my daily experience?
Why does it take courage to pray for boldness?
What portion of the Beatitudes connects with this lesson?

Lesson 8, for November 23, 1940

Deacons Appointed; Stephen Arrested

SCRIPTURE: Acts 6:1-15.

MEMORY VERSE: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord." Prov. 19:17.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 97-99; "Early Writings," pp. 197, 198.

PLACES: Jerusalem, meeting place of the Christians; hall of the Sanhedrin; the synagogue of the Libertines.

PERSONS: Widows of Grecian Jews; apostles and disciples; the seven deacons; priests; foreign Jews; Sanhedrin council.

Setting of the Lesson

The early Christian church was made up of people of various nationalities. Among these were Grecian Jews, between whom and the Jews of Palestine there had long existed a feeling of distrust and dislike. Complaint was made that the widows of the foreign Jews did not receive a just share of the support given to needy believers.

Deaconship Is Introduced

1. When the number of Christian believers had greatly increased, what caused murmuring to arise? Acts 6:1.

NOTE.—The Hebrews were those who were born Jews, who lived in the Holy Land, and spoke the language which the New Testament calls Hebrew. Acts 21:40. Those here called Grecians were converted Jews who had been born in countries where Greek was the native language, or else they were proselytes who had embraced Christianity as Jews. As yet the gospel had been preached to Jews only.

2. Whom did the twelve call together to consider the dissatisfaction of the Grecians? What did they say was not reasonable? Acts 6:2.

NOTE.—Up to this time the apostles had looked after distribution of supplies to the needy. But the number of believers had increased to such an extent that if the apostles continued to give personal attention to this work they would have to "leave the word of God," and give all their time to business affairs. It did not seem right to them to do this.

3. What plan did they lay before the brethren? What were regarded as essential qualifications in the men to be selected? Verse 3.

NOTE.—First, the men who were to be appointed over "this business" must be known to be honest.

Second, though they were to look after temporal matters, they must be "full of the Holy Ghost."

Third, wise men were to be chosen—men having an understanding of the responsibilities to be placed upon them.

4. What would the apostles themselves do? Verse 4.

5. How did the believers receive the plan? Who was the first person named as helper? What is said of him? Verse 5.

6. After the men had been chosen, by what ceremony were they set apart for the special work which they were to do? Verse 6.

NOTE.—The laying on of hands "was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office, and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God. To the Jew, this form was a significant one."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 162.

7. How did the work of the Lord then prosper? Who are especially mentioned as accepting the faith? Verse 7.

NOTE.—"This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles, and to the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 90.

Stephen Meets With Opposition

8. Who of the seven was especially blessed in his ministration? Verse 8.

9. What opposition did Stephen encounter? Verse 9.

NOTE.—The Libertines "were evidently Jews who had been taken captive in Pompey's war and had been liberated afterward by their masters, enjoying thus the privileges of Roman citizenship. They worshiped in this synagogue, along with Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria, either as visitors to the city or as a community statedly resident in the place. In either case, they are likely to have united with their fellow worshipers in the erection of the building for their common use."—*A New Standard Bible Dictionary, art. "Synagogue of the Libertines,"* p. 872.

These all disputed Stephen's claim that Jesus was the Son of God—the Saviour of the world.

10. What were Stephen's opposers unable to resist? Verse 10.

NOTE.—"Stephen, the foremost of the seven deacons, was a man of deep piety and broad faith. Though a Jew by birth, he spoke the Greek language, and was familiar with the customs and manners of the Greeks. He therefore found opportunity to preach the gospel in the synagogues of the Greek Jews. He was very active in the cause of Christ, and boldly proclaimed his faith. Learned rabbis and doctors of the law engaged in public discussion with him, confidently expecting an easy victory. But 'they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.' Not only did he speak in the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was plain that he was a student of the prophecies, and learned in all matters of the law. He ably defended the truths that he advocated, and utterly defeated his opponents."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 97.

Conspiring Against God's Servant

11. How did Stephen's opponents try still further to infuriate the Jews, so that they would consider Stephen worthy of death? Verse 11.

NOTE.—To "suborn" means to hire, or in some other way induce witnesses to commit perjury by telling what they know is not true.

12. What effect did the false accusations have upon the people? What steps did they take against Stephen? Verses 12-14.

NOTE.—"As the priests and rulers saw the power that attended the preaching of Stephen, they were filled with bitter hatred. Instead of yielding to the evidence that he presented, they determined to silence his voice by putting him to death. On several occasions, they had bribed the Roman authorities to pass over without comment instances where the Jews had taken the law into their own hands, and had tried, condemned, and executed prisoners in accordance with their national custom. The enemies of Stephen did not doubt that they could again pursue such a course without danger to themselves. They determined to risk the consequences, and therefore seized Stephen, and brought him before the Sanhedrin council for trial."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 98.

13. How did Stephen appear as he was brought before the council? Verse 15.

NOTE.—"As Stephen stood face to face with his judges to answer to the charge of blasphemy, a holy radiance shone upon his countenance. . . . Many who beheld this light trembled and veiled their faces, but the stubborn unbelief and prejudice of the rulers did not waver."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 99.

14. What similarity is there in the accusation against Stephen and the charge against Jesus? Matt. 26:59-61.

NOTE.—In the trial of Stephen he was accused of teaching that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and change the customs of Moses. Jesus Himself was accused of saying He was able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days. A close similarity appears between the two, and the spirit of false witness and misrepresentation is clearly evident in both. The rulers were willing to stoop to any evil course which would bring death to those whose influence they feared.

Think on These Things

Three qualifications for serving the cause of God in a business way.
The spirit necessary to enable one to withstand opposition.
Does being right exempt one from tribulation and trial?

Lesson 9, for November 30, 1940

Stephen's Sermon Before the Council

SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:1-29.

MEMORY VERSE: "All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10:11.

STUDY HELP: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 99, 100.

PLACE: Hall of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.

PERSONS: Stephen; the high priest; Sanhedrin council. Reference made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses.

Setting of the Lesson

Witnesses had been hired to swear falsely that they had heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against the temple and the law.

When Stephen was questioned concerning the charges against him, "he began his defense in a clear, thrilling voice, which rang through the council hall. In words that held the assembly spellbound, he proceeded to rehearse the history of the chosen people of God."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 99.

Lessons From the Call of Abraham

1. What was the formal charge against Stephen? Acts 6:11, 13, 14.

NOTE.—"Learned Jews from the surrounding countries were summoned for the purpose of refuting the arguments of the prisoner. Saul of Tarsus was present, and took a leading part against Stephen. He brought the weight of eloquence and the logic of the rabbis to bear upon the case, to convince the people that Stephen was preaching delusive and dangerous doctrines; but in Stephen he met one who had a full understanding of the purpose of God in the spreading of the gospel to other nations."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 98.

2. What question did the high priest ask Stephen after hearing those who witnessed against him? Acts 7:1.

3. In what tactful way did Stephen address the company before him? Verse 2, first part.

4. What line of history did Stephen rehearse? Verses 2-7.

NOTE.—The time had arrived when the gospel was to be given to others than the Jews, and the worship of God was not to be restricted to a particular locality as heretofore. Stephen points out that it was not in the Holy Land, to which they attached such sanctity, that God first appeared to Abraham, but in Mesopotamia, and also in Haran. Even when He brought "the father of the faithful" into Canaan, He gave no permanent possession to him or to his descendants for many generations.—*Abbreviated from The Cambridge Bible.*

5. Where was Abraham living when God first appeared unto him? Verse 2.

6. What test of faith was involved? Verse 3.

NOTE.—"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the Land of Promise,—whether the soil was fertile, and the climate healthful; whether the country offered agreeable surroundings, and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God had spoken, and His servant must obey."—*"Patriarchs and Prophets,"* p. 126.

7. What was Abraham's response to the message of God? Verse 4.

NOTE.—"Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. . . . Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead."—*"Patriarchs and Prophets,"* p. 126.

8. How much of the land promised to him did Abraham himself inherit? What experience did his descendants have in Egypt? Verses 5, 6.

NOTE.—A comma should be inserted after the word "evil," as in the Revised Version. The period of four hundred years here mentioned includes

not only the bondage in Egypt, but the sojourning both in Canaan and Egypt. It should be dated from the incident recorded in Gen. 21:9, 10, which was thirty years after the call of Abram from Haran, which event in turn was 430 years before the Exodus. See Ex. 12:41.

9. What promise of deliverance was given them? Acts 7:7.

10. To what ancient rite did Stephen refer? What patriarchs did he mention? Verse 8.

NOTE.—The Jews never tired of hearing the story of their forefathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Moses. Stephen gained the attention of the council by rehearsing the history of the Jewish people.

The Sojourn in Egypt

11. What motive caused Jacob's sons to sell their brother Joseph? How did God overrule Joseph's experience to fulfill His promise? Verses 9, 10.

12. What circumstances brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt? How did they become located there? Verses 11-16.

13. What circumstances surrounded God's people as the time drew near for their deliverance from Egypt? Verses 17-19.

14. What deliverer was born at that time? What were some of his experiences before he was forty years of age? Verses 20-23.

15. What mistake did he make when he visited his brethren? Verses 24-26.

16. What questions revealed that his slaying of the Egyptian was known? To what place did he flee? Verses 27-29.

Think on These Things

False witnesses testified against Jesus. Matt. 26:61.
False witnesses testified against Stephen. Acts 6:13, 14.
The promise to those who are falsely accused. Matt. 5:11, 12.

Lesson 10, for December 7, 1940

Stephen's Sermon Before the Council (Concluded); Stephen's Death

SCRIPTURE: Acts 7:30-60.

MEMORY VERSE: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 100-102; "Early Writings," pp. 197-199.

PLACES: Hall of the Sanhedrin; place of execution outside the city of Jerusalem.

PERSONS: Stephen; the high priest; Sanhedrin council; Saul; the people.

Setting of the Lesson

Stephen continues his speech of defense before the Sanhedrin, and the company listening is the same as in the "setting" of the lesson for last week.

"No legal sentence had been passed upon Stephen, but the Roman authorities were bribed by large sums of money to make no investigation into the case."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 101.

"After the death of Stephen, Saul was elected a member of the Sanhedrin council, in consideration of the part he had acted on that occasion."—*Id.*, p. 102.

Moses, the Deliverer of Israel

1. Experiences of Moses:
   - (a) Hidden when a babe. Acts 7:19, 20.
   - (b) His life saved. Given an education. Verses 21, 22.
   - (c) Attempts to deliver his people. Verses 23-29.
   - (d) At the burning bush. Verses 30-34.
   - (e) The leader in delivering Israel. Verses 35, 36.

2. What words of Moses did Stephen repeat to the council? Verse 37; Deut. 18:15.

NOTE.—The words of Moses were a prophecy of the Messiah, and the coming of Jesus to the earth fulfilled the prophecy. The Jews pretended to believe all that Moses had said, but refused to accept the One of whom Moses spoke.

3. What did Moses say would be required of the man who did not receive that Prophet? Deut. 18:18, 19.

4. Who did Stephen say was with Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness? What had they received from the fathers? Acts 7:38. (See Romans 3:2.)

NOTE.—By "oracles" Stephen meant the law of God as spoken on Mount Sinai. The oracles are called *living* just as the word of God is called *living*. 1 Peter 1:23.

Falling Back Into Apostasy

5. How had the "fathers" treated their leaders? In their hearts, what did the children of Israel do? Acts 7:39.

6. What did they say to Aaron? Of Moses, who had gone up into the mount? Verse 40.

7. How far did they go in their disrespect to God? Verse 41.

8. In what way did God then turn from the children of Israel? Where did He say He would take them? Verses 42, 43.

The Abiding Place of God

9. What reference did Stephen make to the tabernacle built in the wilderness? What became of that tabernacle? Verses 44, 45.

10. What ruler found favor with God? What did that ruler desire to do? Verses 45 (last part), 46.

11. What did David enable his son to do? Although God accepted the temple built in His honor, where does the Most High not dwell? Verses 47, 48.

12. Where is the throne of God? What of the earth? What has His hand done? Verses 49, 50.

NOTE.—"When Stephen reached this point, there was a tumult among the people. When he connected Christ with the prophecies, and spoke as he did of the temple, the priest, pretending to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. To Stephen, this act was a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. He saw the resistance that met his words, and knew that he was giving his last testimony. Although in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 100.

Silencing the Accuser

13. When Stephen discerned that the council would no longer listen to him, how did he address them? How were they like their fathers? Verses 51-53.

14. What effect did Stephen's pointed words have upon the assembly? Verse 54.

NOTE.—"At this, priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. Acting more like beasts of prey than human beings, they rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. In the cruel faces about him, the prisoner read his fate; but he did not waver. For him the fear of death was gone. For him the enraged priests and the excited mob had no terror. The scene before him faded from his vision. To him, the gates of heaven were ajar, and looking in, he saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, as if just risen from

His throne, standing ready to sustain His servant."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 100, 101.

15. What is said of Stephen at that moment? Where did he look? What did he see? Verses 55, 56.

NOTE.—"As he described the glorious scene upon which his eyes were gazing, it was more than his persecutors could endure. Stopping their ears, that they might not hear his words, and uttering loud cries, they ran furiously upon him with one accord, 'and cast him out of the city.' "—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 101.

16. How did they silence the voice they did not wish to hear? Verses 57-59.

NOTE.—They "cast him out of the city" because executions were not allowed within the walls. The site where he was stoned is said to be east of the city, almost under the shadow of the temple walls. The Jewish method of execution was by stoning. They were not allowed to put criminals to death, but this was a riot, contrary to law.

"The witnesses who had accused Stephen were required to cast the first stones. These persons laid down their clothes at the feet of Saul, who had taken an active part in the disputation, and had consented to the prisoner's death."—*"The Spirit of Prophecy,"* vol. 3, p. 299.

17. How did Stephen show a forgiving spirit? Verse 60.

NOTE.—The name Stephen means "a crown." He was the first martyr of the early church, and his faithfulness to the end made his heavenly crown certain and sure. God's people will meet Stephen in the new earth. Here is just a glimpse of what was shown to the servant of the Lord as in vision she was traveling to Mount Zion:

"As we were traveling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as a border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant; their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him."—*"Early Writings,"* pp. 18, 19.

18. What is said of Stephen's burial? Acts 8:2.

Think on These Things

The last words of Jesus in behalf of His enemies. Luke 23:34.
The last words of Stephen. Acts 7:60.

Lesson 11, for December 14, 1940

Philip Preaches in Samaria

SCRIPTURE: Acts 8:1-25.

MEMORY VERSE: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Ps. 51:10.

STUDY HELP: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 103-107; any good Bible Dictionary will tell something about Simon Magus, the sorcerer.

PLACES: Jerusalem and Samaria.

PERSONS: Saul; Philip, the deacon; people of Samaria; Simon, the sorcerer; Peter and John.

Setting of the Lesson

The persecution of the believers in Jerusalem became more bitter after the death of Stephen. Many who had temporarily resided in that city now returned to their distant homes. The means by which the enemies of Christ sought to crush the gospel resulted in scattering it. "The fugitives were like so many lamps lighted by the fire of the Holy Spirit, spreading everywhere the sacred flame by which they themselves had been illuminated."

Persecution Spreads the Gospel

1. Who is especially mentioned as agreeing to the death of Stephen? Acts 8:1.

2. How did Saul manifest his zeal as a persecutor? What did he afterward say as to his motives and experience at that time? Verse 3; Acts 26:9-11.

3. What is said of those who were scattered abroad? Acts 8:4.

NOTE.—From now on, in the Book of Acts, we see the Lord leading the disciples out toward the peoples and nations round about. They were tempted by their national prejudices and narrow vision to settle down at home and work only for their own people. But as we learned in the first chapter, the Lord's command was that they should bear witness "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8.

Samaria Accepts the Message

4. To what place did Philip go? How did the people receive his message? How did the Holy Spirit bear witness to his work? How was the city affected? Acts 8:5-8.

5. How had Jesus once revealed Himself to the people of Samaria? John 4:4-42.

6. What noted sorcerer did Philip meet? How was this man regarded by the people? Acts 8:9-11.

NOTE.—"It is fondly supposed that heathen superstitions have disappeared before the civilization of the twentieth century. But the word of God and the stern testimony of facts declare that sorcery is practiced in this age as verily as in the days of the old-time magicians. The ancient system of magic is, in reality, the same as what is now known as modern Spiritualism. Satan is finding access to thousands of minds by presenting himself under the guise of departed friends."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 289.

7. How did Philip's preaching affect the influence of Simon? How did it affect Simon himself? Verses 12, 13.

NOTE.—"In the traditions of the early centuries this Simon Magus occupies a large place as a reputed enemy of the church. So far as the story of the Acts is concerned, he appears as a clever and unscrupulous magician, who by his arts and deceptions has played upon the ignorance and credulity of his followers so that they might accept his crude and mystical teachings, and more particularly might enrich him by their gifts. He had so impressed the people of Samaria that they regarded him as an incarnation of divine power. . . . The success of Philip is evidenced, then, by the fact that all the people turned to him from Simon, and that even 'Simon also himself believed: and

being baptized, he continued with Philip.' Of course, his belief was quite imperfect; the sequel shows that he experienced neither true repentance nor faith. His influence over the people, however, was destroyed, and he was himself convinced that in the name of Jesus there was a power he himself had never known. He is thus the symbol of the false religious teachers, past and present, mystical, deceiving, selfish, who have opposed the gospel, but have been overcome by its power."—*"The Acts," Charles R. Erdman,* p. 71.

8. How did the apostles in Jerusalem seek to help the work in Samaria? Verse 14.

9. When Peter and John arrived, what lack did they perceive in the experience of the believers? How was this lack supplied? Verses 15-17.

The Rebuke of Simon

10. What proposal did Simon make to the apostles? What object did he have in making such a request? Verses 18, 19.

11. In what direct way did Peter rebuke Simon? Verse 20.

12. What did Peter say of Simon's condition? Verses 21-23.

13. For what did Simon then ask? Verse 24.

NOTE.—Simon's petition showed that he was not truly penitent, for he sought not to be saved from his sin, but only from punishment.

Traffic in sacred things has been called "simony" from the name of this sorcerer. Any who are tempted to seek gain from the possession of some preferment or office in the church, should ponder carefully the searching rebuke which came from the lips of Peter. These words are not to be regarded as a wish or a prayer that evil might come upon the offender, but are rather a call to repentance, ~~even though they give little indication of real sorrow for sin on Simon's part.~~

14. What did Peter and John do when their work was finished in Samaria? Verse 25.

15. What had been John's attitude during his visit to Samaria upon another occasion? Luke 9:52-55.

Think on These Things

Scattered Christians are like brands on fire, kindling a new fire wherever the storms of persecution carry them.

The best gifts cannot be bought with money.
Neither can they be sold.

Lesson 12, for December 21, 1940

Philip and the Officer From Ethiopia

SCRIPTURE: Acts 8:26-40.

MEMORY VERSE: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." Luke 12:8.

STUDY HELP: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 107-111.

PLACES: "Go toward the south [from Samaria] unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza;" Azotus; Caesarea.

PERSONS: Philip; a man of authority from Ethiopia.

Setting of the Lesson

Philip was in Samaria. A great work had been done there and many were rejoicing in the gospel. The apostles, Peter and John, who had come to Samaria to assist Philip, the deacon, had returned to Jerusalem. This lesson sets forth the marvelous way in which Philip was led to leave Samaria, and his further experience.

The Lord Directs His Servant

1. While Philip was laboring in Samaria, how was he directed to leave that place? Acts 8:26.

NOTE.—Gaza was the most southern city in Palestine, about fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem, and was on the route which a traveler from Jerusalem to Egypt would follow. The word "desert" does not mean that the country was all sand and bare rock, but there were few or no villages in which the evangelist might preach. The command for Philip to go might have seemed unreasonable, but he "arose and went."

2. Whom did Philip find traveling the desert road? What is said of the Ethiopian? Why had he journeyed to Jerusalem? Verse 27.

NOTE.—"Ethiopia." A general term for lands south of Egypt.

"Of great authority." A man of power, of wide influence.

"Under Candace [Kan-da-se]." Most likely the official or dynastic name of a number of Ethiopian queens.

"Charge of all her treasure." Secretary of the treasury.

"Had come to Jerusalem for to worship." He most likely had obtained glimpses of the truth from Jewish residents in Ethiopia, and wanted more light.

3. As he was returning to his own country, what was he doing while on the journey? Verse 28.

NOTE.—A traveler of such high rank, with a long journey before him not free from danger, was doubtless accompanied by a retinue of servants and guards.

4. What further direction did Philip receive? Verse 29.

NOTE.—"To those who are willing to follow divine guidance surprising openings for testimony are certain to appear. These opportunities are fleeting. The Spirit said, 'Go,' and 'Philip ran.' . . . Had the chariot rolled by, as far as the evangelist was concerned, it would have been gone forever. Work for Christ demands immediate obedience to every prompting of His Spirit."—*Charles R. Erdman.*

Philip Instructs the Eunuch

5. How eagerly did Philip render obedience? What did he hear as he approached the chariot? What question did he ask the stranger? Verse 30.

NOTE.—"An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light, and who was ready to receive the gospel; and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men. In the trust given to the first disciples, believers in every age have shared."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 109.

6. How did the Ethiopian reply to Philip's question? What invitation did the stranger extend? Verse 31.

NOTE.—"This Ethiopian was a man of good standing and of wide influence. God saw that when converted, he would give others the light he had received, and would exert a strong influence in favor of the gospel. Angels of God were attending this seeker for light, and he was being drawn to the Saviour. By the ministration of the Holy Spirit, the Lord brought him into touch with one who could lead him to the light."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 107.

There is an interesting tradition that this minister of Candace, whose name was Judich, preached the gospel with great success, on his return to Ethiopia, and that his royal mistress was among his converts. It is also said that others of the retinue who heard the chariot driver ordered to stop, who witnessed the rite of baptism, and saw the way Philip was taken from them, formed the nucleus of the church established in Ethiopia.

7. What scripture was the Ethiopian reading? Verses 32, 33; Isa. 53: 7, 8.

8. What question did he ask Philip? Acts 8:34.

9. What did Philip proceed to do? Verse 35.

Baptism Follows Faith

10. After hearing Philip's message, what request did the officer make? Verse 36.

NOTE.—"We must suppose that Philip traveled for some time with the eunuch, for not only has he explained that in Jesus was fulfilled all that the prophets had spoken concerning the sufferings of the Messiah, but has taught him that believers in Jesus are to be admitted into the Christian church by baptism, of which sacrament he desires to be a partaker at once."—*The Cambridge Bible.*

11. On what condition did Philip consent to baptize him? In what words did the convert confess his faith in Jesus? Verse 37.

12. Describe the baptismal service. Verse 38.

13. What took place when Philip and the Ethiopian came up out of the water? What was the effect of this experience on the new convert as he went on his way? Verse 39.

14. At what place was Philip found? What did he continue to do? To what city did he come? Verse 40.

NOTE.—Azotus is the Greek word for Ashdod. It is about three miles from the sea, not far from Joppa.

Caesarea, on the coast, was about seventy miles northwest of Jerusalem. This place became Philip's home. He no doubt made it the center of missionary enterprises for many years. Twenty years later he, with his four daughters, who were prophetesses, welcomed Paul and his company, on their way to Jerusalem. Acts 21:8, 9.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING
December 28, 1940—CHINA

Think on These Things

The result if Philip had not obeyed the Spirit promptly, both times.

If Philip had not known the meaning of the scripture the Ethiopian was reading.

If Philip had not made clear the whole duty of the Ethiopian.

If the Ethiopian had feared to declare his faith before the retinue of men accompanying him.

Lesson 13, for December 28, 1940

From Persecutor to Disciple

SCRIPTURE: Acts 9:1-22.

MEMORY VERSE: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6.

STUDY HELPS: "The Acts of the Apostles," pp. 112-122; "Early Writings," pp. 200-202; "Testimonies," vol. 3, pp. 429-433; "Gospel Workers," pp. 58-62.

PLACES: Jerusalem; somewhere on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus; Damascus, the most ancient city existing, about one hundred forty miles northeast of Jerusalem, said to be in Paul's day a large city with a large Jewish population; a street in Damascus called Straight; the house of Judas. The experience recorded in the lesson probably took place when Saul was approaching Damascus.

PERSONS: Saul and the men journeying with him; Judas, a Jew at Damascus with whom Saul lodged; Ananias, a Christian Jew, living in Damascus; disciples and Jews.

Setting of the Lesson

Tarsus ("no mean city," Acts 21:39) was at the northeast corner of the Mediterranean. Saul had taken a prominent part in bringing about the death of Stephen. He had been deeply impressed with the words and manner of Stephen, and began to fear that he was doing wrong in persecuting the followers of Jesus.

"In his perplexity he appealed to those in whose wisdom and judgment he had full confidence. The arguments of the priests and rulers finally convinced him that Stephen was a blasphemer, that the Christ whom the martyred disciple had preached was an impostor, and that those ministering in holy office must be right.

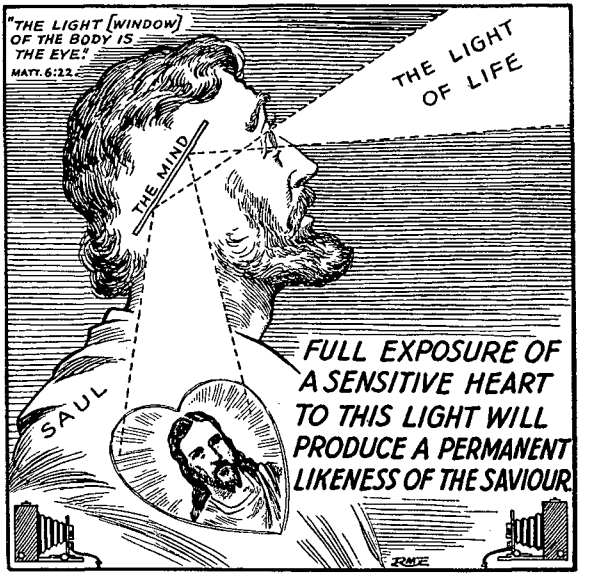
"Not without severe trial did Saul come to this conclusion. But in the end, his education and prejudices, his respect for his former teachers, and his pride of popularity, braced him to rebel against the voice of conscience and the grace of God. And having fully decided that the priests and scribes were right, Saul became very bitter in his opposition to the doctrines taught by the disciples of Jesus."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 113.

Plotting Violence Against Believers

1. What new step did Saul's earnestness lead him to take? What was his plan? Acts 9:1, 2.

2. At a later time, what did Saul himself say of what he did? Acts 26:10, 11.

NOTE.—The expression "of this way" came to be commonly used to designate the Christian religion. Jesus had said, "I am the way," that is, the way into life, the only salvation.



The Lord Miraculously Interposes

3. What strange thing occurred as Saul neared Damascus? Acts 9:3.

NOTE.—By caravan road, about six days were required to make the journey. Saul was probably mounted, and some of his company on foot. In the clear atmosphere of Syria the sun is exceedingly bright, yet there fell about Saul a light from heaven brighter than the sun at noonday.

4. How did the brightness affect Saul and his companions? What did Saul hear? Verse 4; Acts 26:14.

5. What question did Saul ask? Who answered him? What did Jesus say? Acts 9:5.

NOTE.—"This Jesus, who had, while teaching upon earth, spoken in parables to His hearers, using familiar objects to illustrate His meaning, likened the work of Saul, in persecuting the followers of Christ, to kicking against the pricks. Those forcible words illustrated the fact that it would be impossible for any man to stay the onward progress of the truth of Christ. It would march on to triumph and victory, while every effort to stay it would result in injury to the opposer. The persecutor, in the end, would suffer a thousandfold more than those whom he had persecuted. Sooner or later his own mind and heart would condemn him; he would find that he had, indeed, been kicking against the pricks."—*"Spirit of Prophecy,"* vol. 3, pp. 308, 309.

Thus Jesus would have Saul understand how useless and how injurious to himself was his fighting against God.

6. What was Saul's next question? What very definite reply was given him? Verse 6.

7. How were the men with Saul affected by what had taken place? Verse 7.

NOTE.—"Filled with fear, and almost blinded by the intensity of the light, the companions of Saul heard a voice, but saw no man. But Saul understood the words that were spoken; and to him was clearly revealed the One who spoke—even the Son of God. In the glorious Being who stood before him, he saw the Crucified One. Upon the soul of the stricken Jew the image of the Saviour's countenance was imprinted forever."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 115.

8. What was Saul's further experience? Verses 8, 9.

NOTE.—"When the glory was withdrawn, and Saul arose from the ground, he found himself totally deprived of sight. The brightness of Christ's glory had been too intense for his mortal eyes; and when it was removed, the blackness of night settled upon his vision. He believed that this blindness was a punishment from God for his cruel persecution of the followers of Jesus. . . .

"How unlike his anticipations was his entrance into the city! Stricken with blindness, helpless, tortured by remorse, knowing not what further judgment might be in store for him, he sought out the home of the disciple Judas, where, in solitude, he had ample opportunity for reflection and prayer."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* pp. 117, 118.

Saul's mental anguish for a time overcame the natural craving for food.

Saul Joins Disciples in Damascus

9. Name a disciple who lived in Damascus. What was made known to him in vision? What had also been shown to Saul? Verses 10-12.

NOTE.—"During the long hours when Saul was shut in with God alone, he recalled many of the passages of Scripture referring to the first advent of Christ. Carefully he traced down the prophecies, with a memory sharpened by the conviction that had taken possession of his mind. . . .

"As Saul yielded himself fully to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the mistakes of his life, and recognized the far-reaching claims of the law of God. He who had been a proud Pharisee, confident that he was justified by his good works, now bowed before God with the humility and simplicity of a little child, confessing his own unworthiness, and pleading the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour."—*"The Acts of the Apostles,"* p. 119.

10. What reason did Ananias give for not wanting to visit Saul? Verses 13, 14.

11. What did the Lord again bid Ananias do? What did He say further of Saul? Verses 15, 16.

12. What did Ananias then do? How did he address Saul, who had so wickedly persecuted the people of God? Who did he say had sent him? For what purpose? Verse 17.

13. What immediately took place? How did Saul give evidence that he was truly converted? Verse 18.

14. Where did Saul remain for a time? What work did he immediately begin? Verses 19, 20.

15. What was said by those who heard him? What was the effect of his preaching upon the Jews at Damascus? Verses 21, 22.

Think on These Things

The Lord has definite plans for His people, and they bring certain results. How Ananias might have spoiled or delayed the Lord's plans. What words spoken by Saul may well be our daily prayer?

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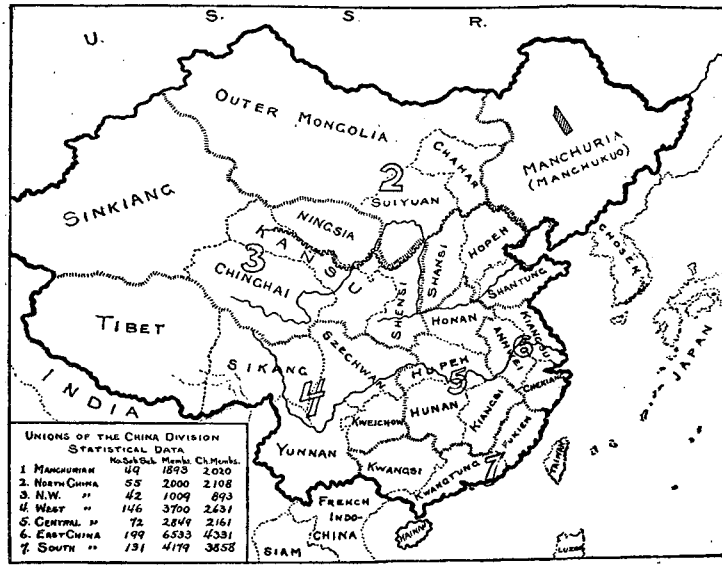

"OVERFLOWS" TO CHINA

In recent years we have given "overflows" to China as follows:

1934, South and West China	$1,822.93
1936, North and Northwest China	2,836.50
1938, China Division, various projects	7,062.23

When the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for all the world amounts to $60,000, there is an "overflow" of $2,000; 20 per cent of all that is given beyond the $60,000 is also part of the overflow. It will rejoice the hearts of many to know that when the overflow for 1938 was converted into Chinese dollars, the China Division was able to help various projects, such as building chapels, schools, dormitories, tribal church schools, headquarters offices, a tribal printing plant, besides assisting tribes youth to attend union or division training schools.

We hope the members of our world-wide Sabbath schools will do their utmost to give another fine overflow to China. If our schools help mightily on this particular offering on December 28, it will result in our being able to establish our work in a number of new places in China, and help to re-establish work in certain sections where it has been destroyed by war.

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