Sunday School Lesson

ANALYSIS

I. STEPHEN THE ZEALOUS PREACHER, 6: 1-15.
II. FALSELY ACCUSED, 7: 1-53.
III. THE MARTYR, 7: 54-60.

December 7. Lesson X—Stephen (An Early Interpreter of Christianity)—Acts 6: 7-10; 1: 54-60. Golden Text—They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.—Acts 6: 5.

INTRODUCTION—Chapter six of the book of Acts records a new development in the Christian movement in Jerusalem. Two groups now appear, "the Grecian Jews," or Hellenists, and "the Hebrews." The former spoke the Greek language. They were Jews who had lived abroad, engaged for the most part in trade, who had returned to Jerusalem to visit friends, or to join in the celebration of the ancient festivals, or no doubt in some cases out of love for the holy city to spend their last day there. Of them E. F. Scott writes, "It is not difficult to guess why they, more than others, were attracted to the new teaching (that is, the Christian teaching). By their contact with a larger world their outlook had been broadened, more than they were aware, and when they came back to Jerusalem they were apt to be bitterly disillusioned. Instead of the religious ardor they had dreamed of they, too, often found nothing but the wrangling of worldly priests and the endless hair-splitting of the interpreters of the law. In the Christian community they breathed a larger and more spiritual atmosphere. Here was Judaism at its best set free from all that narrowed and perverted it. Here, if anywhere, was the real feeling for religion."

To this group Stephen belonged, and his understanding of the Christian faith, as well as his attitude toward the Jewish institutions, is of profound interest to those who would fully appreciate the growing life of the church and especially the ministry of Paul in the period that followed.

I. STEPHEN THE ZEALOUS PREACHER, 6: 1-15.

There may have been a disposition among the Hebrew Christians to treat the Grecians as outsiders and foreigners and the "murmuring" of the latter may have been justified. Where the twelve apostolic leaders had charge, all was well, but the members of the Christian community had so increased and its activities so widened that they were fully occupied with preaching and teaching. And, they said, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." And so they advised the appointment of seven "over this business."

Stephen, however, was not content merely to serve tables "in the daily ministration." He became a preacher "full of grace and power," as did also another of the seven whose name was Philip, chap. 8: 4-8. In their case the lower ministry led to the higher, the less to the greater. It seems clear that Stephen, in his preaching and in the disputes in which he became involved (v. 9), took the essentially Christian position that the law of Moses and the temple ritual were not necessary to salvation, and that Jesus had opened to all men a new way of faith. Of course that was "to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law" (v. 13), but only to put them, as institutions of religion, in their proper place. But the enemies of Stephen distorted his words, accusing him of blasphemy and had him arrested and brought before the council.

II. FALSELY ACCUSED, 7: 1-53.

In deadly peril of his life, dragged before an unfriendly tribunal, Stephen preserved his courage and serenity. Those who sat in the council "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," chap. 6: 15.

Stephen's defence of his teaching before the council presents an argument which must have appealed to fair-minded men among his judges. His enemies were insisting upon the divine and unchangeable authority of Mosaic law and ritual. He shows them in a rapid review of their history that God had appeared to Abraham and made covenant with him long before the time of Moses, that he had delivered Joseph and had given him favor and wisdom before the Egyptian ruler centuries before Moses led their fathers out of Egypt, and gave them the law at Sinai, and that Moses himself was but one of that succession of great leaders whom God had raised up in Israel. He reminded them that the men of Israel had not understood the deliverance which God was giving them by the hand of Moses (vs. 25), that at first they had refused his leadership (v. 35), and that in the wilderness they had not been obedient to his authority (v. 39). In a passionate climax he turned upon his accusers and charged them with resisting the spirit of God as their fathers had done, and with their last and greatest crime, in that they had "become betrayers and murderers" of Jesus, the Righteous One.

III. THE MARTYR, 7: 54-60.

These last words of Stephen so aroused the passions of the mob that a furious attack was made upon him, and he was dragged forth from the council chamber and the city and stoned to death. One can hardly doubt that the "young man named Saul" had more than a passive part in the crime. It may be, indeed, that Saul had heard the speech of Stephen and that, though he resisted the force of its argument, both the speech and the conduct of Stepen had made an indelible impression upon his mind. Both in speech and in action that day Stephen the martyr was a true interpreter of the Christian faith.

How the Telephone Helped

"Great stuff!" exclaimed Jack Wright, former captain of the local football squad. "Next best thing to being with the boys is to hear from you regularly and to know how the team is shaping up." Jack's team mates thought a lot of their captain and when the doctor ordered him right at the very beginning of the season to go to the mountain sanitarium for a complete rest, they arranged amongst themselves to call him on the long distance telephone two or three times a week. The calls cost very little and as coach Hennessy said "those telephone talks not only cheered Jack but they kept the team members right on their toes for naturally, they didn't want to talk about anything but wins when they spoke to Jack!"

"When a man has mush to say he often whispers it."

New Brunswick Hills

The Geodetic Survey of Canada, Department of the Interior, in the course of its work on the triangulation of the Maritime Provinces, has accurately determined the geographic positions and elevations of a number of prominent hills in northern New Brunswick, such as Mount Carleton, 2,690 feet; Costigan, 2,197 feet; Bald peak, 2,086 feet.

Settlers Take Up Land

North Bay, Ont.—During the past 12 months 600 settlers have taken up land in the district which is under the Crown lands agent of Cochrane. This area includes 16 townships from the Quebec boundary west to Fauquier, the greater number of these settlers are in an area within a radiu of 18 miles of Cochrane.

This is said to be the largest number of settlers to come to the district since it was thrown open for homesteading. Europeans have out-numbered Canadian but quite a number of native have come from the West, particularly Manitoba.

The majority of the new arrivals in the district are Finns, Hungarians and Slavs. In Pine and Machin townships there are large communities of Finns who still retain the communal system under which they lived in their own land. Six or seven years ago there were practically no Finns in Cochrane but today they have 18 Finnish hotels there.

When Cats Were Rarities

The Manx cat is dying out. Even in the Isle of Man itself the tailless breed is becoming rare, while the mainland type, complete with tail, is increasing in numbers.

The Manx cat is not a native of Man—indeed, it is believed to be of Japanese origin, though how it got to the Isle of Man from far-away Japan is something of a mystery. But, then, the ordinary domestic cat is not a native of Britain, and was comparatively rare in Europe until late in the Middle Ages. It is believed to be the result of crossings between the Egyptian cat, a sacred animal in ancient Egypt, and the wild cat.

Cats without tails, or with rudimentary tails only, are still common in certain parts of the Far East.

He (at 11.30 p.m.)—"Did you know I could imitate any bird you can name?" She—"No, I didn't. Can you imitate a homing pigeon?"

Mary—"Your insults have no effect on me. You will not gain your point in that way!" Martin—"What do I want to gain?" "You want to make me go to mother. But I will send for her to come here."

Mrs. Chat—"It says here in the paper that a certain man hasn't spoken to his wife for twelve years." Mr. Chat (in name only)—"Give him time. He may get a chance yet."

To Helen of Troy

By Helen Hoyt

Helen, it is not you they have desired,
And it is not you they praise now in their songs,
But you are a thousand women and a thousand faces,
And the glances of many eyes glance out of yours,
And the allurement of your breath
Is not the allurement of one woman that falls,
But your beauty is beauty itself,
And with that you have held men's love, their praise.
For never are they long in the delight of one delight,
But they must taste at many springs and far rivers,
Seeking not any woman, but all womanhood.
And you are that perfection and illusion,
For they have made you after their heart's wish
And call upon you by your name, your beauty,
But 'tis not you they call—not Helen, not Helen's face.
If you returned, would they remember your footsteps?
Or be more eager to look or follow after?
Or would they stop with you more than they stop with us?
Stay then their story, and be immortal and all-lovely;
For only yours is the beauty that can bend them wholly,
It is the dream of love their love is constant to,
The dream of love that holds, not we that hold them.
Only yours the beauty they let bind them, unwearied,
And never our beauty, the binding of our single love,
O Trojan woman who died, who never lived, whose beauty passed,
It is only the dream of love that does not die.

Mr. Wealth: "I am leaving town for my health."

Miss Seeker: "Do you always take your doctor's advice?"

Mr. DeWealth: "This was my lawyer's advice."

Home Chats

By MARIE ANN BEST

Ability, natural abilities are like natural plants, they need pruning by study.—Bacon.

Building

We are living in a wonderful age. I wonder if we realize just how wonderful it is. Ordinary people live in miniature palaces compared to the shelter our less fortunate ancestors enjoyed. It is appalling what necessary things they had to do without. Now we have electricity which wields her magic wand scattering comfort and light broadcast so lavishly. What is it? We use it but who knows what it is? And out of the cauldron of natural hidden wonders which have been lying dormant until now, how marvelously have the builders, thinking men and women, uncovered some new treasure to lavish on our present civilization. Each new thing invented or discovered we receive with wonder but in all too short a time accept and use it as a matter of course. Having these things markedly lessens our tasks and gives us more leisure but we fail to use that leisure to develop our own particular talents and individuality.

It may mean hard work with discouragement for it is a fact that things worth while are not won easily, but every one has something which only he or she can do and it is amazing how that something develops and grows if we try, and we slowly but surely push in to our rightful places. So often we make the mistake of thinking time is wasted if we do not earn money with what we have learned. It is true material things are very desirable, no one denies that, but after all it is our spiritual growth which counts. It is all we can take with us into eternity so the thought comes, "Are we helping and instilling in our children a desire to build their personalities?"

We so often nowadays hear this, "You know, I never study my music any more since we have the radio. I think we'll just sell our piano." We forget because we have at some time studied music, that the door leading to an understanding and appreciation of what we hear is always open to us but for our children who grow up all too quickly we have closed the door because they hear the radio but most of it goes over their heads and they fail to either understand or appreciate the great world of pleasure which music has to offer. They are not building in their minds the storehouse for music. It is a small and poor building and they cannot hear with the hearing of understanding. The same is true of every vocation in life. It doesn't matter what it is. It is necessary to study it and then try to do the things we have learned ourselves in order to broaden out into what we should be. In each new thing learned we are really building, always building an invisible habitation.

Paper bags are a boon and a blessing besides being convenient for packing separate field lunches, they are handy to slip a hand into for disagreeable small task—for instance it may be necessary to wipe up something spilt upon the floor when one's hands are spotlessly clean. Put your hand into a paper bag, take the floor cloth, use it, replace it and still have spotless hands.

Rubber-tired castors will make a convenient tea-wagon out of a table too low or too small to be of much use otherwise.

Snuffling Inches

Little Betty's grandma used the old fashioned method for measuring a yard by stretching the goods at arm's length, holding one end of it up to her nose.

One day Betty came to her saying, "Smell this, Grandma, and see how long it is."

Twilight Hour Story—What is the Story About?

Chapter 1

This is going to be a story about a bird and the kind of a bird I am sure you know, and if you do not know what this bird looks like ask your Daddy to take you out to a farm so you can see for yourself just what the bird I am going to tell you about looks like.

But then I am sure you have often seen one almost exactly like the one I am going to describe. Perhaps it may be you even have some of your own out in the back yard. Now can you guess what it is about? Well, it is about a chicken, a nice fat chicken with pure pretty white feathers. Didn't you ever wonder how she keeps so clean? I do. It seems she never has to take a bath or have her face or her han—goodness, I was nearly going to say "hands." Of course she hasn't any hands, and that makes me remember she has only two feet too, hasn't she? Not much like pussy cat, is she? No hands and only two feet. It must be funny to be made like that, but then she has things we haven't got. For one thing she has those lovely white feathers. Oh, don't they keep her nice and warm, especially just now when it's getting cold? Those feathers are even better than a fur coat.

But we must get on with the story. One day a good many weeks ago, when it was still nice and warm out-of-doors, this young Lady Hen, whose name was Lucy, thought she would like to have some little fluffy baby chicks. She didn't know what they were like because she never had any before, but someone told her, I believe it was Miranda Sparrow, that she could have some all her very own, but Miranda told her "If you want those little chicks you mustn't lay that nice white egg in the nest in the chicken house the way you did yesterday or the day before. I won't tell you tonight what to do but next week I'll tell you what to do with those nice white eggs so you can have some cute little baby chicks. So next week little boys and girls, if you're real good and shut your eyes now and go to sleep in the nice dark which was made so we could go to sleep, I'll promise to tell you all about it.

The dark is kind and cosy,
The dark is soft and deep,
The dark will pat my pillow
And love me as I sleep.
God made the dark so daytime
Could close its tired eyes,
And sleep awhile in comfort
Beneath the starry skies.

Next week—What Lady Hen Did.

A couple were walking down the street and the wife said:

"John, I'd like that dress in the window."

John—"Well, it's there, isn't it?"

Husband (fed up): "By George, I must have been crazy to marry you!" Wife (placidly): "You were, dearest—I remember you said so every day for months."

Master of the House: "Er—Mary, your mistress and I have been discussing matters, and, to put it plainly, we suspect you of eaves-dropping. However, to save further trouble we—" Mary (breaking in): "I heard you, and I've got my box packed."

Peguis Post Office

Peguis post office in Manitoba takes its name from Peguis, the Saulteaux Indian chief, who was a friend of the Red River settlers and well disposed to the whites in their efforts to found a colony in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Salt in Manitoba

In Manitoba numerous brine springs are found in the area west of lake Winnipegosis, and brine has been encountered in drill holes in the district between Winnipeg and the boundary of Saskatcheman.

Every day should be passed as if it were to be the last.—Publius Syrus.

MUTT AND JEFF— By BUD FISHER

Jeff Fools the Latest Invention.