

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 12th.

Walking on the Sea.—Matt. xiv. 22-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid.” Verses 27.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 22-27.

SUMMARY.—Jesus visits his disciples in their peril, and saves them at their call.

ANALYSIS.—I. The disciples alone in peril. vs. 22-24. II. The appearance of Jesus. vs. 25-27. III. Peter's faith and failure. vs. 28-31. IV. Deliverance and reverence. vs. 32, 33.

EXPOSITION.—The Connection.—The seven parables of the thirteenth chapter, set forth the nature and course of Christ's kingdom. This fourteenth chapter again reveals Christ as doing works that pertained to a later and advanced stage of his ministry.

Jesus had gone from the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, near its northern end, across by ship or boat, to the eastern or northeastern shore. vs. 13; Mark vi. 32; Luke ix. 10; John vi. 1, 2. The report of John's death by Herod's murderous hand suggested Christ's danger, especially as he was now thronged by the people. Partly, it would seem, to escape for the time from him, and partly to find quiet, Jesus crossed the sea into a desert, and beyond the jurisdiction of Herod.

He was soon thronged by eager multitudes. vs. 13. According to John, there was a special reason for this unusual rush of people, in the fact that it was near the time of the Jews' Feast of the Passover, when multitudes were about to go up to Jerusalem. They came to him, as it were by the way. John vi. 4.

This throng, staying with Jesus in the desert place until near the day's close, were hungry; and being remote from markets, they could not readily get food, and hence were likely to suffer. The sympathy of Jesus was stirred, while, at the same time, an admirable opportunity was presented to work one of his deeply significant miracles. He thus furnished, by his Divine power, food in abundance for the whole multitude, in token of his power to feed, with the bread of eternal life, all who came to him. vs. 14-21. His own explanation of the spiritual meaning of the miracle is given in John vi. 26-59.

Verses 22.—Straightway. Immediately after the multitude had been fed. Night was coming on “Evening,” in vs. 15, from the ninth to the twelfth hour of the day”—i. e., from about 3, p. m. to sunset; while in vs. 23, the “evening” is the second evening, commencing at sunset. Mark vi. 35. Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship. Showing their great unwillingness to leave him. The unwillingness of the disciples to go may have been, in part, because theirs was the only ship, and Jesus thus left would have either to come around on foot, or to hunt up, and hire another boat. John vi. 22. The other side. That is, the western. They were now on the eastern. John says, chap. vi. 17, that they were to go to Capernaum. The plural multitudes is used to indicate the greatness of the multitude—the large number of the people.

Verse 23.—Went up into a [the] mountain apart to pray. Christ was thoroughly human—a man, with all a man's wants. Hence, his duties to men and with men, in the affairs which engaged his attention and taxed his energies, made necessary seasons of rest, in which he could turn his thoughts wholly God-ward, like a weary child rests on the bosom of his father, and draws down into himself Divine inspiration and strength for the renewal of his wearisome work. He is, indeed, in prayer our pattern; but it is a shallow, wicked, and dishonoring conceit to suppose that Christ prayed only in order to be our pattern.

Verse 24.—In the midst of the sea. The natural impression given by the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and John, is that they were to go directly across, and await Christ's arrival, leaving him to make his way as he would. The word translated tossed indicates that the ship was unmanageable.

Verse 25.—Fourth watch. The night was divided into four watches. Hence this was the last—from about 3 a. m. to sunrise. Jesus went unto them. Moved by sympathy for their distress. Notice, that he saw them when they did not see

him, and was near them when they least thought it. So is it now. The eye of our Lord looks through all the darkness, and sees us when tossed by any storm; and now, as then, his heart is moved with pity, and he is moved by his heart's pity to visit us. Blessed truth! So often tested in the experience of the Christian. Walking on the sea. His natural, unchanged body was borne up by the Divine will. When the disciples saw him. Which was probably not till he was quite near them. Were troubled. The word so translated indicates that they were greatly agitated with fright. Thus often are we terrified by the Lord's coming, because we know not his form. It is a spirit. Or, rather, apparition, phantom—for such is the meaning of the word translated “spirit.” As they mistook Christ for a phantom, they were quite as likely to be mistaken in their belief in phantoms. Yet Scripture teaches that spiritual beings had from the first appeared in human form, and conversed with men. They could only see the outline of Christ's form. They did not expect Christ to come then. Cried out for fear. Their terror increased as they saw the form coming near them.

Verse 27.—Straightway Jesus spake unto them. The Lord terrified them by coming, but did not come in order to terrify them. Hence he spoke promptly, in order to remove their fears. Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid. Spoken in a clear, friendly, assured and assuring tone, and with his own well-known, familiar voice. How suddenly did terror give way to joyful confidence! So can Christ now manifest himself—so does he now manifest himself—to his disciples.

Verse 28.—Peter. Ever the foremost, here true to his temperament and character. Bid me come. He loved Christ, and trusted him; but with this was mixed some undue self-confidence, which once and again brought him into trouble. Very likely a part of his desire to go out to Jesus was for display. Even Peter does not venture to start without the Lord's word. But he urges the Lord to give the word.

Verse 29.—And he said, Come. God often answers a foolish prayer, to show us that it was foolish, and thus teach us wisdom. He walked on the water. He had some faith in Christ, and was therefore for a time supported.

Verse 30.—Was afraid. His faith in Christ was not so great as his fear of the storm. While he confided he was supported; but now he begins to lose confidence, and so we read, he began to sink. Peter had no reason to fear. There was Jesus on the waves. There was his word, “Come,” and then, too, the trial had proved Christ's power. But without reason, and against reason, Peter feared and doubted, and so failed. It is just the same with us. We have no reason to doubt and fear, and draw back from our Lord, however dreadful may be the way we have to go—however high and angry the waves amid which we find ourselves. Jesus has gone before us through all temptation, has triumphed over all enemies, stands before us as conqueror, and has helped us hitherto. But our faith fails, alas for our sinful weakness. Lord, save me. Nothing else, nobody else, could or would. Death is swallowing him up—he is almost gone—the waves engulfing him. Then the cry. Here faith springs up out of despair. It is another form of faith than that which had sustained him thus far. It is such a faith as the soul feels when it sees itself lost, sinking into the sea of eternal death, and no hope, no help, but in Christ. Then it lifts up its helpless hands, its imploring eyes, its pleading voice, to this same almighty Jesus, and cries, Lord, save me. No self-confidence—an earnest, agonizing, direct prayer.

Verse 31.—Immediately. The prompt help meets the urgent need. Thus ever. Caught him. Just in time to save him. When we cannot lay hold of Christ, he may lay hold of us. We are “apprehended” before we “apprehend.” O thou of little faith. A merited rebuke, showing, too, that Peter had no need to have sunk. In the support given to Peter, we have a miracle wrought within and upon Peter, essentially the same in nature as that wrought in and upon Christ. It is the second miracle in this affair.

Verse 32.—The wind ceased. That this occurred just as they entered the ship was not accidental, but doubtless was the completion of the miracle—the winds and sea obeying the command of the Lord. Happy are we, if in our voyage of life we have on board with us the Lord of life's sea, Christ is the Lord of life, and of our life.

He is to be sought, trusted, received, kept. Then we shall have peace, and shall come, as did the disciples, safely to the land whither we are bound—to our destined place of rest—our home. John vi. 21.

Verse 33.—They that were in the ship. Probably “the crew of the ship—the boatmen, the mariners—and perhaps some other passengers, as distinct from the disciples.”—Schaff. The Son of God. An acknowledgment of Christ's Divine nature as shown in his power, and in the way in which he had used it. He acted as one having in himself authority, and as ruling by virtue of that which he himself was.

QUESTIONS.—Why did Jesus cross from the western to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee? vs. 12. Into what sort of a place did he go? What miracle did he there perform? vs. 19, 21.

Vs. 22, 24. Why did Christ send the disciples away? What did the multitudes wish to do to Christ? John vi. 15. Why did Christ pray? What peril befell the disciples in crossing?

Vs. 25, 27. What part of the night is the “fourth watch”? How did Jesus go to the disciples? Why did he? Was he expected by them? What was the effect of his appearance? What did Christ say to them?

Vs. 28, 31. What led Peter to ask this? Why did Christ tell him to come? Did Christ know that he would fail? Does he let his disciples now fail, in the same way? What enabled Peter to walk at first? What caused him to fail? What was his cry? What was the result of his prayer?

Vs. 32, 33. What caused the wind to cease? What was the effect of this whole event on the mariners?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 146.

SUNDAY, October 19th.—The Cross foretold.—Matt. xvi. 21-28.

Youths' Department.

For the Christian Messenger.

MAY DAY.

It was not in the full flush of spring-time, But the paleness of winter had fled, And the stream with a musical murmur Gambol'd over its rock-fretted bed. When a party of teachers and pupils From their hard mental drill were set free, To ramble at will o'er the mountains, And mix with the cataract's glee. We ambled with wain-training charger, Far over the wood-mantled hills, Drinking deep from earth's cisterns of beauty Till we came to the flood-rained mills There giggling with pleasure exultant Over mischief so wantonly done, The rioting, revelling river, Now laughed, and then leaped as it run. We crossed, and away through the woodland, We caught the faint roar of the falls, Where the rocks frowning grandly above them,

Re-echo the cataract's calls. Deep down through the rock-channelled ravine's, The waters, like school boys at play, Now gambol'd, then galloped, then bounded, With deafening clamor away. No pen can describe their wild rapture, To ours, words are but alloy, As we stood on the spray-smoothed rock terrace, And gazed at their tumult of joy. We left them with pleasure and sadness; With pleasure at having been there, With sadness, that life's sterner duties Could not always their joyousness share. But life's stern and unyielding duties, Have pressed on the hours since then, But the memory of their glad music Comes back from the wild mountain glen, And it teaches us daily this lesson, That to have bliss enduring below, The river that flows through our spirits From fountains untailing must flow.

W. H. P.

WILLIE'S EFFORT.

Willie Thornton attended a large school for boys in R—, a pleasant town not far from the Ohio River. He was just fourteen years old, and was studying Harkness's Introductory Latin book, Algebra and English history. Willie was a lively, active boy, and although a fair scholar, was sometimes apt to neglect his studies for play. But from earliest childhood his fondness for animals of every species had been particularly noticeable, and although so young, he had several boxes full of butterflies and various kinds of insects. He had a great many curiosities, among others a horned toad, which his Uncle Fred had brought him from Texas.

In his desire to collect specimens for his “museum,” as he termed it, his lessons were apt to suffer. As you may suppose, he greatly enjoyed reading books on this subject, and he had already studied as a text-book at school Tenney's “Natural History.” He was very desirous to get for himself a library of scientific and zoological works, but as yet his collection was very meagre.

So much by way of introduction. One day, as he and his particular crony, Jack Marston, were coming from the post-office, they spied an advertisement:

WANTED—Immediately, by Cooke & Co., 20 or more copyists! None but good writers need apply.

“Look there, Jack!” said Willie, “suppose you and I offer our services?” “Not I,” answered Jack; “when school is out I don't want to be bothered with any writing on my hands. Get enough of that in Latin exercises.”

“Well,” was the reply, “school closes on Friday, and there's the spring vacation to do it in, and I think 't would be kind of jolly to earn a little cash. I'm sort of hard-up for ‘stamps’ once in a while.”

“So am I, too, for the matter of that,” said Jack, laughing, “but I'm too lazy. What I don't beg from pa. I must go without; so good-by, my boy, and don't over-work! However, I guess there's no particular danger on that score,” and with a shrug of his shoulders he walked away.

Will had been more in fun than earnest while talking with Jack, but the more he thought of copying, the better he was pleased with the idea. That night he wrote a note to Cooke & Co., tendering his services as a copyist, and two days after his manuscript was returned, with the order, “Call at our office at once.”

He received this command Friday noon, and that afternoon school closed for a fortnight's vacation. He called at their office, and was pleasantly received, and Mr. Cooke explained his duties to him, calling him, “Thornton,” which pleased our young hero greatly.

“Here, Thornton, are seventy-five directed envelopes. This is your copy, and here are seventy-five sheets of paper. You will address the letters to the persons whose names you see on these envelopes, and when you have finished these, bring them to our office. We have other clerks who mail the letters. You will receive eight cents for each letter; it occupies three pages of this sheet of letter-paper. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir, I think I do,” answered Willie, and with a polite “Thank you,” he left the room.

Upon reading the copy, Willie saw that it was a notice of a recent publication, and that it solicited canvassers for said book. Willie went home, and that night began his work. He found it rather tiresome, but the plan which he adopted was to get up and practise some violent physical exercise after each hour's work. He wrote almost all day until five o'clock, when he would rest for the remainder of the day. The next Wednesday he returned the seventy-five letters, and received one hundred more. In this way he wrote and played several hours each day, and when the two weeks' vacation was nearly over, he had earned thirty dollars.

“Had a good time this vacation, Jack?” inquired Willie, as he met his friend the last Saturday of vacation.

“No, horrid,” was the reply. “I've just moped around. Pa said I might go to Cincinnati last Monday, and stay a week, if I'd pay my fare; but I'd spent the last five dollars he'd given me, and so hadn't a cent. Have you enjoyed it?”

“Yes, indeed,” answered Willie. “I made thirty dollars copying for Cooke & Co., and played base-ball every afternoon after five o'clock. We're going to play a match game with the ‘Athletics’ next Saturday. Carpenter Chips is going to make me the cutest little cabinet, with glass doors, to keep my specimens in, for five dollars; and I'm on my way to the bookstore to order some splendid volumes on Natural History from New York city.”

“Mighty fine, all of a sudden,” growled Jack.

Willie is now a young man who, not long since, completed his college course at Yale, and as he is as fond of “bugs” as ever, he thinks of attending Professor Agassiz's school at Penikese.

Boys—and girls too—this story has a moral. Instead of always expecting your fathers and mothers to give you money, try and earn some for yourselves, if ever an opportunity offer, and when you want something a little extra—work for it.—Interior.

A CHILD'S IDEA OF PRAYER.

Little Nellie, who was only four years old, no sooner saw work laid aside than she ran to her mother's knee and claimed a seat there. Mrs. Leo lifted her to her lap, and went on busily thinking of her duties and cares, while she rocked herself and Nellie to and fro.

For a while Nellie amused herself very quietly by winding a string in and out through her fingers; but presently she began talking to herself in a low tone: “When I say my prayers, God says, ‘Hark, angels, while I hear a little noise.’” Her mother asked her what noise was that?

“A little girl's noise. Then the angels will do just so (shutting her mouth very tight, and keeping very still for a moment) till I say Amen.”

Isn't this a sweet thought? I wonder if the children who read this story of little Nellie have ever thought how wonderful it is that God always hears their prayers. He is surrounded by thousands and thousands of angels, and all praising him with their golden harps; and yet through all the music and all the praises, he hears the softest prayer of a little child kneeling by the bedside. He must be very loving and very kind to children. We should think he would sometimes forget, and be listening to the beautiful sounds in heaven, instead of the prayer of a little child. But he never does. There is never too much singing or too many praises there for him to hear a little girl's noise. Do you not wonder that children do not pray to him, much more and much oftener than they do?

THE FRUITS OF SIAM.

Siam is verily the queen of the tropics in regard to the abundance, variety, and unequalled lusciousness of her fruits. Here are found those of China, greatly enriched in tint and flavor by being transplanted to this warmer climate; and those of Western Asia, in this fruitful soil far more productive than in the sterile regions of Persia and Arabia; while numberless varieties from the Malayan and Indian archipelagoes, united with the host of those indigenous to the country, complete a list of some two hundred or more species of edible fruits. In this climate of perennial freshness, trees bear nearly the year round, and so productive is the soil that the annual produce is almost incredible. The tax on orchards alone yields to the Crown a revenue of some five millions of dollars per annum, as I was informed by the late “second king” of Siam. It is not unusual to find on a single branch the bud and blossom, together with fruit in several different stages. Thus, at the merest trifle of expense a table may be supplied during the entire year with forty or fifty specimens of fresh ripe fruit. Among these are many varieties of oranges and pineapples, pomegranates, shaddocks, pawpaws, guavas, bananas, plantains, durians, jack-fruit, melons, grapes, mangoes, coconuts, pomegranates, soursaps, litchies, custard-apples, bread-fruit, casew-nuts, plums, taranids, mangosteens, rambustans, and scores of others for which we have no names in our language. Tropical fruits are generally juicy, sweet, with a slight admixture of acid, luscious, and peculiarly agreeable in a warm climate; and when partaken of with temperance and due regard to quality they are highly promotive of health. For this reason, Buddhists regard the destruction of a fruit-tree as quite an act of sacrilege, and their sacred books pronounce a heavy malediction on those who wantonly commit so great a crime. One who has tasted the fruits of the tropics only at a distance from the soil that produces them can form no conception of the real flavor of plums and grapes that never felt the frosty atmosphere of our Northern clime; of oranges plucked ripe from the fragrant stem and eaten fresh while the morning dew still glitters on their golden-tinted cheeks; of the rare, rosy pomegranate juice, luscious as nectar.—Lippincott's Magazine.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

Two piles of faggots were placed about the feet of Huss, which had been stripped of their covering. Bundles of straw were placed erect around the stake, reaching as far upward as the neck of the victim. Everything was now ready for the kindling of the flames. Before the torch was applied, however, one more effort was made to induce Huss to recant. It was the wish of the Emperor even yet, undoubtedly, to save it possible his honor with the prisoner's life; and it was probably by his direction—given beforehand, for he did not choose to witness the scene—that the Marshal of the Empire with the Elector approached the funeral-pile, and exhorted Huss to save his life by retracting and abjuring his doctrines.

It was the last opportunity. Would Huss now hesitate? In a loud, clear voice he replied, with a firmness which the immediate prospect of death could not shake, “I call God to witness that I have never taught or written those things which on false testimony they impute to me; but my declarations, teachings, writings, in fine all my works, have been intended and shaped toward the object of rescuing dying men from the tyranny of sin. Wherefore I will this day gladly seal that truth which I have taught, written and proclaimed—established by the divine law and by holy teachers—by the death.”