

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JULY 30, 1873.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, August 3rd.

The Ministry of Jesus.—Matt. iv. 17-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Never man spake like this man." John vii. 46.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 17-20.

SUMMARY.—The mouth of Jesus speaks the words of God, and the hand of Jesus does the work of God.

ANALYSIS.—I. Christ's theme of discourse. vs. 17-19. II. His call of apostles. vs. 18-22. III. His word and works. vs. 17-23.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 17.—From that time. Evidently from the point of time most distinctly in the writer's mind, and that was the end of the temptation. vs. 12-16 are thrown in to prepare the way for the narrative following. Began to preach. He had lived in the retirement of home before his baptism. That was a time to be silent. Now had come the time to speak. The word "preach" means to herald, i. e., "to proclaim as a herald." And to say, e. g., in the preaching. Its theme or substance is to be given. Repent. The word so translated means not merely sorrow for past sin, but a change of heart or mind, in which the sin is abandoned. Repentance refers to a former state of sin, and has a backward look, though it always implies faith, which has a forward look. Repentance is the abandoning of the wreck for the life-boat; faith is the stepping into, or rather, the resting in the life-boat. For the kingdom of heaven is near. "The kingdom of heaven," or of the heavens, is also called the kingdom of God, and Christ's kingdom. All three designations are found in Matthew, though the first is almost always used there—in all thirty-three times—but nowhere else in the Bible. Paul, however, in 2 Tim. iv. 18, speaks of the Lord's "heavenly kingdom. The three phrases, of course, are but different names of one and the same object. They present to us the one kingdom, under three aspects. This one kingdom, in its origin and character, is of heaven, not of earth, heavenly, not earthly, in its Author and Head: is of God, and not of man; and finally, it is Christ's, because it is the kingdom, not of mere justice, but of grace; where the subjects are justified, not for what they are and do, but for what Christ is and has done. It is the kingdom described in Dan. ii. 24-49; vii. 9-14.

Verse 18.—Sea of Galilee. So called from the province of Galilee, whose eastern boundary it in part formed; also from towns on its shore. The Sea of Genesaret, or of Chinneroth and Cinneroth, Luke v. 1, Josh. xii. 3; "the Sea of Tiberias;" and, though not in Scripture, the Lake of Capernaum. "It is of an oval shape, about thirteen geographical miles long, and six broad. The river Jordan enters it at its northern end, and passes out at its southern end. Its surface is no less than 700 feet below the level of the ocean. On the east, the banks are nearly 2,000 feet high, destitute of verdure and foliage, deeply furrowed by ravines, but quite flat along the summit. The western banks are less regular, yet they present the same general features. The great depression makes the climate of the shores almost tropical. The water of the lake is sweet, cool, and transparent, and as the beach is everywhere pebbly, it has a beautiful, sparkling look.—J. L. Porter. Simon called Peter. Hence called Simon Peter. Luke v. 8. The name Peter means stone or rock, Matt. xvi. 18, and is the Greek form, while Cephas, meaning the same, is the Hebrew form. John i. 42. This call at the sea-side was not the first; for immediately after his baptism, Jesus called both of these brothers, John i. 37-42, who, it seems, were previously John's disciples. The name Cephas, or Peter, was then given to Simon by our Lord, with predictive reference to the place which, as an apostle, he was destined to fill. The first call was to be Christ's disciple; this second to be his apostle. See vs. 19. The account in Luke v. 1-10 supplies much that is here omitted, but does not contradict the very general statement of Matthew. Not. The word so translated means a large "casting-net," as distinguished from a "drag net." Fishers. Fishing not as a mere sport, but as a business. The sea, or lake, still abounds in fish. One of the gates of Jer-

usalem was called, "the fish gate." Hence the occupation of these men was honorable.

Verse 19.—Follow me. The very call that comes to us all. We are not, indeed, in all cases to abandon our occupations, nor in any case to follow the visible form of Christ. But we are to take him to be our Master and let him determine our course in life. Mark how Christ claims to be Lord, and to have authority to command, and power to sustain this authority. Hence his words, I will make you fishers of men. Make you apostles, public teachers, by keeping you in my society and instructing you. Two kinds of preparation are needed for every minister of the Gospel. The one is to acquire, in large measure, Christ's spirit; the other to acquire, in large measure, his doctrines. Failure in either respect is unfitness for the work. In order to get the two, one must now, as then, "walk with Christ," and hearken to his words.

Verse 20.—Straightway left their nets. Prompt obedience, but not thoughtless. They had been doubtless instructed in the Scriptures concerning Messiah to come; had devoutly longed for the appearance; had for that reason been attracted to John; and had, perhaps a year before this, become Christ's disciples. They were thus all ripe for this more special call, and Jesus well knew it. They left their business and business prospects—"left all," as Peter himself afterward said, Mark x. 28.

Verse 21.—James and John. Two brothers, holding a very prominent place among "the twelve." Peter, James and John are often mentioned together. In a ship. The word translated "ship," is used of vessels of all sizes.

Verse 22.—And their fathers. Young men. John lived some seventy years after this, dying about the close of the first century. What a change in their life and destiny did this decision bring.

Verse 23.—All Galilee. The word means "circuit," and "seems at first to have been the name of the country containing the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, king of Tyre." Josh. xx. 7; Isa. ix. 1. In Christ's time, Palestine was divided into three provinces—Judea the southern, Samaria the central, and Galilee the northern. "Josephus says of Galilee, the soil is rich and well cultivated; fruit and forest trees of all kinds, abound; numerous large cities and populous villages, amounting in all to no less than 240, thickly stud the country; the inhabitants are trusty and warlike, being trained to arms from infancy. Galilee was the scene of the greater part of our Lord's private life and public acts. The first three Gospels are chiefly taken up with our Lord's ministrations there, while John's Gospel dwells more upon those in Judea. The apostles were all Galileans, either by birth or by residence. The pronunciation of the Jews living in Galilee had become peculiar, probably through their contact with the Gentiles." Matt. xxvi. 73. Mark xiv. 70. The province was about seventy miles in length, from north to south, and about thirty-five miles in breadth, from east to west, and was divided into Upper or Northern; and Lower or Southern Galilee. Lower Galilee bordered on the Sea of Galilee. Synagogues. Places for religious worship—of comparatively late origin in Jewish history. They are supposed to have come into general use not long before Christ. The size, like that of our churches or chapels, varied according to the population of the place. "At its upper, or Jerusalem end, stood the ark or chest, containing the book of the law, and in front of this chest, the eight-branched lamp, lighted only on festival occasions; a little further toward the middle was a raised platform and a pulpit, in which the reader stood to read the lesson and sat down to teach. The congregation was divided—the men on one side, the women on the other—and a low partition, five or six feet high, between them. Each synagogue had, besides, a chest for the rolls of the prophets, alms-boxes near the door, notice-boards for the names of those "put out of the synagogue," and a chest for trumpets, and other musical instruments used at the New Years, Sabbath, etc. "In the free and pliable order of the synagogue service, an opportunity for Scripture reading, exposition, or exhortation seems to have been offered to any who wished it. Of such opportunities our Lord and the apostles make habitual use." Luke iv. 16; Acts xiii. 15. Gospel. Literally, "good news." All manner of sickness, etc. For the description of a single day's activity, see Luke iv. 31-40.

Verse 24.—Fame. As a worker of miracles—for men think more of that

which heals the body, than of that which saves the soul. Syria. The region to the north and north-east of the Sea of Galilee. Possessed with devils. Or, rather, with demons—wicked spirits having access to men, so as to affect not only mind, but also the body.

Verse 15. There followed him great multitudes, etc. Mostly, not in order to be instructed and guided in divine wisdom, but from curiosity, wonder, or to gain healing favors for themselves or friends.

QUESTIONS.—The subject of our last lesson? Where, and in what condition did we leave Jesus? What did he do after that? John i. 35; Matt. iv. 12-16.

Vs. 17. When did Jesus begin to preach? What did he preach? What is repentance? Jer. viii. 6; Acts xxvi. 20. What is "the kingdom of heaven?" Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. iv. 20. Who is the king? Who the subjects? Why did Christ say the kingdom was near?

Vs. 18, 10. What two brothers did Christ first call? What were they to become? Matt. x. 2. Were they already his disciples? John i. 40-42. What is Peter called in John i. 42? Meaning of the word Peter? Matt. xvi. 18. Why did Christ give him this name? Describe the Sea of Galilee?

Vs. 20. How did they treat the call? Did they do this thoughtlessly?

Vs. 21, 22. What other two brothers were called? Who were the most prominent of the twelve apostles? Matt. xvii. 1.

Vs. 23. What was a synagogue? What did Christ do besides preaching? What did this work show as to his power? What as to his spirit?

Vs. 24. Where was Syria? Why did Christ's fame spread thus? What was the result? Was he sought more for the Gospel than for cures?

Vs. 25. Were all that followed him his disciples? What two ways of following him now?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 133.

SUNDAY, August 10th.—The Beatitudes.—Matt. v. 1-12.

Youths' Department.

APPLE BLOSSOM'S LESSON.

BY MARY ALLEN WEST.

She was not christened Apple Blossom; indeed she never suspected that this was her name; but it was, nevertheless, the name, which deep down in my heart I had given her, because it suited her so well, I could not help it. I have a fashion of thus giving to my friends, names which no one, not even themselves, ever know, but by which they live in my heart for ever.

That first time I saw her, how well I remember it! It was the opening day of spring term in school, and when my old scholars came trooping back, chattering like magpies and half smothering me in caresses, she came with them. A little shy from being among strangers; but this shyness could not subdue the fun which sparkled in her great brown eyes, or rippled over in laughter at some witty sally of the other girls.

She had that clear pink-and-white complexion which suggested my pet name for her, and made the apple-blossoms that were twined in her hair seem the most fitting ornament in the world—no ornament in fact, but as natural an out-growth of her own sweet self as the tint on her lips and cheeks. Her form, too, had the supple grace of the apple-bough, swayed by the wind or bending beneath its fruit; so Apple Blossom she became to me then, and Apple Blossom she still remains.

Before night, the girls had told me all they knew of the stranger—that her name was Maggie Stuart, and that she and her mother had moved into the cottage on the hill, which had stood empty so long.

Maggie's voice and accent had strengthened the impression made by her complexion, that she was a Scotch lassie, and when a few nights after, I walked home with her to see her mother, the conviction was confirmed. Mrs. Stuart was a lady to the very tips of her taper fingers; such a character as in this hurrying worrying world would almost appear seldom to have a chance to develop. That they were poor now, I knew: that they had been wealthy once, I could see; how the change came about I never inquired and never knew. They had been in the country but a short time, and their black dresses told of a grave in dear old Scotland in which slept husband and father.

I was not long in learning that the one aim of Maggie's life was to become a teacher, that she might support mamma. I never saw a girl give greater promise of success. She was fifteen when she came

to me, ahead of most girls of her age in languages, music, and especially in drawing, but behind them in mathematics and the more solid branches. How she did work to make up her deficiencies! and how well she succeeded! Nothing seemed too hard for her to conquer; then she had much of her mother's quiet dignity, joined with her own loving, winsome ways. Any child who could help obeying and loving such a teacher as I felt she would make, must be made of cast iron or india-rubber.

The weeks and the months flew by, and I am half ashamed to confess how large a place my Apple Blossom filled in my heart. If she was away for a day, as she sometimes was because her mother was sick, the light seemed gone out of the schoolroom and the lessons dragged heavily. But one day she did not come, and one of the girls said, "Maggie slipped on a piece of orange-peel, coming to school, and fell and hurt herself." I went to her as soon as school was over, and found her lying on the lounge, but looking as bright and merry as ever. "She had fallen and strained her back," she said, "she should be back in school again on Monday, it was nothing serious; a little bit of orange-peel was altogether too insignificant a thing to get up a sensation over; if it had been an earthquake now, or a railroad collision, who knows but she might have waked up next morning and found herself famous, for then she might have got herself into the papers." So she rattled on, making even her mother laugh at her sallies, though I could not help noticing the nervous clasp and unclasping of the mother's hands, from which some delicate work had fallen.

Monday came to the schoolroom as usual, but it did not bring Maggie; the days told themselves off into another week, and another, and still her place was vacant. The little mother's face grew pitiful to see, with its look of sorrowful anxiety; the good doctor's horse stood oftener at the cottage gate, and his face was very thoughtful as he came out. For each day was deepening into certainty the fear he had felt at first, that it was not a simple strain my darling had suffered, but an injury to the spine, which might prove incurable.

Those terrible weeks! It was so dreadful the thought, of my Apple Blossom, so full of bounding life, never to walk again. I had so loved the sound of her quick, free step, its very echo was a joy to me; how could I bear never to hear it again! And her mother! But her grief was too sacred for my intruding.

My poor crushed Apple Blossom! She bore up bravely for the first week and the second; then I could see that a dim foreboding was creeping into her heart, though we had not hinted at the fear oppressing our own. Confinement itself was very wearying for one whose life had been one of such vigorous health and ceaseless activity; then the pain, slight at first, had gradually increased, till at times it was almost unbearable, and even worse to bear than the pain was the nervous derangement, showing itself in morbid sensitiveness and wakefulness. The pretty pink of her cheeks grew fainter and fainter day by day; my Apple Blossom was fading into a snow-drap.

One day the old doctor stopped at the school-house, and said in his abrupt way, "Miss Mary, you must go over and tell Maggie and her mother; they'll bear it better from you than from anybody else." Then he went away as suddenly as he came, without even saying what I must tell. But there was no need, I knew only too well, and I returned to the schoolroom staggering under the thought of the task before me. Must I tell my Maggie that never again could she come bounding down the hill, as I had so often seen her, or go dancing round the schoolroom from very fulness of physical joy, that all her plans in life must be given up, and instead of "supporting mamma," she must submit to be herself supported? Oh! it was too hard for anything. At that moment I would willingly have given my life to restore Maggie to what she was only one short month before.

I went through with the rest of the lessons in a dazed sort of way, for I was conscious of nothing except that a terrible task awaited me when those lessons were ended, and of the strong crying of my heart, "Dear Jesus, help me." Slowly, as the hours passed away, there stole into my heart a strange peace, and then I knew that

He unto my burden bent The weight it waited for,

lifting off my own heart on to His, which had sustained the weight of a world's woe, and yet had not broken. And all the way

kept singing itself in my heart: to the cottage the beautiful Christmas poem

Daughter, be comforted,..... O dumb, deaf, blind, receive! Shall He who shaped the ear not hear your cry? Doth He not tenderly see who made the eye? Ask Me, that I may give.

I told her mother first, but how I did tell it I cannot tell, it was so much harder than I had thought. Indeed, I had not thought much about telling her, my mind had been so full of Maggie. It was over at last, and I left the poor stricken heart, bowed low in prayer to the dear Father, and knew she was receiving better comfort than I could give.

Then I went to my darling; the poor, wan face brightened, as it always did when she saw me; but something in my own startled her, for she said, "You have had news for me: tell me, what is it?" I took her in my arms—I often held her so for hours, during her wearisome, sleepless nights—and told her. Never shall I cease to hear the echo of her moan of anguish. She spoke no word; she shed no tear; but her whole body quivered as though each fibre was an individual being, and each dying in spasms from its own separate heartbreak. And I could only clasp her close in my arms, press my lips to the clammy forehead, and stroke the dear head on which my tears were falling like rain. At length, it may have been minutes afterwards, or it may have been hours, a long sob came, and then the blessed tears. How I thanked God for those tears! And then it all came out, in a torrent of burning words—the story of their poverty, their little stock of money almost exhausted, the necessity that she should at once become the bread-winner for mamma; here the poor girl broke down utterly. Rallying soon, she went on: "Hadn't I noticed mamma always at work on those beautiful embroideries—that was how she earned money to live on; and she's just stitch, stitching her life away, and now I can never, never be of any good to her; I almost wish I was dead!" Don't blame my Apple Blossom, nor talk of resignation; the time for resignation was not yet come.

"God has forgotten me," The torture of this thought was more than she could bear; and when she said, "Lay me down, please," I know it was because she felt she must wrestle with this great trial alone.

I did not dare return to her until an hour had passed, then I was astonished to find her asleep. Very quietly I sat down and watched her. There were tears on her cheeks, but they did not seem bitter tears; they had ploughed no furrows there; the sharp pricks of pain were fading out from her forehead, and even as I watched, the hard lines which had drawn her mouth into such an agonized expression, relaxed, and a half smile transformed it into the rosebud mouth I had loved to kiss so well.

She slept on for an hour, then suddenly opening her eyes, she asked: "Did you speak to me?" "No, dear." "Then God did," and the reverent, joyous look on her face awed me. I did not ask her what it meant; I knew that in her own time she would tell me, and she did. She lay quite still for a time, smiling softly to herself, then looking full in my face, she said, "I thought God had forgotten me, but He has not." "I know, dear, but how do you know?" He told me Himself. When you left me I was fighting Him with all my might, and I kept on fighting till I had not a particle of strength left. Then I must have fallen asleep; I didn't know I was asleep till I woke up; then I heard, just as plainly as though you had spoken the words, 'He giveth his beloved sleep.' You did not speak them, so God must; He gave me sleep; so He does love me and I can bear anything now."

So Apple Blossom learned her lesson and God Himself was her teacher. I had racked my brain planning how to teach it to her, but the work I should have done so bunglingly was taken out of my hands and perfectly performed by God.

In the months and years which followed He trained my Apple Blossom, by the ministry of pain, to be a minister to others. No touch so tender, no heart so loving as Maggie's. From far and near, weary, wounded or sick hearts sought her, and found a very Bethel in her invalid chamber.

Nor did the dear Father fail to make good to her the promise of the "hundred-fold in this life." The artist-soul which had ever slumbered within her, but which in the exuberance of physical vigour had failed to make itself known woke to life in the sweet morning twilight of that sick chamber. She never walked again, but her skillful fingers transferred to canvas the beautiful creations of her artist-soul. And so she earned the money which realised the great aspiration of her girlhood, "to keep mamma as papa always kept her."