

Christian Messenger.

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THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, July 27th.

The Temptation of Jesus.—Matt. iv. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For in that the himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Hebrews ii. 18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-4.

SUMMARY.—Thrice did the devil tempt our Lord, thrice was he vanquished by our Lord.

ANALYSIS.—I The fast, vs. 1, 2 II The first temptation, vs. 3, 4 III The second temptation, vs. 5, 7 IV The third temptation, vs. 8-10. V Angelic aid, vs. 11.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—Then. After the baptism, and evidently immediately after. As his ministry ended on the cross in victorious struggle with the powers of hell, so does it at once begin with a struggle with the same power. Col. ii. 15. Led up. From the valley of the Jordan into the higher country, or desert. This was most obviously the same desert or "wilderness" as that mentioned in iii. 1. The Greek word is the same, and the connection favors the view that the same region was meant. Tradition specifies the mountain of Quarantana, between the Mount of Olives and Jericho, and described by Dr. Robinson as "an almost perpendicular wall of rock, twelve or fifteen hundred feet above the plain," as the exact place of the temptation. Quarantana is from quadraginta, the Latin for forty, because of the forty days of fasting and temptation. The tradition is not trusted by scholars, and some suppose that the place of temptation was east of the Jordan. Deut. xxxii 10; viii. 15. By the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, not his own spirit or mind, Luke iii 16. We meet here a very striking fact freely taught elsewhere, that though our Saviour was in his own person divine, not less than human, God as well as man, he yet had not less need of the Holy Spirit than we, and his life unfolded and shaped itself under the operation. Tempted by the devil. The Bible knows but one devil, traducer; called also Satan, enemy.

Verse 2.—Fasted.—Luke says, "he did eat nothing in those days." Chap. iv. 2. There is no good reason why we should not take the fasting to be total abstinence from food. Forty days and forty nights. Afterward an hungered. Apparently implying that thus far he had not been conscious of hunger—too much absorbed in spiritual activity. If so, there was a brief cessation, thus leaving him to feel the terrible gnawings of a hunger consequent on the long fast.

Verse 3.—When the tempter came to him. This may not have been his first visit Mark i. 13; Luke i. 2; but from his return after a brief absence. If so, the second stage in Christ's temptation begins here; and of the preceding stage, we have no other description than the mere fact that he was "tempted forty days," while of this we have the detailed account. Others, however, with some reason, suppose this to have been the beginning. But how did the tempter come? Was it in visible form, or by vision, or in some other way? The Scripture does not gratify curiosity. It shows that somehow the devil had such access to Christ's mind as to set vividly before him his own satanic thoughts, and perhaps to bring the mighty influence of his own satanic will and disposition to bear upon him. It also seems clear that we are to take the reference to the places as literal. The connection and the character of the account both require such view. If thou be the Son of God. Apparently referring to the voice from heaven at the baptism, iii. 17; perhaps also to what may have occurred during the previous forty days. The words do not express doubt. The meaning of the original would be more nearly given by reading, "since thou," etc. Satan doubtless knew that Christ at least had no doubt on this point, and hence a temptation to be of avail must assume that Sonship as a fact. Command, more literally, "speak," Gen. i. 3; Psalms xxiii. 9, that these stones became bread. For "bread" read "leaves," making it thus correspond to "stones," as in the Greek. The leaves were usually small, round and thin, not very unlike in size and form stones which may have been before the eyes of Christ. This change

would be a miracle, and virtually an act of creation, and hence of omnipotence. This Satan expects Christ to do in his own strength, by virtue of the power belonging to him as Son, i. e., he assumes, as did his children, the unbelieving Jews, that the title, "the Son of God" implied divine nature or Deity. See John x. 36; xxix. Christ does not correct, but rather endorses as true the assumption. It stands with the same full literalness as that other title, "the Son of Man." The principle here, of course, reached far beyond this one act of supplying his want of food it covered the whole domain of human wants and needs and aspirations. How mightily must such a temptation have wrought upon Jesus! with his human consciousness of a divine power, and his human susceptibilities so keen and powerful. This same temptation to self-sufficiency is pressed upon us, of this time, in a myriad ways, by this same enemy of souls, on every occasion of urgent want. How hard, then, to stand and "wait upon God;" as hard as for the soldier to stand under fire of the enemy, and not be allowed to advance, retreat, or return fire.

Verse 4.—It is written. By this word Christ wins. The devil would wrench him from the divine order, from union with the Father. Christ flees at once to the divine order or law, and by grasping that law, as it stands before man in the written Word, thus holds fast to it, as though anchored. In his hold on Scripture, and the hold of Scripture on him, he finds his safety. The battle is won already. His quotation shows it. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." From Deut. viii. 3. See the connection, there, and how exactly suited to Christ's use. God, not our own pressing wants, God's eternal order, not our personal ends, must shape our course. We abide by his Word, whether "it is written," or otherwise known. How instructive to us this answer. He was tempted in this point, "as we are" most surely.

Verse 5.—Holy City, i. e., Jerusalem, for there was the capital of "the holy people," and the temple, the seat of their holy worship. xxvii 53; Luke iv. 9. A pinnacle of the temple. More exactly, "the pinnacle," i. e., some well known and especially high one. There is no evidence that Satan carried Christ bodily through the air, but the words "taketh" and "settleth" both imply that Christ was in this matter virtually under Satan's direction and control xxvii. 27. So always when the word translated "taketh" occurs. In Luke iv. 9, we have "brought," literally led or conducted. The passage seems to teach that Christ was in body on the pinnacle. That it was to "the temple" that he was taken, may have been because as Son of God, that was specially his own house, and here would be the place to make the display of himself as Son of God.

Verse 6.—If thou be, etc., as above "since thou art," cast thyself down in order to prove thy Sonship, and so enter at once into the exercise of thy right as Son in opposition to what Christ knew to be his duty and God's will. H. b. v. 8. Now mark Satan's craftiness. He had just filled in his effort to turn Christ out of the divinely ordered way of patient toil and suffering, by using to this end the power inherent of himself. By quoting God's Word, and just that passage of it, Jesus reveals his immovable loyalty to divine purpose. Now the devil says, Well, be it so; hold to God's purpose, hold to the Father, trust him, but trust him to stand by you in this "short cut" to glory, trust him even more perfectly than you are doing by waiting, and as you rest on Scripture, Scripture you have. Artful devil! Then he quotes from Scripture, Ps. xci. 11, 12 just as he is doing to day, in so much of the learned and unlearned irreligion that through the press, the public address, and private conversation is sent abroad, dressed in Scripture clothes.

Verse 7.—Observe that we are not to take the devil's plans, and then because of our sonship expect the Father to help us out with those plans. That is no true trust; that is its most wicked counterfeit, presumption. That is not to trust, it is to "tempt;" and the Scripture in which Satan's quotation is to find its principle of interpretation is, Thou shalt not tempt, etc. This "point" in Christ's temptation is the very one in which we, "in the weariness and suffering of our service of God in a wicked world, are constantly and vehemently tempted.

Verses 8, 9.—The third temptation. Taketh, as above, conducts, or leads. Exceeding high mountain. See above on vs.

1. All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Luke adds, "in a moment of time." iv. 5. There is to the natural eye the view of Palestine's fair land and adjacent regions, and instantly Satan to this outward view on its natural suggestion, impresses the mind with that marvellous vision of worldly glory and grandeur. He does not now say, "Since thou art this Son of God," for he proposes nothing which appeals to the sense of sonship. He only connects his plea at once with Christ's sense of a lofty destiny on earth, and his fearful, instinctive shrinking from the way of suffering and death which stretched out before him. It is still the old cry. Take "the short cut" to glory, to position, to your destination; and if you can't use your own power as Son, if you can't look to the Father for his power, no matter; this world is in my hand—its pomp, power, glory, all is mine, and you can trust me to carry you through. Here is the temptation which so comes upon us, which has so come upon the church, and has so overcome the church.

Verse 10.—Get thee hence, Satan. When it comes to this, that Satan's aims and Satan's power were both to be accepted, there is no call to discriminate and correct. For it is written. Deut. vi. 16. God's first law, the clearest, plainest. And not even Satan could find a text which, his ingenuity could pervert into a justification of its disobedience.

Verse 11.—Then the devil leaveth him. Written for our encouragement, in proof that if we "resist the devil he will flee from us." The circuit of enticement is completed. Christ cannot be made to abandon the way of God, however difficult in presumptuous reliance upon himself, or upon God, or upon Satan. Oh, that we and our pupils may, like Christ, hold fast to the Word of God, and to God whose is the Word. And shall we not henceforth offer with more earnestness and a better understanding the prayer, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Heed well the caution, and cling fast to the promise in 1 Cor. x. 12, 13. Angels came, etc. See Luke xiii. 43.

QUESTIONS.—The subject of our last lesson? What new stage of Christ's life was begun by his baptism?

- Vs. 1. To what place was Christ led? Chap. iii. 1. When? By whom? For what? What two kinds of temptation or trial are there? Genesis xxii. 1; James i. 13, 14. Did Christ endure both kinds? Vs. 2. Why do you think Christ fasted? Do we find mentioned elsewhere in Scripture the period of forty days, or that of forty years? Exodus xxiv. 18; 1 Kings xix. 8. Vs. 3. What was the first temptation? Do you think Satan knew who Christ was? Why just then should he have suggested this miracle? Vs. 4. What harm would their have been in working it? What lesson for us here? Vs. 5. What is "the holy city"? What is a "pinnacle of the temple"? Why should Christ have been taken there rather than elsewhere? Vs. 6. What kind of a king did the Jews expect the Messiah to be? Why did Satan now quote Scripture to Christ? Vs. 7. What was wrong in the suggestion? What lesson is here for us? Vs. 8, 9. The third temptation? Vs. 10. What was wrong in the suggestion? Are we thus tempted? Can we resist? James iv. 7. Vs. 11. What are angels called in Heb. i. 14? How think you, did they minister? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 131, 132.

SUNDAY, August 3rd.—The Ministry of Jesus.—Matt. iv. 17-25.

Youths' Department.

AUNT POLLY'S ADVICE.

BY EULA LEE

If things go wrong in the household (As they often will, you know), Or you're worried out with cares that vex, And the children try you so, Don't sit in the vale of shadows, Or stoop to be a sould; 'Twill only make bad worse, you see, While you grow gray and old. I know how things will bother, While work seems mountain high, And the adding of a leather's weight Makes you feel as if you'd fly; And then perhaps your husband Says some thing quite unkind (He has his worries, too, poor man), So pray, then, never mind.

A sharp retort is best unaid, Though censure's hard to bear; But John may think you're most to blame, If you his spirit share. Then keep your temper, gentle Nell, Just do the best you can, And by-and-by God will unfold The secret of His plan.

I've had my troubles, too, dear Nell, And many and many a day, If the Lord had not been with me, I'd have fainted by the way. Then let Faith fold her brooding wing O'er all your doubts and fears, And God will give thee needed strength For all the coming years.

THE STREET OF THE IDLERS.

When the city of Bremen was a little village surrounded by bogs, an old peasant lived there with his seven sons. They were called "the seven idlers" by their neighbors, who were themselves as lazy and idle as possible. At length these seven brothers grew ashamed of doing nothing, and went out into the world to work. One day the cry was heard, "The seven idlers are returning! The seven idlers!"

The neighbors rushed to the windows. Yes there they were, with spades and hoes and all kinds of strange implements. The next morning they went with shovels and spades to their father's meadows, and commenced digging a deep ditch, that drained the water from the fields, and in a short time the meadows stood free from water. When the neighbors saw the rich grass on the meadows, they said, "O! the idlers! they do not like standing in the water, and fishing for the hay as their father did. They are afraid of work."

In the autumn the seven brothers carried stones and wood to build a house near their father's cottage.

"O! they think the little cottage too inconvenient," said the neighbors again; "they are afraid of the trouble."

At length, seven houses stood in a row beside the little cottage, and the seven brothers married and lived happily near their parents.

"They are afraid of being burdened by their relations," cried the neighbors, who lived with their sons and daughters-in-law in one house.

The seven idlers now built stables and barns opposite their dwellings, and made a pavement of stone.

"They are afraid of cleaning their boots," whispered the neighbors, who were accustomed to sink ankle deep into the mud of their roads.

The also planted a row of trees on either side of the roads.

"It is to save the trouble of a walk into the woods, thought the neighbors.

The seven brothers dug a well. Then the neighbors shrugged their shoulders higher than ever.

"They are too idle to carry the water from the river in pails," said they.

That was a long time ago, and the little village has grown into a large city, but the busy street where the brothers once lived is still called the Street of the Idlers.—Methodist.

THE OWL WHO WROTE A BOOK.

The owl who wrote a book to prove that the sun was not full of light, but that the moon was much more luminous; that the whole world had been mistaken about it, and that the whole world was wrong and the owl alone was right.

"What a wonderful book!" cried all the night birds, "and it must be right; our lady, the owl, has such very large eyes, of course she can see through all the mists of ignorance."

"Very true," cried the bats, "she is right, no doubt. As for us, we cannot see a blink; the moon and sun are alike to us. And for anything we know, there is no light in either. So we went over into a body to her opinion."

By-and-by the matter was noised abroad until the eagle heard of it. He called the birds around him, and looking down upon them from his rocky throne, spoke thus:

"Children of the light and of the day, beware of night birds; their eyes may be large, but they are so formed that they cannot receive the light. And what they cannot see they deny the existence of. Let them praise the darkness or the moonlight in their haunts, they have not known anything better; but let us who love the light, because our eyes can bear it, give all glory to the fountain of it and make our boast of the sun, whilst we pity the poor moon worshippers who live in comparative darkness."

The moral is all around us.—Good Cheer.

CHOICE NAMES.—The names of the canal boats on the Delaware and Hudson Canal are about as various and comely as the names of the modern novels. Here are some of them, and they do very well for the purpose to which they are put: "Bo Just and Fear N.e."—"I'm Quite a Healthy Lad," "It's Naughty, But it's Nice," and "Free Labor."

A court at Portland Me., has decided that a railway ticket is good for six years if not used before the expiration of that time.

A wag speaking of a blind wood-sawyer says that "while none ever saw him see, thousands have seen him saw."

Sermon.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE PREACHER'S COMPLAINT, AND SOME OF THE REASONS FOR IT.

The Sermon preached before the N. S. Central Baptist Association at Bridgewater on Monday, June 30, 1873.

By REV. I. J. SKINNER.

(Published by special request of the Association)

Who hath believed our report? Isa. lxxi. 1.

Every man that labours, expects some remuneration. The farmer looks for a crop as the reward of his toil. The merchant employs his skill and capital with the hope of realizing a fair profit. The professional man plies his vocation with the same expectation. And if after a season of patient and laborious effort the legitimate fruits do not appear, the spontaneous inquiry arises, What can be the reason of failure, and what can be done to prevent a recurrence of the same in future.

Christian ministers are laborers. Indeed this is true of all christians, but pre-eminently so of those to whom the treasure of the gospel's committed. Their work is to preach the everlasting gospel—to scatter broad cast the seeds of divine truth. Their field of operation is the wide world, and their rewards are to be gathered from the triumphs of truth over error and wickedness. Their heart's truest and holiest joys are derived from the fact that souls are saved by the truth which they preach. And when they are permitted to witness the gathering in of precious souls their joy is like that of the reapers when they bear, "The harvest treasures home."

No work is so important as this—none so dignified and glorious, and none that promises such a rich reward. God, that cannot lie, has said for the encouragement of his servants, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from Heaven and returneth not thither but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isa. lv. 10, 11." With this and kindred promises the preacher goes forth, sowing the seed of truth, and expecting a plentiful harvest. But alas! in so many cases, how few precious sheaves are gathered. How often is the servant of God compelled, under the crushing weight of disappointment, to utter the sad and disheartening complaint "Lord who hath believed our report?"

Never, it appears to me, was this complaint more justifiable than at the present time. If we look at the statistics of our denomination in these Provinces and P. E. Island for the year ending August, 1873, we find that by a little calculation we arrive at the startling truth, that some thirty sermons were preached during that time for every one person baptized. With these facts before us ought not the inquiry to be awakened in the mind of every minister of the gospel. Why so much labor and so little increase? Why so many sermons and so few additions?

While we would not by any means regard the number of baptisms in any church or Association as the true measure of the good accomplished, nevertheless, are we not warranted by the word of God in looking for a much larger increase in our churches, than it has been our privilege to record for some time past? Ought we not, therefore, to exhibit the deepest concern as to the reasons for the existing state of things, and what can be done to effect a change for the better.

I purpose this morning, with all due deference to those who are my seniors in the ministry, presenting, what I conceive to be some of the causes of the non-effectiveness of the preaching of the present day, and I assure you my Brethren that it is with a degree of trembling that I approach the subject. I trust I shall be aided by your sympathies and prayers and guided by the Holy Spirit, that I may "speak the truth in love."

There are two prominent and obvious reasons for the non-success of the gospel. The one is clearly indicated in the chapter which contains the text, viz.: The unpretending character of the great author of the Gospel, as well as the humble manner in which He should make his appearance on earth. The other is the unreasonable and persistent rebellion of the human heart—that awful perversity of man's nature, that leads him to reject the truth and trample