

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 13th, 1874.

The Crucifixion.—Mark xv. 22-39.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah liii. 5.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 25-28.

SUMMARY.—"Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."

ANALYSIS.—I. A summary account of the Crucifixion. Vs. 22-28. II. Christ reviled on the cross. Vs. 29-32. III. The death-scene. Vs. 33-39.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—Our last lesson closed while Christ was still before Caiaphas, about three A. M. of Friday. There condemned for blasphemy, because he declared himself to be the Son of God, the preliminary examination closed with the most shameful abuse of Christ. (xiv. 65). In the early morning the Sanhedrim, after a recess of about three hours again met, and took Jesus, bound, to Pilate, the Roman governor, or "procurator," of Judea, expecting him to carry out their wish, and crucify Christ. Convinced of Christ's innocence, he tried by artful shifts to evade their demand, but dared not refuse it. Then followed the derisive mockery of him (vs. 17-19), and that doleful passage to the place of execution. (Vs. 20, 21.) See Luke xxiii. 26-32.

Verses 22.—And they bring him unto the place Golgotha. It is nowhere said that it was a mountain, "mount," or hill. On the spiritual and doctrinal import of the crucifixion, outside of the city, see Heb. xiii. 12.

Verses 23.—They gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh. Matthew says, "vinegar mingled with gall," with reference to Psalm lxxix. 21. The "vinegar" (Matt.) was the sour wine used by the common soldiers. The "myrrh" could be called gall, because bitter. This drugged wine was given to stupefy the person, and so deaden the pains of execution. Prov. xxxi. 6. He received it not. Matthew says, "When he had tasted thereof he would not drink"—because he would not thus darken his consciousness and flee from the pains of the cross.

Verses 24.—When they had crucified [having crucified] him they parted [were dividing, or proceeded to divide] his garments. They cast lots for the coat, or tunic, because it was woven whole and was without seam. The other garments were distributed. A remarkable fulfillment of Psalm xxii. 18. The garments fell to the executioners, according to custom. Persons were crucified naked.

Verses 25.—And it was the third hour. About nine, A. M., John says Christ was still before Pilate about the sixth hour (xix. 14), noon. There are three principal ways of harmonizing the accounts: (1) There is some authority for the reading "third" instead of "sixth," in John's account. (2) It is held that the Romans sometimes reckoned from midnight and midday, instead of sunrise and sunset. John wrote after the Jewish nation was dispersed, and when the Roman method of computation would be chiefly in vogue by his readers. The other notes of time in his Gospel agree as well or better with this view. i. 39; iv. 6, 52. Thus John represents Christ as before Pilate at six, A. M., and Mark represents the crucifixion as being at nine, A. M. The intervening time would be taken up in preparation for the execution, etc. (3) Neither Mark nor John may have intended to do more than give a general note of time. John says, "about the sixth," that is about or towards noon, intending to include the execution, as well as declaration of the sentence, in the reference. Mark's meaning would thus be, "It was about the middle of the forenoon." John's, "It was towards noon"—when Christ was crucified. And they crucified him. Fixed him to a cross. "Crucifixion was a punishment used by the Grecians, Romans and Egyptians, and many other nations, but not by the Jews. It was indeed permitted by the [Jewish] law to hang a man on a tree, but only after he had been put to death. (Deut. xxi. 22, 23. Compare Gal. iii. 10.) The person was nailed to the cross, sometimes before, and sometimes after, its erection. Crucifixion was the most ignominious of all punishments, employed only with the

lowest and worst criminals. A Roman citizen might never be crucified. And yet, "they crucified HIM."

Verses 26.—The superscription of his accusation. Called by John a "title." It was printed in large characters, so as to enable the spectators to read and know the crime for which the person died. This one was written in three languages—"Greek, Latin and Hebrew." The Latin was the official language, as the country was under Latin, that is Roman, rule. Hebrew, in one of its dialects, was the "mother tongue" of the province, while the Greek was in very general use by persons of all classes and nationalities. By writing the charge in these three great languages of the earth, the universal destination of the Gospel was fore-shadowed. The King of the Jews. This is only a part of the title. The whole, as made up from the four narratives, was, "This is Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews."

Verses 27.—With him they crucify two thieves. Christ was crucified with them, in token that he took rank with that infamous class of outlaws. He was crucified between them; in token that he was the worst of the class.

Verses 28.—The Scripture was fulfilled. Isaiah liii. 12. See Luke xxii. 37, where Christ quotes it as fulfilled in his apprehension by the armed multitude.

Verses 29.—They that passed by. Along the street, which on this day of the feast would of course be thronged, especially by persons from Galilee, if it were on the east or northeast side of Jerusalem. Wagging their heads and saying. This mockery of one even now nailed to the cross seems at first incredible—too mean and dastardly and cruel for men at their worst—and especially for the classes of men that joined in mocking Christ. For the Jewish rulers led the people in it, and the soldiers also bore their part (Luke xxiii. 35,) while the lips even of one of the crucified robbers added their tribute to the same infamy. Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, etc. Referring to the words spoken by Christ (John ii. 19), and afterward misused in his trial (Mark xiv. 58). Note the perversion which hatred gives them. He never intimated that he would destroy the temple, "his body," but that they would; as they were now doing.

Verses 30.—See Matt. xxvii. 40.

Verses 31.—He saved others, himself he cannot save. A glorious truth is here stated, though not in their meaning of the words. He could save others—had so done—but only because he would not save himself. He died that we might live. "By his stripes we are healed."

Verses 32.—Let [the] Christ, King of Israel, etc. They thus contrast his pretensions and expectations with his condition and end. They that were crucified, etc. So Matthew; but Luke says, "one of them." The other rebuked this one. Possibly both at first reviled, and one afterward repented.

Verses 33.—The sixth hour. Noon. There was no eclipse, as it was the time of full moon. Until the ninth. Three, P. M. Three hours of horrible suffering on Christ's part, far less bodily than spiritual, enduring the hidings of God's face, the sense of desertion, the pains of hell, our punishment.

Verses 34.—Eloi, etc. Hebrew words in Aramaean dialect, given as spoken to show why they were referred to Elias. Why hast thou forsaken me? Literally, "Why didst thou?" that is, during the horror of those three hours. Psalm xxii. 1. The typical sufferings of David find here the antitype, shadow and substance.

Verses 35.—Calleth for Elias. Whether said in mockery or honesty, is uncertain. We would fain believe the latter; but the former seems quite as likely. One ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar. The soldier's common sour wine. Christ had said, "I thirst," and the act was humane. The rest said, "Let alone," etc. Matt. xxvii. 49. After giving the wine, he too seems to have taken up and repeated their words, as much as to say, "Now wait and see."

Verses 37.—Cried with a loud voice. Saying, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Before saying this, and after drinking the wine, he said: "It is finished." So John says. The loudness of the cry was due to the mighty power and earnestness of his spirit—not so bodily strength. He died after being on the cross about six hours. Most of the crucified lived at least twelve hours—some two, and even three days.

Verses 38.—The veil of the temple. The inner one between the holy place and the most holy place. Ex. xxvi. 35; 36; Heb.

ix. 3. On the meaning of this see Heb. v. 5-22.

Verses 39.—The centurion. A Roman commander of one hundred men who had charge of the execution. He had become convinced that Christ was "a righteous man," and that his claim to be a (not the) son of God, was correct. The meaning given that title by him was probably much less than Christ's meaning in his claim to be "the Son of God."

QUESTIONS.—Where did our last lesson leave Christ? At what hour of what day? What occurred between that and the present lesson? Vs. 1-21. See Matthew, Luke and John.

The other accounts of the Crucifixion are Matt. xxvii. 22-54; Luke xxiii. 32-47; John xix. 17-30.

Verses 22. Where was Jesus put to death?

Verses 23. What was given him to drink? For what purpose, think you? Why did he refuse this, and receive that given afterward? Vs. 26; John xix. 23.

Verses 24. Among whom were his garments divided? For which one were lots cast? John xix. 24.

Verses 25. What does John say of the time? xix. 14. How was Christ put to death?

Verses 26. In what languages was the superscription written? John xix. 20. Why was it set up?

Verses 27. Why was Jesus crucified with robbers? Why between them?

Verses 29-32. What different classes mocked Christ? Some of the words used? Did both the robbers revile him? Luke xxiii. 39-43.

Verses 33. What caused the darkness? Of what was it the symbol?

Verses 34-36. What was the greatest suffering of Christ? What did one of the bystanders do?

Verses 37. What did Christ say in this cry? Luke xxiii. 46. How long was Christ on the cross? Why did he die? Rom. iii. 24-26.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 20th, 1874. — The Risen Lord.—Mark xvi. 9-20.

Youths' Department.

AN ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BIBLE NAMES.

Get your Bible and find each answer; which write down opposite the text. A was a high priest in Israel's day. Ex. xxix. 9.

B was a king, over Chaldee held sway. Dan. v. 1.

C was a land now called "holy" by all. (Home of the Israelites. Name it.)

D was a smith in the story of Paul. Acts xix. 24.

E was a country of darkness and haze. Ex. x. 21.

F was a ruler in Apostolic days. Acts xxiii and xxiv.

G was a garden the Saviour oft sought. Matt. xvi. 36; John xviii. 1.

H was a man by his own gallows caught. Esther iii. 1; vii. 9.

I a brave Ithrite whom king David knew. 2 Sam. xiii. 38.

J was a hostess her guest calmly slew. Judges v. 24.

K was a rebel, in great folly fell. Num. xxi. 9, 11.

L an old word meaning lies that we tell. Ps. iv. 2; v. 6.

M was a meek man, who wrote laws quite well. Deut. xxxi. 9.

N was a prophet in king David's door. 2 Sam. vii. 2, 3, 17.

O was a famed mount in historic lore. Matt. xxi. 1, etc.

P was a book the Jews quote and read. Luke xxiv. 44.

Q was a sentence we all better heed. 1 Thes. v. 19.

R was a woman once saved from a fall. Joshua vi. 25.

S was a young king remarkably tall. 1 Sam. ix. 2.

T was a woman all praised with a sigh. Acts ix. 36, 42.

U was a man his king sent forth to die. 2 Sam. xi. 14, 15, 24.

V was a fair Queen, her husband did fret. Esther i. 10, 11, 12.

W what Solomon tells all to get. Prov. iv. 5.

Y binds to labor while making all free. Matt. xi. 29, 30.

Z was a small man called down from a tree. Luke ix. 4, 5.

NO LITTLE SINS.

Never say, when you are about to do something that is wrong, or when you are going to leave undone something that is right, "It is only a trifle." "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." Never say, "It is but a little sin." There are no such things as little sins. Eve only ate the forbidden fruit: but, because it was sin, it brought death into the world, and the world became the abode of sinners and mourners. God is a great God, and no sin can be a trifle, for it is done against him.

We would advise all little children to be very careful to avoid that great sin which

young people so very often fall into, the sin of disobeying their parents. Children disobey their parents in two ways; they disobey them by doing what they bid them not to do; and they disobey them by leaving undone what they have told them to do: it may be just to save themselves, as they think, a little trouble; but they do not know how much trouble they are making for themselves. They forget that God has said, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" or perhaps, like the wicked man whom the Bible calls a fool, they say in their hearts, "God hideth his face; he will never see it."

Read the following history, which will show you the great sin of what perhaps was thought but a little act of disobedience to a parent's will.

In those parts of the far West where the great forests are not cut down, and where only a few persons live, the woods sometimes take fire, or are set on fire when it is dry weather in the autumn. The fire burns the dry leaves, the dry limbs and twigs, and dry trees, and even the green trees. It leaps from tree to tree, burns, and crackles, and rushes on like a fierce army in battle.

A thousand war-horses could not make more noise; and in the night, as it throws up its flames, it is seen a great way off. Sometimes it goes almost a hundred miles before it is stopped. Now you shall hear how, at one time, the woods were set on fire.

A little boy was playing one day just at the edge of the woods when his mother was not with him. Though he knew it was wrong, and his mother had often told him not to play with fire, yet he went into the house and brought out some burning wood. He felt that it was wrong; but thought that nobody would ever know it. "God was not in all his thoughts." He played with the fire for a time, and it did no harm. At last the wind blew a spark into the woods, and it caught the dry leaves; they blazed; the whole forest was set on fire. On the fire went, kindled into a great flame, raging and burning all before it. For whole days, and even weeks, it roared and raged without hurting any one. But one day when the wind blew hard, it burned faster and more fearfully, until it came to a small new house which a poor man had just built, almost in the middle of the forest, on some land which he had just bought.

The man had left home. When at a great distance he saw the fire, and hurried back as fast as he could. But oh, what a sight! The woods were all burned black. Not a leaf was left. His house and barn were burned up; but what was far worse, his dear wife and little child were burned too. On the spot where he left them happy in the morning, nothing was found but a heap of smoking ashes.

All this sad sorrow was caused by a little boy, who disobeyed his mother and played with fire.

HELPFUL PEOPLE.

"Ask Deacon Ready; he can do it; he is always willing." This is a very current formula in a certain church that I wot of. If any special job of usefulness is required, he is the man on whose broad and benevolent shoulders the load is pretty sure to be laid. He has earned a good reputation for promptness, for unselfishness, and for never complaining of being made a pack-horse. He would go more than a mile to carry around a subscription-paper, or to visit a poor family on a freezing winter night, or to act as usher at the church doorway when strangers require attention, than a big Newfoundlander would decline to plunge into the water and save his young master when drowning. Blessings on Deacon Ready! He is the "joy and crown" of his pastor. He is the staff of life to the prayer-meeting on a rainy night, for he is always sure to be there. He is a prime favorite with all those who like to see things done, and are never nimble at doing them. In short, he is the pattern and patron saint of the helpful people. Happy is that pastor who has his quiver full of them.

What is the secret of the usefulness of the Deacon Ready? It is not their wealth. Rich people are sometimes too much occupied with their own business to give time or personal attention to others. It is not their genius. The geniuses are often very dangerous characters in the pulpit, and they are often balking and eccentric when harnessed into the lay labors of a church. I am not sorry that the Lord creates so few geniuses. The helpful people are commonly men of moderate means,

moderate talents, and modest character. Talking is not their forte, but working is. They have a knack at it. Phillip, Aquila, Dorcas, Lydia, and Luke, all belonged to this guild. They left others to do the shouting; it was their province to do the silent lifting. Probably a large proportion of the best workers in Apostolic churches are never mentioned at all in the New Testament. It is only now and then that a modest Harlan Page finds a biographer to tell the world the story of his useful life. The great mass of the best lives and the best deeds that our Lord delights to look upon will never be put into print. But they will be read beautifully when "the books are opened" on the last great day.

The secret of usefulness with the helpful people is that they are so unselfish. In this prime grace of Bible religion they copy Christ. He pleased not himself he came not to be ministered unto, but to wait on others; he was among his disciples "as one that serveth." Helper is not a name so often given to our Lord Jesus, but he deserves it as truly as that more frequent and adorable name of "Saviour."

This unselfishness of the modest, helpful people makes them willing to do the hard work and the obscure work and the disagreeable work for the solid satisfaction of doing good. If they invite an impenitent friend to a prayer-meeting, or talk with him about his soul, they are listened to with respect for their sincerity. When they say a few words in a social meeting, their words weigh a pound apiece, for behind their lips there stands a life. They are the main stay of the church in times of revival; they are too solid to volatilize into mere excitement. It is not brain power that gives them weight, it is heart power. They love Jesus, and love their fellow-men, and this gives them a prodigious momentum. They move others by it. They constitute the real force in all our churches. The saddest tears I have ever dropped over a coffin were when I looked down into the silent face of one of my helpers whose right hand was for the first time motionless.

The number of these helpful folks might be increased immensely. We pastors do not hunt enough after them, and call them out. Thousands do not ask themselves the questions, What was I made for? What can I do? Can't I help somebody? Where am I needed? If this article stirs some Christian to this self-questioning, then it is not wasted. We cannot all be rich, but we all can be useful. We cannot all be eloquent, but we all can be helpful. We can be "fellow-helpers" with our Lord. We can help to lift up the fallen, and help to steady the feeble, and help carry the loads of the burdened, and help take care of the friendless, and help some poor fellow-sinners on the road to heaven. To prepare for such usefulness the best prayer is that God would help us to kill our selfishness, and to consecrate what is left to the blessed life of living for others.—Rev. T. L. Cuyler, in N. Y. Evangelist.

LAMPS IN THE EASTERN CITIES.

Dr. H. Bonar says: "As there are not street lamps in Jerusalem, one must have his lantern when needing to be in the street after sunset, both because he would be laid hold of by the guard as a suspected person if found without a light, and because the rough narrow streets really required it. Our Jerusalem waiter, Gabriel, considered it as a regular part of his duty to come for us with his lantern, as to wait at table. On he marched before us, up one narrow street and down another, always holding the light as near the ground as possible, to indicate the ruts and stones, for it was our feet that alone seemed to need the light. We thus found new meaning in the new passage, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.'"

It's an ill wind which blows nobody good. In the late college regatta a Saratoga minister has found inspiration for a sermon on "The Christian's Regatta toward the Heavenly Goal." According to the account before us, "he glowingly portrayed the Christian racer as feathering his oar with precision, turning the stake-boat of life with all the resolution of faith, coming down the desperate course of the homestretch with vigour, fixing his eye on the Heavenly Referee, and taking good care not to imitate the disciple Judas, and break his oar."

Passion may not unjustly be termed the mob of man, that commits a riot on his reason.

WEDNESDAY... Port... Boston... Halifax... (Vertical text on the right edge of the page, partially cut off)