

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., DECEMBER 16, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I and he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Revelation i. 18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 9, 12, 14, 19.

SUMMARY.—"Christ rose from the dead, and to the apostles showed himself alive" by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

ANALYSIS.—I. Three appearances. Vs. 9-14. II. The great commission. Vs. 15-18. III. The ascension. Vs. 19, 20.

EXPOSITION.—Introductory.—In our last lesson we followed Christ from the place of his mocking to the place of his crucifixion, and stood there till in death he committed his spirit to his Father. Then followed the piercing of his side with a spear by the soldiers; the entombment of the body in the rock-hewn sepulchre by Joseph of Arimathea; and the sending of a guard of soldiers on the (Jewish) Sabbath to watch the sepulchre until the time predicted for the resurrection should have passed. This guard was to prevent all appearance of the fulfilment of that prediction by making it impossible for Christ's disciples to steal his body, and then point to the empty tomb in evidence of his resurrection. The Jews had stamped out the "deceiver's" life, and now they will prevent even a rumor of the restoration of that life. Said Pilate: "Ye have a watch, go your way; make it as sure as you can;" and so they did. xv. 40-47; Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

Verse 9.—Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week. Comp. vs. 1-8. The same time is here meant as in vs. 2. All the Evangelists agree as to the time; though John says, "while it was yet dark;" and Mark, "at the rising of the sun." The time between the dawn and sunrise, was that of the events. This Mark could well enough, in a general way, call sunrise. "While it was yet dark," of course, means before the full light of day. "The first day of the week," our Sunday, and next after the Jewish Sabbath, or Seventh Day, is called "the Lord's Day," and is observed as such, because of the Lord's resurrection on it. The example of the apostles, and of the apostolic church, assures us that the reason is good and ample. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mark speaks of only three appearances, but neither says nor implies that there were no others. Luke, in Acts i. 3, says that he was "seen of them [the apostles] forty days," which implies, not a continuous manifestation, but frequent appearances. Of these appearances there are mentioned in the New Testament from nine to twelve. The exact number is uncertain, because it is not certain in two or three cases whether the references of one writer are to appearances elsewhere mentioned, or to different ones. It would seem, from Matthew xxviii. 9, 10, that Jesus appeared to the company of women with whom Mary Magdalene first came to the sepulchre as these were going to tell the disciples that the tomb was open, and Christ's body gone. Mary Magdalene had left these as soon as she saw that the guard was gone, and the tomb open, and had hurried to John and Peter, doubtless dwelling in a part of the city very near the garden, and had followed those back to the tomb. Just before the arrival of these, then, the other women had left in fright. The appearance to Mary was after Peter and John had left the tomb; so that she was there alone. A most life-like and affecting account of the scene is given by John xx. 11-17. Out of whom he had cast seven devils (demons). Thrown in to explain her devotion to Jesus, and the consequent honor put upon her as being the first to see the risen Lord.

Verse 10.—She went and told. In joy—Christian joy—which ever prompts us to make others sharers in Christ's manifestation to our souls. Them that had been with him. The disciples, but chiefly the apostles.

Verse 11.—When they had heard, etc., believed not. His appearance to Mary; but this was based on their disbelief in his resurrection. How utterly blotted out were their hopes!

Verse 12.—After that. On the same day—in the afternoon. See Luke xxiv. 13-35, which is a full and graphic account of the appearance. He appeared in another form. The disciples were at first prevented from recognizing the Lord in his changed aspect, voice, etc., either by the power of their earthliness naturally, or by an operation of God supernaturally. Unto two of them. Of the disciples, tradition adds, "of the seventy." The name of the one was Cleopas. As they walked and went into the country. From Jerusalem to Emmaus, a little over seven miles. Not till the place was reached, and they were about to dine near evening, was Jesus "known to them in the breaking of bread."

Verse 13.—The residue. The rest of the brethren at Jerusalem. Neither believed they them. A part of the company believed, a part disbelieved, and many questioned. The story of the two was a very strange one, and would be likely to call out all the doubt or disbelief that existed.

Verse 14.—Afterward he appeared unto the eleven. It was after the appearance to the two, but on the very occasion of their telling of it, just as the company were giving vent to their disbelief (Luke xxiv. 36). This was the evening of the day of the resurrection. Mark says, "the eleven," though Thomas was absent (John xx. 26); and Paul says, "the twelve," though neither Thomas nor Judas was there (1 Cor. xv. 5). From Luke we learn that there were others than the ten present. After their evening meal they were freely talking. Upbraided them with their unbelief, etc. Their despair at his death and incredulity as to his resurrection, were not from any lack of instruction on his part, or from any defect in the testimony of their Scriptures. How gentle and loving was this upbraiding, may be seen from Luke's narrative. Jesus never scolded, and least of all at this time. Most critics, with good reason, identify the appearance here mentioned by Mark with that of the first evening mentioned by Luke. Just one week after, and hence "on the Lord's day," Jesus again appeared to the assembled eleven, Thomas this time not being absent. John xx. 26-29. Thus we have a sort of pledge that Jesus is specially pleased to meet his disciples in their assemblies.

Verse 15-18.—Had we only Mark's account, we might think these words were spoken on the occasion mentioned in vs. 14. This commission would not naturally be given at a time when his disciples were so lacking in faith. It was, as is with good reason believed, at the time mentioned by Matthew (xxviii. 16-20), and by Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6) in Galilee on a mountain, subsequent to the appearance mentioned in John xxi. 1-23, and near the close of the forty days. The commission is thus not for the apostles alone, but for the church. The promise as to the signs related specially to them. Compare the same special reference in John xiv. 26, where the general reference is by no means to be denied.

Verse 19.—After the Lord had spoken. At the close of forty days from the resurrection. Was received up into heaven. The ascension was bodily and visible to the apostles from Olivet, near Bethany. Luke xxiv. 50-53; Acts i. 9-12. That body had from its resurrection been other than it was before its crucifixion. The difference now appears at its full. Where in space it is, and how it exists, and acts, we are not told, and cannot guess. The term—right hand of God—is to be understood not of place, but of condition, state, of authority, and glory. Jesus had ceased to be a servant, sin bearer, and sufferer—a sacrificial victim. He had become, once for all, victorious reigning king—in state as before in nature, Lord—and hence is so called by Mark in the next verse.

Verse 20.—They went forth and preached. But not before the day of Pentecost. The Lord working with them. Christ, who wrought the miracles which attested the divine authority of the apostles, and the divine origin and nature of their teaching, for these works are here as often spoken of as signs, and are said to have confirmed the word. We do not now need miracles to confirm those words. The signs which confirmed them for the hearers, confirm them for us readers.

QUESTIONS.—With to day's Scripture compare and study Matthew xxviii; Luke xxiv; John xx, xxi; Acts i. 1-14; 1 Cor. xv. 5-8.

Vs. 9. On what day of the week did Christ rise? At what hour of the day? To whom did he first appear? Where? Why first to her, and there? What is John's account of this appearance?

Vs. 10. What did Mary at once do? Do we now see like conduct?

Vs. 11. The effect of her report? What like that do we see?

Vs. 12. To whom does Mark next say he appeared? What day? Luke xxiv. 11-13. What time in the day? Vs. 29. Where? Vs. 13. The name of one of these disciples? Vs. 18. Had Jesus already appeared to any others? Vs. 34; Matt. xxviii. 11-15. How did he appear? Luke's account?

Vs. 13. What did these men do? The effect?

Vs. 14. To whom did Christ next appear? This was probably the appearance mentioned in Luke xxiv. 36-49. When was this appearance? Luke xxiv. 34-36. Why were the disciples slow to believe in the resurrection? The wrong of this slowness?

Vs. 15-18. Why is this called "the great commission"? Where, according to Matthew, was it given? Matt. xxviii. 10. Were there others than the eleven present? 1 Cor. xv. 6. Who are to make known the gospel? Some of the ways in which it can be done? Who are to be baptized?

Vs. 19. Luke's description of the ascension? Acts i. 9-12. Where is Christ now? Will he ever again appear in the body?

Vs. 20. When did the apostles begin this preaching? Acts ii. 1-12.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Decem'ber 27th, 1874.—Review past Quarter.

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

HOW NOT TO GAIN ATTENTION.

By demanding it as a right.

By pleading the solemn character of the truths you are to teach.

By begging it as a great favor.

By scolding the scholar for not giving it.

Attention is not to be gained by special indulgences or by rewards.

It cannot be secured by threats.

Hearing the lesson rather than attempting to teach it, will not be likely to gain attention.

endeavoring to teach truths which the scholar cannot comprehend will not secure his attention.

Reading the lesson from a book will not fasten the mind upon it.

Presenting a confused combination of ideas will prevent the attention of the scholar.

The use of words not understood, or using words so inaccurately that they convey no definite idea, will not command the intelligent attention of any one.

HOW TO GAIN ATTENTION.

By telling the child something which pays him for giving attention.

By giving information in a manner which the scholar will count it worth his hearing.

Interest the scholar in a subject and he will cheerfully give attention.—Sunday-school World.

An interesting little boy, timid when left alone in a dark room, was overheard recently by his mother to say in his loneliness: "Oh, Lord, don't let anyone hurt me, and I'll go to church next Sunday, and give you some money."

Some one has called attention to the fact that as ordinarily sung, a well-known Sunday-school hymn is rendered:

We are out on a notion sailing. And it is frequently the case, too!

Youths' Department.

AN ANGEL IN A SALOON.

One afternoon in the month of June, 1870, a lady in deep mourning, followed by a little child, entered one of the fashionable saloons in the city of N—. The writer happened to be passing at the time, and prompted by curiosity, followed her in to see what would ensue. Stepping up to the bar, and addressing the proprietor, she said:

"Sir, can you assist me? I have no home, no friends, and am not able to work."

He glanced at her and then at the child, with a mingled look of curiosity and pity. Evidently he was much surprised to see a woman in such a place, begging, but, without asking any questions, gave her some change, and turning to those present, he said:

"Gentlemen, here is a lady in distress. Can't some of you help her a little?"

They cheerfully acceded to the request, and soon a purse of two dollars was made up and put into her hand.

"Madam," said the gentleman who gave her the money, "Why do you come to a saloon? It isn't a proper place for a lady, and why are you driven to such a step?"

"Sir," said the lady, "I know it isn't a proper place for a lady to be in, and you ask me why I am driven to such a step. I will tell you, in one short word," pointing to a bottle behind the counter labelled "whisky,"—"that is what brought me here—whisky. I was once happy, and surrounded by all the luxuries wealth could produce, with a fond, indulgent husband. But in an evil hour he was tempted, and not possessing the will to resist the temptation, fell, and in one short year my dream of happiness was over, my home was forever desolate, and the kind husband, and the wealth that some called mine, lost—lost, never to return; and all by the accursed wine-cup. You see before you only the wreck of my former self, homeless and friendless, with nothing left me in this world but this little child;" and weeping bitterly, she affectionately caressed the golden curls that shaded a face of exquisite loveliness. Regaining her composure, and turning to the proprietor of the saloon, she continued:

"Sir," the reason why I occasionally enter a place like this is to implore those who deal in this deadly poison to desist, to stop a business that spreads desolation, ruin, poverty, and starvation. Think one moment of your own loved ones, and then imagine them in the situation I am in. I appeal to your better nature, I appeal to your kind heart, for I know you possess a kind one, to retire from a business so ruinous to your patrons.

"Do you know the money you take across the bar is the same as taking the bread out of the mouths of the famishing? That it strips the clothing from their backs, deprives them of all the comforts of this life, and throws unhappiness, misery, crime and desolation into their once happy homes? O! sir, I implore, beseech, and pray you to retire from a business you blush to own you are engaged in before your fellow men, and enter one that will not only be profitable to yourself, but to your fellow creatures also. You will excuse me if I have spoken too plainly, but I could not help it when I thought of the misery, the unhappiness and the suffering it has caused me."

"Madam, I am not offended," he answered, in a voice husky with emotion, "but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have said."

"Mamma," said the little girl—who, meantime, had been spoken to by some of the gentlemen present—taking hold of her mother's hand, "these gentlemen want me to sing 'Little Bessie' for them. Shall I do so?"

They all joined in the request, and placing her in the chair, she sang in a sweet, childish voice, the following beautiful song:

Out in the gloomy night, sadly I roam; I have no mother dear, no pleasant home; No one cares for me, no one would cry Even if poor little Bessie should die. Weary and tired I've been wandering all day, Asking for work, but I'm too small they say; On the damp ground I must now lay my head; Father's a drunkard, and mother is dead.

We were so happy till father drank rum, Then all our sorrow and trouble began; Mother grew pale, and wept every day; Baby and I were too hungry to play.

Slowly they faded, till one summer night Found their dead faces all silent and white; Then with big tears slowly dropping, I said, "Father's a drunkard, and mother is dead."

O! if the temperance men only could find Poor, wretched father, and talk very kind; If they would stop him from drinking, then I should be very happy again.

Is it too late, temperance men! Please try, Or poor little Bessie must soon starve and die.

All the day long I've been begging for bread; Father's a drunkard, and mother is dead.

The game of billiards was left unfinished, the cards thrown aside, and the unemptied glass remained on the counter; all had pressed near, some with pity-beaming eyes, entranced with the musical voice and beauty of the child, who seemed better fitted to be with angels than in such a place.

The scene I shall never forget till my dying day, and the sweet cadence of her musical voice still rings in my ears, and from her lips sunk deep into the hearts of those gathered around her.

With her golden hair falling carelessly around her shoulders, and looking so trustingly and confidently upon the gentlemen around her, the beautiful eyes illuminated with a light that seemed not of this earth, she formed a picture of purity and innocence worthy the genius of a poet or painter.

At the close of the song many were weeping; men who had not shed a tear for years wept like children. One young man

who had resisted with scorn the pleadings of a loving mother, and entreaties of friends to strive and lead a better life, to desist from a course that was wasting his fortune and ruining his health, now approached the child, and taking both hands in his, while tears streamed down his cheeks, exclaimed in deep emotion:

"God bless you, my little angel. You have saved me from ruin and disgrace, from poverty and a drunkard's grave. If there are angels on earth, you are one! God bless you!—God bless you!" and putting a note into the hands of the mother, said:

"Please accept this trifle as a token of my regard and esteem, for your little girl has done me a kindness I can never repay; and remember, whenever you are in want, you will find me a true friend;" at the same time giving her his name and address.

Taking her child by the hand she turned to go, but, pausing at the door, said:

"God bless you, gentlemen! Accept the heartiest thanks of a poor, friendless woman for the kindness and courtesy you have shown her." Before any one could reply she was gone.

A silence of several minutes ensued, which was broken by the proprietor, who exclaimed:

Gentlemen, that lady was right, and I have sold my last glass of whisky; if any one of you want any more you will have to go elsewhere."

"And I have drank my last glass of whisky," said a young man who had long been given up as utterly beyond the reach of those who had a deep interest in his welfare; sunk too low ever to reform.

A HERO.

"If I were a general," said Freddie, laying down his history, "I should be happy."

"Are you not happy now?" asked Aunt Margaret.

"O, yes; but I long to be a hero. It is something to be a hero; do you not think so?"

"Yes," said Aunt Margaret, "I admire a hero. Shall I tell you how you may become one now, a boy hero, which I think is far more noble than being a general?"

"Yes," said Freddie, eagerly, "do tell me."

"By being master of yourself. Do not give way to angry, wicked feelings. The Bible says, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.' Think of this, and when tempted to do wrong, fight for the right, and you will be a hero greater than a general."—Children's Friend.

GEMS OF PSALMODY.

The popular notion is that the Ritualists are persons of very cultivated taste, in fact that taste is their strong hold; and that bad taste is the monopoly of the Hard-shell Baptists and the Camp Meeting Methodists. But the following specimens from "The St. Alban's Psalter and the People's Hymnal," an ultra Ritualist English Collection, goes far to dispel the illusion:

On straw reclined, the Lord most high Within a manger deigned to lie; And He who feeds the birds of air Vouchsafed a little milk to share.

There comes a galley sailing With ample cargo stored, It bears God's Son, most loving, The Lord's Eternal Word; That galley calmly floating Bears freight of precious cost; Love is the sail that wafts it, Its mast the Holy Ghost.

A SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSION.

"... A theme ... which will be handled ... ages after you and I, like streaks of a morning cloud, shall have melted into the infinite azure of the past."—Professor Tyndall's Address before the British Association.]

"This a beautiful speech, very learned and pat.

Full of history, science and thought, and all that;

It tells us without undue circumlocution That nature is nought but a grand evolution. That things make themselves whether gross or aerial,

And even the vainest of thoughts are material. So it clears up the problem how all things consist,

Till at length it dissolves in a thin streak of mist,

Which seems, notwithstanding such eloquent chatter, An exceedingly cloudy clear-up of the matter.

For, watching for sunshine, with minds all agog, The last thing we behold is a vanishing fog.

—English paper.