

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, July 5th, 1874. The Beginning of the Gospel.—Mark i. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. John i. 1.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 9-11.

SUMMARY.—There was a long period of preparation for the coming of Christ which was completed in John the Baptist whose mission was to introduce Him to the world.

ANALYSIS.—Introductory, vs. 1-3. The work and office of John, vs. 4-9. The baptism of Jesus, vs. 9-11.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1. The beginning. The first announcement. This abrupt opening harmonizes with the book itself. It is the briefest, and, in some respects and scenes, the most comprehensive of the four. The Son of God. Mark equally with John recognizes Christ's divine character.

Verses 2.—In the prophets. See Malachi iii. 1, and Isaiah xl. 3. My messenger before thy face, Christ makes this to apply to himself. (Luke vii. 27; Matt. xi. 10), and leaves no doubt of its true interpretation.

Verse 3.—The voice. John does not exalt himself but wishes only to be recognized as a voice and a precursor. Matt. iii. 1-6, 11; John i. 15, 28.

Verse 4.—Baptize in the wilderness. By comparing this with Matt. iii. 1; Luke iii. 3, and John iii. 23, we find that John had the "much water" of the Jordan at Aenon in which to baptize his disciples. The baptism of repentance, &c. His preaching was for the preparing a people for listening to the gospel, first to shew them their sinfulness, and then to make them put it away, and be ready to receive Christ when he should be manifested to them. The remission was consequent on their repentance, reception of the message, and baptism. The latter was to be the outward sign of the change wrought within.

Verse 5.—All the land of Judea. The people generally. A great awakening had taken place. All baptized, a very large proportion. It is evident by Matthew iii. 7-12; Luke iii. 7-14, that this was not an indiscriminate baptism without reference to character. This too shews that baptism was not to take away sin, or those who came would surely have received it without enquiring further and sending the applicants away. In the river. The immersion was easily effected here where there was a gathering of waters by a union of rivers.

Verse 6.—Camels' hair. A coarse cloth commonly used for tents. A leather girdle indicates the austerity of John's life. Elijah was similarly clad. 2 Kings i. 8; Zech. xiii. 4. Locusts, winged insects resembling grasshoppers, and might be used as food. Lev. xi. 22. They are in eastern countries now often eaten by the poorer classes. Wild honey, the products of bees that were not owned by any person; often found in rocks or hollow trees. Lev. xx. 24; Deut. xxxii. 13; Psalm lxxxi. 16; 1 Sam. xiv. 26. John's habits resembled those of Elijah. Matthew xi. 14, 18.

Verse 7.—There cometh one. John had a most exalted estimate of what Christ would be when he should be revealed to him. He (John) was unworthy to perform the most menial service to the Divine Person—he came to herald, Matthew xi. 9-11. Shoes, sandals fastened on with straps. See John x. 30, 41; v. 27; Matt. xxviii. 18.

Verse 8.—John contrasts his baptism in water with that which would be administered by Christ in the Holy Spirit. With water. "One of the most accurate of recent commentators, (Meyer) on this verse, says that the preposition here translated "with" is to be understood in accordance with the idea of baptism, that is immersion, not as expressing the instrument with which, but as meaning "in" and expressing the element in which the immersion takes place."

Verse 9.—In those days, John had then been preaching and baptizing about six months. Nazareth is now a village of about 3000 inhabitants. It was not in good repute. John i. 46. Here Jesus lived for about twenty-seven years, Luke i. 26, 27; ii. 39, 51; Matt. ii. 23. And was baptized. Jesus was now about thirty years of age. In Jordan. Probably at

the ford near Jericho. He was now about thirty years of age, Luke iii. 23. In receiving baptism at the hands of John he shewed his approval of his ministry—not as indicating that he (Christ) needed repentance for himself, but as prefiguring his death, burial and resurrection, Luke xii. 50. It also prefigured his receiving its death and burial with him, and holiness its resurrection and life with him, that thus his people should die with him, be quickened and rise again with him, Col. ii. 12, 13; Eph. ii. 5; Rom. vi. 3, 4, 8; Psalm xl. 12. In Jordan. Probably near Jericho where John had been baptizing. It was surrounded with historic interest. Josh. iii. 17; 2 Kings ii. 8, 14. This place is still a resort of thousands of pilgrims every year who immerse themselves and are immersed as commemoratives of John's baptizing Christ.

Verse 10.—Straightway. A word often used by Mark signifying immediately. Out of the water, not from, but out of the water, according to the highest critical authorities. Luke says he went up praying, iii. 21. He saw, Jesus saw and John said he also saw the descent of the Spirit, John i. 32. Luke says "in a bodily shape like a dove," iii. 22. The dove was an emblem of purity and gentleness and so represented Christ in his person and work. Isaiah lxi. 1-3; Matt. x. 16; xi. 29; xii. 21; John tells us "it abode on him." This was to be the sign to John, of all those he baptized, which one was the Christ. John i. 33.

Verse 11.—A voice out of heaven. Here was the witnessing of the Father to Christ's being the Messiah. My beloved Son. Psalm ii. 7, 12; Isaiah xlii. 1. Jesus is not the only person called by this name in the Scriptures. Angels in Job i. 6; xxviii. 7, and kings in 2 Sam. vii. 14; Psalm lxxii. 6; and believers, 1 John iy. 2; are said to have this relationship; but Christ alone is called the Son of God, John i. 34; xi. 4. I am well pleased. This testimony was repeated, Matt. xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 17; Here was the doctrine of the three divine persons taught as combining in one, in order to accomplish man's salvation.

Jesus was here shewn to be personally and morally suited to open to us the kingdom of heaven, and as an example for our imitation. Matt. iii. 15; 2 Peter ii. 21; John xiv. 6.

QUESTIONS.—What time is referred to here by "the beginning"? How did Mark shew that he regarded Jesus as divine?

Vs. 2. What prophets had foretold of Christ?

Vs. 3. In what way did John "make his path straight"?

Vs. 4. What was the burden of John's preaching? Did John encourage the idea that his baptism took away sin? Matt. iii. 26. How numerous were his disciples? Describe John's appearance and food. Who did he resemble in this? What was his great mission? What comparison did he draw between the coming Christ and himself? Did John recognize Christ as needing the baptism for himself? John iii. 13-15. How did Jesus urge John to perform this rite? At what age did Jesus enter upon his official work? Luke iii. 23. Where was Jesus baptized? How was John to know which of the persons he baptized was the Christ? What additional testimony was given to confirm John and his disciples that Jesus was the Messiah? In what way does Jesus afterwards refer to this. John viii. 18, 29.

Scripture Catechism, 195.

SUNDAY, July 12th, 1874.—The Authority of Jesus.—Mark i. 16-27.

THE THIRD QUARTER'S LESSONS.

- 1 The Beginning of the Gospel. Mark i. 1-11.
2 The Authority of Jesus. Mark i. 16-27.
3 The Leper Healed. Mark i. 33-45.
4 The Publican Called. Mark ii. 13-17.
5 Jesus and the Sabbath. Mark ii. 23-28, iii. 1-5.
6 Power over Nature. Mark iv. 35-41.
7 Power over Demons. Mark v. 1-15.
8 Power over Disease. Mark v. 25-34.
9 Power over Death. Mark v. 22, 23, 35-43.
10 Martyrdom of the Baptist. Mark vi. 20-29.
11 The Five Thousand Fed. Mark vi. 34-44.
12 The Syrochænan Mo her. Mark vii. 24-30.

Review of Lessons for the Quarter.

A man has not risen very high who extends his energy only in scolding and contempt for the evil. That ox will not grow very fat and strong which spends its hours in the pasture-field horning and scraping up his thistles, to the neglect of filling his stomach with the sweet and nutritious grass. And so in the church, the men who boast they can scent out heresy in the very hair of a man's head, or in the cut of his clothes, are very lean and miserable saints for the most part.

The man who pretends to know everything generally knows nothing.

Youths' Department.

CAPITAL FUN.

It was a little past twelve o'clock, and a merry group of boys were seated on the young grass, under the trees that shaded the Academy play-grounds. A little later, and they would be scattered in every direction at their play, but first they must attend to the contents of well-filled pails and baskets, where their dinners were stowed.

"I should like to know," said Horace Colby, "why Joe Green never comes out to eat his dinner with the rest of us, but sneaks off somewhere till we all get through."

"Guess he brings so many goodies he is afraid we shall rob him," said one.

"Poh!" said Will Brown, "more likely he don't bring anything at all. I heard my father say they must be badly pinched since Mr. Green was killed; and mother said she didn't pity them, for folks had no business to be poor and proud."

"Well," said Sam Merrill, "I know Mary Green asked my mother to let her have plain sewing to do; but then folks do that sometimes that aren't very poor."

"And Joe is wearing his winter clothes all this warm weather, and his pants are patched behind—I saw them," said Horace Colby, with a very complacent look at his new spring suit of light gray.

"I'll tell you what, boys," said Will Brown, "let's look to-morrow and see what the old fellow does bring, any way. You know he is always in his seat by the time the first bell-rings, and we can get a peep into his basket and then be in season for roll-call."

The boys agreed to this, all but Ned Collins, who had sat quietly eating his dinner, and taking no part in the conversation. Now he simply remarked, as he brushed the crumbs from his lips, "I can't see what fun there will be to do that, and it looks real mean and sneaking to me. I am sure it is none of our business what Joe brings for his dinner, or where he goes to eat it."

"You're always such a granny," said Will Brown, contemptuously. "You have got every one of our poor Aunt Sally's notions."

Ned could not bear to be laughed at, and it made him a little angry to hear his kind old aunt sneered at, but his eye only flashed for a moment, and he sprang up, shouting, "Hurrah, boys, for football!" and in five minutes the whole play-ground was in an uproar of fun and frolic.

The next morning at the stroke of the bell, a half dozen rough faces peered into the school-room, and, sure enough, there sat Joe Green, busily plying his pencil over the problems of the algebra lesson. It was but the work of an instant to hurry into the clothes-room, and soon the whole group were pressing around Will Brown, as he held the mysterious basket in his hand. Among them, in spite of the remonstrance of yesterday, was Ned Collins, with his fine face fairly crimson with shame, or something else; we shall soon see.

"It is big enough to hold a day's rations for a regiment," said Howard Colby, as Will pulled out a nice white napkin. Next came a whole newspaper, a large one, too; and then at the bottom of the basket was one little cold potato; that was all. Will held it up with a comical grimace, and the boys laughed and cheered as loudly as they dared in the school-room.

"See, here," said Howard, "let's throw it away, and fill the basket with coal, it will be such fun to see him open it."

The boys agreed, and placed the napkin carefully on top, and before the bell commenced tolling they were on their way down stairs.

Ned Collins was the last to leave the room, and no sooner did the others disappear than, quick as flash, he emptied the coal into the box again, replacing the paper, and half filled the basket, large as it was, with the contents of the bright tin pail that Aunt Sally delighted to store with dainties for her darling's dinner. Ned was in the seat almost as soon as the rest, and all through the forenoon he looked and felt as guilty as the others, as he saw the sly looks and winks that were exchanged among them. Noon came, and there was the usual rush to the clothes-room for dinner-baskets; but instead of going out to the yard, the boys lingered about the door and hall. Straight by them marched Ned Collins with his pail on his arm.

"Halloo, Ned," said Sam Merrill, "where are you going now?" "Home," said Ned. "I saw Aunt

Sally making a chicken pie this morning, and I am going home to get some."

"Ask me to go, too," shouted Howard Colby; but just at that moment they saw Joe Green carrying his basket into the school-room.

"I should think he'd suspect something," whispered Will Brown; "that coal must be awful heavy."

Joe disappeared in the school-room, and curious eyes that peered through the crack of the door, were soon rewarded by seeing him open his basket.

"Hope his dinner won't lie heavy on his stomach," said Howard Colby.

But apparently Joe only wished to get his paper to read, for he took it by the corner to pull it out, but it was fast. He looked in surprise, and then, in a sort of bewildered way, took out a couple of Aunt Sally's great, crispy doughnuts, then one of the delicious round pies he had often seen in Ned's hands, bread and butter, and such honey as nobody's bees but hers ever make, and the plump white breast of a chicken.

It was a dinner fit for a king; so poor Joe thought, and so the boys thought, as they peered wonderingly from their hiding-place. But Joe did not offer to taste it; he only sat there, and looked at it with a pale face, over which the tears began presently to flow very fast. Then he leaned his head on his desk, and Freddie Wilson, one of the smallest boys, whispered, "I guess he's praying;" so they all stole away to the play-ground without speaking another word.

"I'll tell you what," said good-natured Tom Granger, "I move and second that we are all ashamed of ourselves; all in favor of this motion will signify it by giving three cheers for Ned Collins—there he comes this minute, brim full of chicken pie!"

The boys sprang to their feet, and swinging their caps in the air, gave three hearty cheers for Ned Collins, and even Will Brown joined the chorus as loudly as any of them. Sam Merrill explained the thing to Ned, and he only said in reply:

"I have often heard Aunt Sally say that it is poor kind of fun that must be earned by hurting somebody's feelings, and what Aunt Sally says is almost always so."

A WONDER OF CALIFORNIA.

During our pleasant sojourn in Santa Barbara, we were invited by an old friend to visit the old Mission, and from thence to the bounteous production of nature, the "Big Grape Vine," as it is called by every one in its vicinity. A description of the services at the old Mission would, doubtless, be of little interest to your numerous readers, so familiar are many of the old Spanish customs, but to your correspondent it was a delightful treat. The huge vine spoken of above, and which I was so kindly invited to inspect, is situated in the section known as Montecito, about three miles from the town (or city it professes to be) on the road to what will undoubtedly, in the future, become more extensively known as the remarkable Hot Springs of Santa Barbara. Although this vine, so highly spoken of and eulogized, did not come fully up to the expectations we had realized from the marvellous stories so often told the temporary sojourner, yet enough was learned of its romantic history (planted as it was before the year 1800), and under such peculiar circumstances, by Senorita Dominguez, when but a simple shoot (in fact, a riding-whip presented by her lover), to induce the belief that it has but one known rival on this continent.

This vine has now assumed the proportions of a foot in diameter at its base, and its extensive branches require something like sixty trellises to support them. It is inclosed by a high board fence, and under its spreading branches has been built a fine dancing floor, around the edges of which are rudely constructed seats. Upon this floor the Spanish fandango is indulged in, while upon the benches, during the summer nights, are congregated the seniors and senioritas, intent upon a rehearsal of their sweet love songs, so peculiarly their own. The entrance to the enclosure containing this vinous monstrosity is through a low-roofed dwelling, peculiarly Spanish in its construction; inside this is a bar plentifully stocked with liquors, which, with the two bits entrance fee and the quite extensive bar patronage the Dona receives, enables the aged lady to live in comparative affluence. The immense product of this vine we have not heretofore alluded to, so very improbable does it seem that one

vine should give in weight the enormous amount of over twelve thousand pounds in one year. Alongside of this, but in a separate enclosure, is another vine of some twelve years' growth, which is said to be fast rivalling the parent stem, both in size and profusion.—San Francisco Alta.

IN LIQUOR.

A mouse one day on a frolic bent, About a brewery roaming, Into a beer-but sudden went, And called, with sighs and groaning.

Unto a cat that passed that way, 'Though to its sight most hateful, 'Sweet puss, come lift me out I pray, And I'll prove ever grateful."

"How would it help you in the least," Replied Grimalkin, grinning. "When I at once should on you feast— And where would be the sinning?"

"And better so than here to drown, Dear puss—so help me speedy, And I'll to you my life lay down, And will not call you greedy."

"Quick, quick, or you'll be too late! I perish, I am freezing!" Puss helped him out, but, luckless fate, The beer fumes set her sneezing.

The mouse she dropped, which sped away, And in its hole safe nestled; Puss, disappointed of her prey, With craft and anger wrestled.

"Come from that hole," she cried, "and roam, With me in regions upper;" "Excuse me, puss, I'll keep at home— So seek elsewhere your supper."

"You cheating rascal, think, oh, think, You promised I should eat you, If I would help you; now you shrink— Come out, let me entreat you."

"I know I promised," mouse said, "Yet wonder not nor bicker, For when such promise it was made, You know I was 'in liquor.'"

- SENSATIONALISM RUN MAD.—The Congregationalist minister in Worcester, Mass., who recently preached his own installation sermon from the text, "Never skeddaddle. None of these things move me," has announced the following subjects for each Sunday until the close of July:
May 17—Guzle and Give!
" 24—Paul's "Shoo Fly!"
" 31—Cremation.
June 7—Republican Locusts.
" 14—Empty Churches and How to Fill Them.
" 21—Main street.
" 28—Pharaoh's Lean Kine.
July 5—The Mad Prophet.
" 12—"Who's Young Hatter?"
" 19—"Popping the Question!"
" 26—A Tragedy in Four Acts.

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon last month entertained forty poor blind people at tea in the large schoolroom in the Metropolitan Tabernacle. The guides and friends of the guests brought up the number present to 100. After tea they were addressed by Mr. Spurgeon, and as soon as they heard his voice it might be at once known that though they were blind they were not dumb, for the cheering was almost deafening. The guests are in the habit of attending a mission station in the Kennington-road, where a substantial tea is provided for the blind every Sunday, after which the Gospel is preached. This excellent institution owes its existence to a poor working man, a painter, who is assisted by others of the same class. Mr. Spurgeon subscribes £5 annually, and a few members of the Tabernacle give liberally to the cause.

BARONESS BURDETT COUTTS AND MR. MOODY.—There is some hope that Messrs. Moody and Sankey may be induced to prolong their stay in Scotland, and to traverse the whole land. In the mouths of detractors "commercial speculation" has been a phrase freely applied to the movement; but the confidence of those who advance or accept this charge must be somewhat dashed by what happened recently,—when Mr. Moody received a cheque from the Baroness Burdett Coutts for £1,000—a liberal gift from a great giver. The Baroness was sojourning in Edinburgh during the whole of the time when Messrs. Moody and Sankey were at work in that city, and her offering shews the nature of the estimate she had formed from personal observation of their labours. The recipient, no doubt, had all his previous good opinions of her ladyship confirmed by this fresh proof of her munificence, and saw new cause for admiring the Lady Bountiful. No doubt he told her so in the courteous letter in which he returned the cheque.—Christian World.