

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JANUARY 14, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, January 12th, 1874.

The Call of Moses.—Exodus iii. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" vs. 10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verse 7-10.

SUMMARY.—When Moses was ready for his work, and his work was ready for Moses, God spake the word, and set him over Israel.

ANALYSIS.—I. Moses with the sheep. vs. 1. II. The strange sight. vs. 2, 3. III. The introduction. vs. 4-6. IV. The ordination. vs. 7-10.

EXPOSITION.—Connection.—Last Sabbath we had as our lesson the beautiful story of Moses' birth, concealment, exposure, discovery, and princely good fortune. Now he has made himself acquainted with "the wisdom of the Egyptians," and has also learned of his own origin, and put himself into sympathy with the sacred traditions and prophetic hopes of his own people. Choosing to identify himself with them, though enslaved, he rashly incurs the deadly hate of Pharaoh by interfering for the defence of an abused fellow-countryman. Hence his flight into "the land of Midian," situated on the east shore of the western gulf of the Red Sea, the gulf of Suez, southeast from Goshen. There he was received into the family of the priest of Midian, who seems to have borne three names, after the manner of other persons mentioned in Scripture (chaps. ii. 18; iii. 1; Num. ix. 29), unless, in chap. ii. 18, the grandfather is named as being still alive, and representing the family. Comp. Num. ix. 29. Of this priest's seven daughters Moses married Zipporah, and as she, with the others, followed the honorable employment of shepherdess, Moses too became a shepherd and servant of Jethro. This was perhaps at first, as with Jacob under Laban, in payment for his wife. Moses was forty years old when he went to Midian (Acts vii. 23), and he staid there in that desert land forty years (Acts vii. 30). Just at the close of this period our present lesson finds him.

Verse 1.—Kept the flock.—Possibly Jethro had very large possessions in flocks and herds, since the priest was often also the chief or the king of the tribe or people. Moses may have been the shepherd-in-chief, having general oversight and control of the care of the flocks. Gen. xlvii. 6. Yet, from chap. ii. 16, Jethro's possessions seem small. The mountain of God, even to Horeb. In the centre of the barren triangular peninsula, bounded on the west by the gulf of Suez, on the east by the gulf of Akabah, and on the north by a line of broken, rocky mountain range is Horeb. This high separate mountain has two principal peaks, and it is said that Horeb was used as the name of both the northern one, and the whole mountain. Sinai is the name of the southern. It was called the mountain of God either because of its size or by way of anticipation, because here God afterward revealed his glory in giving to Israel the land, or for both reasons.

Verse 2.—And the angel of the Lord [of Jehovah]. Christ the Word or Revealer in his pre-existent, unincarnate state. In a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. There is no evidence that there was any form of a person seen, but only the flame. At other times this Being appeared in human form. It was God's wont to make fire "either the symbol or the attendant of his presence." Chaps. xix. 8; xxiv. 17; 1 Kings xix. 12; Ezekiel i. 4, 13; Daniel vii. 9. Heathen nations also have had the idea that God's presence is manifested in the splendor of light or fire. This bush was the wild acacia or thorn with which that desert abounds. It has been thought, not without reason, that the form of this divine manifestation was intended to symbolize the condition of the Hebrew nation in whose behalf it was made.

Verse 3.—I will now turn aside, etc. Apparently influenced only by curiosity, and not suspecting the true nature of the phenomenon.

Verse 4.—And when the Lord [Jehovah] saw, etc., God called. First the Lord sees means to awaken the attention and get it fixed, then he speaks. Moses turns aside, then he is ready to be addressed. Moses,

Moses. Repeated for emphasis. How personal. Some one is here in this lone desert who is acquainted with this keeper of flocks. How startled must Moses have been. ALONE WITH GOD.

Verse 5.—Draw not nigh hither. As though this were merely an object for curiosity. There is a profane drawing near to the truth of Scripture which is censurable. Men handle the Word of God, pry curiously into it, as though it were only man's word. Put off thy shoes, etc. In token of reverence, "in conformity to a usage well known to Moses, for the Egyptian priests observed it in their temples, and it is observed in all eastern countries" The custom is not unlike that observed by us in the removal of our hats in token of respect. The eastern shoe was rather a sandal, easily taken off and put on. Holy ground. We associate with certain places, times, etc., the uses to which they are set apart, and though there be nothing in the nature of one time or of one place as compared with another to call for special reverence, yet we do well to have our sacred places and sacred seasons, and to cherish reverence for them; e. g., the Sabbath, the house of worship, the place of secret prayer, etc.

Verse 6.—Having arrested attention and awakened reverence, the angel proceeds to tell who he is. That he reveals himself as the God of the Hebrew fathers arises from the fact that he is now to prove himself the God of the children, and the Fulfiller of the promises made to the fathers concerning the children. Moses hid his face, there was an awe, but it was not mere slavish dread and terror. It indicated no lack of love. Love of God does not diminish reverence, and lead one to take liberties with his Maker.

Verse 7.—I have surely seen the affliction. It had seemed as though he had not seen, as though he had forgotten. The captives were far from the land of hope, powerless under tyranny's iron heel. Year followed year, and the oppression grew more oppressive, the affliction more afflictive.

How comforting to have spoken to the soul then the words, "Surely I have seen." My people. God still regards them as his, holds on upon them, will look after his own property. Have heard their cry. He not only saw, he heard; not only knew of their affliction, but knew how they felt about it, their intense longing to escape. So she sums all up in the words, for I know their sorrows.

Verse 8.—The Lord has told what he had seen, heard, and felt. Now he tells what comes of it, what he has been led to do. Come down. From his home in the heavens to deliver them, according to the promises made to the fathers. Good land and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. The abundance of milk and honey betokened a land naturally fruitful, in contrast with the artificial fertility of Egypt. Chap. xiii. 5; Joel ii. 23. The land of Palestine, on the testimony of ancient profane writers, was extremely fruitful, but from various causes a change for the worse has passed upon it.

Verse 9.—An emphatic and consoling repetition of verse 7.

Verse 10.—The deliverance of Egypt is the work to be done. It is to be God's work; but he will not do it without human agency. He will do it, but it must be through Moses. So he comes now to this matter. I will send thee. This to Moses was a strange message. Forty years ago he would have been ready for it, but age had sobered him. Moses has received such training for this great work as God willed.

QUESTIONS.—The history of Moses between the last lesson and this? chap. i. 11-15. How many years? Acts vii. 23-40.

Vs. 1. The name of Moses' wife? chap. i. 21. The other name of Jethro? chap. ii. 18; Num. ix. 29. Tell what you can of "the land of Midian," the desert, and Mount Horeb? Why is Horeb called the Mount of God? vs. 12.

Vs. 2. Who was this angel? vs. 4, 6, 7. How did he appear? Of what is fire a symbol? Wherein was the Hebrew nation then like the burning thorn bush?

Vs. 3. What did Moses do? In what spirit, probably?

Vs. 4. Who called to him? What effect would such a call be likely to have upon him? What may we learn as to God's presence with us?

Vs. 5. What did God forbid him to do? What lesson in that for us? What did he command him to do? What was the reason? chap. xix. 12; Josh. v. 15.

Vs. 6. Why did God here refer to the fathers?

Vs. 7. What did God say he had seen? What heard? What known? Why this?

Vs. 8. Why had he come? What do you know of the fertility of Palestine?

Vs. 10. What was wanted of Moses? Why should Moses be the man?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher, Scripture Catechism, 164.

SUNDAY, January 25th, 1874.—Doubt Removed.—Exodus iv. 1-9; 27-31.

Youths' Department.

THE LOCOMOTIVE AND THE SNOWFLAKE.

BY REV. SYDNEY DYER.

The Iron-steed, with his glowing lungs, Came thundering along on the rattling rails; His screams resound like ten thousand tongues, Pouring torrents of noise through the startled vales.

Ha! ha! how he laughs in his fiery glee, Till the rock-ribbed earth seems to rock and reel!

"Ye puny worms, if ye grapple with me, I'll grind you to dust 'neath my iron heel!" Now under still he defiance breathes,

The flames of his wrath shooting fierce and red; A vapory cloud from his nostrils wreathes.

And nature quakes 'neath his iron tread. "Ha! ha! how they quail at my reckless sway, And frightened rush from my fiery path; As a spider's web I will brush them away, Or grind into dust in my cubless wrath!"

Just then a flake from a fleecy cloud, Dropped softly down on the iron way; But the steed swept on all too haughty and proud.

To notice the place where the meek one lay. Another came on its jewelled wings, And nestled down where its sister died,

And a pearly shroud o'er it softly flings, As crushed it lay 'neath heels of pride.

The snowy hosts in the clouds above Behold where their mangled sisters lie, And, moved by the ties of a stainless love, On cloudy wings to their rescue fly.

They hurtle thick on the airy plains, And earthward move with their banners white.

O'er hill and dale mark the snowy trains Build wall and tower through the stormy night.

The morning dawns—in a drift of snow The Iron steed in a tether lay;

In angry throes, with his lungs aglow, His iron arms cannot break away!

Ha! ha! where now is the strength of his pride Who shuns him thus in his humble plight? What puny hands have his fetters tied, A captive held by a snowflake's might!

Beware all ye who despise the weak; God hears the groan 'neath the heel of pride, For He is their strength, uplifting the meek—Not them—'tis Omnipotence thou hast defied!

As the Iron-steed that despised the flake Lay helplessly bound in the drift of snow, The morning may come when thou wilt awake To find them exalted—while thou art laid low!

"WHY I DON'T."

A conversation recently overheard and reported for the benefit of all whom it may concern.

BY KATHERINE WILLIAMS.

"Are you not going to the prayer-meeting this evening?" asked Mrs. Young of her niece, as she tied the strings of her brown bonnet.

"No; I shall stay at home and finish my book," was the answer. "It is too interesting to be left just yet."

"I wish you liked those things a little better, my dear," said poor auntie, dolefully; "I must confess that your indifference causes me a great many uneasy minutes."

"What do you mean by 'those things,' you dear little Paritan?"

"Why—why—the means of grace," answered auntie; "all those things which set us on the right track, or keep us there."

"I do like the means of grace," was the reply, "and long for them more than any one knows; but it is because I do not regard the prayer-meetings which it is my misfortune to attend as worthy of such a name that I seem indifferent. Now do not look horrified, but this is really so. I cannot recollect a single instance in which I have been conscious of feeling stronger to work, or bear; or more penitent for my short-comings, after passing an evening at our church prayer meetings."

"That is because of yourself, my dear; the carnal soul is enmity against God, and if you were what you ought to be, you would not only have gotten good, but you would have thoroughly enjoyed all the exercises."

"That is just what I complain of," she answered. "I have a carnal soul and a human body, and so have most of the people whom I know. Now, being what we are, it strikes me that we should have means of grace suitable for carnal souls and human bodies. In other words, we should have prayer-meetings conducted in a way that would take hold of the natures that we have, and help those—not something fit only for perfected beings or nerveless ones."

"I don't know what more you can want," said poor auntie, twitching her shawl in an irritated way. "there are prayers, and hymns, and exhortations, and a pleasant room, and—"

"Yes, yes, and don't think I desire there should be any more," she replied. "There is so much done now that when the exercises are half through I am ready to go home. Now let me tell you about the last meeting I attended. In the first place, everyone crept in with a Sunday face, as if going to a funeral; we sat, and waited, hearing nothing but the rustling of dresses or the squeaking of boots. At length the minister arose and made a prayer. It was rather pointless, but being short it did not matter much. A hymn was then read and sung—one which had no particular bearing upon anything which had been said before. After that there followed a long prayer by one of the members, in which the Lord was informed several times that He was supreme, almighty, omnipresent and omnipotent, and that we were only worms of the dust; which prayer continued for fifteen minutes. Being a worm of the dust, and not a celestial being, my neck became perfectly stiff, my back out of joint, my eyes so blurred that when I did lift my head I could see nothing with any sort of distinctness. After this edifying prayer the good man settled himself and slept the sleep of the just, for the poor soul was worn out with the cares and toil of the day. Next came a very short passage of Scripture, with very long remarks thereon from the pastor, which was the beginning of speech after speech. Mr. S. rose and urged us all to flee from the wrath to come, informing us at the same time that, as for him, he was resolved to serve the Lord." Now I was very glad to hear that that was his determination, but having been informed of the fact once a week for nearly two years it had ceased to make any impression. After a few more speeches, upon what subject I couldn't quite discover, we sang another hymn, received the benediction, and departed to our several homes. Did I feel any stronger, or better able to battle with the ills of life? No; as far as I know, my only sensation was one of intense thankfulness that the meeting was over, and that I had finished that disagreeable duty for the week.

"You do have such a way of putting things," said auntie, undoubtedly recognizing ninety-nine out of a hundred of the meetings she had attended.

"No; I state the facts exactly as they occurred, and I then and there resolved to wash my hands of prayer-meetings. But there comes many a time during the week when I long more than I can tell for my ideal hour of prayer, something that would take hold of my heart and strengthen my hands. Why can we not all go in simplicity to our heavenly Father when we are footsore and weary and ask for what we want, and not talk of cherubims and seraphims? Why cannot the prayers be short and full of earnest petitions, instead of half full of stereotyped phrases, and the rest consisting of patronising words addressed to the Lord? What is more helpful or satisfying than the prayer taught us by our Jesus? There was no tiresome worldliness about that simple and reverent 'hallowed be Thy name'; and in that short prayer is contained a petition for nearly everything for which we need ordinarily ask. Why can't we ask downright for what we want; wisdom in our business perplexities, strength in weakness, patience in the thousand worries of life, physical strength and moral courage to bear bravely whatever our heavenly Father sees fit to lay upon us, and a clearer knowledge of his goodness and love; in short, of Himself? Why can't we have a few simple addresses, containing helpful bits of advice or encouragement; warnings against the stones or briars in every one's way, and the like? Why can't we sing such hymns as we love to learn by heart, and then separate before we are tired out? Such a meeting would be like a tonic to many a weary pilgrim, and I myself would walk two miles every week to attend one. How often I've heard the invitation extended, 'Mr. So-and-so, we have ten minutes left, may we hear some remarks from you?' Mr. So-and-so who has not the good sense of the coloured brother who, when asked, 'Brudder Brown, have you anything to say to-night?' answered, 'No, Brudder Jones, I hasnt anything to say,' feels that the ten minutes must be used up, so he says his 650 words, whether he has any ideas to use as a foundation or not. We are severely lectured from the pulpit on Sundays for our delinquencies on Wednesday evenings, but, after all, I think the fault is as much with the meetings as with the stayers away. I know I am the poorest Christian honoured by that holy name yet even I would seize thankfully upon such weekly food as we

might have for our hungry souls. Now confess, auntie, don't you think you go about as much from habit as anything else?"

"You do have such a point blank way of putting things," Aunt Polly answered, "but there are a good many wrongs that need to be righted, my dear, and we must each do our little part towards accomplishing the mighty whole."

OBEYING PLEASANTLY.

Little Harry had seen some older boys fly their kites from the tops of the houses, and he thought it would be nice fun if he could do so too—so he came to his aunt and said:

"Aunt Mary, may I go up to the top of the house and fly my kite?"

His aunt wished to do everything that was proper to please him; but she thought this very unsafe, so she said:

"No Harry, my boy, I think that is a very dangerous sort of play. I'd rather you wouldn't go."

"All right. Then I'll go out on the bridge," said Harry. His aunt smiled and said she hoped he would always be as obedient as that.

"Harry, what are you doing?" said his mother, on one occasion.

"Spinning my new top, mother."

"Can't you take the baby out to ride? Get out the carriage, and I'll bring him down."

"All right," shouted the boy, as he put the top away in his pocket, and hastened to obey his mother.

"Uncle William, may I go over to your store this morning?" said Harry one day at breakfast. "I want to see those baskets again, that I was looking at yesterday."

"Oh, yes, Harry," said his uncle, "I shall be very glad to have you."

"But I can not spare you to-day, Harry," said his mother. "I want you to go out with me; you shall go to the store another time."

"All right," said Harry, and went on with his breakfast.

No matter what Harry was asked to do, or what refusal he met with when asking for anything, his constant answer was "All right." He never asked, "Why can't I?" or, "Why mustn't I?" Harry not only learned to obey, but he had learned to obey in good humor.—Youth's Companion.

REGULAR EATING.

Half of all ordinary diseases would be banished from civilized life, and dyspepsia become almost unknown, if everybody would eat but thrice a day at regular times, and not an atom between meals, the intervals being not less than five hours, that being the time required to digest a full meal and pass it out of the stomach.

If a person eats between meals, the process of digestion of the food already in the stomach is arrested, until the last which has been eaten is brought into the condition of the former meal, just as if water is boiling and ice is put in, the whole ceases to boil until the ice has been melted, and brought to the boiling point, and then the whole boils together.

But it is a law of nature that all food begins to decay, to rot, after exposure to heat and moisture for a certain time. If a meal is eaten, and in two hours another, the whole remains undigested for seven hours, before which time the rotting process commences, and the man has his stomach full of carrion—the very idea of which is horribly disgusting; but that such is the case the unendurable belchings demonstrate.

As, then, all the food in the stomach is in a rotting condition, in a state of fermentative decay, it becomes unfit for the purposes of nutrition and for making good, pure blood. Small wonder is that dyspeptics have such a variety of symptoms and aches, and complaints in every part of the system; for there is not one drop of pure blood in the whole body, hence the nerves which feed on this impure and imperfect blood, are not properly nourished, and as a consequence, become diseased. They "complain"; they are hungry, and, like a hungry man, are peevish, fretful, restless. We call it nervousness, and no one ever knew a dyspeptic who was not restless, fretful, fidgety, and essentially disagreeable, fitful, and uncertain.

The stomach is made up of a number of muscles, all of which are brought into requisition in the process of digestion. But no muscles can work always. The busy heart is in a state of perfect repose for

one-third of twice in a continued feet must be when there food in the five hours' day, they breakfast of, usually titudes eat time; th of the Lady labouring to begin ag der is it h has lost its become dy their teens the house lay their Hall.

FEAST As an tor, I hav shadowed which, w present t The see we have to pass, and feast priate ti publish a And fit speak of held in e Rome, th leyans, a phrase it day of th That the annivers it, to w But if it new Tee 25th day christian day, a cr vener Prese upon us and set between interspe in the tion of Now ally to brother all this days? in the What Christ's mass, o believe marry, to carniva St. Pa St. Pa But there above religio if the such One d by Go made reason cuse first d specifi tivity curri which fled— ces o Sund not l smac iam. Be these of g who mas orna the with I sai not on o fast yon