

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., DECEMBER 23, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 27th, 1874.

Review of Lessons for the quarter.

- 1 The Deaf Mute.....Mark vii. 31-37.
2 The Evil Spirit Cast Out...Mark ix. 17-29.
3 The Mind of Christ.....Mark ix. 33-42.
4 Blind Bartimeus.....Mark x. 46-52.
5 The Fig Tree Withered....Mark xi. 12-14, 19-24.
6 The Two Commandments. Mark xii. 28-34.
7 Hypocrisy and Piety.....Mark xii. 38-44.
8 The Anointing at Bethany. Mark xiv. 3-9.
9 The Betrayal.....Mark xiv. 42-60.
10 The Denial.....Mark xiv. 66-72.
11 The Crucifixion.....Mark xv. 22-39.
12 The Risen Lord.....Mark xvi. 9-20.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, and the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Mark xvi. 19, 20.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Acts ii. 38, 39.

SUMMARY.—"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."

ANALYSIS.—I. Works and Words. Lessons I-VII. II The Cross. Lessons VIII-XII.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.—In general.—Of the quarter's lessons only four have been on miracles.

Three have treated of divine law and the life required by it. Five, including that on the resurrection, have had to do with the cross. Only the first four lessons dealt with events preceding Passion Week, and of these the fourth presented a miracle which immediately preceded that week. We are thus struck with the amount of space given in our lessons, in Mark's Gospel, and in those of the other Evangelists, to the closing scenes of the life of Jesus. Nor is it otherwise in the other parts of the New Testament. A prominence is given to the death of Christ which cannot be explained on the view that he was merely our Teacher and Exemplar—that his mission was only to show us how to live. It is explained by the fact, insisted upon abundantly in Old Testament and in New—in the Mosaic ritual and the Christian ordinances—that Christ is first and fundamentally a vicarious sacrifice, and consequently and secondarily a Teacher and Revealer. He wrought our redemption, and hence could reveal a redemption wrought. Thus did he lay a solid and secure foundation for that faith on which he insists as the root of Christian and eternal life. If I look into the law of God, or the life of Christ, I see how I ought to live and to have lived.

Lesson I.—We note in this lesson. 1. The cure, though of the body, and at once a manifestation of Christ's loving power and a sign of his divine authority as a teacher. 2. It illustrates the way of salvation as coming from Christ both to the individual separately, and by personal contact or union. We come, each for himself, into personal union with the Saviour. 3. It is God, in and through Christ, who saves; as he taught by the upward look into heaven, the Father's home. 4. The prompting of a saved man is to tell what God has done for his soul.

Lesson II.—This miracle was the cure of a person deaf and mute through possession of an evil spirit or demon. A great variety of effects are referred to demons, some bodily, and some mental, and some purely moral, but all of them mischievous and malignant, and exactly opposite to Christ's working. 5. A man's power for good is wholly from God and is therefore increased by closeness of union with God, while this closeness is promoted by watchfulness, prayer, and spiritual endeavor to draw nigh to God. The tearful pleading of a believing father for his child is sure to receive the favorable answer of Christ in some form.

Lesson III.—Good men are only in part good. Even the twelve, living so long in closest intimacy with Christ, had their petty, selfish ambitions. We are most like God when we most love and endeavor to help our fellow men. The highest lessons are enforced by the simplest means. Jesus was the friend of children. Bigotry always deserves rebuke, and the tendency to bigotry is rooted, not in Christianity, but in man's corrupt nature. All they are our brethren who love and serve Christ. Our acts, good and bad, will come into God's judgment.

Lesson IV.—This miracle was performed close by or at Jericho. The variations in the different accounts of the miracle show the independence of the several evangelists. Christ gives to us spiritual light when he changes the heart. The enlightened man will "follow Christ."

Lesson V.—Brings us within the closing week of Christ's life. Christ's power goes with his disciples for the performance of those far higher wonders which through them he was to accomplish, has been, and is accomplishing, and till the world ends will continue to accomplish. Primarily the promise referred to the triumph of the primitive church over the mountainous obstacles of persecuting Judaism.

Lesson VI.—Evil deeds are often the occasions, not properly the causes, of great good. The malice of the Pharisees was the occasion of the question and answer given in the Scripture of this lesson. The law of God is simple and single in its essential principle and requirement—Love. The teachings of Jesus command the approval, and even admiration, not of the good only, but also of the bad. The law of God is the standard of final judgment.

Lesson VII.—Observe, 1. Many who give to good causes large sums do it at small sacrifice. 2. Many also do it from selfish motives. 3. Many who give but little in quantity do it at large sacrifice. 4. Christ marks well every one who gives, and knows both the prompting motive and the amount of sacrifice, and his judgment is not according to the appearance, but according to the truth. We all can and should do something to help on Christ's cause.

Lesson VIII.—Every disciple serves and should serve Christ, the Master, according to the bent of his own nature. Wicked men pay an unconscious tribute to Christians and to Christianity when in Christian society they make profession of a goodness which is not theirs. We grieve the Lord when we deal rudely and unjustly with one of his disciples.

Lesson IX.—The Betrayal. 1. Sin, though covered for a time under a false profession, works on to its fatal issue. Only the new birth destroys its power and saves the sinner from destruction. The Lord is never taken unawares, and all outbreaks of sin will somehow further his work. Men who beforehand think no temptation can draw or drive them from Jesus, often have not courage and strength to stand by their Lord when the temptation comes.

The studies of the quarter have taught only one lesson as to men's sin, guilt, need, ruin. Only one doctrine as to God—his unity, supremacy, holiness, goodness. Only one gospel of salvation, redemption through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus, who is to be received, loved, obeyed, as God's Son. If we have faithfully studied the lessons we know how to be saved. If we have not studied them the fault is our own. The great lesson of all the lessons is, Follow Christ.

QUESTIONS.—How many lessons of the quarter new closing treated of events preceding the last week of Christ's life? How many treat of miracles? Why does Scripture give such prominence to the death of Christ?

Subject of the first lesson? Of the second? Difference in the two cases? Some practical lessons taught by the two? What is meant in Lesson III by "the mind of Christ"? Repeat Phil. ii. 5-11. What is the way to become great? Mark ix. 35.

Who asked Christ to heal blind Bartimeus? Who are said to be in darkness, or blind, in 1 John ii. 10? How can they receive sight? 1 John i. 7.

What makes the miracle of the withered fig tree unlike Christ's other miracles? What was the chief lesson of the miracle?

What is the one principle of the Divine Law? What are the two chief applications of it, giving the two "tables" of the law? The relation of the one principle of the law to its many precepts?

What, in our gifts to the Lord, makes them acceptable? What lessons are taught in the story of the anointing? In that of the betrayal? Of the denial? Why was Christ crucified? Where is he now?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, January 3rd, 1875.—Joshua Encouraged.—Joshua i. 1-9.

The memory is a treasurer to whom we must give funds, if we would draw the assistance we need.

It is not enough to have great qualities, we must also have the management of them.

How great a pity that we should not feel for what end we are born into this world, till just as we are leaving it.

Youths' Department.

THE ANGEL OF CHRISTMAS.

BY MARY E. C. WYETH.

It was the sunset hour of Christmas eve. The snow was falling fast, and all the city was draped with a pure, white pall, burying its filth and ugliness out of sight. So rapidly fell the soft, powdery snow, that even the sidewalks over which tramped so many feet, were quite white.

It was not very cold; at least not for those who were comfortably clad; and merry children, trooping along the pavements, laughed and shouted in glee, as they caught up handfuls of the beautiful snow, and tossed balls at each other, in their light-hearted play.

Bob Tinker thought or cared little, in a general way, whether it snowed, or rained, or shone. All weather was much alike to him. His thought and care was to sell papers—in sunshine or in storm to sell papers. But on this Christmas eve, at the busy hour of sunset, when the mechanics and machinists were going home from their shops and factories, and he always sold so many copies of the evening edition, he cared somewhat for the silently, but swiftly falling snow. If it kept on, at this rate, until seven o'clock, it would be at least twelve inches deep, on the ground. "Poor Timmy's broken shoes," said Bob, to himself, as he dodged in and out of the groups of men who came out from the factories. "Paper, sir? Ev'n' paper, sir?" his lips said, briskly and business-like enough; but his heart moaned, "Poor Timmy, poor little feller."

When the papers were all sold, it was quite dark; the street lamps were lighted, and the shops were all ablaze with gas, and brilliant with display of Christmas eve. And in the "Globe" alley stood little Tim, shivering over the restaurant grating.

"I beat ye, Bobby," he said with an effort at gayety, as Bob turned in at their usual place of meeting. "Yer behind time. Aint yer goin' ter Arthur's?"

"Can yer go?" asked Bob eagerly. "Aint yer feet too bad?"

"Oh!" said Timmy with a faint smile, "They've hurt wuss afore—I wont mind it so much, after we git there. Come on." And Tim caught Bob by the coat-cuff and limped along a step or two.

"You poor little rat," said Bob; and though his words were not fine, his eyes were full of tears, for Timmy's feet showed and bled through the ragged excuses for shoes that were on them; and the snow that had sifted in around the purple and swollen little feet, stung cruelly. Bob had provided his brother with a good pair of boots and warm socks but a few days before, that the poor, chilblained feet might have a degree of protection against the pains of winter; but the father had sold them, one night while the boys were sleeping, and drunk himself crazy with the proceeds.

Poor Tim had nothing now but a pair of odd, broken shoes he had found in a dust heap behind the hotel. And he and Bob were invited to spend Christmas eve with Arthur Gray. At cost of incurring a beating on Christmas-day, Bob had accepted the invitation. He knew that if he spent the evening in Mrs. Gray's pleasant home, he could not hang around the theatres and places of amusements, in order to sell his papers; and to miss the patronage of the Christmas eve gala public was something serious to him. His father would beat him, as soon as he found out that he had made no extra sales. He was quite used to beatings, however. One more or less would make but little difference.

He had only had opportunity to call on Arthur once since Thanksgiving day, and then Arthur was very ill—so much so, that Bob and Timmy cried at witnessing the intensity of his sufferings. But Bob could not forget how poor Arthur amid all his suffering, whispered earnestly, "Does the boy come to Sunday-school?" and when Timmy answered, "Yes, indeed; his name's Sim Linton, an' he comes reg'lar," how the distorted face was lighted with a smile, as the white lips whispered, "Oh, I'm so glad. Be kind to him, and keep him coming."

And now that the doctor had brought them the invitation from Arthur's mother, to spend the Christmas eve with her, and to bring Sim with them, Bob felt, that as there could be no merry Christmas for him or Timmy, they were fairly entitled to a few hours of happiness and grace of Christmas eve. So Sim was hunted up, and duly advised.

"Souse yerself from head ter heels, 'n' comb yer hair, and git yer regimentals on as shew-gee as posseubul, coz yer got er invite ter Christmas eve, up to that little lame feller's house. It's nice there. Nice as Sunday-school; an' nicer."

Sim could n't imagine anything nicer than the dear, delicious, bright, warm Sunday-school, with its happy faces, sweet songs, and the loving words and smiles of his teacher; and he readily agreed to go through the prescribed formula of preparation, and to meet the boys at half past six o'clock, on the corner of Tenth street. But none of them had counted on this heavy fall of snow. Poor Sim's shoes were as bad as Timmy's besides being four sizes too large for his feet; while his tattered garments were past all description, both in material and out. Yet though these little street waifs were not insensible to the discomfort of shabby attire, on this occasion they had grandly risen above such useless sensibilities, and had resolved to be as happy as they could, on this night of all the year to them.

Through what discouragements manifold the trio accomplished their toilette arrangement, it is not needful to detail. It is enough that in the best they had, put on in their best manner (who could do more?) they finally presented themselves at the door of No. ——— place. The servant brushed the snow from their garments, presented each one with a pair of warm, stout-soled, carpet-slip pers, and led them into the room where Arthur lay, on his little couch. For a moment Sim started about the room in a dazed, bewildered manner. The birds, the flowers, the aquarium, the bright flowers, the lovely lady bending over him and welcoming him so kindly, seemed like a dream. Was this like heaven?

"I'm but a stranger here; Heaven is my home,"

they had sung last Sunday, and he wondered at the words. Now he thought of them again, and some dim apprehension of the symbolized meaning entered his mind. Ah, by how many, and intricate, and unnoticed avenues does God's truth find its way to our dark, human understandings!

"Are n't you going to speak to me, Sim?" said Arthur. "I'm right glad to see you."

Then the poor, wondering lad gulped back a sob and in a coarse, husky whisper replied, "I'm dead 'shamed o' myself fur burtin' ye so. I axes yer pardon. An' I've fetched ye my cat. She's all I've got, as is wuth anything. I love her. An' I'll give her ter ye." And tenderly he drew from the bosom of his bulgy outer garment, a great, white beauty of a puss, and stroking her fine fur lovingly, he laid her gently on Arthur's couch. The cat looked up into the sick boy's face, purred softly, and cuddled down beside him, as if she had always lain there.

"Ho! Is n't she sleek and fat!" exclaimed Tim.

"She's a real beauty," said Arthur and Arthur's mother together; and the praise of his favorite acted like a charm upon awkward Sim, and loosened his benumbed faculties. "She gits a plenty ter eat," he said eagerly. "Tain't no harm ter eat rats an' mice, an' there's lots of 'em on the levee—fat uns too. I've wished a many times I could eat 'em. She'd git 'em fur me, fast enough, would Susan?"

"Is the cat's name Susan?" asked Leila laughing, and stroking the sleek animal, who purred dreamily in answer to her name.

Sim replied by calling gently, "Come, Susan, Sukey, Susey, Sue!" and the cat bounded from Arthur's couch, and leaped upon Sim's shoulder, where she perched jauntily, rubbing her head against Sim's cheek, in an affectionate manner.

"Aint she a general?" said Bob. "I did n't know ye had that ere cat in yer bosom. Did ye raise her?"

And then followed a history of Susan; and the ice of restraint melted away, and poor Sim's heart was warmed, and comforted with the pleasant glow of Christ love, in the hearts and homes of these disciples of the Master.

The tea-bell rang. Arthur's tea was brought on a tray, and the servant remained with the sick boy while Mrs. Gray and Leila accompanied the guests to the dining-room. The supper of oyster stew, and broiled chickens, with celery and jellies, followed by coffee and cakes and bon-bons, was enjoyed by these poor children of the street, with a keenness of zest, known only to those who all their lives have seen and smelled these appetizing material comforts, but have seldom if ever tasted

them. And though poor Timmy's feet ached cruelly, his heart was light and his face radiant.

As they gathered again around the pleasant fire in Arthur's room, Mrs. Gray opened the Bible, and Leila spread out a portfolio of colored plates, representing in the Holy Land—Judea—the plains of scenes Bethlehem—the Heavenly Choir—the Adoration of the Wise Men—the Flight into Egypt, and other scenes in the life of Christ.

"I will read you the best of all Christmas stories," said Arthur's mother, turning to the second chapter of Matthew, and beginning with the dear, familiar words, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king."

So interesting was her manner of reading and illustrating the sacred text, that her young hearers heeded not the clock striking again and again the hour. They questioned—she answered. They commented, suggested, and queried—she explained, illustrated, and instructed. Bob's great, gray eyes grew luminous. He drank in the wonders of Scripture, lore with an intense eagerness that was absorbing. Arthur, free from pain, wakeful, though quiet, lay there happy and content, caressing the pussy, and looking lovingly from one to another of the animated group. Tim was delighted. What were sore feet compared with the delights of these blessed hours? And Sim, poor, empty-hearted, starveling, listened and wondered. Sim was no fool. His intellect, though slow, was by no means dull. When Mrs. Gray closed the Bible, he said reflectively,

"And that's wot Christmas is. I never knowed afore. 'Jesus' birthday! Like Washington's birthday."

"Only," said Leila, "the beauty of Christ's birthday is that it is a glad day for all the world. Everybody has a right to Christmas. Christ came to bless the whole world. Everybody can come to him and be saved."

"Why do n't everybody?" asked Sim. And how sad solemn seemed his question. "They do n't know," said Bob. "If they knew how good and kind my God is, they would come to him. I'd love to tell everybody how Jesus is the only good. Think how he loved us!" The boy spoke like one inspired.

"I'll come," said Sim. "An' glad to." The Christian mother, unmindful of the rough and soled garments, unmindful of the grimy, half-cleansed skin, unmindful of the low condition of the poor lad before her, seeing only a weak child-disciple of the Lord she loved, folded her arms about him and kissed him.

"Dear child," she said, "may the good shepherd watch and defend you. Let us thank him for this Christmas happiness." And kneeling there, the mother carried all those dear young souls on the wings of her pure, Christ-like, loving faith, up to the throne of God.

"Is heaven like this?" asked Sim, as they rose from their knees. "Is it warm and light, and everybody loving each other?"

"It is better than this," said Arthur's sweet voice. "For here we have to go out and see and hear bad things, and bad people and feel pain, and hunger, and cold, and sickness. But there they go out no more for ever. Dear mamma, I feel so well and so happy. If you are not tired, I wish you would please to read my heaven chapter to me—the one I love so."

And the mother read St. John's wonderful apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. Arthur closed his eyes and lay calm and smiling. The other boys, with eager, dilating eyes, fixed on the face of the reader, heard with wonder and delight the words of the glorious revelation.

"No more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, Bobby," whispered Timmy. "Wont it be good there!"

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things. I will be his God, and he shall be my son," repeated Bob. "Is n't it worth while to overcome? It'll be hard, but I'll do it. I mean to go to that city where the Lamb is the light thereof."

"Dear children," said Mrs. Gray, "this life is full of rough places, and pain and sorrow are our portions here. But it is only for a little while. The life to come is for ever and ever. Is it not worth while to suffer a little while here, that we may dwell for ever there?"

"You're right, it is," said Sim. "If I'd only knowed o' Christmas and Jesus afore, I'd a stood life better." After a pause he said, "I wish I could read good, I'd read that agin ter-morrow."

"Can't you go to school?" asked Leila.