

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N.S., SEPTEMBER 23, 1874.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, September 27th, 1874.

Review of Lessons for the Quarter.

- 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. 38-45.
4 The Publican Called. Mark ii. 13-17.
5 Jesus and the Sabbath. Mark ii. 23-28; iii. 1-6.
6 Power over Nature. Mark iv. 35-41.
7 Power over Demons. Mark v. 1-16.
8 Power over Disease. Mark v. 24-34.
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 Syrophenician Mother. Mark vii. 24-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—'He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.' Mark vii. 37.

COMMIT TO MEMORY; Mark vi. 2.

SUMMARY.—Christ went about doing good.

ANALYSIS.—I. Christ's ministry inaugurated. Lessons I-IV. II. Christ's power displayed. Lessons V-IX. III. Christ's headship manifested. Lessons X-XII.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.—The first six months of this year we studied in the Old Testament the history of Israel in their deliverance from bondage to the death of Moses, when they were at Jordan, ready to cross into Canaan under Joshua, the successor of Moses. The last six months of it we give to Mark's gospel. We are now completing the first half of these months, or the third quarter of the year.

Testaments.—The word for which 'testament' is sometimes used as a translation, denotes not only a covenant between two parties, but also the promise made by the one (Gen. ix. 9), or the precept to be observed by the other (Deut. iv. 13), and, in a wider sense, a religious dispensation, economy. (xxxi. 16)

Mark.—There is one gospel, and yet there are four gospels. We mean by this there is but one Christ—the Saviour; one salvation; and yet we have four authoritative narratives of this one Saviour, each of which narratives we call a gospel. Gospel means good news. So does the Greek word Evangelion, from which come our English words evangel, evangelists, evangelical, etc. Matthew's is the kingly gospel; Mark's is the work-gospel; Luke's is the human gospel; John's is the divine gospel, and the four are symbolized respectively by the faces of vision, viz., those of the lion, of the ox, of a man, and of the eagle. The first three have far more matter in common with each other than in common with John. Mark's full name is John Mark. He was a relation of Barnabas, and an attendant and assistant of Peter. Neither he nor Luke was an apostle.

The analysis.—The present quarter has shown us the ministry of Jesus in its first main stage before the transfiguration, and before the final departure from Galilee, to the last deadly encounter in Judea with the death-breathing, death-plotting, death-dealing hierarchy of Judaism and of Satan. Not till the close of this quarter's study do we reach the point in our Lord's course from which, and all the way beyond which, the cross stands up and stands out clear and distinct as the certain inevitable earthly terminus of the route. We have had little thus far of the death of Christ even in its foreshadowings, though having in mind what is to follow of the history we see even from the start how all things tend and converge cross-ward. The first month's lessons we, in our analysis, called 'The Inauguration of Christ's Ministry;' because, until the apostles were called, it was preparation. The next month's lessons we called 'The Display of Christ's Power,' because, in each lesson, he vindicated his authority over some realm of nature or of existence in order to show to men who and what he was. The last three lessons, those of this present month, saw him with his apostolic band organized and in operation, John removed from earth and from sight, because Christ was fully the Head, and the Headship of Christ was in the last two lessons exhibited, first as that of life to men; and, second, as that of life to all men. For this reason we called these lessons 'The Manifestation of Christ's Headship.'

Lesson I.—This presents to us John the Baptist, and John's baptism of Christ.

'The beginning of the gospel.' John the Baptist, was called Elias or Elijah, because of the likeness of their character and missions. In his bold attacks on the sins of the times, as well in the established religious orders as out of them, John reminds us of Luther, but in his temperament and mode of life, the contrast is not less striking than is this similarity of mission. That John's baptism was essentially Christian baptism, and that Scriptural baptism, whether called by us John's or Christian, involves immersion, are facts shown in our exposition of the first lesson, and worth insisting upon in the review. Nor should the meaning of the act of Christ, in being baptized, fall here of notice. It was like the disciples' baptism, death to sin and resurrection to the new life, the real atoning death, and the consequent resurrection symbolically presented at the very start of his public life. This rejects the false and groundless theory that 'Christ's baptism was his solemn induction into his priestly office.'

Lesson II.—This lesson has for its subject 'the authority of Christ.' The Scripture of the Reason presents to us this authority in three distinct relations. In the first, it is authority over men—their time, services, persons, all. For, not in request, but in command, he says to one and another, Follow me. He gives command to wicked spirits as being their master also, and as having both the right and the power to bid and to make them do what he would, and to go where he said. His authority gives to us, in the first relation, our duty; in the second, our doctrine; in the third, our protection.

Lesson III.—This lesson introduces Christ as the Healer of men, as the great Physician. He cured this bodily disease. There are implied here analogies between sin and leprosy. Leprosy was, in its worst form, a foul, incurable, and fatal disease. By Jewish law it was singled out from diseases as the one which put its victim in much the same relation to the rest of the people as was a dead body. Sin, like leprosy, corrupts the whole nature, renders one loathsome in the eyes of purity, is incurable by all save Christ; separates from the Israel of God, from the Holy Temple, and the Holy City. Yet if Christ be approached, and his touch received, he puts forth power to heal the soul to remove the guilt, to reunite with God's people the separate; but no one receives this healing without Christ's will and work, and no one receives it who will not sooner or later be made manifest to the eyes of all as saved by faith.

Lesson IV.—This lesson carries forward and upward the preceding, for it presents Christ as taking one of the social and moral outcasts, most despised and hated as a class, and inducting him into the office of an apostle. He had cured him of his moral disease, cleansed him from his spiritual pollution, and now, regardless of popular prejudice and clamor, made him one of his intimates, and, in defiance of Pharisaic customs and Pharisaic protests, he sits down at the redeemed man's table. The boundaries of social customs, and the partition walls of caste, are unable to stop the course or hem in the activities of Jesus.

Lesson V.—We here have Jesus presented as the Lord of ordinances, and ordinances presented as aids to men. We are set on our guard against two extremes, both misinterpretations; the first, that which here sees the institution of the Sabbath nullified; the second, that which sees in the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament an enslavement of men to mere outward observance. The golden mean of Christian liberty is that of both common sense and piety. As to the connection of the Jewish Sabbath with our Sunday or Lord's Day, it is needless to decide between the several conflicting theories. Whichever theory is adopted, the principle of this Scripture will apply. Even though we go to the false extreme of regarding Sunday as a custom of no divine authority, we might still accept our Lord's doctrine, that it is to be used in the highest human interests, in a way to promote especially our religious welfare.

Lesson VI.—Natural science has made a great advance during the last century. Men have learned much of the physical universe. 'The laws of nature' are taught to our children. We declare them to be universal and immutable. Men of science come thus to look upon the universe as not in God, and they conceive only of impersonal forces, which they may study and admire, but cannot love and adore. Jesus, in this and like miracles, brings himself near to us as the Lord of nature, and glorifies nature as the servant of the Lord used in ministering to his people.

Lesson VII.—This miracle, which followed so closely on the preceding, is really its interpretation. The storm of Satanic influence smiting down on men's soul and body, and lashing into uncontrollable fury the waves of passion, he bids be still. We learn the dreadful power for evil of malignant spirits, and the value of our reason.

Lesson VIII.—The issue of blood, incurable, permanent, is a symbol of sin in the heart. The waste of money on physicians while the issue grows worse represents the uselessness of all efforts to stay the stream of sin and heal its fountain, except by grace. The touch of faith and its effect exhibit the way of salvation by Christ. The appeal of Christ, and his extraction of a confession show that he would have all boldly own him by an open confession and acknowledgement.

Lesson IX.—The last enemy is death. Christ showed his power over death. Three instances recorded. His own resurrection is the crowning proof. We have the pledge that death shall not permanently harm any one of Christ's. The three remaining lessons are fresh in mind.

QUESTIONS.—In what sense is there but one gospel? In what sense are there four? The general characteristics of Mark's? What do you know of Mark? In what part of Palestine have our lessons this quarter found Christ?

Lesson I.—Meaning of the phrase, 'the beginning of the gospel.' Was John's baptism Christian baptism? How did John baptize? Where? Why was Jesus baptized?

Lesson II.—Over what had Christ authority, as shown in this lesson? Whence his authority? Does he still have and exercise it?

Lesson III.—Show that leprosy was a symbol of sin. Show how this act of healing exhibits the way of saving a sinner.

Lesson IV.—What was a publican? This one's name? To what called? Why a man from such a class chosen? The lesson of encouragement?

Lesson V.—For what was the Sabbath made? How should our Sabbath be spent? How is it sometimes broken?

Lesson VI.—What is nature? What is providence? Of what spiritual work was this miracle a symbol?

Lesson VII.—How was the issue of blood an emblem of sin? The lesson taught by its cure?

Lesson IX.—What other miracles of resurrection by Christ? Are all to be raised? The subjects of the next three lessons?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 4th, 1874.—The Deaf Mute—Mark vii. 31-37.

Youths' Department.

MISSIONARY DRILL.

A Story for the Little Folks.

BY MRS. HUNT MORGAN.

'What a jolly thing it must be to be a missionary!' exclaimed Frank Rivers, as he and his brother were returning from a missionary meeting one evening.

'I don't think it can be very jolly' to see so many poor people worshipping those ugly idols, and sacrificing their dear little children to them," replied Harry.

'Well, no, of course, that isn't jolly,' answered Frank; 'but I meant the going all around, and having plenty of adventures with lions and bears, and all that, you know. Wouldn't you like to be a missionary, Harry, when you are a man? I should!'

'Yes,' said Harry, thoughtfully. 'I would like to teach the people who don't know anything about Jesus. I was thinking so while Mr. Moffat was speaking.'

'I shall try to be very learned,' said Frank. 'Perhaps if I know ever so many languages, and lots besides, some society will send me out, when I am a man.'

'But, Frank,' said Harry, anxiously, 'we must know something else before we shall be fit for missionaries, you know.'

'Oh, the Bible, of course,' returned Frank, carelessly; 'but we know that pretty well now.'

'I don't,' said Harry, soberly; 'I wish I did; but there are a great many parts that I don't understand at all, and what I do know I very often forget to practice.'

'Well, we are only boys,' remarked Frank; 'all that will come when we grow up.'

'But don't you remember the verse papa read to us yesterday?' asked Harry. 'It was like this: 'Even a child is known by his doings.' So you see God expects us to do right as much as he expects papa.'

Frank made no answer; they had reached their own garden-gate, and he did not care

to pursue Harry's course of reasoning; but the next morning, at the breakfast table, the subject came up again.

Mr. Rivers smiled at his two eager boys, as they expressed their delight at what they had heard, and their hope that some day they might go to the mission-field.

'If you want to be generals in Christ's army, you must learn your drill,' said Mr. Rivers.

'Learn our drill, papa!' exclaimed, both of the boys together; 'what do you mean?'

'Why, you know, before a soldier is fit to command others, he has to learn his drill; he must march, and use his arms properly, and learn to fire blank-cartridge before he is trusted with real bullets. He has to do a great many things that are very wearisome, and that seem to him almost useless; but they are all really necessary.'

'I see what you mean, papa!' exclaimed Harry joyfully. 'You mean that if we boys do our little daily duties faithfully, even in things that we don't like, and can't see much use in doing, we shall be just learning to shoot with blank-cartridge, in order to be prepared another day to fire bullets on the king's enemies.'

'Yes, Harry,' replied his father. 'Every little duty done is training you to something greater; learning a few verses, to please your mother or me, seems a little thing, perhaps, now; but if you learn your Bible well, and ask God to teach you to understand it, how many bullets you may fire into Satan's kingdom some day!'

'I see, papa; I will try to remember,' said Harry. 'But we must not be late for school, Frank, or we shall make a bad start.'

Morning school passed over with no event to mark it, and in the noon recess the two boys were busy preparing their sums.

'Oh, Harry,' yawned Frank; 'I do wish these tiresome sums were finished! They are all about gallons of oil, and firkins of butter. I'm sure doing this rubbish will never help me to be a missionary; and I mean it; I shall really try to be one; but this is just waste of time.'

'Blank cartridge!' laughed Harry, as he settled himself more resolutely to his work, which he did not like any better than his brother. Determination soon conquered the difficulties, and he jumped up for a game at ball; but Frank piteously begged him to wait and help him. Harry hesitated a moment; he did so long to be out of the hot school-room; Frank might do his own sums, surely, without him. A little voice seemed suddenly to whisper, 'Be ye kind one to another,' and his hesitation was at an end.

'Only a little more drill,' he thought; and throwing all his heart into the matter, he soon aided Frank to work out the puzzling sums, and they had plenty of time for a good game before afternoon school.

On their return home Mrs. Rivers met them at the kitchen door, with a little basket of eggs.

'Who will volunteer to do an errand for me?' she asked, pleasantly.

'I will, mamma!' cried Harry; and Frank sauntered contentedly off to his new story-book on his favorite perch in the old apple-tree.

'I want you to take this basket of eggs to Blind Andrew, Harry,' said his mother; 'tell him I would have come to read to him this afternoon, but baby is so fretful and feverish, I do not like to leave her. And here are some strawberries I want you to leave for Johnny Ray.'

'Couldn't I read to Andrew mamma?' asked Harry, hesitatingly.

'Yes, certainly my son,' replied his mother, looking much pleased; 'mind and read very distinctly, as the old man is a little deaf.'

Harry trudged off with his Testament in his pocket. As he passed his brother in the apple-tree, he held up his cargo of eggs and strawberries, with the merry shout: 'This isn't blank cartridge, Frank—Won't Johnny be glad!'

Frank shrugged his shoulders. He liked reading his story of lion fights better than running on errands for sick people.

Blind Andrew was highly delighted with Harry's reading. The boy told him of his wish to be a missionary.

'The Lord bless you, Master Harry,' said the old man, heartily; 'you've been a young missionary to me this afternoon. I shall think of them beautiful chapters you've been reading, all the weary hours when I can't sleep to night.'

From Andrew's cottage Harry went on to see Johnny Ray. The poor boy was just recovering from rheumatic fever.—Harry found him looking very thin and wan,

feebly trying to split some wood, which was too much for his little strength.

'Hoorry, Johnny!' called Harry, as he came up to the tiny wicket; 'why, you're mending famously! Only don't work before you've got round a little more. That's too hard for you.'

Johnny looked up with a faint, tired smile.

'I'm so much better, Master Harry, thank you. Mother will be home from work soon, and I was trying to split her some wood; there's none ready to boil the kettle for tea, and she'll be so tired.'

Poor Johnny himself looked weary enough, as he leaned against the wood pile to rest.

'There, you've done enough for the first time, Johnny,' said Harry, brightly. 'I'll split you plenty of wood, while you sit down under the lilac-tree, and eat these strawberries mamma sent you.'

The hatchet did good service in Harry's strong young hands, and a goodly heap of firing was soon ready.

The evening was spent in a thoroughly enjoyable series of games by the boy who had tried that day to do the little things for Jesus.

'I haven't done much to-day, papa,' he said, 'but I have tried to use the tiny opportunities—to mind my drill, you know; and perhaps Jesus will give me more to do when I am better fitted for it.'

'That is right, my boy,' replied his father, kindly. 'He that is faithful over a few things shall be ruler over many things.'—N. Y. Methodist.

ALMOST SAVED.

'A man is drowning! He fell off the pier-head into the sea, and look! you can see his head just above the waves! There, he has caught hold of the rope those men have thrown to him. Now he has it. No, he has missed it! Ah! that huge wave has carried him further out. Nothing can save him now. Oh, if he had but caught the rope when he was so near it!'

'And he so near being saved,' says one honest fellow, dashing a tear from his eye. 'Why the rope nearly touched his head! Ay, that made it all the worse. To think of being drowned after all, when he was almost saved.'

Almost saved! Do you not hear that cry from another world? 'I was once very near being saved; I had almost made up my mind to accept Christ, but did not do it, and now it is too late! Lost! lost! and forever! Oh, if I might go back to earth again, and hear once more of Jesus! Oh, that I had come to Him then!'

A DOG THAT SAID HIS PRAYERS.

The following is vouched for by a correspondent of the Chicago Interior:—

'I visited a friend here in Hannibal yesterday, and, seeing the New York Observer on the table, I asked if she had read 'Irenæus.' 'Well, of all the dog stories I ever read or heard of, I never have known one equal to that of my little Fiddie.'

'On my manifesting a desire to hear it, she said that a number of years ago she had a small dog that was very affectionate in his disposition and domestic in his nature. That during the time she owned him, which was several years, whenever morning or evening prayers were attended to, as soon as her husband, who was a physician, took up the Bible to read a chapter, Fiddie would jump up into her lap, and, after kissing her on the cheek, would lie down and keep perfectly still until the doctor finished the chapter; when in an instant he would run to one particular chair, and sitting on his hind feet, would raise his fore feet to the seat of the chair, and placing his paws one on each side of each eye, he would remain in that position until the prayer was finished.

'Then he would retire to some other part of the house, apparently perfectly contented with himself and everything about him. This little fellow slept in the bedroom of Mrs. G.'s sister; and each night before retiring would go to the wash-stand and hold up his paws until some one washed them for him.'

GRATITUDE.—A poor Irish woman applied to a lady for a flower or two to put in the hand of her dead infant, and when a handsome bouquet was handed her, she offered to pay for it, which, of course, was declined, when with a look full of gratitude, she exclaimed, 'May the Lord Jesus meet you at the gate of heaven with a crown of roses.' Nothing could be more touchingly beautiful as well as poetical.