

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, August 29th, 1857.—Freedom by the Truth.—John viii. 28-36.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."—Isaiah lxi. 1.

ANALYSIS.—I. Death foretold. Vs. 28. II. Fatherly protection. Vs. 29. III. Believers addressed. Vs. 30-32. IV. Bluster of pride. Vs. 33. V. Bondage and freedom. Vs. 34-36.

The Feast of the Tabernacles is not yet over, and Jesus teaches without restraint, yet not without opposition, in the Temple. He utters a testimony to himself as the Light of the world (vs. 12-24), announces the inevitable consequences of unbelief (vs. 21-24), and the freedom from bondage that follows a belief of the truth; for the service of sin is bondage ever, while the service of God is the truest liberty. But this liberty becomes intelligent only through a knowledge of divine truth. See vs. 32.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 28.—Our last lesson dealt with the discourse which was on the last day of the festival (vii. 37); and to-day's discourse was on the day following (viii. 2). Yet multitudes of the visitors at the feast may have staid over, and been present in the Temple on the next day. There would have been thus a practical continuance of the festival. Then said Jesus unto them. "Then," or more exactly, "therefore," because of the ignorance of Christ's previous words (vs. 27), he proceeded to say farther. When ye [shall] have lifted up the Son of Man. "The Son of Man," as shown in former lessons, was the favorite title by which Christ referred to himself, appearing as it does, in the Gospels in this use, some fifty times, but never used of him by others except once by the dying Stephen (Acts vii. 56), and possibly once in Revelation. It designates him as true man, as universal man, as representative man, as the second Adam; and its use by Christ in preference to the title "the Son of God," shows how on earth his heart was intent on binding himself to men in order to lift them up. The words, "lifted up," here, as in iii. 14, refer to his crucifixion. This end of his ministry he clearly saw at the beginning of his ministry, as indicated in his baptism, and never lost sight of during his ministry. Jesus says, "Ye have lifted up," thus perhaps for the first time publicly announcing the authors, as well as the manner of his death. He had before charged these same hostile Jews with seeking to kill him, but he now assures them that they will succeed. There is something sublime and awful in this calm, deliberate, direct, authoritative, divine confronting of his malignant persecutors with such a declaration. Thus is he in reality "lifted up," exalted to be Saviour and King—Saviour for all, king over all—ALL, even those who thus "lift him up." Then shall ye know that I am he. That he was what he had represented himself, and what they had refused to own him because hating the doctrine, life and destiny which he revealed as being the true objects of human faith and endeavor, and also of all Old Testament revelation. They did not know him; but their ignorance was rooted in their sin, and confirmed and deepened by their sin. This ignorance, he says, shall be dispelled when, that is, after they have crucified him. After the crucifixion, and in consequence of it, as completing the atoning sacrifice, Christ's power and glory would be signally displayed in forms and on a scale impossible before that event. His resurrection, the outpouring of the Spirit, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the spread of Christianity, all indubitable fulfillments of his repeated predictions; and finally, the second coming, his final revelation, and all the glorious events connected with it—thus, thus is it that his crucifixion brings in upon even his enemies, a knowledge of his nature. And that I do nothing of myself. The Jews would make Jesus out an impostor, with a new doctrine, teaching and practicing not according to the Old Testament, but against it, and hence, not of, but against God. In such an one they neither could nor should believe. Against this allegation Jesus persistently, incessantly affirmed and showed that he was not an innovator, breaking out of the line of God's providence and revelations, and trying to break up God's institutions and kingdom. The very opposite was true, from his very origin and nature

as God's Son, the eternal Word. As the Father [hath] taught me, I speak these things. All his teachings were summed up and epitomized in that testimony to himself, which was the immediate matter in debate. How the Father taught him, we are to gather from his own doctrine of his relation to the Father. It was through that oneness of nature, and that mutual indwelling of person, and that unmeasured and immeasurable communication of the Spirit, which are explicitly and abundantly affirmed of him.

Verse 29.—And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone. Here we have a single fact stated, first affirmatively and then negatively. It was a fact of which he was conscious, and hence he speaks from his consciousness, giving experimental testimony. Even on the cross, beneath the consciousness (terrible and agonizing as it was) of abandonment, there was still left for his support a consciousness of the Father's presence; for his cry is, "My God, my God." Though we find in this verse no immediate affirmation of Christ's deity, we find nothing whatever against it. If he speaks as a man, it is yet as the God-man. For I do always those things that please him. Notice this word "always," which is meant to declare his perfect sinlessness. It is as true of Jesus as of us, that the possibility of his doing what did not please God is often conceived. The conception is plainly implied in the recognition, of his temptations.

Verse 30.—As he spake these words. The sense is because of these words as spoken, thus stating not merely time, but cause. Many believed on him. There was that in the manner, the matter, the circumstances, which carried conviction. There was an irresistibility of authority, and partly because back of the words were the known character and life of the speaker. When ministers of godly character and repute, full of the Holy Ghost, preach the simple gospel in its fullness and pertinency, how often has a like effect followed.

Verse 31.—To those Jews which believed on him. As formerly shown, the word "Jews" in John, refers specially to the hostile leaders. Thus some even of this party seem to have believed, and under circumstances in which the fact would at once specially honor Christ and intensify the wrath of the hostile party. If ye continue in my word. The duty of continuance or abiding is often urged, and especially to persons and at times when sore temptations to a relapse existed. Then are ye my disciples indeed. Not otherwise; for he who under sorest trial actually and finally abandons Christ, thereby proves himself not to have been a genuine disciple.

Verse 33.—And ye shall know the truth. The truth as to himself—as to eternal life as found in him. This is the knowledge of experience, carrying such consciousness of God's favor to us, and presence with us, as Christ himself had. See above on vs. 29. Mark too the identity of condition—there, always pleasing God; here, continuing in Christ's word, that is, its reception and obedience; living "in" it as in an atmosphere which is breathed in and becomes our life. The truth shall make you free. The truth received, that is, Christ accepted. "Free" from sin. Vs. 34.

Verse 33.—We be Abraham's seed, etc. Priding themselves on their descent, and showing that they thought this the one only qualification for God's favor. We have met this fact in former lessons.

Verse 34.—Verily, verily, etc. Note the emphasis. Whosoever, etc. "Every one," of Abraham's seed, as well as others. See Paul's clear explanation of this in Rom. vi. 15; vii. 6.

Verse 35.—The servant or slave, held to the house only by constraint; in the house, but not of it.

Verse 46.—If the Son, etc. Jesus, who was one with the Father. See above on vs. 28, 29. His disciples have his spirit and so are of God—his children.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 28. Where is there boldness of speech in this verse? Had Christ spoken before this of the manner of his death? Chap. iii. 14. How were his enemies to know by his death that he was Christ? How did his death give proof that he did nothing of himself, but was sent from God? Matt. xxvii. 51-54

Vs. 29. What does Jesus mean by the Father not leaving him alone? When came he the nearest to being forsaken? Matt. xxvii. 46. Was it then absolute desertion? Ans. Not at all. It was the eclipse, for that dark moment, of the felt sense of God's presence. What is meant by pleasing God? Ans. Doing his will. See 1 John iii. 24. What proofs have we that Jesus pleased God? Matt. iii. 17; Phil.

ii. 8; 2 Peter i. 17; Matt. xvii. 5. With a consciousness of pleasing God, what can we hear? Ans. The opposition of sinners. See Rom. viii. 8. What one thing must all have to please him? Heb. xi. 6.

Vs. 31. Of what does the continuance in the faith give proof? Will any who do not have the "grace of continuance" be saved? Matt. x. 22; Rev. ii. 27.

Vs. 32. What truth is referred to? What freedom is here meant? Who are slaves to sin? Rom. vi. 16.

Vs. 33. To whom were the Jews in present bondage? To whom had they been in bondage in the past?

Vs. 34. Does anybody live without sinning? What does Jesus, therefore, mean by "whosoever committeth sin"?

Vs. 35. What is the difference between a servant and son in the house?

Vs. 36. How are slaves to sin made sons of God? Rom. viii. 14-17; Gal. iv. 4-7. Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, September 5th, 1875.—The Light of the World.—John ix. 1-11.

Youths' Department.

CHICKENS.

BY ROSE TERRY COOKE.

"I didn't!" says Chip. "You did!" says Peep.

"How do you know?—you were fast asleep."

"I was under Mammy's wing, stretching my legs like anything. When all of a sudden I turned around, for close beside me I heard a sound—A little tip, and a little tap."

"Fiddle-de-dee! You'd had a nap, and when you were only half-awake, heard an icicle somewhere break."

"What's an icicle?" "I don't know; Rooster tells us about ice and snow, something that isn't as good as meal, that drops down on you and makes you squeal."

"Well! swallow Rooster's tales, I beg! I tell you I heard the old shell break, and the first small noise you ever could make;

And Mammy croodled, and puffed her breast, and pushed us further out of the nest, just to make room enough for you;

And there's your shell—I say it's true!" Chip looked over his shoulder then, and there it lay by the old gray hen—Half an egg-shell, chipped and brown, and he was a ball of yellow down, clean and chipper, and smart and spry. With the pertest bill and blakest eye.

"H'm!" said he, with a little perk. "That is a wonderful piece of work! Peep, you silly! don't you see that shell isn't nearly as big as me? Whatever you say, Miss, I declare I never, never, could get in there!"

"You did!" says Peep. "I didn't!" says Chip.

With that he gave a horrid nip, and Peep began to dance and peck, and Chip stuck out his wings and neck. They pranced, and struck, and capered about,

Their toes turned in and their wings spread out,

As angry as two small chicks could be, Till Mother Dorking turned to see. She cackled and clucked, and called in vain—At it they went with might and main—Till, at last, the old hen used her beak, and Peep and Chip, with many a squeak, staggered off on either side.

With a very funny skip and stride. "What dreadful nonsense!" said Mother Hen.

When she heard the story told again; "You're bad as the two-legs that don't have wings, nor feathers nor combs—the wretched things!"

That's the way they fight and talk for what isn't worth a mullen-stalk. What does it matter, I'd like to know, where you came from, or where you go? Keep your temper and earn your food; I can't scratch worms for a fighting brood. I won't have quarrels—I will have peace; I hatched out chickens, so don't be geese!"

Chip scratched his ear with his yellow claw, the meekest chicken you ever saw; and Peep in her feathers curled one leg, and said to herself, "But he was an egg!"

—From St. Nicholas, for August.

CHASED.

A FRONTIER STORY OF TO-DAY.

"Everybody ought to know it's the hoppers that's to blame, and not Johnnie and me. We never begged before, sir, and please God, we never will again."

The Relief Commissioner looked kindly down into Bess Nelson's pleading face, and answered—

"Bless you, sis! there isn't the shadow of an apology due. We're all alike in Kansas this year—prairie chickens, as it were, with our pinfeathers picked clean out; fighting our way through the coldest weather, too, that has been known for thirty years."

"Always bad luck in Kansas. I blame the day that ever I squatted on its onery soil," grumbled a settler, who stood behind Bess and Johnnie.

"Look here, sir, said Johnnie, turning upon them with disapproval. "Kansas

isn't busted yet, not by a long way round. She's the best State in the Union, all things considered. I reckon if the grass-hoppers had lit down in the valley of the Connecticut, they'd have cleaned things out as neatly as they did here. The only difference, the people there'd have back crops to climb up on. We haven't; but we're going to have, some time. Then we'll invite the hoppers down again, and tell 'em to pitch in and stuff themselves."

"That's the right kind of talk, my boy. Better days for suffering Kansas. We'll try her again next year for better luck."

Johnnie and Bess Nelson had come up to Fort Dodge from their father's claim, fifteen miles away, to apply to the Relief Commissioner for supplies to carry to their destitute home. Shivering under their scanty garments, "with stomachs big as Mammoth Cave," all the afternoon they had waited for the train which was to bring the needed aid sent by the good people Eastward. About them stood a band of anxious, care-worn farmers, all having come upon the same pressing errand as Bess and Johnnie.

Late in the afternoon the train arrived. The wintry twilight had almost set in ere Johnnie and Bess had received in full the liberal share of supplies allotted them. But a more jubilant boy and girl never started on a homeward trip. They had flour, hominy and ham, tea, coffee, sugar, and other articles of food; shoes for the little barefoot brothers, and baby Bell, at home; woollen clothes, and even medicine for mother's chills and father's rheumatism.

Johnnie drove his own red Mustang, Prancer, harnessed to a hickory jumper—a rude but serviceable affair, made by Mr. Nelson.

"Now, then, we must travel lively," said Johnnie, as they glided over the snowy prairie between Fort Dodge and Smoky Hill Timber. Fifteen miles home, and after sunset.

"'T would be no matter only that pa and ma are sick, and they are all so hungry at home," said Bess. "It's bright moonlight, and we have a big buffalo robe to keep us warm. I'm so glad the grass-hoppers couldn't eat this up, anyhow."

Wrapping themselves snugly in the robe, Bess and Johnnie fell to eating eagerly the supper of crackers and dried beef they had spared themselves—small, indeed, because of the hungry loved ones waiting in the prairie cabin. When they had finished, Bess took a nap, while Johnnie whistled softly and made future plans, into which grasshoppers, drouth and chinch-bugs did not enter.

The road home led most of the way through Smoky Hill timber. The trees were thick on either side, but the moon shone brightly overhead, and stars glimmered in the cold, clear sky.

In the loneliest part of the timber tired Bess awoke. Prancer had settled into a lagging gait.

"Poor little Mustang! how weak he is!" said Bess, pityingly. "He's been so nearly starved all winter, I'm afraid the trip will use him up entirely."

"Hush, Bess!" was Johnnie's only answer. He had thrown off the buffalo robe, and was sitting in an erect and listening attitude.

Bess pushed back her brown hood from her ears, and listened too.

"Johnnie," she said, at length, "I hear something howling behind us. Rover didn't go with us to Fort Dodge. Do you suppose there's a strange dog following us?"

Johnnie only listened more intently. Bess gave Johnnie's hand a nervous clutch.

"It sounds nearer now, and there's a lot of 'em howling together," she said, in a low, frightened tone. "They say that wolves are unusually fierce this winter. Wolves sound some like dogs, don't they?"

Johnnie's answer was quick and resolute. "You can be a brave girl, Bess. The wolves are after us. Get down in front and hold the reins. Whip Prancer hard, if need be—into a dead run."

As Johnnie said, Bess could be a brave girl. She quickly saw the fearful danger that threatened. Slipping down in front, she seized the reins and cruel stick, with which to whip the tender little pony, whom she loved almost as well as Johnnie. Holding in his hand a loaded revolver, which he had brought along as a precaution, Johnnie turned his face towards the backward road.

At the first touch of the whip, to which

he was so unused, Prancer leaped forward into a desperate run, but the terrible pursuers gained upon him rapidly. Soon a violent panting could be heard, and the leader of the pack appeared in sight. Nine wolves were closely following at his heels.

Almost in a twinkling the foremost wolf was tearing at the buffalo robe, one end of which had fallen from the leigh behind. Johnnie fired upon him. With a howl of rage and pain the savage creature released his hold and fell backward in the snow. The scent of blood maddened the remainder of the pack. They paused in the pursuit to rush upon the wounded wolf, quarrelling ferociously as to which should taste the last drop of blood.

This gave Johnnie a temporary rest, although he knew the wolves would be after him again when they had finished tearing their leader in pieces. Prancer, with true animal instinct, felt his danger, and sped with almost supernatural strength along the frozen road. Bess, uttering no sound of the alarm that filled her heart, held tightly to the reins, and did not feel the cold that cut her hands and unprotected ears with cruel sharpness.

Again and again the wolves renewed the attack, and as often did brave Johnnie repeat his firing, killing or wounding one of the pursuers with nearly every shot. These were quickly torn in pieces, as the leader of the pack had been, thus making fortunate intervals in this horrible chase.

"Faster, Bess! faster! I've got to reload my pistol," exclaimed Johnnie, during one of these short intervals.

"Prancer's giving out. I'd rather die than whip him any more," cried Bess, despairingly.

Johnnie's hand had become so stiff with cold that he could scarcely remove the cylinder of the pistol to reset the charges. If he should fail in that, one chance remained. The hams might serve for brief delays; but that would rob the hungry ones at home—almost as hungry as the wolves themselves, he thought with sudden pain.

He made a desperate effort, and reset the charge; but when he had replaced the cylinder, through some mismovement an accidental ball took flight and lodged in Johnnie's hand. With a loud click the pistol dropped into the snow beside the way, while the wounded hand fell paralyzed.

Dropping Prancer's reins, Bess threw her arms about her brother, with a cry of terror.

"Don't hold me! See, they're coming on again! There's a hatchet in the bottom of the sleigh that I'd forgotten," said Johnnie, with desperate impatience.

He stooped and seized the hatchet; but the hand that tried to raise it fell as powerless as the wounded one, from which the blood was flowing fast.

"Bessie," he said weakly, "I can't do any more. Throw out the hams, and then—"

Poor Johnnie fainted ere the sentence could be finished.

Brave little Bess! Her courage rose to meet the peril of that moment. The wolves were gathering hard upon her. She could almost feel the breath of one upon her face. Taking the hatchet from Johnnie's hand, she dealt a blow that split another victim's blood in the pathway of the clamoring pack.

Bess now prepared to throw out the hams if more attacks were made, but a new circumstance rendered this unnecessary. Prancer, whose pace had grown slower and slower, suddenly came to a dead halt, uttering a long, loud neigh. Bess turned her head, expecting to behold some new danger meeting her, but experienced joyful relief instead. She was within a clearing in the timber, and not far distant from a little cabin, in the door of which a bright light glimmered.

"Help!" called Bess, with all her voice, and then sank down almost as powerless as her wounded brother. The settler who owned the cabin heard the cry, and hastened out with two stout boys. When they reached the spot the wolves had vanished.

Johnnie and Bess were taken to the cabin and kindly cared for, and as soon as possible were carried to their home, some five miles distant. The next morning the settler and his boys went through the timber on a prospecting tour, and found that six wolves had met their death in the fierce combat of the night before.—Youth's Companion.

A pill in the mouth makes the whole world bitter.