

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, August 8th, 1875.—Jesus at Bethesda.—John v. 5-15.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I am the Lord that healeth thee."—Exodus xv. 26.

ANALYSIS.—I. The impotent man hopeless. Vs. 5-7. II. The impotent man healed. Vs. 8, 9. III. Fault-finding unbelief. Vs. 10-12. IV. Ignorance enlightened. Vs. 13-15.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—According to Andrews, an excellent authority, Jesus held his memorable conversation with the woman of Samaria late in the fall, and after spending the winter in Galilee, during which time he healed the nobleman's son, he went to Jerusalem to the Passover. This he, and Dr. Hovey also, believe to be the feast at which he healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (House of Mercy). This pool was the Hebrew name of a reservoir or tank with five porches, close upon the Sheep-gate, or market, in Jerusalem. These porches, or colonnades, accommodated a great number of sick and infirm people, who waited there for the "troubling of the water." The troubling of the water by an angel, in verse 4, is believed by Tischendorf, Alford, Meyer, Tholuck, Olshausen, Schaff, etc., to be spurious. Still, verse 7 seems to imply the truth of verse 4.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 5.—And a certain man was there. At the Pool of Bethesda. One of the class mentioned in verse 3. Thirty and eight years. This is stated to show that Jesus wrought a miracle whose genuineness was manifest, and indisputable. His works were such as to be thoroughly and easily tested.

Verse 6.—When Jesus saw him. Not, however, as though he had accidentally, and without purpose, come upon him. And knew, etc. Whether by having before met him and heard his story, or by his supernatural knowledge, as in i. 47, 48, ii. 24, 25, is not told. Not improbably in both ways. Christ's knowledge of the case is mentioned to show that he acted by deliberate purpose, and wrought the miracle known to be adapted to his ends. Wilt thou be made whole? Asked, like very many of his questions, in the way of preparation for the blessing about to be conferred. Here it is to draw out a confession of conscious need, and chief desire, and utter helplessness. Such preparation of heart is all that is required by Jesus in imparting to us his fullness.

Verse 7.—Sir, I have no man, etc. Alone, friendless, in poverty, left to himself, yet not beneath Christ's notice. When the waters are troubled. According to verse 4, by "an angel," though the weight of authority pronounces that verse spurious. Intermittent springs of medicinal character are not uncommon, though such an one as this seems to have been is quite unknown. To put me in, etc. Literally, "that he may cast me in," thus picturing the extreme haste and rapidity with which the favorable opportunity was seized. This poor man was able to move, but only slowly, and so however often he started he failed. Hope flickered up again and again, only to flicker down. Yet against hope he hoped on, watching, waiting.

Verse 8.—Jesus saith unto him. His first word was a question; his second a command. Christ's question, and Christ's command is all of grace, while yet man's freedom has its place. Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. Mark the authority with which Jesus speaks, not merely to a man, but to disease; for the disease must flee the man before the man can rise and walk. This authority often struck men with astonishment. There was child-like simplicity, utter freedom from parade and ostentation, and yet the sublime consciousness of divine power expressed in word, in tone, in bearing.

Verse 9.—And immediately the man was made whole. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." It was the same word that spake creation into existence. That word could not but be obeyed. It was not the word of precept, but of execution. The former men disobey, the latter they cannot. Took up his bed, and walked. The word translated "bed," seems to be rather a mere rug, or slight mattress. The man did not object that he could not rise and walk. He obeyed, and in so doing, found his strength. In this he is our pattern and our encouragement. And on the same day was the Sabbath. This is stated because on this

fact turns the controversy following. There is little doubt that Jesus deliberately chose the Sabbath day for the performance of this miracle, in order to furnish occasion to clear away false views of that day, and show what was its true design, and the proper principle of its observance. Christ is often represented as though he fell in with all the views and practices of the times, right or wrong, true or false. So far is this from true, that we see him deliberately planning to force an issue between himself and the false teachers in this and many another matters. He came to "bear witness to the truth," and against the false.

Verse 10.—The Jews. Not here the multitude, but some among the spiritual heads of the nation, whom it is very noticeable that John continually characterizes by this name (i. 19; vi. 1; ix. 22; xviii. 12, 14). Therefore. Since it was the Sabbath.—Said unto him that was cured. Not improbably they knew that Jesus had cured him, for they were ever on the watch to catch him; but they speak to the man as he appears as transgressor, and hope through him to strike the Lord. It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. "Already the pharisaical Jews, starting from passages such as Ex. xxiii. 12; xxxi. 13-17; xxxv. 2, 3; Num. xv. 32-36; Nehemiah xiii. 15-22, had laid down such a multitude of prohibitions, and drawn so infinite a number of hair-splitting distinctions that a plain and unlearned man could hardly come to know what was forbidden and what was permitted." Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; that on this principle was to be interpreted the law of the Sabbath, as of every other institution; and that to stand for the mere letter of the law, regardless of the design of the letter, and especially to proceed to add restrictions not involved in the original law, and not added in the spirit of the law, was heresy and abomination.

Verse 11.—He that made me whole, the same said unto me, etc. The healed man has been accused of a great crime, punishable with death. He would justify himself. He says, in effect: "I was commanded to do it by one who had a right to command me; for he was the one who, by a word, healed me." Right reasoning; God's word could not be against itself. Nothing less than God's word would thus heal him; nothing higher than God's word instituted the Sabbath.

Verse 13.—Wist [knew] not who it was. He may have conjectured, or may not have known of him as yet. Conveyed himself away. Purposely slipped out of the man's sight, that the right "time" might come for the disclosure.

Verse 14.—In the temple. Where Jesus was wont to resort, "his Father's house," and where the healed man probably went with pious spirit, according to the law, gratefully to make the appointed offering. Sia no more, etc. Implying that his disease was the result of some sinful act or course of action, and shadowing to view the more terrible retributions of eternity.

Verse 15.—The man departed, and told, etc. He was able now more fully to justify himself, and in his simplicity he may have thought the name of Jesus would be owned by them as a sufficient justification. If so the event proved him to have been mistaken, and must have been a great shock to his feelings. Only as we hold to Jesus, and keep with him, have we safety.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 5. "A certain man was" where? Meaning of Bethesda? What was the popular belief regarding it? To what was this infirmity due? Does God punish sin in this life? Is punishment ever delayed? Eccles. viii. 11.

Vs. 6. Why put such a question to a sick man?

Vs. 7. Was the man altogether helpless?

Vs. 9. Does the man show any faith in Jesus?

Vs. 10. Why did they consider carrying the bed on the Sabbath unlawful? Jer. xvii. 21. Why did Jesus do this miracle on the Sabbath day? Matt. xii. 8; John v. 17.

Vs. 12. Why did the Jews not ask, "Who has healed thee?"

Vs. 14. What is hinted at in "sin no more?"

Vs. 15. What ought Christians to say of Jesus? Do you, young Christian, witness for him? See Mark v. 19; also Ps. lx. 4.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 15th, 1875.—The Bread of Life.—John vi. 47-58.

"How can you do the most good?" asked a lady of a little girl. "By being as good as I can be," was the wise reply.

Youths' Department.

WHO DOES, AND WHO WILL.

BY MRS. S. F. KEENE.

Jesus loves the children— This we know is true, Do they all love Jesus? Little folks, do you?

Do you love to please him? Serve him all you may? Thank him for the blessings Given every day?

There are many errands Only you can do. Who will do them for him? Little one, will you?

JOHNNY'S ESSAY ON "THE TODE."

Todes is like frogs, but more dignity, and when you come to think of it frogs is watter. The warts with todes is noted for can't be cured, for they is cronick, but if I couldnt get wel Idestay in the house. My grandfather knew a tode wich some body had tamed til it was folks. Wen its master wiesled it would come for flies. They cetches 'em with their tung, which is some like a long red worm, but more like lisenin, only lisenin haint got no gum onto it. The fi will be a standin a rubbin its hind legs to gather and a thinkin wa a fine fi it is, and the tode a settin some distance away like it was a sleep. Wile you are seein the fi as plane as you ever see anything, all to once it aint there. Then the tode he looks up at you sollem, out of his eyes, like he said wat's become of that fi? but you kno he et it.

LITTLE TANGLES.

Once there was a king who employed his people to weave for him. The silk and patterns were all given by the king. He told the workers, that, when any difficulty arose, they should send to him, and he would help them, and never to fear troubling him.

Among many men and women busy at the looms, there was one little child who worked cheerfully, though often alone. One day when the men and women were distressed at the sight of their failures,—their silks were tangled, and their weaving unlike the pattern—they gathered round the child, and said:

"Tell us how it is that you are so happy in your work. We are always in difficulties."

"Then why do you not send to the king?" said the little weaver. "He told us that we might do so."

"So we do, night and morning."

"Ah!" said the child; "but I send directly when I find I have a little tangle." So let us take all our wants and troubles directly to the Lord in prayer. He invites us so to do, and promises to help us.—Well Spring.

ONE REASON FOR CHURCH-GOING.

Two little girls were walking home from church together quite thoughtfully. You would have supposed, to look at them, that the services of the day had made a deep impression upon their minds and hearts.

"I am so glad I came out to church today," said Jennie. "I did not wish to go at all. I felt so sleepy when the first bell rang for breakfast, I did want another nap. But Aunt Lucy said I would be late for church if I did not hurry, and that it was always wrong to stay at home unless one was sick. I am really glad I listened to her and came. You do learn so much at church, don't you?"

"Yes," said the other, rather indifferently. "Father thinks Dr. Selby a very good preacher."

"O, I was not thinking about that so much, Minnie. I meant you learned so much about the fashions. Now I have worried a whole week about my spring hat, and could not decide how to have it trimmed. Now my mind is made up. I shall have a blue sash with fringed ends, and a square knot on the front, a little to one side, and one of those lovely 'crush roses' in it. Won't it be sweet? And then that girl who sat two seats before us had a spring suit made just as I intend to have mine. If it was not Sunday, I should go about it the minute I got home. But I would not do that for the world. I am so afraid I shall forget just how it was trimmed, though I studied it over as well as I possibly could. Do you think it would be wrong to just dot down a line or two on a slip of paper, so

I shall be sure to remember where the buttons were set on—just make a faint mark, you know, merely so I can see it on Monday?"

Miss Jenny was like some older people, anxious to break the Sabbath just as softly as she could. Do you think the recording angel made much distinction when he wrote it down between her and the common Sabbath-breaker, who actually made her suit and trimmed her hat on the Sabbath-day?—Presbyterian.

SCOWLING.

Don't scowl, it spoils faces. Before you know it, your forehead will resemble a small railroad map. There is a grand trunk line now from your cowl to the bridge of your nose, intersected by parallel lines running east and west, with curves arching your eyebrows; and O, how much older you look for it! Scowling is a habit that steals upon us unawares. We frown when the light is too strong and when it is too weak. We tie our brows into a knot when we are thinking, and knit them even more tightly when we cannot think. There is no denying there are plenty of things to scowl about. The baby in the cradle frowns when something fails to suit. "Constitution scowl," we say. The little toddler who likes sugar on his bread and butter tells his trouble in the same way when you leave the sugar off. "Cross," we say about the children, and "worried to death," about the grown folks, and as for ourselves, we can't help it. But we must. Its reflex influence makes others unhappy; for face answereth unto face in life as well as in water. It belies our religion. We should possess our souls in such peace that it will reflect itself in placid countenances. If your forehead is ridged with wrinkles before forty, what will it be at seventy? There is one consoling thought about these marks of time and trouble,—the death angel almost always erases them. Even the extremely aged, in death, often wear a smooth and peaceful brow, thus leaving our last memories of them calm and tranquil. But our business is with life. Scowling is a kind of silent scolding. It shows that our souls need sweetening. For pity's sake, let us take a sad iron, or a glad iron, or smoothing tool of some sort and straighten these creases out of our faces before they become indelibly engraved upon our visage.—Christian at Work.

WHAT TO TEACH OUR DAUGHTERS.

- Teach them self-reliance. Teach them to make bread. Teach them to make shirts. Teach them to foot up store bills. Teach them not to wear false hair. Teach them to wear thick, warm shoes. Bring them up in the way they should go. Teach them how to wash and iron clothes. Teach them how to make their own dresses. Teach them that a dollar is only a hundred cents. Teach them to cook a good meal of victuals. Teach them how to darn stockings and sew on buttons. Teach them every day dry, hard, practical common sense. Teach them to say No, and mean it; or Yes, and stick to it. Teach them to wear calico dresses and do it like queens. Teach them that a good rosy romp is worth fifty consumptives. Teach them to regard the morals and not the money of their beaux. Teach them all the mysteries of the kitchen, the dining-room, and the parlor. Teach them not to have anything to do with temperate and dissolute young men. Teach them the further one lives beyond his income, the nearer he gets to the poor-house. Rely upon it that upon your teaching depends in a great measure the weal or woe of their after life. Teach them that a good steady mechanic is worth a dozen loafers in broad-cloth. Teach them the accomplishments, music, painting, drawing, if you have time and money to do it with. Teach them that God made them in His own image, and no amount of tight lacing will improve the model. Genuine modesty is the sense of imperfection common to the wise and good, impossible to the fool and villain.

Temperance.

ADVERTISEMENT OF AN HONEST RUM-SELLER AS IT SHOULD BE!

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS:— Having just opened a commodious shop for the sale of "Liquid Fire," I embrace this early opportunity of informing you that, on Saturday next, I shall commence the business of making drunkards, paupers, and beggars, for the sober, industrious, and respectable portion of the community to support. I shall deal in "familiar spirit" which will excite men to deeds of riot, robbery, and blood; and, by so doing, diminish the comforts, augment the expenses, and endanger the welfare of the community. I will undertake, at a short notice, for a small sum, and with great expedition, to prepare victims for the Asylums, the Poor-houses, the Prisons, and the Gallows. I will furnish an article which will increase the amount of fatal accidents, multiply the number of distressing diseases, and render those which are harmless incurable. I shall deal in drugs, which will deprive some of life, many of reason, most of property, and all of peace; which will cause the fathers to become fiends, wives widows, children orphans, and all mendicants. I will cause many of the rising generation to grow up in ignorance, and prove a burden and nuisance to the nation. I will cause mothers to forget their offspring, and cruelty to take the place of love. I will sometimes even corrupt the ministers of religion, obstruct the progress of the Gospel, defile the purity of the church, and cause temporal, spiritual, and eternal death; and, if any should be so impudent as to ask why I have the audacity to bring such accumulated misery upon comparatively happy people, my honest reply is, money. The spirit trade is lucrative, and some professing christians give it their cheerful countenance. I have a license; and if I do not bring these evils upon you somebody else will. I live in a land of liberty. I have purchased the right to demolish the character, destroy the health, shorten the lives, and ruin the souls of those who choose to honour me with their custom. I pledge myself to do all I have herein promised. Those who wish any of the evils above specified, brought upon themselves or their dearest friends, are requested to meet me at my Bar, where I will, for a few cents, furnish them with the certain means of doing so. THE BOY'S RESOLVE. I would like to have ruddy cheeks, and bright eyes, and strong limbs. But they that drink strong drink dim the eyes, and whiten the cheeks, and enfeeble the frame—therefore, I will not drink at all. I would like to have a clear mind, so that I may be able to think on great things, and serve God and do good to others, and prepare to die. But they say that strong drink clouds the mind and often destroys it—therefore I will not drink at all. I would like to have a peaceful heart, and a quiet conscience, that I may be happy while I am here. But they say that strong drink fills many a heart with misery, implants in many a conscience a sting—therefore, I will not drink at all. I would like to have a quiet home, and happy fire-side, where I could rejoice with loving brothers and sisters, and parents. But they say that strong drink makes ten thousand homes wretched and miserable—therefore I will not drink at all. I would like to go to heaven when I die, that I may dwell with Jesus in glory forever. But they say that strong drink keeps many from entering into heaven, and casts them down to hell—therefore, I will not drink at all. TOBACCO JUICE. Considerable admiration has been expressed for the fact that at Hempstead, Long Island, the Methodist Church sued and recovered eight dollars from a man who defiled the floor of the meeting-house by expectoration of tobacco. We like that movement of the Methodists for clean floors; but how much grander the crusade, if we could also clean the mouths of the people of this loathsome stuff! We never want to hear a man lecture about the evils of rum if his breath smells of tobacco. Let all Christian reformers know that there is something in tobacco that seems to excite thirst for strong drink. Multitudes of men have got into the beer shop through the tunnel of their own pipe. We know of many young men who seemed to be reformed from the habit of intoxication, who went back first to tobacco and then to the wine flask.—Christian at Work.