

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 3rd, 1875.—Jesus lifted up.—John xii. 23-33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John xii. 32.

ANALYSIS.—I. *The hour come.* Vs. 23, 11. *Life out of death.* Vs. 24, 25. 111. *Acceptable service.* Vs. 26. 1V. *Conflicting emotions.* Vs. 27, 28. V. *Voice from heaven.* Vs. 28-30. VI. *The world judged.* Vs. 31. VII. *Jesus lifted up.* Vs. 32, 33.

EXPOSITION.—*The time*—Tuesday of Passion Week. Tuesday, so assigned by most of the leading harmonists, all the events and discourses comprised in Matt. xxi. 20—xxiv. 46; Mark xi. 20—xiii. 37; Luke xx. 1—xxi. 38; and apparently John xii. 20-36, with the recapitulatory remarks and citations of the Evangelist. Vs. 37-50. *What a day!* *What a day's work!*

Verse 23.—*And Jesus answered them.* The discourse which follows is generally, with good reason, believed to have been spoken in the hearing of the Greeks (vs. 20), and hence that their request to see Jesus (vs. 21) had been granted. If so, the answer of Jesus may have been either to them and their request to see him, or to Philip and Andrew, who carried the request to Jesus. The discourse is rather an exhibition of the doctrine of salvation, as suggested by the coming of these Greeks. They were representatives of the whole heathen world, from whom, as well as from the Jews, the Great Shepherd, by his death, was to gather his own flock, x. 16. They were not Greek speaking Jews, as the original shows, but Greeks by blood, who however seem to have previously adopted the Hebrew faith and worship. (Vs. 26). Such were called *Proselytes*; and were divided into “*Proselytes of the Gate*” (not receiving circumcision), and “*Proselytes of Righteousness*” (becoming circumcised). *The hour is come* that the Son of Man should be glorified. These Greeks had sought an interview with Jesus, unquestionably, in order to gain a clearer view of his character and work as Saviour. To this desire Jesus here speaks. If he was to be Saviour, he must be glorified; for he cannot take men to a destiny higher than his own. The Prince of Life must have life to impart. He refers to the glory which came to him through his death. It was so near that he could fitly say, “*The hour is come.*” It was the fit and divinely appointed hour.

Verse 24.—*Verily, verily, except a corn of wheat [kernel of grain] fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.* An illustration, not intended as in all respects a parallel. The seed gives up its own life, and must do so, in order to bear fruit; but in giving up its life, unlike man in self-sacrifice, it gives up its existence as a seed. *But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* Doubtless Christ has chiefly in mind his own death, and the necessity of it, in order to bring life, spiritual, eternal life, to the world. He is laying a foundation for the faith of these men in him as Saviour, even though they see him on the very day of the interview persistently set at naught by his own nation, and though they feel the air charged with the spirit of murderous hate against him. They are to recall these words after he has gone down into the tomb, and so have ground for faith even then, especially then. This word, “*much fruit.*” points to the greatness of the result of Christ's death, the innumerable multitude saved.

Verse 25.—*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth, etc.* The central principle of Christian life stated in the form of a double paradox. We all come to glory by his death dying with him—his fellows in crucifixion and in glory. To love one's life or soul, according to Christ's meaning, is so to make self first and chief, that self-gratification becomes the law or principle of all action. To do this is to lose the life or soul. For, first, this is a wrong or wicked principle, and hence is itself the soul's ruin; and, second, this principle works out ruin because it is at war with the nature of God, with the nature of the human soul, and so with the constitution of all society, human and angelic, earthly and heavenly.

Verse 26.—*If any man serve me, let him follow me.* He had his own impending death in mind in choosing this illustration. To follow him is to enter, in self-sacrifice, into his suffering. We must have and live out his spirit at whatever risk. Its full realization is future, when we go to be “*with the Lord,*” especially “*when he*

shall appear,” and “*we shall appear with him.*”

Verse 27.—*Now is my soul troubled.* Profoundly agitated, overwhelmingly disturbed. Why this fearful inward commotion just now? The occasion seems to have been the visit of these Greeks, and the consequent near, clear view of the ruin of man kind, the sin, guilt, and desert of a lost world, and his victorious relation to it as bearing now the sins of the world. *What shall I say?* Horror and amazement, a mighty inward conflict also; “*the flesh,*” the sensitive human nature recoiling: the spirit, the man as having the Spirit and life of God, unmoved and immovable. What shall be the spoken prayer? It shall be a double prayer. First, *Save me from this hour.* This some take as a question, “*Shall I say, save me?*” etc. “*No, but for this cause,*” etc. *But for this cause* [on account of this] *came I unto this hour* “*This cause,*” the experience now endured by Jesus, the attempt upon him, and all the horror and woe it brought. *Father, glorify thy name.* “*Glorify it in my suffering, whatever the hour brings to me.*” Thus do both elements of Christ's experience come to their right.

Verse 28.—*Then came there a voice, etc.* See Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5. The transfiguration may be referred to, but it seems better to hold that the Father had glorified Christ by all the words and works and fruits of Christ's life which had witnessed that God was his Father, and that in all future works of grace, consequent on Christ's death, God would glorify him again. The transfiguration and the ascension might stand as signs and symbols of the two respectively.

Verse 29, 30.—*That there was an audible sound, or voice, is clear.* That this voice, as in the other instances of heavenly speaking, was not understood simply through the natural senses, is clear. *This voice came not because of me, etc.* It was a sign of the Father's approval, given in the Temple for the disciples, who needed every kind of aid to their faith.

Verse 31.—*New is the judgment of this world.* The atonement was the curse for man's sin, actually laid on Christ's death, showed or announced God's judgement or condemnation on the whole world. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Satan, cast out from supreme domination, because now redemption was accomplished, salvation brought in. Satan works mischief but the Saviour reigns.

Verses 32, 33.—*Lifted up.* On the cross. Vs. 33. *Will draw all men unto me.* “*Whosoever will, let him come.*” This voice sounds over the world from the up-lifted cross.

GENERAL QUESTIONS.—*What week have we now entered upon? Between what places does Jesus pass during its successive days? On what day of the week is our present lesson placed? How many days is it before the crucifixion?*

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 23. Who are meant by “*them*”? What is meant by “*The hour is come*”? Matt. xvi. 21. Cf. vs. 31; chap. xiii. 31. Had it waited God's time? How was Christ's glory to appear specially in his death?

Vs. 24. Can we be useful without self-sacrifice? Cf. Rom. viii. 36; 2 Cor. iv. 11. Vs. 27. What emotions in Jesus were now in conflict? Which triumphed?

Vs. 28. How many times did a voice from heaven honor Jesus as the son of God? Ans. Three: (1) at baptism; (2) transfiguration; (3) here.

Vs. 31. How is Satan “*the prince of this world*”? Eph. ii. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 26. Is this prince of evil a personal being? Gen. iii. 1; Job i. 6; Matt. iv. 1; John viii. 44; Eph. vi. 12; Rev. xii. 9. What is meant by his being cast out? Luke x. 18; Acts xxvi. 18. Will the Church of Christ ever be defeated? 1 Cor. xv. 25.

Vs. 32. Had Christ predicted his being lifted up before? Where was he lifted up? Heb. xii. 2. Has the cross attracted, as Christ said it would?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 10th, 1857.—Washing the Disciples' Feet. John xiii. 1-9.

A PERSIAN FABLE.

A drop of water fell out of a cloud into the sea, and finding itself lost in such an immensity of fluid matter, broke out into the following reflection: “*Alas! what an insignificant creature I am in this prodigious ocean of waters; my existence is of no concern to the universe; I am reduced to a kind of nothing, and am less than the least of the works of God.*” It so happened that an oyster, which lay in the neighborhood of this drop, chanced to gape and swallow it up in the midst of this its humble soliloquy. The drop lay a great while hardening in the shell, till by degrees it was ripened into a pearl, which, falling into the hands of a diver, after a long series of adventures, is at present that famous pearl which is fixed on the top of the Persian diadem.

Verse 26.—*If any man serve me, let him follow me.* He had his own impending death in mind in choosing this illustration. To follow him is to enter, in self-sacrifice, into his suffering. We must have and live out his spirit at whatever risk. Its full realization is future, when we go to be “*with the Lord,*” especially “*when he*

Youths' Department.

PICTURES IN THE FIRE.

BY MRS. BRADLEY.

The children sat by the fire
Watching the shifting flame;
And each one saw a different scene,
And gave it a different name.

“There,” said Will, “is a river,
With a rushing water-fall,
And there's an Indian warrior—
Feathers and paint and all!”

“I can't see that,” cried Lizzy;
“What I see is an arch,
And a troop of soldiers passing through
In a slow and a solemn march.”

“I see a ruined castle,
With a draw-bridge and a tower;
And a little girl,” said Laura,
“Stoops down to pluck a flower.”

But “Oh, indeed!” cried Alice,
“It doesn't look so to me;
A forest full of branching trees,
Is the picture that I see.”

“Come to the fire, mother!
Look if it isn't so;
You can hear the whisper of the wind,
As the trees sway to and fro.”

The children laughed at Alice,
But the mother said, “Indeed,
The picture she has seen in the fire,
Is the easiest one to read.”

“Who knows but she hears the murmur
Of the far-off summer breeze,
That used to stir in their leafy tops
When those lumps of coal were trees?”

“Were trees, indeed,” cried Laura.
“Why, mother, to think of you
Trying to make us believe a thing
We all know can't be true!”

“But why not, then?” the mother
Asked with a smiling look,
“The thing I tell you is written down
In many a learned book.”

“How ages ago the forests
Of mighty trees were grown,
And age ago, by wind and wave,
Their might was overthrown.”

“How in the deep earth buried
They lay for ages still,
And shape and substance both were changed,
According to God's will.”

“And now with grimy faces
Men delve in the darkness mine,
To find the hard black lumps of coal
That make our firesides shine.”

“Sometimes with pick and hammer
They strike a mass apart,
That holds the form of leaf and branch
Still printed on its heart.”

“And men of wise discernment,
Who read these signs aright,
Can tell us, from a single stem,
The whole tree, breadth and height.”

“So we may learn, my children,
To praise God, and admire
The wonders of his providence,
From pictures in the fire.”

BE KIND TO THE BIRDS.

Don't hurt the birds. True they are sometimes very annoying in a garden, but they generally prefer animal food to vegetable, and devour many more insects than seeds. And if they do get a small share of ripe fruit it is only what a kind Providence intended them to have. They are a beautiful portion of the creation, and, on the whole, much more beautiful than injurious to the garden and farm. Look upon them as friends, study their habits, and note their peculiarities. This will improve your minds, soften your tempers, and make you more inclined to love one another. A bird-nesting, bird-tormenting boy seldom grows into a good and humane man.

Many of the men who have most shocked the world with their terrible cruelties began their evil career when boys, by tormenting flies, insects, and birds.
Be kind to all of God's helpless creatures.
—Reaper.

IT IS DARK.

There come seasons of darkness in all our lives—times when there is neither sun nor moon nor stars in the sky, and we stand still in fear, or grope trembling. A few years ago, there fell upon my life one of these seasons, in which I could see neither to the right nor left. A terror of darkness was upon me.

One night I lay awake thinking, thinking, until my brain grew wild with uncertainty. I could not see a step in advance, and feared to move onward, lest, with the next footfall, I should plunge into hopeless ruin. Very strongly was I tempted to turn aside from the way in which I was going—a way reason and conscience approved as right; but something held me back. Again

and again I took up and considered the difficulties of my situation, looking to the right hand and the left for ways of extrication, and now inclining to go in this direction, now in that; yet always held away from resolve by inner convictions of right and duty that grew clear at the moment when I was ready to give up my whole integrity.

So the hours went heavy-footed until past midnight. My little daughter was sleeping in the crib beside my bed. But now she began to move uneasily, and presently her timid voice broke faintly the still air.

“Papa! papa!” she called.
“What is it, darling?” I asked.
“Oh, papa! it is dark! Take, Nellie's hand!”

I reached out my hand and took her tiny one in my own, clasping it firmly. A sigh of relief came from her little heart. All her loneliness and fear were gone, and in a few moments she was sound asleep again.

“O my father in heaven!” I cried, in a sudden, almost wild, outburst of feeling, “it is dark, very dark. Take my hand.”

A great peace fell upon me. The terror of darkness was gone. “Keep hold of my hand, Oh my Father!” I prayed fervently; “and though I should be called to walk through the valley and the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Let not my feet wander to the right or to the left.”

Sleep fell softly on my eyelids, and morning broke with scarce a seeming interval of time. I felt calm and strong. The day was to be one of severe trial. Dark uncertainty rested over it. But I was resolved to walk steadily through its trials and its pains, holding tightly the hand of my Father.

Oh! is not the Lord better to us, if we will trust him, than all our fears? There came fierce assaults upon my integrity; I was lured by golden promises; I was threatened with disaster and disgrace; but my hand lay in the firm grasp of One who sticketh closer than a brother, and who is strong to save.

In my recititude I found safety. Had I swerved, I would have gone down to hopeless ruin. Even my tempters, who had hoped to gain through my defection from honor, bore witness to my integrity. And now having escaped the perils of this difficult and dangerous pass, peace, prosperity and honor opened on my view. But the highest and dearest of all my possessions is my integrity, which, but for the hands of my Father, grasped in darkness, I should have lost.—*British Messenger.*

INSTANTANEOUS CONVERSION.

I heard a man the other night saying, “I do not believe in sudden conversion. I do not believe what the preacher said to-night, that a man could come in here not a Christian, and go out one.” I do not believe in any other conversion. I do not believe that there ever has been a conversion in the world that was not instantaneous, and I want you to mark this; not but that many cannot tell the day nor the hour when they were converted—I will admit that; they may not know the year. But that does not change the great fact that there was a time when they were born into the kingdom of God. There must have been a minute when their name was written in the Book of Life. There must have been a time when they were lost, and a time when they were saved; but we may not be conscious when the change takes place. I believe the conversion of some is like the rising of the sun, gradual; and of others like the flashing of a meteor. But both are instantaneous, really, in the sight of God. There must be a time when life begins to rise; when the soul begins to live.

When I was in Manchester, I went into the gallery one Sunday night to have a talk with a few inquirers, and while I was talking, a business man came in and took a seat on the outskirts of the audience. I think at first he had come merely to criticize, and that he was a little skeptical. At last I saw he was in tears. I turned to him and said, “My friend, what is your difficulty?” “Well,” he said, “Mr. Moody, the fact is, I cannot tell.” I said, “Do you believe you are a sinner?” He said, “Yes, I know that.” I said, “Christ is able to save you;” and I used one illustration after another, but he did not see it. At last I used the ark, and I said, “Was it Noah's feelings that saved him, or was it the ark?” “Mr. Moody,” said he, “I see it.” He got up, and shook hands with me, and said, “Good night, I have to go. I have to go away on the train to-night, but I was determined to be saved before I went. I see it now.” I confess it seemed almost too sudden for me, and I was almost afraid it could not live. A few days after he came and touched me

on the shoulder, and said, “I know your face, but do not remember where I have seen you.” He said, “It has been all right ever since. I understand it now. Christ is the ark; he saves me, and I must get inside him.” When I went down to Manchester again and talked to the young friends there, I found he was the brightest light among them.

This afternoon at the woman's meeting, I told them that a woman came and said to me in Manchester, that she was not in the ark, but that she wanted to go into it. I said to her, “The question is, Why do you not do it? I have been wanting to go to America for the last four years, but I have not gone. It is one thing to want, and another thing to do. Why do not you just step into the ark?” After talking a little while she said, “Good evening, Mr. Moody.” I said, “Are you in the ark?” She said, “Yes; I will trust Christ and make him my ark.” I do not see how you can have a better illustration than that. A man must be in the ark or out of it. If he dies outside of the ark, he must perish. If he dies in the ark, it is the ark that saves him.—*D. L. Moody.*

ART OF LIVING WITH OTHERS.

It is not well for us to cherish the habit of dwelling much on the faults and shortcomings of those with whom we live. It makes us more critical than generous. It affects the cordiality of our manner toward them. It insensibly lessens our confidence. It interferes with the delicious ease and freedom of our intercourse with them. It colors the remarks that we make about them to others and then reacts with double force upon our own feelings and our relations to them. It is said of the virtuous woman, whose price is above rubies, that the law of kindness is in her tongue. But in order to be in the tongue, it must first be in the heart, and the habit of dwelling much on the imperfections of our friends and associates will soon drive it from us.

GOD HEARS PRAYER.

Skeptical men discredit the idea that God so interferes with human affairs as to answer the prayers of his people; but if the records of Christian experience were read, in what numberless instances should we find incontestable proof that God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. A correspondent of the *American Messenger* says:

“Last Sabbath evening I was present at a sailors' prayer-meeting, at which some thirty men were gathered from the different men-of-war and merchant vessels in the harbour. Nearly all these men had recently, as they hoped, found the Savior; and as they rose one after another, to tell of what the Lord had done for them, I was particularly struck with the narrative of one young man as he went on to tell how, about five or six weeks ago he had found peace in Christ. About a week ago he had received a letter from his mother, in which she told him of the labors of Messrs. Moody and Sankey in Scotland or Ireland, and how, at one of the meetings, she had sent in a request for prayer for an unconverted son. Upon reflection, he found that the request for prayer and the time of his conversion were almost simultaneous. Thus was God again fulfilling, ‘While they are yet speaking I will answer them.’ Not so speedily does the electric telegraph bear its message. It often takes hours to send a message from England here; but God works at once, ‘while they are yet speaking.’”

ART IN GERMANY.—An annual sum of 40,000 thalers has been granted by the German Government for the carrying out of the proposed project of having plaster casts taken of all the most important monuments of architecture and sculpture in Italy. The Italian Government have given permission for this work under certain conditions, one being that a copy of every one of the works reproduced should be given towards the formation of a museum of casts in Italy. Certainly Germany is doing her utmost at the present time to promote the art education of her people, and spares no expense in the acquisition of works of art. According to the report lately published of the Commissioners of the Berlin Museums, the Berlin Gallery alone has been enriched during the past three years by the addition of 220 pictures, 73 works of sculpture, 12,368 engravings and drawings, 20,800 coins and medals, 50 Egyptian antiquities, and other additions in various departments, making in the whole a total of 44,337 works in three years. It is not surprising under these circumstances that art-loving France, whose resources are so crippled that her fine arts budget is obliged to be cut down to the lowest possible sum, should look somewhat grudgingly at the free expenditure of her rival.