

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

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

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."—Exodus xvi. 15.

ANALYSIS.—I. Self-assertion. Vs. 47, 48. II. Contrast. Vs. 50, 51. III. Questioning. Vs. 52. IV. Enlarged statement. Vs. 53-58.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—Jesus had just miraculously fed the five thousand assembled on a plain sloping down to the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, producing an impression that he was "that Prophet that should come into the world." But seeing that Jewish pride was ready to make him a king, he bade his disciples row back to Capernaum, dismissed the multitude, and went up into a mountain alone to pray. The disciples, however, were in peril, and Jesus drew near to them on the sea. It was night, and Jesus seemed like a ghost; but he said, "It is I, be not afraid." The next day the whole region round about flocked to him, attracted by the miracle of the day preceding. Perceiving, however, that their great desire was for "loaves and fishes" (John vi. 26), he preached them a memorable discourse upon himself as the bread of life. This discourse was given in the synagogue of Capernaum, in the spring of the year, about the time of the Passover. Vs. 59.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 47.—Verily, verily, I say unto you. Here, as always, this formula introduces statements of most solemn import, and demands for them the most reverent attention. He that believeth on me. Faith is the root of Christian life—the fundamental, distinguishing characteristic of the Lord's disciples. It is the bond of union between Christ and Christ's, and the condition of all that fullness of manifold gracious life coming from the union. It is perpetual, continuous, not to be interrupted. God meets us lost men in the person of Jesus Christ; and hence to believe in God as our God is to believe in Christ. Hath everlasting life. The same Greek word is translated sometimes, as here, "everlasting," and more often "eternal." See Matt. xxv. 46. This life is called "eternal" in contrast with our bodily, animal life, which is brief, coming soon to an end—fading like a flower, vanishing like the mist. Its difference in continuance, however, is due to its difference in nature. The death which stands contrasted with this life, consists in man's unbroken enmity to God. Eph. ii. 1; Rom. viii. 7. Hence the possibility of "eternal death." This "eternal life" the believer "hath," not simply shall have. There is one unbroken life, but two greatly dissimilar stages—a germinal state, and a perfected state.

Verse 48.—I am that [the] bread of life. The bread that sustains life, referring to vs. 35, which in turn refers back to vs. 30, 31, and the whole comparison suggested by the miracle of feeding the multitude. Christ taught us in iii. 3-17, that Christian life is always originated by God, and never by the man himself. Here we are taught that man does not by himself sustain the life when originated. We are utterly dependent on Christ, as the branch upon the parent stock, or the body on its food. See viii. 12; xi. 25; xiv. 6; xv. 1.

Verse 49.—Your fathers. Referring to their own words in vs. 31. They boastfully said, our fathers. Jesus says yes, your fathers—those whom you resemble—eating manna, indeed, but dying; and dying in judgment for their sins. His Father was in a special sense God. See vs. 41, 43, 45, 46. Did eat manna in the wilderness. They demanded such a sign from Jesus as was given through Moses in the manna (vs. 30, 31), thus casting contempt on his miracle of the loaves, on his other works, and especially on his divine teaching. They wanted mere temporal good, and would hold to Christ only in case he gave them that, and only for that. And are dead. Jesus thus shows them from their own reference what worthless desires and ambitions move them. The temporal perishes, and they perish whose whole good is temporal. A mere temporal Saviour is something infinitely less and lower than their needs, than the needs of mankind.

Verse 50.—This is the bread which cometh down from heaven. The bread which is really from heaven, and which was

only symbolized by the literal material manna that came down from the visible heavens, is a bread such in nature as to sustain a spiritual and eternal life—to satisfy, not the wants of a perishable body, but of the imperishable soul. Having thus told them of what kind of bread man has need, he goes on again to tell them where only they can find it.

Verse 51.—I am the living bread which came down from heaven. Bread which is alive and makes alive, which not only seemed to be, but which was, from heaven. "This bread, the great need of man, this I am." If any man eat of this bread. "Any man"—whether Jew or Gentile—universal. Very often is this feature of the absolute universality of the Gospel made prominent. But a man must "eat"—showing that to be saved we are to be ourselves active, to receive, accept, and obey Christ. This eating is only another name for faith. He shall live forever. Contrast between the speedy death of those who ate manna, and the endless life of believers. Bodily death does indeed come to the Christian, as to others. But this does not end the soul's true life; nay, it is but a step forward into a fuller life. It is easier to understand this since we have seen our Lord come from the tomb and ascend into the skies. And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. He has said that He is the bread of life. He here tells how he becomes bread. He gives his flesh, in the surrender of his life, as the paschal lamb became food by being slain as a sacrifice. The cross is in his view. His sacrificial death is before him. He was to bear the sin "of the world"; to become for the world, the whole world, a Saviour. "By his stripes are we healed."

Verse 52.—How can this man give us his flesh to eat? As much perplexed as was Nicodemus in regard to the new birth; as much as are those now to whom the cross is an offence, because they cannot see how justice can be satisfied for our sins in the offering of a sinless Substitute.

Verse 53.—Verily, verily, I say unto you. Unbelief confronted with emphatic affirmation. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. He does not try to explain how, but affirms more pointedly the fact. He makes it a personal thing, and warns them that they must find life in him, or find it not at all. Instead of softening his assertion, he makes it more offensive by declaring that they must drink his blood. The mention of the blood is a clearer intimation of his death.

Verse 54.—Whoso eateth, etc. Jesus is not speaking of the supper, but both he and the supper speak of our salvation through his death. Hath eternal life. Notice again the present—hath it now, as those Jews did not have it. I will raise him up at the last day. The resurrection, in which the eternal life comes to its full rights and manifestation. These Jews believed in the resurrection, but did not believe that in Jesus they were to find it; and least of all that it was through his death that the eternal life, completed in resurrection, was to have place.

Verse 55.—Meat indeed . . . drink indeed. Genuine meat, genuine drink, as contrasted with the manna, which was only symbol. The material was shadow; the spiritual was substance.

Verse 56.—Dwelleth in me and I in him. Mutual indwelling—one of the most precious truths of Scripture and of experience. How totally unlike, how infinitely above, mere imitation of Christ! In faith we have a union with Christ which is vital.

Verse 57.—The union of Christ and Christ's is here put in the strongest light, and the results of it again put in sublime contrast with mere earthly good. If we turn to the fifteenth chapter of John, we find the Saviour teaching this same doctrine of union with him, by the similitude of the vine and its branches. There, as here, he shows that the union is to be both vital and voluntary. Because vital, its absence implies spiritual death; its presence life, and the same life that was in Jesus—a pure, lovely and loving, right and righteous life. It is a voluntary union, and therefore we have something to do—living not merely for Christ, but in him—first in him, and then for him.

QUESTIONS.—What miracle had just been wrought? Where? What was the effect of it? Vs. 14. What did the multitude wish to do with Jesus? Vs. 15. Where did the Saviour go? Where did the disciples go? What happened to them? Where do we find Jesus the next day? Vs. 59. Of what did he assure the multitude? Vs. 26. What counsel did he give them? Vs. 27.

Vs. 47. When does faith give "everlasting life"? Cf. vs. 54; chap. xi. 26. Vs. 48. How do you account for such a statement of self-importance as this? Will you give other similar statements? Would they not be insufferable egotism in a mere man?

Vs. 49. Why does Jesus say, "Your fathers"? How often was this manna gathered? Ex. xvi. 21. Excepting on what day? Ex. xvi. 26. How long did the nation subsist on it? Ex. xvi. 35.

Vs. 50. In what lies the contrast between the manna and the living bread?

Vs. 51. What is the origin of the living bread? The design? The effect? Was Christ's death his own free act? Chap. x. 18. What character does Christ now exhibit? Ans. His priestly.

Vs. 52. Of whom does this surprise remind us? Chap. iii. 9. Are surprises necessarily unreasonable?

Vs. 53. Why were these words harsh to the Jews? Gen. ix. 4; Lev. xvii. 10. Of what are they a prophecy? Had Christ foretold his death as publicly before. Ans. No. What are we to understand by eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood? Ans. That by Christ's death the believer lives. 1 John ii. Does Christ design any reference to the symbols of the Lord's Supper? Ans. Probably, though the reference is not stated.

Vs. 58. What should be the prayer of us all? Vs. 34.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, August 22nd, 1875.—Jesus the Christ.—John vii. 40-46.

Youths' Department.

ONE RULE.

"Alice," said little Bessie Gray to oldest sister, "little Christians don't have to be like big ones, do they?"

"In some things they do, yet there is one rule for old or young, Bessie, and that is, to follow Jesus. But why do you ask that question?"

"O, because the minister preached to-day about self-denial, and I thought he he must mean grown people, for the children can't be self-denying, you know. And besides, the text says, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.' I found the verse as soon as I came home, and learned it."

"It is a good thing to learn the texts you hear preached from Bessie; it will help you to remember the sermons too. But you are wrong, little sister, in thinking that children can not or need not practice self-denial. It is just as truly their duty as it is that of older people. The word man in the verse you learned means all of us. It is the same as if it said, 'If any one will come after me,' etc. So far as a child can understand or practice them, the directions of the Bible are binding on it just as truly as on its parents."

"But how can children be self-denying, Alice? How could I?"

"O, in many ways."

"Tell me some, sister."

"Bessie, you like to sleep late in the morning, do you not? And when auntie calls you to breakfast, you would like to lie in bed, instead of getting up promptly?"

"Yes, I should."

"Here, then, is a chance for self-denial every morning. It troubles our kind aunt to see any of us late at breakfast; by denying yourself the pleasure of sleeping longer, you can please her and obey this rule of Christ. Then you are fond of a good deal of gravy with your food. Papa thinks it is not good for you. You can deny yourself of that also, and thus follow Jesus. You like to enjoy a swing in the orchard; but sometimes brother Willie wants to swing at the same time. There is another chance for self-denial."

"O, Alice, I didn't know—I didn't think it meant such little things. Does the Lord care about my eating, and sleeping, and playing?"

"The Lord cares for all you do, or think, or say, my dear little sister. When you gave up the ride which papa had promised you yesterday, for the sake of the poor, sick family who needed him, if you did it in obedience to Christ's command, you pleased him as truly, and showed yourself his child as really as your cousin Laura did when she left home, and friends, and country, to be a missionary."

"O, Alice, Alice!" Bessie could hardly speak more from the fast flowing tears. She had thought so much and so admiringly of her cousin's devotion. She had longed to imitate her heroism. And now to see the opportunity always at hand for denying herself for her Saviour, opened her eyes and melted her heart. When she and her little sister had closed their

talk with a prayer, Alice gave her to learn that beautiful verse, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right."—American Messenger.

"JUST MY LUCK."

"Did you get the place, John?" asked his mother anxiously.

"No, ma'am; just my usual luck; Mr. Adams had engaged a boy half an hour before."

"I am sorry you did not apply last evening, or very early this morning, as I advised," she said sadly.

"Well, but, mother, I did not suppose any other boy knew of the vacancy," he answered, as he started for school. When he reached there it lacked fully ten minutes of nine, and the boys called him to come and play ball.

"All right!" he replied; "here, girls, put my arithmetic on my desk, will you"—and he threw it hastily towards the open window.

Crash went the glass. John stopped in dismay. He knew just how much those broken panes would take out of his mother's scanty earnings.

"Just my luck," he muttered sullenly. "No, not your luck, my dear, but your carelessness," said a voice behind him; and he turned, and saw the teacher coming.

"You are too apt, John, to shield your neglect and haste under that expression. Some one says that every man is the architect of his own fortune, and if you would only grow careful and prompt, you would not complain so often of ill luck."

There are a great many Johns in the world, and I hope they will remember this too.—Congregationalist.

A SOCIAL BLESSING.

Show us an intelligent family of boys and girls, and we shall show you a family where newspapers and periodicals are plentiful. Nobody, who has been without these silent private tutors, can know their educational power for good and evil. Have you never thought of the innumerable topics of discussion which they suggest at the breakfast table, the most important public measures with which, thus early, our children become familiarly acquainted; great philanthropic questions of the day, to which unconsciously their attention is awakened, and the general spirit of intelligence which is evoked by these quiet visitors? Anything that makes home pleasant, cheerful and chatty, thins the haunts of vice and the thousand and one avenues of temptation, should certainly be regarded when we consider its influence on the mind of the young as a great moral and social blessing.—Emerson.

A MUMMY RESTORED.

Mr. Conway, the English correspondent of the Cincinnati Commercial, relates this in one of his last letters:

A gentleman of the town being in Egypt, brought back for its museum a number of Alexandrian mummies—a mummied Ibis, cat, and several heads taken from human mummies. These heads were brought in separate small boxes, and one of them in some way got soaked in salt water on the voyage. When it was opened by Mr. Leyland, a distinguished antiquary of Yorkshire, in the presence of a number of other gentlemen, they were startled—even astounded—to find that the flesh on the face had recovered its outline, the cheeks and chin were plump and rounded, the open eyes looked upon them, and even seemed to move. The gentlemen hastened to call others from all parts of the museum to observe this wonderful phenomenon. For a few minutes they beheld an unmistakably Egyptian countenance, with pleasant composed expression—the face of a man who lived at least three thousand years ago. They could only conclude that the powerful aromatic gums which had been used had arrested the decay which the salt water had now rendered possible, and which speedily set in after the head was taken from its box and wrappings. But several gentlemen who saw it have assured me that they can never forget the life-likeness of the face before the swift decay of flesh which followed. The skull was shown me, and the bone of it is remarkably white and clear, in strong contrast with the darkness of other mummy heads beside it; it is also a much finer head than usual cranologically, so that it is possible that the agent by which the Alexandrians had sought to

preserve it were unusually strong, such as would be used for a famous man. At any rate the fact I have stated is unquestionably true.

Children are children as kittens are kittens. A sober, sensible old cat, that sits purring before the fire, does not trouble herself because her kitten is hurrying and dashing here and there, in a fever of excitement to catch its own tail. She sits still and purrs on. People should do the same with children. One of the difficulties of home education is the impossibility of making parents keep still; it is with them, out of their affection, all watch and worry.—Memoir of C. W. Dilke.

LEARN A TRADE.—I never look at my old steel composing rule that I do not bless myself that, while my strength lasts, I am not at the mercy of the world. If my pen is not wanted I can go back to the type-case and be sure to find work; for I learned the printer's trade thoroughly, newspaper-work, job-work, book-work and press-work. I am glad I have a good trade. It is as a rock upon which the possessor can stand firmly. There is health and vigor for both body and mind in an honest trade. It is the strongest and surest part of the self-made man. Go from the academy to the printing office, or to the artisan's bench, or if you please, to the farm—for, to be sure, true farming is a trade, and a good one at that. Lay thus a sure foundation, and after that, branch off into whatever profession you please.

Temperance.

SWALLOWING FIFTEEN COWS.

"Swallowing fifteen cows!" said Bertie in astonishment, looking up from her play. Her ears had caught the words in a conversation that was going on in the room.

"Yes," answered her brother; "he drank them all up."

"Drank fifteen cows! I don't believe it," answered the little maiden firmly.

"He sold them, and bought whiskey and beer with the money," exclaimed her aunt Katy.

"Oh, oh, that was it. I see now. Well, it is funny."

"No, not funny, dear, but sad," said Aunt Katy. "The man had a wife and two little children, and he sold the milk from fifteen cows and bought them food and clothing. But now having swallowed the cows, as we were saying, his wife and children go hungry and cold, and he, a poor, miserable drunkard, is in the almshouse. Isn't it dreadful to think of it?"

The children looked very sober. "You'll never catch me drinking up fifteen cows, nor one, either," said George, very positively.

"I don't know as to that," replied Aunt Kate. "The man we were talking about was once a little boy like you, with a healthy taste for food, and clear, cold water. As to ever swallowing a cow, much more fifteen cows, such a thing never entered his head. But you see what he came to at last. How was it? He began by taking a glass of ale or beer, or a little wine at parties now and then. This corrupted his pure taste, and gave him an unnatural thirst which only strong drink could satisfy. After ale and beer came whiskey, rum and brandy; and the more and oftener he drank, the more his thirst increased, until he became a poor, miserable drunkard. So you see, George, that no man can tell what he may come to. Maybe, instead of swallowing fifteen cows, you will get down, one of these days after you become a man, forty or fifty cows, and a house into the bargain."

"Now, aunty, this is too bad!" exclaimed George. "You know I will not." So hundreds and thousands of little boys might once have said who, now that they are grown to be men, are drunkards. There is only one way of safety."

"What is that, aunty?" asked the boy looking up with serious eyes.

"It is the way of total abstinence, as we call it—the only way of safety for boys and men. If you never drink a drop of intoxicating liquor, you will never be a drunkard. If you depart from this rule, no man can say to how low a depth of wretchedness and degradation you may fall. The worst drunkard in the land was once a pure and innocent boy."

"I'll never swallow even a calf!" exclaimed George, starting up, and speaking with great earnestness.

"Touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing," said Aunt Kate, "and all will be well with you. But indulge ever so little in drink, as you grow to manhood, and none can tell into what depth of hopeless ruin you may fall."—Morning Star.