

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 3rd, 1876.—The Gentiles Received.—Acts x. 34-48.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 44-48.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." Isaiah ix. 3.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Acts x. 21-23. Tuesday, Deuteronomy vii. 1-8. Wednesday, Ephesians i. 15-23. Thursday, Luke iv. 13-20. Friday, Isaiah xlii. Saturday, Isaiah lx. Sunday, Isaiah lxi.

ANALYSIS.—I. Address of Peter. Vs. 34-43. II. Descent of the Holy Ghost. Vs. 44-46. III. Converts baptized. Vs. 47, 48.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 34. To what place had Peter come? In what sense is God "no respecter of persons"?

Vs. 35. Did the good character of Cornelius entitle him to salvation? Would God have rewarded him with salvation because of it? Is there any probability of anybody ever being saved without Christ? Acts iv. 12. If there is, why the need of missions? Was Cornelius really saved until he believed in Jesus?

Vs. 37. After what temptation did Jesus begin his ministry in Galilee? Luke iv. 13-15.

Vs. 43. Give some of the proof-texts of the witness of the prophets to Jesus?

Vs. 44. How did the Holy Ghost fall?

Vs. 47. Does the baptism of the Holy Ghost make baptism in water needless?

REMARKS.—We left Peter at Joppa just as the messengers from Cornelius had arrived to invite him, and the Spirit of God had commanded him to comply. The next day, taking six of his Jewish Christian associates (xi. 12) he started with the three messengers for Caesarea, and the day after arrived at that place, and met Cornelius, who, anticipating the arrival, had gathered at his house a considerable congregation of his relatives and associates, to receive and hear Peter. Peter, being introduced to the company, made a manly and brief statement of the reason of his coming, and in reply Cornelius briefly stated why he had called him. Vs. 21-23.

I. Peter's Address. Verse 34.—Of a truth I perceive. Contrasting his present with his previous view, and asserting the completeness of the change, his perfect assurance in his present position. Respector of persons. Peter had not before this regarded God as unjust, but had supposed that his justice required him to treat Jews as on a different footing from Gentiles. He had supposed that nationality had something to do with full citizenship in God's kingdom.

Verse 35.—In every nation. Not among the Jews only. The proselytes in a sense became Jews. This expression explains in part the phrase "respector of persons." See on verse 34. He that feareth him, etc. This looks to the description of Cornelius, as we have it in verse 2, and as Peter had learned it from the messengers. Vs. 22.

Verses 36, 37.—The word. The gospel. God sent unto the children of Israel. The covenant name for the Jewish nation. By Jesus Christ, Who made atonement, and thus became the perpetual meeting-place of God and humanity. The Lord of all. Parenthetical, yet most pertinent. Christ was supreme over all, and hence could be Saviour of all. Comp. vs. 42, 43. He was not a mere Jew, coming to do and die for Jews alone.

Verse 37.—That word . . . which was published, etc. Repeating the thought contained in "the word" of vs. 36, but not exactly, for the Greek terms are unlike; the one here used signifying in this connection rather "work," and designating the gospel as an historical fact which came to pass [literally, became, not "published"] in Judea. From Galilee. Whither Christ retired from Judea after John's imprisonment. Mark i. 14. Ye know. They had heard of Christ and his gospel.

Verse 38.—Jesus of Nazareth. Exactly, from Nazareth, where he was "brought up" (Luke iv. 16), and whence he went to his ministry. God anointed. Peter, unlike some of us, was not needlessly anxious lest the Deity of Christ should suffer by recognizing his distinction from both Father and Spirit. The Holy Ghost [Spirit] and with power.

The sinless perfection of Christ's life was due to his possession of the Spirit without measure, but here the reference is to the Spirit as given him for his ministry, in general and in particular, for his miracles ["power"]. Matt. iii. 16, 17. Who went about doing good, etc. The consequence and manifestation of the anointing. Here, too, we have first the general ministry, and then in particular his miracles, these corresponding to "the word" ["power"] of the preceding sentence. Because God was with him. This repeats and enforces the previous statement as to the anointing, while the importance of the fact justifies the repetition. Peter's word is essentially that of Christ, "I can do nothing of myself." "The Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works."

Verse 39.—We are witnesses. We the apostles, contrasted with ye in verse 37. Ordained and set apart for that very work. See i. 21, 22. Whom they slew and hanged on a tree. Slow by hanging. "They," the Jews, did it, thus proving that not all who were of the Jews were also of Christ, and hence that mere nationality did not determine discipleship.

Verse 40.—Him God raised. Contrasting God's work with that of the Jews, as in ii. 36, etc., and presenting Jesus as an ever living Saviour, "a very present help." Showed him openly. Giving a solid ground for rational faith.

Verse 41.—Not all the people. Not to the unbelieving Jews, as before his crucifixion. But unto witnesses, etc. Why Jesus showed himself only to his friends after his resurrection is nowhere stated, but the suggestion has been made that "it was not fitting to subject himself in his risen condition to a second rejection." Who did eat and drink with him. As is shown in Luke xxiv. 42; John xxi. 13; comp. Acts i. 3. The circle of witnesses was sufficiently large, and their opportunities for knowledge were most ample and satisfactory.

Verse 42.—He [Jesus] commanded us, etc. See i. 8. Peter is explaining that in confining their ministry to the Jews, as thus far had been done, the "witnesses" had been obeying orders. That it is he. And he only. Ordained of God. See Rom. i. 4, where the same Greek word here rendered "ordained," is translated "declared."—The Judge of quick and dead. Living and dead. Evidently looking forward to the time and circumstances described in i. These. iv. 17. This office of Judge is one which requires all divine attributes, and hence could be filled only by a truly divine Being, by him who "in the beginning" "was God." Like xvii. 30; 2 Tim. iv. 1; 1 Peter iv. 5.

Verse 43.—To him give all the prophets witness. The whole Old Testament. This is no new religion, and the Jews ought to have been prepared to receive Christ, John i. 11. Through his name whatsoever, etc. Emphasize "whoever." The future Judge is the present Saviour.

II. The Spirit's Descent. Verse 44.—While Peter, etc. God at once confirming his testimony. The Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them. This indicates the suddenness of the new power of the Spirit received by them as at Pentecost. All of them. Not including Peter and his six companions. Vs. 46. This gift of the Spirit was not for regeneration, but for the bestowment of gifts (vs. 45, 46) as on the day of Pentecost. In both cases the recipients were already the sons of God.

Verse 45.—They of the circumcision, etc. The Jewish Christians with Peter, who had not the same preparation with Peter for this revelation.

Verse 46.—They heard them speak, etc. As in ii. 1-13. Whether there were now, as then, the symbolic tongues of fire, is not said.

III. The Baptism. Verse 47.—Can any man, etc. Strictly, "anyone." The question in the Greek implies that only a negative answer can be given, and it is thus the strongest assertion that no one can forbid, that Christ himself has so clearly received the man into full fellowship that for anyone, even the most strenuous Jew, to object to give the sign of this reception would be manifest rejection of his authority. It is worthy of note that here, as ever, conversion is the condition precedent to baptism. This bestowment of the Spirit is given as a reason for baptism, only as being a very special, and the highest of evidence immediately from Christ

that the recipients were by Christ acknowledged as being his. As well as so. This "we" is emphatic, and seems to refer not simply to Jewish Christians in general, but still further to the very apostles themselves.

Verse 48.—Commanded them. That is, his attendants, according to Paul's practice. 1 Cor. i. 14. Then [after and in consequence of this full reception by baptism] prayed they him. The whole company joining in the request. So was the door opened never to be shut.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 10th, 1876.—The Spread of the Gospel.—Acts xi. 19-30.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Stranger in the School.

On a warm day, a large school of boys and girls were conning over their lessons. The teacher tried hard to keep order, to make all take to their studies, to help those who needed aid, and to make all happy. He opened the doors and the windows to give them fresh air, but all would not do. Some felt discouraged with their lessons, some felt sleepy, some felt cross, and everything seemed to drag and linger. By-and-by the heavy tread of a foot on the doorsteps was heard, and without knocking in walked a hard-faced man, somewhat old in years, but with a firm step. The children at first felt afraid of him, but they soon found that beneath his hard looks there was a bright eye, a pleasant smile and a kind heart. But instead of sitting down and staring at the school, he sat down by the side of a little girl who was trying in vain to get her spelling-lesson. There were tears of discouragement in her eyes.

"Well, what's the matter with our little one?"

"O, sir! I can't get my lesson! It's so long, and the words are so hard, I can never learn them!"

"Let us see. How many of those words are there in one column?"

"Fifteen, sir."

"And how many columns in your lesson?"

"Three, sir."

"Very well. That makes forty-five words to be learned. How many of these are easy, so that you can spell them at once? Count them."

"Twenty-five, sir."

"Then you have twenty left which you call hard. Now take the first one, look at it sharp, see every letter in it, count the letters, see just how the word looks. Now shut your eyes, and see if you can still see just how the word looks. Spell it over softly to yourself. There, now, you spelt it right. Now do so with the next word, and the next, till you have them all."

"O, sir! That is very easy. I can get my lesson now."

Then the visitor went to a boy who was puzzling over a sum in arithmetic. He was discouraged, and almost cross.

"Let us see. What's the matter here?"

"This sum, sir! I can't do it, and every sum grows harder and harder! It seems as if the man who made the book tried to see how hard sums he could put down."

"I see. Now what's the rule by which this sum is to be done? Repeat it. Very well, only you have not said it quite right. Turn to it and see. There, now, you left out one important link. You now understand the rule. Try the sum now, putting in the part you left out."

"Yes, but you must not be thinking about your ball, and kite, and play. You must give all your mind to the thing you are studying, and then it will all be easy."

The stranger next sat down by a boy who was trying to commit the declension of a noun in the Latin Grammar. Over and over he had repeated, but alas! he could not make the memory hold it. He was ready to throw down the book.

"Hold there, my boy! Don't look so discouraged. Take your pen and carefully write down that declension. See how every word is written, and what letter ends every case. There, now, is every one right? Yes? Well, shut your Grammar, turn over your paper, and on the other side write it all over again from memory. So ho! How many mistakes have you made?"

"Two, sir!"

"Very well. Put away that bit of

paper, get another, and try it again, and again, till you can write it without a single mistake. You can say it then, for writing will fix it in the memory."

Thus he went from seat to seat, and helped all. The scholars forgot the heat. They all had their lessons, the teacher smiled and praised them, and all were very happy. Just as he was leaving, the teacher thanked the stranger, and hoped he would soon call again.

"Oh!" said he, "just send for me at any time, and I will come and give any one a lift."

"Pray, sir, by what name shall we ask for you?"

"Mr. HARDSTUDY, sir, at your service!"—John Todd.

The Clergyman and the Peddler.

BY FLETCHER BATES.

A clergyman who longed to trace Amid his flock a work of grace, And mourned because he knew not why You fleece kept wet while his kept dry. While thinking what he could do more Heard some one rapping at the door, And opening it, there met his view A dear old brother whom he knew, Who had got down by worldly blows From wealth to peddling cast-off clothes.

"Come in, my brother," said the pastor, "Perhaps my trouble you can master, For since the summer you withdrew, My converts have been very few."

"I can," the peddler said "unroll Something perchance to ease your soul. And to cut short all filsome speeches, Bring me a pair of your old breeches." The clothes were brought; the peddler passed, And said, "No longer be amazed, The gloss upon this cloth is such, I think, perhaps, you sit too much. Building air castles bright and gay, Which Satan loves to blow away."

And here, behold! as I am born, The knap from neither knee is worn. He who would great revivals see, Must wear his pants out on the knee. For such the labor prayer supplies, When pastors kneel, their churches rise.

Perishable Books for Boys.

Whoever thinks "it doesn't matter much what children read" would do well to note the fact brought to light by Mr. James T. Fields upon a recent visit to Pomeroy, the boy murderer. This boy, now lying in prison under sentence of death for murder, confessed to having been a great reader of blood-and-thunder stories. He had read sixty cheap novels, all about scalping and other bloody performances; and he had no doubt these books had put the horrible thoughts into his mind which led to his murders.

If a good and attractive literature had been put in Pomeroy's hands, he might have been spared the dreadful fate of a murderer. The lesson comes with tenfold force to every Christian parent, to watch what their family reads.

The Gift of Song.

A touching story is told of a little girl sent by her parents from Spain, during a time of religious persecution there, to take refuge with some friends in England. The vessel was lost on a rock-bound coast during a severe storm; but the little girl was saved through the efforts of some heroic men. She was too young to tell her story, but by a series of providential events, was brought at last to the house of a friend of her parents, just as, released from imprisonment, they arrived in England to seek their long-lost darling. A familiar tune, that the mother had taught to her little girl in former days, became the clew that led to their joyful meeting.

A remarkable incident is that of a Scotch youth, who learned with a pious mother to sing the old psalms that were as household words to them in the kirk and by the fireside. When he grew up he wandered away from his native country, was taken captive by the Turks, and made a slave in one of the Barbary States. But he never forgot the songs of Zion, although he sung them in a strange land and to the heathen ears. One night he was solacing himself in this manner, when the attention of some sailors on board of an English man of war was directed to the familiar tune of "Old Hundred," as it came floating over the moonlit waves. At once they surmised the truth, that one of their countrymen was languishing away his life as a captive. Quickly arming themselves, they manned a boat, and lost no time in effecting his release. What a joy to him after eighteen long years passed in slavery!—Child's World.

Admiral Hope and the Swearer.

Admiral Hope's Christian firmness in rebuking swearing and improper language when uttered in his presence is familiar to many. Not many years back a gentleman in a London omnibus was using very violent language, swearing and talking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in vain, when he was quietly rebuked and requested to desist by an elderly gentleman sitting opposite. The first named having resented the interference, the old officer added, "Well, sir, I am extremely sorry you resent my words, simply requesting you to forbear insulting a very dear and precious name which I honor and love; and I can only say that if you are dead to all feeling or consideration of common courtesy, and will persist in using the language you have done, you will compel me to do that which I shall be sorry to be obliged to do."

Upon this the angry man broke out afresh and defied him, when the admiral stopped the omnibus and got out, the other watching him, expecting he would call a policeman; but seeing him walk quietly away, he remarked to another passenger about his impertinence, when the person whom he addressed asked if he knew who it was that had been induced to remonstrate with him. He replied, "No; nor do I care except that he was very impertinent for threatening me in that way." The other remarked that he was mistaken, for there had been no threat, but a meek and courteous remonstrance; that the man was a most kind and benevolent man and a gallant officer, who was quite incapable of any mean act.

"What right had he to threaten me? Did he not say he would do something if I did not desist?" said the other.

"Yes," replied the gentleman; "but that was no idle threat, and he did what he said he would be obliged to do."

"And what was that?" asked the angry man.

"Why get out and walk, which his age and infirmities would hardly allow him to do, for he spends a great part of his income in succoring the afflicted and the destitute, and he would not like to throw away even a sixpence."

"You don't mean to say that was what he meant?" asked the angry man.

"What is his name?"

"I am quite positive it was all he meant," replied the other; "and his name is Admiral Hope—a true-hearted Christian man."

The angry man looked puzzled, then thoughtful, and at last cried out, "God forgive me! What a fool I have been! Give me his address, in case I should miss him." He stopped the omnibus and jumped out to seek his faithful reprover, adding that he hoped it would make a new man of him, for he never should forget the lesson to the last day of his life. This anecdote was related by the gentleman himself, who became a humble follower of the Lord Jesus, but who has since gone to his rest, trusting only in that blessed name which he had so blasphemed and lightly spoken of.—S. S. Visitor.

But All Who Drink Do Not Become Drunkards.

"BUT ALL WHO DRINK DO NOT BECOME DRUNKARDS." I know that; but if fifty young men began to drink, some will assuredly be ruined by it. Then there is risk. Now we all desire safety and security. Suppose you desire to travel from New York to Chicago and there were two lines of road—one on which there were accidents constantly occurring; on every train some disaster, passengers killed and wounded; in short a very risky road—and on the other, never since its opening had there been the slightest accident. Which road would you take? If you are sensible, and regard your own welfare, you would take the safe one. Suppose some one should tempt you to take the risky road, by telling you how much more beautiful the cars were, and what a jolly company you would find on board the train. You would say "I care not so much for my safety. I want to be safe." Now, it is your safety we seek, when we urge you to abstain entirely from strong drink. There is no certainty that you will begin to indulge, but there is a risk.—Mr. Gough.

Two pastors, one in San Francisco and the other in Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, have exchanged pulpits "for a Sunday or two."