

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, March 5th, 1876. — God's Covenant with David.—2 Samuel vii. 18-29. B. C. 1042.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 23-26.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." Acts xiii. 23.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Samuel vii. Tuesday, Deuteronomy iv. 1-40. Wednesday, Exodus xv. 1-13. Thursday, Psalm ii. 18. Friday, Psalm lxxvi. 1-10. Saturday, Jeremiah xxxiii. 14-26. Sunday, Psalm lxxii.

ANALYSIS.—I. Expression of humility. Vs. 18-20. II. Covenant confirmed. Vs. 21-24. III. Prayer and thanksgiving. Vs. 25-29.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—Having received the ark within the folds of the tabernacle, a desire awoke in David to build a more ample and enduring temple for Jehovah. But Nathan the prophet was bidden to tell him that as he was a man of war and blood so peaceful a work would be better reserved for another. He assured him, however, that the mercy of the Lord should not be taken from him as it had been from Saul, but that a son of his own should carry on his work. David's most praiseworthy design was, therefore, not so much forbidden as postponed. In the meantime, he was to realize by conquest the prophetic extension of the boundaries of Israel made in Gen. xv. 18, 21, and to rest in the same covenant-making and covenant-keeping God who had promised after him to raise up one of his sons, whose kingdom should be established forever. 2 Sam. v. 12-17. In this covenant, Jehovah had reference, doubtless to Solomon first, but after him, by the majesty of its terms, to the Messiah himself. It was evident that David so understood it from the wonderful prayer which he poured out before God. In many of David's Psalms (Ps. ii. xlv. xxii. xvi. cx. cxviii.) there is believed to be an expressive speech that finds answer only in Him who was at once David's Son and Lord. In proof of which direct Messianic reference in the Psalms, we have the authority of apostles (Acts ii. 22-35,) and the concurrent judgment of the best scholars in all ages.

EXPOSITION.—See another record of the prayer in I Chron. xvii. 16-27. The ark was now safely in David's city, not in the old tabernacle of the wilderness, which had long been separated from the ark and may have been nearly in ruin, but in a new tent temporarily provided until the temple should be erected. Thus was the symbol of the throne of God with him at his capital, and the worship of God organized and firmly established. This David rightly regarded as the foundation of his power, and in connection with this were confirmed and enlarged to him the ancient promises of God concerning Israel, and especially concerning Judah and David's house. Vs. 1-17. Our exposition will follow the order under the heads of Acknowledgment, Supplication and Recapitulation. I. Acknowledgment.—Verse 18-24.—These acknowledgments primarily respect himself in vs. 18-22, and his nation in vs. 23, 24. Yet as David recognized his own exaltation as being, for Israel, his personal acknowledgments, have also a national bearing, just as the genuine leader in the church or in the state always regards himself, as belonging to the church or the state, and not the church or the state as belonging to him.

Personal.—The mercy of God to David respected the past (vs. 18) and the future (vs. 19), and that in both his person and his family. The greatness of God's favor to him in both respects rightly made him humble rather than proud. He saw that neither in him, nor in his family was there anything which either claimed or caused this elevation. It was of grace, not of merit, and hence boasting was excluded. Rom. iii. 27. He remembered the lowly condition of his father's family, and his own lowly condition in the family of his father. This, in vs. 19, makes in David's soul the climax of humble, amazed gratitude. The reference is immediately to vs. 13-16, which though predictive of

Solomon's reign, were and are rightly understood to look on to the greater Son of David, of whom Solomon was a type, and whose kingdom is eternal. I Chron. xvii. 19. With this brief reference to his mercies he closes, appealing in vs. 20, to God's omniscience. Vs. 21 says truly, for thy world's sake and according to thine own heart." Compare Eph. i. 3-12. Was not the gospel of Paul the gospel of David? Nay, it was the gospel of God, and hence eternally one. GRACE, GRACE, GRACE. And so thanksgiving culminates in adoration in vs. 22.

National Acknowledgment.—The transition is already begun in vs. 22, in the words "according to all that we," &c. He thinks of himself and his nation as one, with one interest, and God's mercies to him are mercies to his nation; while, conversely, God's mercies to his nation are mercies to him, and so he goes to personal favors all national favors and says, "we, all that we have heard." The dealings of God with the whole body of Christ proceed on the same principles as do his dealings with the individual members. So we have right over again in vs. 22 and 23, the same thoughts as in the preceding verses, only here it is the nation as there it was the individual. And this again is exactly the gospel of the New Testament, because it is God's gospel, and the principles of his dealings with man are from the beginning unchangeably the same.

II. Supplication.—Verse 25-27.—Now mark at the outset how much more of the prayer is thanksgiving than petition. Not that it is so in every prayer given in Scripture. See "the Lord's prayer." The occasion of David's prayer was the culmination of his prosperity, and hence his burden was that of acknowledgment. In his straits, when death stared and struck at him, his cry was mainly or wholly for deliverance (Ps. xxii.) and the like. We notice in this supplication that the glory of God's name and the glory of David's house and of Israel go together. The union of the Lord and his people is most close. And when we remember that the promise which David pleads, and thence the prayers which he offers, includes Jesus Christ and his reign, it is more easy to understand this. How interesting in vs. 27 is David's special mention of God's promise to build his house when we remember that it was in David's heart to build God a house. That is done for him on a divine scale, which he, as best he could, would fain have done for God. And so he closes the petition with the assertion that but for the great promise he could never have dared to make the great request.

III. Recapitulation.—Verse 28, 29.—Vs. 28 repeats consciously the acknowledgment, and vs. 29 the supplication. We cannot take leave of the prayer without an earnest desire to be of a like mind with David, in humility in gratitude, in adoration, in faith, and in supplication.

QUESTIONS.—What one thing does David wish now to do? What prophet tells him that he cannot do it? What reason does he assign? With what is he nevertheless to be blessed? v. 15. What is the meaning of covenant? Ans. In general, a mutual agreement, or contract, between two parties. In theology it means the promises of God made from of old to his people. What was the old Abrahamic covenant? Gen. xvii. 7. What covenant or promise does God now make to David? vs. 12-16. What son of David realized some of these blessings? In whom have they full realization? Is there any proof that David's Psalms have Christ the Messiah in mind.

Vs. 18. Where was David sitting? In what attitude probably? What grace of character does he show here and in the verse following? What is meekness? Is it absence of manliness?

Vs. 27. Sometimes we are very weak in prayer; what must we plead to be strong?

Vs. 28. How do God's words differ from men's? What is said of his covenant? Deut. vii. 9. Has he made any covenant, or promise, to sinners? Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Rev. xxii. 17.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 12th, 1876.—Absalom's Rebellion.—2 Sam. xv. 1-14.

Why Questioning Fails.

Questioning often fails in a class because the words in which the questions are expressed are not understood.

Prof. Morrison, in The Sunday-School Chronicle, in quoting this example, gives some similar ones. A clergyman asked

a class of young children "Can you tell me whether, in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit operates casually or instrumentally?" The class showed better sense than the questioner by keeping silence.

Questioning often fails of its purpose also, because the questions are too long or are too complex. In such cases they puzzle and confuse the scholar, and he remains dumb. In the lesson on Gideon's army, a teacher, and writer of American Question-Books for younger classes, asked, "What does the reason God gave for diminishing the army of the Israelites tell us about the character of God's people?" In the same lesson this question is suggested for a class of children: "Did God select those who lapped the waters because they drank in this way, or did they drink thus because God had selected them?" No teacher should be surprised if his class listened to questions of this kind without attempting to answer them.

Prof. Morrison wisely impresses this thought upon all young teachers: "Whenever you receive no answer to a question, always assume that the fault is yours, not that of the child."—Sunday-School World.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Getting up in the World.

BY ABBY MORTON DIAZ.

"Mother, do butterflies remember when they were worms and caterpillars?" inquired Natty.

"What puzzling questions you children do ask!" said his mother. "The idea never entered my head. You must ask your uncle Joe."

"Uncle Joe," asked Natty, again, "do butterflies remember when they were worms and caterpillars?"

"Why, no," said Uncle Joe. "I should say not, if all stories are true."

"What stories?" "I happened to be reading one the other day which—but stay, just hand me that book, please; the thin, square, prettily bound one. That's it. Now we'll look for the story. I forget the name. Ah here we have it. It's not a long story. Reading it will hardly take ten minutes. Listen.

A poor little worm was one day crawling slowly along the ground, seeking for food, while above her happy insects darted through the air, their bright wings flashing in the sunlight.

"Alas!" sighed the little worm. "What a toilsome life is ours! We move only by great labour and even with that can never travel far. Kept near the damp ground, liable at any moment to be crushed, toiling up and down rough stalks, eating tough leaves—for it is only now and then we find a flower. Oh, it is truly a wearisome life.

"Yet none seem to pity our sorrows. Those proud insects flitting over head the miller, the butterfly, the dragon-fly, the golden bumble-bee, they never notice us! Oh, but life goes well with them! Flying is so easy! Even easier than rest. Wherever they wish to be, they have only to spread their wings and the summer winds bear them on. Dressed out so gayly, at home with all the flowers, living on sweets, seeing fine sights, hearing all that is to be heard, what care they for us poor plodders? Selfish creatures! They think only of themselves. Now, for my part, if I had wings and could move about so easily, I would think, sometimes, of the poor worms down below, who could not fly. I would bring them, now and then, a sip of honey, or a taste of something nice from the flower gardens far away. I would come down and speak a kind word, tell them something good to hear—in short, be friendly. Oh, if one only had wings, how much good one might do. But these selfish creatures never think of that!"

Not long afterward this complaining worm was changed into a butterfly. Spreading her light wings, she passed the happy hours in flitting from field to field, rocking in the flower cups, idling about when the sunshine was brightest, sipping where the honey was sweetest. Oh, a right gay butterfly was she, and no summer day ever seemed too long! One morning, while resting upon an opening rose-bud, she saw below her a couple of worms making their slow way over the ground.

"Poor creatures!" she said. "Life goes hard with them. Dull things, how

little they know! It must be stupid enough down there. No doubt their lives could be brightened up a trifle. Some few pleasures or comforts might be given them, and I hope this will be done. If I were not so busy—but really I haven't a moment to spare. To-day there is a rose party, and all the butterfly flies are going there. Next day the grasshoppers give a grand hop, and at sun-down there will be a serenade by the crickets. Every hour is occupied. The humble-bees and hornets are getting up a concert. Then there is a new flower blossoming in a garden far away and all are flying to see it. The two rich butterflies, Lady Golden Spot, and Madame Royal Purple, have arrived in great state, and expect great attentions. The bees have had a lucky summer, and in honor of these new arrivals, are to give a grand honey festival, at which the queen herself will preside. The wasps are on the police, and will, I trust, keep out the vulgar. The gnats and mosquitoes have formed a military company, called the flying militia, and will serve if needed. It is to be hoped that no low creatures like the two creeping below, will intrude themselves. Poor things! If I had the time, I really would try to do something for them, but every sunny day is taken up, and stirring out in the wet is not to be thought of.

"Besides one meets with so much that is not pleasant in mixing with low people! Their homes are not always cleanly. I might soil my wings. And if once taken notice of, they will always expect it. Why make them dissatisfied? They are well enough off, as they are. Perhaps, after all, it is my duty not to meddle with them. In fact, I have no doubt of it.

"Here comes Miss Gossamer! Welcome, Miss Gossamer! All ready for the rose party? How sweetly you look! Wait one moment till I have washed my face in this dew-drop. The sun has nearly dried it up while I have been pitying those mean worms below there. Folly, I know, to thus waste the time. But my feelings are so tender! I actually thought of calling! What would Lady Golden Spot think, or Madame Royal Purple! Have you seen them pass? They are sure to be there. Do you suppose they will take notice of us? If they don't, I shall be perfectly wretched. Come, dear Miss Gossamer, one more sip, and then away!"—St. Nicholas for January.

The Jackdaw.

Do you know the fable of the jackdaw who dressed himself in peacock feathers? If not, let me read it to you.

Once upon a time a jackdaw found some beautiful peacock feathers lying on the ground.

He thought that if he decked himself out with them, people would admire him for his fine dress.

So he stuck the feathers in his tail, and then he went strutting to show himself off.

Do you see him as he tries to spread out his tail like a peacock! But it was of no use. He was only a jackdaw after all.

Instead of being admired by his brother jackdaws, they all mocked and jeered at him. They would not let him stay in their company; and the other birds pecked at him till they plucked off all his borrowed feathers.

He was glad to be a plain, homely jackdaw again. And when he was dying he gave this advice to his children: "Never pretend to be what you are not.

"Do not be like some boys and girls I know, who think that fine dresses will make people admire them.

"A jackdaw should not try to look like a peacock, nor a little girl to look like a fine lady."

This was very good advice to come from a jackdaw, was it not?

A Musical Heart.

A poet once inquired of Haydn how it happened that his church music was always of an animating, cheerful and gay description; to which Haydn made the following reply:

"I cannot make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts which I feel. When I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy, that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be easily forgiven me that I serve him with a cheerful spirit."

The Tough Log, and how to split it.

"Oh dear! it's enough to take off one's finger ends—such a frost," said Jane Watson, raking the embers together. "Jack, what brings you by the fire? Up and get some wood; there's never a stick left, and I'm going to bake a barley cake."

"The wood's about gone till father fetches a load," said Jack, who liked the chimney corner better than the yard.

"Don't tell me; there's that log in the corner. We shall have no more till that's burnt, depend on it. Be off and chop some."

"Chop that!" said Jack. "Yes, a nice job. "Why, it wants father to do it; and I don't believe he'd be very handy at it. Do you know how thick it is? And hard wood, too; and green besides!"

"It's no good bothering about it. If you're not quick, I shall have the fire out. When once you get the wedge in, it'll split easy enough," answered his mother. So Jack stretched himself, and moved slowly off with a grumble, by no means relishing his job.

"He's as stupid as he can be," said Jane, as she watched him from the window. "Just look, father, how he stands with his hands in his pockets, staring at the log. And now he's trying to chip off some bits of no consequence." And she went to the door and screamed out, "You'll never do any good that way; strike in, and get the wedge in, or I'll teach you something, you may be sure."

Then turning to his grandfather, who sat quietly reading, she added, "He's aggravating, I can do no good with him, and don't believe I ever shall." The old man smiled.

"Oh, it's nothing to laugh about," she said sharply. "I'm sure I do all in my power to teach him and rule him, but it's waste work; I may scold and scold, it's not a bit of good!"

"He's a tough log," said the old man. "It's just what he is," she answered. "Ah," she continued, looking through the window, "he'll do it now; he's got the wedge in."

"Have you any eggs to spare, Mrs. Watson?" said a neighbor, coming in as she spoke. "Our fowls have done laying, and they have sent down for a few from the Hall."

"Why ever did you come out this cold day, when you've been so bad? Sure, you've plenty to send," said Jane.

"The children, you mean?" replied the neighbor. "The boys are out with their father, and Mary's at school, and Bessie is minding the baby. I thought I could get quicker through the snow than she would; and she's a famous nurse."

"I'm sure I don't know how you manage with so many. I know, to my cost, children are more plague than profit," said Jane, counting the eggs into the basket.

"I should be lost without mine," said the neighbor. "They don't give me any trouble but what can't be helped, poor things; and they always wish to do what's right, I believe."

"I wish, as you go through the yard, you'd tell Jack to bring what he's got, and be quick with it," said Jane, as the door closed after her. "I don't believe in the goodness of other people's children," she said with a sneer, and looked around at her father, who, closing his book, said gently, "I know how they manage it, Jane."

"How?" she asked.

"They followed your directions to Jack," he answered.

"My directions to Jack!" she said, in surprise.

"Yes," said he, smiling again; "they get the wedge in."

"What are you driving at, father?" she asked, peevishly.

"Why, don't you see; you are forever scolding, and threatening, and faultfinding with your children. Whenever you are out of sorts, you begin to rate at them; and when they do wrong, you are angry, not for their sakes, but for your own, and they can see that."

"What's that got to do with a wedge?" she asked sullenly.

"Why, children's hearts may be likened to logs, Jane; and mostly they are like Jack's, very tough. The only way to manage them is to get into them by love; just as you said, Get the wedge in, and when once in, work on it, and every