

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Sunday, July 2nd, 1876. — David's Charge to Solomon. 1 Chron. xxviii. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 9, 10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Know thou the God of thy Father and serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Chron. xxviii. 1-10. Tuesday, 1 Chron. xxviii. 1-16. Wednesday, Ps. cxxxii. 1-18. Thursday, 1 Kings i. 5-31. Friday, 1 Kings i. 32-53. Saturday, Josh. xxiv. 14-25. Sunday, Matt. vi. 24-34.

EXPOSITION.—With this lesson we again resume the study of Old Testament history. As several years elapsed between the rebellion and death of Absalom, which formed the subjects of our last studies, and the interesting event selected for the present lesson, it will be alike proper and profitable to recount a few of the leading incidents in the life and reign of David which occurred in the interval.

On the overthrow of Absalom, the people returned to their allegiance; and the king, with royal clemency, granted a general amnesty. An unhappy dispute arose between the tribe of Judah and the other tribes as to the manner of the king's return and restoration. The northern tribes felt aggrieved because they had not been consulted in the matter. The feeling of dissatisfaction became so general that an ambitious adventurer named Sheba raised the standard of revolt, and many of the men of Israel followed him. This insurrection was quelled by the valor and indomitable energy of Joab, who, without a commission from the King, assumed the command of the royal forces.

After these two insurrections the land was visited by a severe and long continued famine, year after year, which caused great and wide-spread distress.

The civil wars and the wasting famine were followed by renewed hostilities on the part of the Philistines, led by men of gigantic stature and great personal prowess. During this war many feats of heroic valor were performed by David's warriors, and the life of the aged king on one occasion was rescued from imminent danger by the bravery of Abishai. The army of the Philistines was routed and their doughty champions slain.

David, being firmly reinstated on the throne, and the nation at peace both at home and abroad, incurred the displeasure of God by ordering a general census of the people. God rebuked this vainglorious act by sending a fearful pestilence which prevailed over the entire land, and swept away seventy thousand men.

The remaining years of the king were spent in making extensive preparations for the building of the temple, and in taking effective measures for securing the succession. Some jealousies having arisen among his sons he nominated Solomon and ordered him to be anointed and proclaimed his successor. He then called together an assembly of the leading men of state and delivered to them and to the young prince the address which forms the subject of the lesson.

Consider in order: (1) David's purpose; (2) God's plans; (3) Solomon's duty.

I. David's purpose.—As Saul was chosen by the people some time after he had been anointed by Samuel, and as David himself had been designated at Bethlehem many years before he was elected to the throne at Hebron or Jerusalem, so now, although Solomon had been already anointed at Gihon by Zadok, and hailed by the people as king, yet it was necessary that his appointment should be ratified by the representatives of the people. Hence the august assembly which the dying monarch called together, which may be regarded as "the supreme council or parliament of the nation," comprising the princes of the tribes and a great multitude of officers of the state, both civil and military (as enumerated in chapter 27, together with the members of the royal family and household.

The occasion was most affecting and solemn, similar to that when Moses addressed his parting words to the tribes

on the plains of Moab before he ascended Mount Nebo.

How deep and powerful must have been the emotions which filled the heart of the aged, enfeebled monarch as he arose to address for the last time the chiefs and nobles of the people over whom he had reigned for forty years. Before him stood many old veterans and valiant soldiers whom he had often led to victory on the battle field. Beside him stood the young prince, a son greatly beloved, into whose hand, with great confidence, he was about to place his crown and sceptre.

With what mingled feelings, too, of affectionate loyalty and reverent awe must the whole assembly have looked upon the feeble but venerable form of him whose name was associated with all that was dear either to their piety or their patriotism, and whose face they should see no more.

With fraternal benignity and affectionate tenderness the king addresses the assembly as his brethren whom he loved and his people for whom he cared, and speaks to them of a purpose which he had cherished in his heart and fondly hoped to execute, the purpose "to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant," which he styles "the footstool of our God." As the Shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence, shone, between the cherubim, over above the mercy-seat which covered the ark, the ark itself might be spoken of as his footstool. (See Isaiah lx. 13). This purpose he formed many years ago, and in proof of his sincerity and devotion "had made ready for the building" by amassing great treasure and collecting much valuable material. (See 1 Chron. xxix. 3-5). His purpose was wise, devout, liberal, and divinely approved, though he had not been permitted to carry it out (1 Kings viii. 18).

II. God's plans, (3-8).—The King in his address next refers to the divine message he received by Nathan, in which God graciously made known to him his plans for the future (2 Sam. 7: 4-17).

1. That David, as a man of war, should deliver and establish the kingdom. Notwithstanding his earnest desire and ability to build the house, he had been divinely interdicted, because God had other work for him to do, in freeing the land from foreign foes, and in placing its institutions on a firm and lasting basis. All this he had been enabled gloriously to accomplish, but in achieving this object he had caused much bloodshed, and it was meet that in more peaceful times other and bloodless hands should erect the house which for ages should typically represent the work of the Prince of peace.

2. That he should have a son to succeed him on the throne, who should accomplish his purpose in building the house.

3. That should the young king and the people be obedient and faithful they would have the pleasure he now enjoyed of transmitting a noble inheritance to their children.

Surely, a charge from such a man, in such circumstances, so solemn in manner, so important in matter and so powerful in motive must have produced a deep and lasting impression on all who heard it!

III. Solomon's Duty.—Having spoken as a sovereign to the assembled representatives of the nation, David now turns to the ingenuous and blushing youth at his side, and with fatherly affection and yearning solicitude gives him his last charge. How hushed the whole assembly; how eagerly every word was listened to as it fell from his trembling lips. The message came as a voice from heaven. How profoundly moved the heart of the young prince must have been, as the first words fell upon his ears, "Solomon my son." What a wealth of love and fearful tenderness thrilled in every accent, and gave weight to every word.

1. Know the God of thy Father. Become personally acquainted with him, as your covenant God, acknowledge and love him as thine own God. Maintain constant communion with him, and learn his mind and will. Look to him for wisdom and direction in all thy ways. Choose him for thy portion, as he has chosen thee for thy servant.

Serve him faithfully. Engage in his worship with sincerity, and obey his commands with cheerful alacrity. The only basis of acceptable service is a willing mind and a sincere heart.

3. Forsake him not. Seek him humbly, perseveringly, and in his own appointed way, and he will be to thee a father and a friend. But if thou shalt neglect his service, disobey his commands and follow other gods, he will turn from thee and cast thee off, notwithstanding the honor and favor he has shown thee. God will never cast us off while we cleave to him. The willing and obedient he will bless and keep.

Build him a house? This was to be Solomon's special work, reserved for him, enjoined upon him by the will of God and the wish of his father.

5. Be cautious. Take heed to the revealed will of God in this matter. Be solicitous to please him. Beware of self-confidence, or pride of power, or love of applause. Let nothing dissuade thee from entering upon the work, or hinder thee from prosecuting it. Let no private end and public policy divert thee from it. Give it thy personal attention and constant care.

6. Be courageous. Difficulties and discouragements may arise, opposition from various sources may be offered, but fear not; be firm in purpose, strong in resolution, to do thy duty. God is with thee and will aid thee in thy work; therefore, "be strong and do it." Watchfulness over ourselves and confidence in God are needed for successful work for God. Seek ever to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (Josh. 1: 6-9).

REMARKS.—(a.) In all service God looks at the heart. It was in David's heart to build the house and God approved the purpose. Solomon was enjoined to serve with a perfect heart.

(b.) God assigns his service to each worker. The sword was given to David, the trowel to Solomon. The ministry of the word to apostles, the service of the poor to deacons. Some sow, others reap, but if faithful all will rejoice together.

(c.) For success in service we must have courage. Confidence in God, in his word, in his work, in his promises, and in his presence.

(d.) What service are we rendering in the building of God's house. A greater than Solomon is now raising a spiritual temple. What have we done to advance that work? Are we living stones in it? Have we brought any other soul to it? Or are we merely scaffolding around it, which must be removed? God has given us all a work. "Be strong and do it."—S. S. Times.

SUNDAY, July 9th, 1876.—Solomon's Choice.—2 Chron. i. 1-17.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Pound, Sir!

The good ship lies fast at her mooring, Keel, rudder, bows, stern, spars—complete—

And white waves with eager alluring Spread ermine robes, just at her feet; A wind from the westward is speeding To lift the broad sails—but, behold! Some secret flaw still is impeding The launch of the vessel; and old, Wise builders stand speechless with wonder,

And bodings, for never before Was known this strange failure to sunder The spurs of a ship from the shore!

Yet while the whole crowd idly gaze In helpless astonishment, lo! A little lad suddenly raises

His voice, saying, Captain, I know I'm small, but then, when I'm standing— A pound, sir, I push, at the least! And running right down to the landing Before the loud laughter has ceased, The eager child presses his shoulder Against the broad side of the ship, When, presto! the slight bonds that held her,

Give way! and the supple bows dip Anon, with a free, graceful motion The waters that woo her with song; And now to the broad, boundless ocean Her strength and her beauty belong!

For you see it was only "a pound, sir," That measured, just then, the ship's need; And the brave little "wide awake" found, sir,

The right point of pleasure!—indeed, In our world, just such helpers are wanted—

Such tiny feet ready and swift, For often a child's faith undaunted The gravest of burdens may lift!

—Wide Awake.

The New Century is the name of a newspaper published by the Women's department at the Centennial. It will be devoted to matters pertaining to the trades, callings, artistic, scientific and learned professions open to women.

African Hippopotamus Hunters.

The late Dr. Livingstone, in his "Last Journals," gives the following interesting account:

"At the Loangwa of Zumbo we came to a party of hereditary hippopotamus hunters, called makombwe or akombwe. They follow no other occupation, but when their game is getting scanty at one spot they remove to some other part of the Loangwa, Zambesi, or Shiré, and build temporary huts on an island, where their women cultivate patches: the flesh of the animals they kill is eagerly exchanged by the more settled people for grain. They are not stingy, and are everywhere welcome guests. I never heard of any fraud in dealing, or that they had been guilty of an outrage on the poorest; their chief characteristic is their courage. Their hunting is the bravest thing I ever saw. Each canoe is manned by two men; they are long light craft, scarcely half an inch in thickness, about eighteen inches beam, and from eighteen to twenty feet long. They are formed for speed, and shaped somewhat like our racing boats. Each man uses a broad short paddle, and as they guide the canoe slowly down the stream to a sleeping hippopotamus not a single ripple is raised on the smooth water; they look as if holding their breath, and communicate by signs only. As they come near the prey, the harpooner in the bow lays down his paddle and rises slowly up, and there he stands erect, motionless and eager, with the long-handled weapon poised at arm's length above his head, till, coming close to the beast, he plunges it with all his might towards the heart. During this exciting feat he has to keep his balance exactly. His neighbor in the stern at once backs his paddle, the harpooner sits down, seizes his paddle, and backs too to escape; the animal, surprised and wounded, seldom returns the attack at this stage of the hunt. The next stage, however is full of danger.

"The barbed blade of the harpoon is secured by a long and very strong rope wound round the handle: it is intended to come out of its socket, and, while the iron head is firmly fixed in the animal's body, the rope unwinds, and the handle floats on the surface. The hunter next goes to the handle and hauls on the rope till he knows that he is right over the beast: when he feels the line suddenly slacken, he is prepared to deliver another harpoon at the instant when hippo's enormous jaws appear with a terrible grunt above the water. The backing by the paddles is again repeated, but hippo often assaults the canoe, crunches it with his great jaws as easily as a pig would a bunch of asparagus, or shivers it with a kick by his hind foot. Deprived of their canoe, the gallant comrades instantly dive and swim to the shore under the water; they say that the infuriated beast looks for them on the surface, and being below, they escape his sight. When caught by many harpoons, the crews of several canoes seize the handles and drag him hither and thither, till, weakened by loss of blood, he succumbs.

"This hunting requires the greatest skill, courage, and nerve that can be conceived—double armed and threefold brass, or whatever the Æneid says. The makombwe are certainly a magnificent race of men, hardy and active in their habits, and well developed, and, though not so tall as some tribes, their figures are compact and finely proportioned; being a family occupation, it has no doubt helped in the production of fine physical development. Though all the people among whom they sojourn would like the profits they secure by the flesh and curved tusks, and no game is preserved, I have met with no competitors to them except the wayeye of Lake Ngami and adjacent rivers.

"I have seen our dragoon officers performing fencing and managing their horses so dexterously that every muscle seemed strained to its fullest power and efficiency, and perhaps had they been brought up as makombwe they might have equaled their daring and consummate skill; but we have no sport, except, perhaps Indian tiger shooting, requiring the courage and coolness, this enterprise demands. The danger may be appreciated if one remembers that no sooner is bloodshed in water than all the crocodiles below are immediately drawn up stream by the scent, and are ready to act the part of thieves in a London crowd, or worse."

Eyes that see and Eyes that see not.

Here is a pleasant little letter from a teacher in South Carolina, which was mislaid for a long time, but is none the worse for the waiting:

"A friend at the North requested us to send him a boll of the 'cotton' plant for his little girl, who had never seen one. As the plant in the 'Up country' was only in bloom we decided to press some of the flowers and leaves, and send those first.

"In looking over a cotton field in bloom we always noticed that the flowers are not all of one color; in shape and appearance they are very like [the] hollyhock and althea, and some are of a cream color, others are pink, others again of a deep, rich crimson.

"I had received the impression that they were all of the same color when they first blossomed, but changed afterward, and as I wanted exact information, I made enquiries of our scholars in the Academy and of others, and was interested to notice in their answers the difference in their habits of observation.

"Some who had lived always near cotton fields could not tell anything about it, others were very positive, but so divided in their opinions that I was not likely to gain any certain knowledge; when a young girl of bright, active, observing mind, said, 'I will find out for you; a neighbor of ours has cotton; I will ask him, and will watch the plants myself.'

"In a few days she came to me with a pleased confidence in her face, and said, 'I can tell you about the cotton flowers now. I have watched the plants, and it is, as our neighbor says: 'They' first bloom a pale yellow color, in three or four hours turn a pale pink, and the day after turn a deep red.' After they become crimson the flowers soon drop off, leaving the feathery green calyx about the tiny cotton ball.

"I felt a decided pleasure in gaining certain information with regard to a fact in nature, through the careful observation of a member of our normal class of thirty teachers, upon whom we had impressed the importance of 'Object Teaching' as a means of awakening the minds, and opening the eyes of children to see the endless forms, and wisdom and beauty unfolded in nature, around them, as well as to observe many things about common objects and affairs of life that would give them a knowledge that would add to their value and effectiveness in any sphere of labor to which they might be called in future.

"In our academy we had a very pleasant exercise on birds, used as a means of discovering observing talent where it existed, and developing it where it did not. The scholars were asked to give the names of the birds of the region, and to give those of the birds most interesting to themselves, with any facts they knew about them. Of course all was enthusiasm in a moment, and everybody wanted to talk at once, but they soon learned to let each other in turn 'have the floor.' The scholars who had come from the plantations showed the most accurate habits of observation; the birds are more abundant in the country. Besides there are kinds that never appear in town. Then, too, there is less in the country to call off the attention, less to hinder a close observing of the appearance and habits of birds.

"All had their favorites, yet all agreed that the mocking-bird has not an equal. A description of some of the birds was afterward made a writing-exercise."—Advance.

MIND YOUR P'S.—Persons who patronize a paper should pay promptly, for the pecuniary prospects of the press have a peculiar power in pushing forward public prosperity. If the printer is paid promptly, and his pocket-book kept plenteous by prompt-paying patrons, he puts his pen to the paper in peace, his paragraphs are more pointed, he paints his pictures of passing events in more pleasant colors, and the perusal of his paper is of more pleasure to his people. Paste this piece of proverbial philosophy in some place where all persons can perceive it.—Exchange.

A copy of the first dispatch sent over the telegraph lines in America, has been neatly framed, and is exhibited at the Centennial.

Steeple-chasing—a pursuit followed by ambitious ministers.