

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, April 23rd, 1876.—The Early Christian Church.—Acts ii. 37-47.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 37, 38.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans x. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Matthew iii. 1-12. Tuesday, Luke xiii. 1-5. Wednesday, 2 Corinthians vii. 5-10. Thursday, 2 Chronicles xxxiii. 1-13. Friday, 1 Timothy vi. 7-19. Saturday, Matthew vi. 19-34. Sunday, Matthew xxviii. 16-20.

ANALYSIS.—I. Inquiring souls. Vs. 37. II. Peter's exhortation. Vs. 38-40. III. Three thousand baptized. Vs. 41. IV. Steadfastness and awe. Vs. 42, 43. V. Benevolence and joy. Vs. 44-47.

CHANGE IN CHARACTER OF PREACHING.

—Many have accounted for the thousands who were converted under the preaching of Peter, in comparison with the few score, or the few hundred at most, who followed Jesus, on the ground of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But the thousands who believed on the day of Pentecost received no special gift of the Spirit until after they had believed. The difference in the effect of the preaching of Jesus and in that of the apostles, was owing chiefly to the change in the character of the preaching. Jesus preached upon his incarnation, culminating in his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascended glory, in prophecy only; but the apostles had these great facts of Christianity made ready for their proclamation. It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that the effect of their preaching should have been what it was, especially as it was attended on the part of the preacher by the power and the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. Besides, the earlier preaching had been largely of a general, impersonal character. Much had been said of a "kingdom of God at hand," but the later preaching was of a decided personal character, verifying the words of Jesus concerning the work of the Spirit in the church, "He shall glorify me." Now "they cease not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ," the only "name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved." Oh, that all preachers and Sunday-school laborers would more sacredly follow the apostolic example! At all times and everywhere preaching "a Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again."

EXPOSITION.—I. Inquiring souls.—Verse 37.—Now when they heard this, i. e., Peter's discourse. Pricked in their heart. This expresses keenness of anguish consequent on a clear, sudden view of their own personal guilt. Of course the language does not imply that all the hearers were convicted; and it is according to the analogy of grace to suppose that those who had previously hardened themselves against the truth were now yet further hardened. Comp. vs. 40; vii. 54. Said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles. Peter is mentioned first and separately because he had been the speaker, and to him naturally the inquirer first turned. Men and brethren. Literally, "men brethren," and about equivalent to our "Dear Sirs"—a respectful, courteous address, and in common use. What shall we do? Peter had shown them what they had done, and how it brought to them ruin. Now they cry, Show us what we shall do to escape the ruin. They wanted to know the "way of life"—how they could be saved by Christ, what was for them to do, by what means they could receive pardon and peace. Both the Spirit and the truth are noted.

II. Peter's exhortation.—Verse 38.—Repent. Literally, "change mind," i. e., exchange that old spirit of unbelief and enmity in which thus far Christ and his words had been rejected. The word translated repent always in the New Testament refers to this radical, inward change of the central principle of moral character. And be baptized. John's baptism had come to be universally known among the Jews years before this, and as Christ and his disciples not only had received, but also continued to administer baptism to converts, of course his command would be at once understood. This baptism was immersion only, and was to follow repentance as the outward

expression of the inward change, an expression which thus made visible, and in that sense completed the change. The converts at this time seem to have been promptly immersed, showing to the church and the world of all time what was and is and ever must be the normal method. Every one of you. Each for himself, as each for himself must repent. Individual responsibility, personal relation to Christ. No man can repent for another, not even parents for a child, not even a church for its members; and so no man can be baptized for another. Nothing so separates and individualizes one as the rite of believers' baptism. It sets one apart from all mankind, full in the eye of all mankind, and also of God and angels. This "every one of you" makes the individual, not the family, the unit in the Christian church. Hence the woman not less than the man must be baptized, the child not less than the parent. Peter joins this clause concerning remission with the complete command, which gives the complete idea of discipleship. It is left to others, Scripture, and to common sense to show, that in fact one who is in Christ, though not yet baptized, is forgiven, is accepted of God. And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He refers in this not to that work of the Spirit by which one becomes a disciple, is brought to repentance, is "born again." He refers immediately to that outpouring of the Spirit of whose signs the people had been spectators, and of whose fruits the apostles and other disciples were the partakers. Just as true now as then; but not therefore true that we are as sons to have just the same form of spiritual gifts as had the apostles, viz., the power of tongues and of miracles. God's people have God's Spirit now, as of old, and now on the same principle as of old, and for the same essential ends.

Verse 39.—The promise. Given in vs. 18-21. To your children. Your descendants, i. e., to the Jewish nation in perpetuity. To all that are afar off. The heathen nations, who were from the beginning included in the promise of grace—"all the nations of the earth" to be blessed. Ps. lxxii. 11-17; Eph. ii. 13, 14. Peter afterwards was in doubt as to the manner of receiving the Gentiles into the church, not as to the fact; x. 10-48. He apparently supposed they were first to become Jewish proselytes. As many as the Lord your God shall call. "Effectually call," thus indicating who, out of all men, would actually enjoy the blessing promised. There is not a shadow of support in this verse for infant baptism.

Verse 40.—Many other words. Showing that the account here is not intended to be full. Saying, save, &c. Giving the pith of his exhortations. "Untoward," or literally, "crooked," perverse, shown in rejecting Christ. The "generation" was the Jews, as represented by Christ's murderers. Matt. xxiv.

III. The results.—Verse 41.—They that gladly received, etc. The word "gladly" is to be omitted, as not authorized. "Receiving" is here obeying—doing what was hidden. In so concise a narrative the day of the first sermon would be mentioned as gathering into it what immediately followed from it. But if they were all baptized that day, they could as well have been immersed as sprinkled, or poured, for there were plenty of pools, and it takes an administrator no longer to immerse a person in water than to sprinkle or pour water upon a person. It is surprising that intelligent men ever dreamed of using this verse as an argument for sprinkling. It shows under what lack of arguments their cause suffers.

Verse 42.—Fellowship. The same word translated common in vs. 44, and is elsewhere used of communicating, e. g. property or gifts. Breaking of bread. The Lord's Supper, coming in its natural and proper place after baptism. No evidence exists that any change of this order was permitted or even thought of in apostolic times. As to prayers, it is said that Paul prayed before baptism, and his prayer was an evidence of his fitness to be baptized. No such natural relation exists between baptism and prayer as between baptism and the Supper.

Verse 44, 45.—A temporary arrangement, as other Scripture shows. 2 Cor. viii. 13.

Verse 46, 47.—The freshness of the new divine life and its power also.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 37. What is the meaning of "pricked in the heart?" They say, "What shall we do?" Just what did they wish to know?

Vs. 38. What is to be understood by the word "repent?" What is it to be baptized in the name of Christ? If "not a saving ordinance," of what is baptism a test?

Vs. 39. To whom do the words "to your children" refer? Is there any comfort to be taken out of the verse by Pedobaptists?

Vs. 41. Was it possible to baptize so many in one day? Is the old objection of scarcity of water warranted by facts? How do you account for the marvelous results of the preaching of the apostles, as compared with that of Jesus?

Vs. 42. What four things did the early Christians at once engage in? Where have we in their act a warrant for common Christian worship? See Mal. iii. 16; Heb. x. 25.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 30th, 1876.—The Lame Man Healed.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

For the Christian Messenger.

Jottings for Boys and Girls about Missions and Missionaries.

The Chinese once thought that the world was an immense plain and that China was the centre. Whilst we all know this was a freak of fancy and far from the truth, I hope my young readers will remember that the Celestials have a history which is a wonderful record, commencing 2,852 years B. C., or 403 years after the flood, their traditional history begins, and is continued, almost without a break, until now. We are far ahead of them to-day, but maybe had not the Celestials a hand in it, we would not have been in Nova Scotia now.

There was a time when the pale-face had no compass to guide them whithersoever they would across the seas and trackless wilds, yet we are told these Celestials had the compass in use in the twelfth century before Christ, to guide them in their hunting expeditions and travelling. It was not till 1302 a traveller from China introduced the needle which always points north, and which enabled men to sail seas before unknown, and Columbus to find a western world.

They not only knew how to make gunpowder, but they also had the art of printing, which has since developed into such a mighty power for the spread of knowledge.

Yet alas, their knowledge and many inventions did not profit, not being mixed with faith in the one true God, going away from the truth, they were at last lost in the night of heathen darkness. Confucius, who lived 500 years before Christ, introduced his own philosophy respecting present things, but left no guide to the glories of eternal life. The disciples went lower than their master, for they worshipped his image. Noble as were many of the sentiments contained in his writings, they were human, faulty and deceiving. Having none of the elevating cheering influences of God's word. Pray that the 220 foreign missionaries, with their 400 and 500 native helpers, may soon bring China's millions to Christ.

I say China's millions. For "suppose that on the first day of the year 1876 you began to count, and continuously persevere day and night until the first day of the year 1888 or twelve years, you would not count four hundred millions, the number of China's population. They would form hand in hand a line long enough to reach to the moon, or encircle the earth 10 times at the equator. In this population there are about 33,000 deaths daily."

And now with two anecdotes of Mission work, I conclude my jottings for to-day.

ONLY LIVE THAT CHAPTER.—A proud East Indian Nabob, going along the streets one day, was attracted by the sounds proceeding from a Mission school, and he drew near to listen. The boys were reading the fifth chapter of Matthew. The eyes of the prince flashed with unwonted fire, and, when they finished their lesson, he exclaimed, "Well, if you only live that chapter as well as you read it, I will never say another word against Christianity."

IRON SPIKES THROWN AWAY.

—A heathen man on the Malabar coast had inquired of various devotees and priests how he might make atonement for his sin. At last he was directed to drive iron spikes, sufficiently blunted, through his sandals; and on these spikes he was to place his naked feet

and walk about 480 miles. If through loss of blood or weakness of body, he was obliged to halt, he might wait for healing and strength. He resolved to follow his directions, and undertook the journey. One day, halting under a large and shady tree where the Gospel was sometimes preached, one of the Missionaries came and preached in his hearing the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." While he was preaching the man rose up, threw off the torturing sandals, and exclaimed "This is what I want." That man became a living witness to the truth that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.

Try children and put into practice the advice of the Indian Nabob.

Yours truly,
J. F. AVERY.

Halifax, N. S.

The sad work of Scandal.

1 Sam. xxiv. 9.

A whisper broke the air—
A soft, light tone and low,
Yet barb'd with shame and woe;
Now might it perish only there,
Nor farther go!

Ah me! a quick and eager ear
Caught up the little meaning sound?
Another voice has breathed it clear,
And so it wandered round
From ear to lip, from lip to ear,
Until it reached a gentle heart,
And that it broke!

A little deed but a good one.

Little Ellie found a thirsty flower by the side of her path. She thought it needed water, and so she went with a big pitcher and poured a little stream gently upon it. It was a very little thing to do, and yet it was a very good thing. If the flower had not had some water, it might have drooped and died, but when the water fell upon it, it revived and grew, and all the Summer long it sent out sweet perfume and showed bright blossoms that pleased everybody that looked at it.

A great many good deeds are just as simple as this. It is the kind words and bright smiles that make people happy often. They are worth more, sometimes, than great speeches or rich gifts, and any little boy or girl can give them.—
Apples of Gold.

I would not be a bee to roam,
Seeking the sweetness far from home
With which to fill my honey-comb;
Nor would I be a red rose, born
With many a hidden cruel thorn,
Where children's fingers might be torn.
But I would simply choose to be
A little child at mother's knee,
Of years that number one, two, three,—
O that is far the best for me!
St. Nicholas.

A Dog Story.

A Radnorshire lady, who was married in March and came to reside in Yorkshire, recently paid a visit to her father, who, before she was married, had kept two or three sheep-dogs, of which she was very fond. Since then he has retired from business and disposed of all but one dog. This one met the lady with demonstrations of great delight upon her arrival at her father's house, and that night the dog went a distance of seven miles to a farm-house where one of the other dogs had been sent (the latter was blind but kept as being an old favourite). In the morning when the lady went to the door she saw not only the dog which had given her such a glad reception the day previously, but also the blind one; which had evidently been brought by the other dog to welcome her. When the second night came the old blind one was taken back to its home by the same dog, which afterwards returned, having travelled a distance of twenty-eight miles to give pleasure to the old blind one.—
Land and Water.

Beware of evil thoughts. They have done great mischief in the world. Bad words follow, and bad deeds finish the progress. Watch against them, strive against them, pray against them. They prepare the way for the enemy of souls.

Truths hang together in a chain of mutual dependence; you can not draw one link without attracting others.

Money and time are the heaviest burdens of life, and the unhappiest of all mortals are those who have more of either than they know how to use.

A waist of time—The middle of the day.

The Centennial Exhibition.

PROGRESS IN THE MACHINERY DEPARTMENT.

Philadelphia is being invaded by an army of mechanics and exhibitors in preparation for the grand display to commence next month. The following description of its present appearance is from the latest number of the Scientific American.

The commencement of the period of hustle and tussle, such as has been more than once predicted in these columns, is at hand: and Machinery Hall and its offshoots are now a very pandemonium of iron, wood, brick, stone, and mortar, in every conceivable shape and position. Heaped up in the most indiscriminate manner may now be seen monstrous castings and forgings, belonging to such mighty engines as steam hammers, rolling mills, etc.; and they lie about the floor in a manner as though some Titan, in mockery of all human effort, had carelessly dropped the ponderous objects in this way to thwart the toiling mites who tug at them all the day to bring them into place; and one might pass on in full conviction that busy man had here overreached himself in his attempt to master these unwieldy masses and bring out of such chaos by the 10th of May, if it were not for those modern and veritable titanic aids, the steam cranes, three of which are now constantly at work lifting heavy objects into place. One of these machines picks up a 10 ton piece of iron and whirls about on its vertical axis with it, to deposit it where wanted, or moves off to the desired spot with the piece of metal hanging from its extended arm, with all the ease imaginable. Much of this kind of material as there now is upon the floor, car load upon car load continues to arrive almost hourly. As an earnest of what may be expected within the next two weeks, it may be stated that eighty car loads of material arrived on the grounds on Saturday last. In view of such facts, we may well believe that before the whole is in its destined place, many figurative corns will be trod upon and some peculiarly centennial anathemas be added to the language. Mixed up with such ponderous objects as the foregoing may be seen, here and there, a fancy little show case occupying its half dozen square feet of floor, and others of greater size and pretensions looming up in all their majesty of polish, gilding and ornate carving; and one is led to wonder how their present high state of finish is to be preserved amid an assembly which may be described as the furniture of some huge smithy.

Some of the "early birds"—to whom we give all credit—have their exhibits finished, and they can look on at their more tardy confreres with all the complacency of a man with an umbrella among his friends caught in a heavy shower without any.

The Japanese mechanics have finally entombed themselves in their new abiding place, for any one of them is now rarely to be seen outside of that structure. The clatter going on within, however, gives note that they have by no means ceased their labors. They have expressed themselves as considerably astonished which must, however, have been in the form of words or gestures for their immobile visages seem incapable of any such expression—at the rapidity with which the "Melican man" erects his large and handsome buildings, and they rather feel themselves in the shade in this respect. At the beginning of their labors, a large and curious throng was always to be found observing and criticizing the tools and methods of the "Japs" and no doubt gave the foreigners the impression that they were creating a grand excitement among, and imparting much valuable knowledge in the building line to, the American mechanics and architects. If such has ever been their state of mind on that subject, they have evidently become disabused of it; for not only have they expressed their surprise at the rapidity of our workmen, but they now look upon their own chosen instruments as inferior to ours: as is instanced in the fact that Mr. Henry Disston, saw manufacturer of this city, has received an order from them for 900 hand saws to be sent to Japan. In the operation of such tools as planers and saws, their cutting is done by pulling the tools towards them; but they are evidently coming to the conclusion that a little American "push" is the best.