

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, April 2nd, 1876.—The Ascending Lord.—Acts i. 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 9-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—Luke xxiv. 51.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, John vi. 47-62; Tuesday, John xx. 11-17; Wednesday, Eph. iv. 1-13; Thursday, 1 Pet. iii. 18-22; Friday, Phil. ii. 1-11; Saturday, Ps. 24. Sunday, Rev. xxii.

ANALYSIS.—I. Acts linked to the Gospel. Vs. 1-3. II. Promise of the Father. Vs. 4, 5. III. Closing Interim. Vs. 6-8. IV. Ascension. Vs. 8-12.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.—In the opening scenes of the Acts of the Apostles we have the real and inward continuing and reappearing of Christianity. It is this reversal of the world's judgment concerning Christianity that welds the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles into unity. It shows their fitness to succeed each other. It shows the expediency (John xvi. 7) of Christ's going away personally from the earth, and the reason for the limitation of his teaching (John xvi. 12) in the marvelous endowments given to believers, by the Holy Ghost, related chiefly to their inner experience and life, constituting an entirely new system of spiritual instruction and guidance, not only for Peter, but in turn for Stephen and John and Paul, for the founding and development of the Church, and for the advance and perfection of the inspired word. The ship is not wrecked, as men supposed, nor has it lost its way. It still sails on, an unseen hand directing its course. The Lord is at her helm.

THE BOOK OF ACTS was written in Rome about A. D. 63 by Luke, the author of the Gospel by this name; a Gentile, possibly a native of Antioch; a faithful companion of Paul. Col. iv. 11, 14. It was written, with little formality but great comprehensiveness of design, for Christian readers, Jews or Gentiles, out of a large knowledge of apostolic movements, especially under Peter and Paul, gained from report and observation. The Gospels have presented Jesus in his manifestation. The Acts follow to show how he was preached to the world. It only remains, then, for the Epistles to show how he was taught to the Church.

Note upon the Forty Days.—Jesus remained forty days upon the earth after his resurrection, even as Moses had forty days in Sinai, as Elijah had forty days in the wilderness, as he himself had forty days in the wilderness when tempted of the devil. In these forty days the New Testament gives us record of ten appearances to his disciples; five on the day of his resurrection—to Mary, to the other women, to Peter, to the two disciples, to the ten; the sixth one week later, the seventh by the Sea of Galilee, the eighth on the mountain side of Galilee, the ninth to James (1 Cor. xv. 7), the tenth and last on the day of his ascension.

Note upon the Ascension.—In the same mountain where the Saviour had his agony he had his ascension to glory. Such is the divine chequer-work of our religion, it offsets shade with light. "Depressed before advanced, crucified before enthroned, passing through the valley of tears to the region of eucharist and hallelujahs."—South. So the great apostle puts it, with whose life and labors the Acts of the Apostles deals very largely. "He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Yet very little attention, comparatively speaking, is given to Christ's ascension into heaven. If we stop at Calvary in our thought, we do not exhaust the curse of death. For this we must have a resurrection. If we stop at the resurrection, we do not restore redeemed human nature to the honors and felicities of a paradise regained. For this we must have an ascension of our risen but human Lord into heaven.

EXPLANATIONS.—(1.) Theophilus, "friend of God;" a man of rank, but not a Jew nor a resident of Palestine, possibly of Rome (Luke i. 3); began both to do, etc., initiatory, as some think, to what he should do after his ascension by his apostles. (2.) taken up, into heaven is

understood, the abbreviation showing the familiarity of men with the fact: through the Holy Ghost—i. e., by his influence upon Christ's human nature guiding it. Still, Christ gave the commandments, and not the Holy Ghost; commandments. See Matt. xxviii. 19. (3.) infallible proofs, convincing manifestations, not admitting a shadow of doubt, having the strongest possible proof; seen of them, not yet, however, as a glorified body. Luke xxiv. 39. (4.) of the Father (see Joel iii. 1, 2); heard of me, John xv. 26. (5.) with water, the element by which; with the Holy Ghost, "in the Holy Ghost."—HACKETT. (6.) to Israel, fulfilling a temporal expectation. (7.) he said, not pronouncing their hope to be wholly false; for you to know, therefore, bridle your curiosity. And you too, ye modern prophetic interpreters; hath put, or kept for his own sovereign exercise. (8.) But, a happy transition from what is denied to what is granted; power—i. e., all needful efficiency; shall be witnesses. "The apostles were not to be prophets of the future, but witnesses of the past." (9.) spoken these things, with an added blessing (Luke xxiv. 50, 51); taken up—i. e., into the air, not yet into heaven, the commencing ascent only; received him, closing the scene to human view. (10.) stood, literally, "were standing;" shall so come, to be taken literally, and not allegorically. So the early Christians took it, and we do not think they were mistaken. If their longings were too ardent, our indifference may be too careless and cold. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

QUESTIONS.—Who wrote the Acts? From whom did he derive his knowledge of the events he describes? At what place did he write it? At what time? For what readers? What have you to say of the place of the Acts in the book of inspiration?

- Vs. 1. Who was Theophilus?
Vs. 2. What words are to be understood after "taken up," and why? What commandment in particular?
Vs. 3. How strong were these "infallible proofs"? Did the disciples during these forty days look upon a glorified Christ? How many appearances did he make to them during these days?
Vs. 4. Through whom hath the Father made this promise?
Vs. 6. What were the ideas of the disciples in asking this question?
Vs. 7. What did Christ forbid? To whom do his words now apply?
Vs. 8. What happy transition do we have in this word "But"? Meaning of "power"? What are the apostles to be pre-eminently?
Vs. 9. What was the order of the ascension?
Vs. 10. How are the words "shall so come" to be taken? If the early Christians were too ardent touching the second advent, what are we? What does the ascension of Christ give us sublime assurance of?

SUNDAY, April 9th, 1876.—The Day of Pentecost.—Acts ii. 1-11.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

The Little Rill.

A little rill, Ran down a hill, A cunning little pond to fill; Sped on its way, To dance and play, Turned to a stream both bright and gay. Onward it hied, And boatmen plied, Their oars to row against the tide. It larger grew, And I'll tell you, That boats sailed on it not a few. But then it took a silly notion, To go on with a swifter motion, And stop not till it reached the Ocean. —Olive Branch.

Baby's Skies.

Would you know the baby's skies? Baby's skies are mamma's eyes. Mamma's eyes and smiles together, Make the baby's pleasant weather. Mamma, keep your eyes from tears, Keep your heart from foolish fears, Keep your lips from dull complaining, Lest the baby think 'tis raining. —St. NICHOLAS.

Cold Gray Stones.

Two "cold gray stones," cousins of mine, live in a great tiresome city. The wind brought the story to me, and so you may be sure it is all true. These cousins were part of the back yard of a wretched little house, and in the wretched little house lived a pale, blue-eyed child.

The poor child had never seen anything growing but the straggling grass, that tried to force its way up here and there in the dirty streets, and she never caught but a glimpse of the blue sky, because all the rest was hidden by the tall gloomy houses around her.

"O dear!" said one of my cousins to the other, one day, "how I wish she could see a flower!" when along came the Wind in a great hurry, as he almost always is.

"Puff! puff!" said he, "how hot you are here. How do you do?" "Same as ever," said my cousin; "but what are you carrying?"

"A few seeds," answered the Wind, "I picked up miles from here, and I'm looking for some good, rich earth to drop them on."

"Dear Wind," said my cousins, "do drop some here."

"Here!" said the Wind, and he laughed until the wretched little house shook. "What good would they do here? I see plenty of dirt—ha! ha! ho! ho!—but no earth—ho! ho! ha! ha!"

"There is a crevice between us," said my cousin, "where there is a little earth (do stop for a moment and look, dear Wind), and we think a flower might grow there. Please give us one seed, and we will hide it from the birds, and watch it carefully until it grows to gladden the heart of the pale, blue-eyed child."

"All right," said the Wind, and he blew a seed in the crack, between the "two cold gray stones," and then fled, laughing, around the corner.

And the seed took root, and sent up two bright green leaves, to tell the stones that there was more on the way, and the blue-eyed child, coming into the back yard to look at the patch of sky, one morning, spied them and clapped her little hands with gladness.

And from that day, as the plant grew and grew she became happier and happier; and when a fragrant purple white flower opened to the sun, her joy knew no bounds. And with each succeeding blossom came new joy, and so the child was happy all summer long. And my cousins looked on and were well content.

My sermon is finished. I suppose you know the greatest writer that ever lived said we stones could preach.

"Yes, sir. He said there were sermons in us. You have got to acknowledge that, if you do call us "cold gray stones."—Christian Weekly.

Always Summer There.

We know a very little Boston boy who goes every summer to his grandfather's in New Jersey, where he makes friends with the cows and horses, and plays out of doors with more freedom than he can possibly have in the city. The place is a paradise to him.

The winter in Boston has hung rather heavy on our young gentleman's hands; growing a little restless one stormy day, he exclaimed, "Oh dear, I wish I was at grandpapa's so I could play out of doors!"

"But," replied his mother, "you could not play out of doors at grandpapa's in winter."

Well would it be for all children if they would have one spot to remember through life "where winter and storms never come." They will all have enough coldness and hardship to endure in life, so it should be the endeavor of parents and grandparents to give them as much "summer" as they can in childhood, and to make their homes resemble, as nearly as anything on earth can do, the real home beyond, in the land where eternal summer reigns.

The little fellow looked up into her face with surprise, and exclaimed, "Why, it's never winter at grandpapa's! It is always summer there!"

He had never seen the dear place with leafless trees and snow clad fields, and thought it remained always as he left it,—bright with verdure and flowers and birds.

He was mistaken in one sense, but his innocent ignorance showed that the love he met at "grandpapa's" had thrown a summer beauty round the spot, which will go with him through life, and be a beautiful picture to look back on in the years to come.—Watchman.

A waist of time—The middle of the day.

Neighbor's Thistles.

A person was once walking with a farmer through a beautiful field, when he happened to see a little thistle on the other side of the fence. In a second, over the fence he jumped, and cut it off close to the ground.

"Is that your field?" asked his companion. "O, no!" said the farmer, "bad weeds do not care much for fences, and if I should leave this thistle to blossom in my neighbor's, I shall have a plenty of my own."

Evil seeds in your neighbor's field will scatter seeds of evil in your own; therefore every weed pulled up in your neighbor's field is a dangerous enemy driven off from your own. No man liveth or dieth to himself. All are linked together.

Sages of old contended that no sin was ever committed whose consequences rested on the head of the sinner alone; that no man could do ill and his fellows not suffer. They illustrate it thus: "A vessel sailing from Joppa carried a passenger, who, beneath his berth cut a hole through the ship's side. When the men on the watch expostulated with him, 'What doest thou, O miserable man?' the offender calmly replied, 'What matters it to you? The hole I have made is under my own berth.'"

This ancient parable is worthy of utmost consideration. No man perishes alone in his iniquity; no man can guess the full consequences of his transgression.

Learn a Trade.

I want to ask of you boys, what you expect to make of yourselves? Have you any fixed plan? If not, then learn a trade. Look at the hundreds of young men in the cities who have no trade. What good are they? What good do they do the community at large? If they lose their position what have they to depend on for a living? Nine out of ten never get rich; they live on from hand to mouth, trying all their lives to make both ends meet. I tell you, boys, the man who has a trade is independent. He can always find work, if he is honest, skilled and industrious. No fear of his being poverty-stricken. Why was the Relief Association started? To help the men who have? No, sir. It is to help those men and the widows of those men who never learned a trade; who lived from hand to mouth when alive, and when they died left their widows and children in poverty.

Learn a good trade, and you need never call any man master. Suppose you go to a strange city for work, don't you think, if you learn a trade, you can get work sooner than without one? Learn a trade and be master of it, and when dull times come, as they sometimes do in winter, you will find how much better off you are than the clerks and other young men who have no trade to back them.—Farmer's Union.

Catching Cold.

Many of the colds which people are said to catch commence at the feet. To keep these extremities warm, therefore, is to effect an insurance against the almost interminable list of disorders which spring out of a "slight cold." First, never be tightly shod. Boots and shoes when they fit too closely press against the foot and prevent the free circulation of the blood; when, on the contrary, they fit with comparative looseness, the blood gets fair play, and the space left between the leather and the stockings is filled with a comfortable supply of warm air. The second rule is, never sit with damp shoes. It is often imagined that unless they are positively wet it is not necessary to change them. This is a fallacy, for when the least dampness is absorbed into the sole it is attracted nearer the foot itself by the heat, and thus perspiration is dangerously checked. Any person may prove this by trying the experiment of neglecting this rule. The feet will become cold and damp after a few moments, although on taking off the shoes and warming them they appear quite dry.

A little five-year old Wisconsin boy was heard saying to his little brother, "I know what Amen means. It means, 'you mustn't touch it.' Mamma told me so." Which was his childish but literal interpretation of "so let it be."

April.

I listen for the voice of song, And hear a murmur in the trees Of April in a fitful breeze, Who says the growing wings are strong.

Rise! Burn thy winter robe to-day! Thus did the poet Omar sing: The bird of Time is on the wing, He flutters but a little way.

Behold the dawning of a voice! Hold hard the sorrow of thy heart, For music keener makes the smart; The singer waits not on our choice.

In the new dawn I hear his note; He lingers while the roses blow, Then goes—oh, where?—I do not know On what bright waves my darlings float. —A. F., in Harper's Magazine for April.

The value of Taet.

Frederick Douglass was travelling with a friend of another color in a part of the country where public sentiment was bitterly hostile to the association of colors. They stopped at a tavern and dined together, at which spectacle the village, growing and grumbling about the stove in the bar-room, was immediately disposed to mischief. The bar-room philosophers were sadly troubled for the honor of their color. "What business has a white man to be traveling and eating with a nigger, anyhow? If he doesn't know what's decent, we'll teach him." The crowd was, indeed, very anxious to give the offender a few summary lessons in decency. They were like duellists, who having a ludicrous conceit that they know what honor is. Douglass slipped out quietly, and, returning after a while, he remarked to his companion, in a good-humored way, that he had just seen a very singular sight in the stable; and the crowd turned to hear what it was. You'll hardly believe it," said Douglass, addressing his companion as if there were no one else in the room, "but I gave my white mare and your bay horse four quarts of oats each, and there they are, eating side by side as quietly and contentedly as if they were of the same color! 'Tis most extraordinary!" He did not laugh nor wink, but made his remark with a simple sincerity that was irresistible. There was a moment of silence. Then came the echo. Human wit had spoken, and a human heart answered. "What cussed fools we are!" said one of the crowd, sentimentally; and a loud laugh followed, which scattered like a burst of sunlight the gathering cloud of mischievous intention. A little tact had been a hundredfold more effectual in melting a prejudice than a series of solemn lectures.—EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR, in Harper's Magazine for April.

What babies are all our "oldest" papers beside the venerable Pekin Gazette. It was born full grown, and has never had any new clothes. It is a ten-page paper with a yellow cover. It has no continued stories, no advertisements, no marriages, no deaths, no editorials, no subscribers; in short, no modern improvements. It contains simply the official notices of the Government. We have met some people whom we think the Pekin Gazette would just suit.—Exchange.

TEMPERANCE.

For the Christian Messenger.

The inebriate.

Man was made by his Creator to be a ruler over all other created objects; and how happy a lot were his if he would enjoy the blessings and comforts God has given him; health, friends, the air we breathe, and the pure crystal water so bountifully bestowed. But man is not contented with this and has invented a drink which has a tendency to sink its victim down to the lowest forms of degradation and woe.

This downward road is not travelled in "a day" it is begun by taking the first social glass, this leads to another and so on till the once respected youth is a frequent visitor at the lowest of grogeries, and often wakes up from a long sleep in the gutter only to rush madly on for drink which adds to the fire of the nether world already kindled within.

Friends interpose to save him; a mother's prayers, a sister's earnest, tearful entreaties are all unheeded. Much as he desires to reform, he cannot overcome the cravings of his acquired appe-