

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, February 27th, 1876.—The Ark brought to Zion.—2 Sam. vi. 1-15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 3-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation." Psalm cxxxii. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Samuel vi. Tuesday, 1 Chronicles xiii. Wednesday, 1 Chron. xv. Thursday, 1 Chron. xvi. Friday, Hebrews ix. 1-14. Saturday, Psalm cxxxii. Sunday, Ps. xxiv.

ANALYSIS.—I. Assembly called. Vs. 1. II. Going to Kirjath-jearim. Vs. 2. III. Ark brought away. Vs. 3-5. IV. Uzzah smitten. Vs. 6-8. V. David afraid. Vs. 9-11. VI. Ark at Jerusalem. Vs. 12-15.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—So powerful is the effect of the capture of Jebus upon the surrounding nations, that Hiram, king of Phoenicia, sends at once messengers, with offers of artificers and of material for constructing for David upon Zion a royal palace. The house of Saul is quiet; the Philistines are routed; David is established in his palace at Jerusalem. Long, sleepless nights does David pass in thinking of the ark's removal from Kirjath-jearim, in the woods, just on the outskirts of the hills of Judah. Here it has been in exile nearly fifty years. Saul seems not to have cared for it. For the transport of this precious relic a great assembly is called from the extremest north to the extremest south. The king himself goes at the head of his army to restore the symbol of the ancient religion, followed by thirty thousand from all Israel to escort it on its way. The act of David is in the interest of true religion, whose sacred symbol of the Divine presence has been too long neglected. At last the solemn procession reaches Jerusalem. The gates of the ancient fortress lift up their heads. The symbol of the presence of the King of Glory enters in. Ps. xxiv. 8, 9.

EXPOSITION.—See for a parallel account 1 Chron. xiii, xv, xvi. The interest centres in the ark, as representing God's throne, and hence the seat of his law, his judgments, and his power. It will be well to recall at the outset the description of the ark, as given in Exodus xxv. 10-30. Remembering that a cubit is one foot and a half, the size and form will be at once in mind, and thus the present narrative be made more vivid. The narrative falls into four divisions, viz.: The first removal of the ark from Baale, its profanation, its detention with Obed-edom, and its final removal.

I. THE FIRST REMOVAL.—VERSES 1-5.—The preparation. Vs. 1, 2. This includes the assembling of the nation's representatives, and the march to Baalah. The representatives had before assembled at David's inauguration as king of all the tribes. Vs. 1-3. Hence the word "again" in vs. 1. See a fuller statement in 1 Chron. xiii. 1-5. The fact that all the tribes were represented by so many and so eminent men, shows the importance attached to this event in its relation to David's rule and the national life. The ark was, by God's own appointment, the centre of divine service as appointed by himself. As vs. 2 says, God's name was connected with it; and the treatment accorded it, whether of honor or dishonor, God regarded as accorded to him. For seventy years, ever since the death of Eli, whose death, as we learned in a former lesson, was caused by the report of its capture by the Philistines, it had failed to receive due honor. 1 Sam. iv, especially vs. 18. Compare 1 Sam. v, vii. 1, 2. Baale, written also Baalah, the same as Kirjath-baal, and Kirjath-jearim (Josh. xv. 60), was in the hill-country, near the corner of junction of the territories of Dan, Benjamin and Judah. Josh. xv. 9; xviii. 14, 15. Kirjath means city, and jearim forest. Baal, or Baalah, was the ancient name, and probably indicated that Baal had formerly a sanctuary there.

The transportation. Vs. 3-5. They set the ark of God upon a new cart. "New," as in honor of the ark. It was well to show honor, but it had been well if David had shown the honor of obedience, and caused the ark to be borne as God commanded and provided. Num. iv. 5-15. He rather imitated the Philistines, whose method God accepted

because it was the best thing that they, as Philistines, could do in the emergency. 1 Sam. vi. 7-15. "To the law and to the testimony," not to human traditions and heathen practices. This is a rule as needful for us as for David, and applies to things small and great—to the conduct of life and the constitution of a church. To the house of Abinadab, a Levite, the ark had been taken seventy years before, and it is not likely that he was now living if indeed he was when the ark was taken to his house, though naturally the house was still called by his name. It seems from 1 Sam. viii. 1, 2, that Eleazar was the son in whose keeping the ark was originally placed. It was the Levites' duty to carry the ark, but not to drive the cart. The word translated "played," in vs 5 means "danced," i. e., to the music. It was the expression of joy; and that the king and the chief men of all the tribes joined in this shows their deep interest in the transaction. On all manner of instruments of fir-wood. The word here translated "cornet" was rather the Latin *sistrum*, "an instrument with bells or rings, which gave sound by being shaken." Rich describes it as consisting of a number of metal rods inserted into a thin, oval frame of the same material. To this a short handle was attached, by which it was held up and rapidly shaken.

II. THE PROFANATION.—VERSES 6-8.—They were going in a direction somewhat south of east, toward Jerusalem. The whole distance was doubtless less than ten miles. "Nachon's threshing-floor" is, in 1 Chron. xiii. 9, called Chidon's, whether because it was known by both names, is not certain. "Threshing-floors," so called, were simply circular spots of earth, some fifty feet in diameter, made level and beaten down hard, on which was spread the grain over which oxen were driven, sometimes drawing a rude plank-drag, to help in beating out the grain. See Ruth iii. 1-5. The sin of Uzzah was in breaking an explicit command of God, which forbade the bearers to touch the ark on pain of death. Num. v. 15. His immediate motive was to save the ark; but God would have obedience—first, last, and always. The servant best honors the Master by obeying. The sin of Uzzah in this was not unlike the sin of David, and all associated with him, in removing the ark in a way of their own choosing, to the neglect of God's way. The word translated "displeased," in vs. 8, is the same with that translated "was kindled," in vs. 7. In God, it was righteous displeasure at the sin. In David, it seems to have been a mixed feeling of grief, fear, shame and indignation. The dance and joy were suddenly interrupted by the judgment, and David was made to see that, with Uzzah, all of them had failed and sinned. A lesson for those who feel free to modify the ordinances and commands of God on grounds of expediency and policy.

III. THE DETENTION.—VERSES 9-11.—The fear of David can well be understood in view of what has just been said. In his consciousness of sin and want of preparation to meet God's requirements, he dared not take the ark to his city. He left it with one who was a Levite, of the tribe of Merari (1 Chron. xvi. 38), a porter and harper (1 Chron. xv. 18, 21). This detention gave David time to arrange for divine service, and it gave God time to show, through his blessing upon Obed-edom, that blessing was connected with his service, and that disaster came only from disobedience.

IV. THE FINAL REMOVAL.—VERSES 12-15.—From 1 Chron. xv. 1-24, we learn with what care David arranged to put the service of God in the hands of God's appointed ministers. Very unlike was this to his first arrangement to move the ark. Fear and repentance issued in confidence and gladness. Vs. 12. The City of David, or Jerusalem, was properly made the place of worship, because the Hebrew government was a theocracy, and God's worship should centre at the seat of his law. The sacrifice mentioned in vs. 13, was of seven bullocks and seven rams. 1 Chron. xv. 26. The "paces," or, literally, steps of marching, are by some thought to have been measures, of a certain length not known. The offering was a perfect one (seven) in honor of God—a thankful recognition of his favor. The linen ephod, or mantle is mentioned to show that David appeared as worshipper rather

than king. God was king, and David only his servant.

QUESTIONS.—What did Hiram, king of Phoenicia, do for king David? After being established as king in Jerusalem, to what did David at once give his thought? Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5. Where now was the ark? What was its form and measure? Ans. It was an oblong chest, 2½ cubits long by 1½ cubits broad and deep. How long was a cubit? Ans. About 18 inches. With what was it covered, and what did it contain? Heb. ix. 4, 5. What was the customary shout when the ark moved forward? Psalm lxxviii. 1.

Vs. 1. Who were these thirty thousand? Vs. 3. How ought the ark to have been borne? Vs. 6. Describe an Oriental threshing floor? What was Uzzah's sin? Vs. 8. What was probably allied with David's grief? Vs. 10. Why did David stay the progress of the ark? Vs. 12. How long did the ark remain with Obed-edom? Vs. 13. Why stop for sacrifice at the distance of six steps? Vs. 14. Where was the ark placed in Jerusalem? 1 Chron. xv. 1.

ABRIDGED FROM THE BAPTIST TEACHER. SUNDAY, March 5th, 1876.—God's Covenant with David.—2 Samuel vii. 18-29.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

"The Penny ye meant to gi'e."

There's a funny tale of a stingy man Who was none too good, but might have been worse, Who went to his church on a Sunday night, And carried along his well-filled purse. When the sexton came with his collection plate, The church was but dim with the candles' light; The stingy man fumbled all through his purse, And chose a coin by touch and not sight.

It's an odd thing now that guineas should be So like unto pennies in shape and size. "I'll give a penny," the stingy man said; "The poor must not gifts of pennies despise." The penny fell down with a clatter and ring! And back in his seat leaned the stingy man. "The world is so full of the poor," he thought, "I can't help them all—I give what I can."

Ha! ha! how the sexton smiled, to be sure, To see the gold guinea fall in his plate! Ha! ha! how the stingy man's heart was wrung, Perceiving his blunder, but just too late! "No matter," he said, "in the Lord's account That guinea of gold is set to me. They lend to Him who give to the poor; It will not so bad an investment be."

"Na, na, mon," the chuckling sexton cried out; "The Lord is na cheated—He kens thee well; He knew it was only by accident That out o' thy fingers the guinea fell!" "He keeps an account, na, doubt, for the poor; But in that account He'll set down to thee Na mair o' that golden guinea, my mon, Than the one bare penny ye meant to gi'e!"

There's a comfort, too, in the little tale— A serious side as well as a joke; A comfort for all the generous poor, In the comical words the sexton spoke. A comfort to think that the good Lord knows How generous we really desire to be, And will give us credit in His account For all the pennies we long to "gi'e."

How the Cats kept the Family.

BY MRS. BRADLEY. There was once a little lame boy who was not able to go to school, or to work; and to amuse himself he had nothing but a family of cats. He was allowed to keep these, just because it cost little or nothing to feed them, as the old barn of a house in which they lived was overrun with rats and mice; and then the mother was glad to see her poor boy occupied with anything. He was not able to walk a step, and the time would have passed heavily to him if he had not taken a notion to teach the cats tricks. No one would believe what a variety

of things he made them do; it was as if they were children, and understood every word he said; only children are not always so obedient as he somehow contrived to make his cats.

One day, a neighbor came in and found him alone, with all the kittens crouching on their hind legs before him. At the end of the room a string was stretched across two chairs, and each cat as he came to it, gravely jumped over it. The neighbor screamed with laughter at the comical sight; and then little Ben showed off all their accomplishments, with great pride. He made them turn somersaults, and play "beggar," and pretend they were dead, with many other cunning tricks; and last of all he made them all stand in a row, and ring a tune on some little bells that Ben had fastened round an old barrel-hoop. The neighbor was astonished, as well he might be. "It's as good as a show," he said. And he went home and told the people about it; and first one and then another came to see the comical cats.

And at last somebody proposed that Ben should give a public exhibition, and charge a penny apiece for the sight. Ben laughed at the notion, and his father and mother laughed, too; but they didn't object. So he exhibited his cats, and so many people came to see them that he made over a hundred English pennies, which is equal to two dollars of our money, you know.

This put thoughts into his head; and not long afterwards, when his father died, and the family were left in poverty, Ben's thoughts and his cats were turned to good account. He made arrangements with a travelling show-man, and went about with him through all the towns and villages. Night after night the "Comical Bell-ringers" were exhibited to crowded houses; pennies and shillings came in by the handful, everybody wondered at and praised the patient little boy, and the patient little cats who had done such remarkable things.

Certainly, nobody had ever dreamed that poor lame Ben and his kittens would support the family. But they did, after all; and it shows what can be done by those two steady workmen, Patience and Perseverance. Idle boys and girls, please to take example!—Young Reaper.

After the Spelling School.

Then comes the hurrying and bundling, the whispering and glancing, the pairing off and the tumbling in. There are hearts that flutter and hearts that ache; "mittens" that are not worn, secret hopes that are not realized, and fond looks that are not returned. There is a jingling among the bells at the door; one after another the sleighs dash up, receive their nestling freight, and are gone.

Our Master covers the fire, and snuffs out the candles—don't you remember how daintily he used to pinch the smoking wicks, with forefinger and thumb, and then thrust each hapless luminary, head first, into the tin socket?—and we wait for him. The bells ring faintly in the woods, over the hill, in the valley. They are gone. The school-house is dark and tenantless, and we are alone with the night.

Merry, care-free company! Some of them are sorrowing, some are dead, and all, I fear, are changed. SPELL! Ah! the "spell" that has come over that crowd of young dreamers—over you, over me—will it ever, ever be dissolved? In "the white radiance of eternity!"

How, like the shadow upon the dial, thought is ever returning to the place of beginning! Where we first began to live—where we first began to love; to the trysting place and the homestead, the play-ground and the grave-yard.—Benjamin P. Taylor.

For the Christian Messenger.

Jottings for Boys and Girls about Missions.

We read that William Carey had in early life to struggle through many adverse circumstances. At the age of 18 he joined a small Independent Church, and here he was encouraged by his brethren to exercise his talents by speaking and sometimes preaching to them. After three years his views changed respecting the subject, and

subjects of baptism, and he was baptized by Rev. Dr. Ryland and united with the Baptist Church and continued his preaching. In the year 1787 he was ordained and elected minister of a very small and poor church. To eke out a living he labored as schoolmaster and shoemaker. Now my dear young friends please notice that this pioneer missionary had a good share of the try element in him. He believed if a "first you don't succeed, try! try! try! again!" And this is a lesson you should heed, try! try! try! again!

While yet employed as a shoemaker William Carey, tried to gain information from books of all kinds, that came within his humble reach. Cook's voyage around the world, was not only a source of pleasure and profit to him, but it opened to him a new field for thought, which presently burst forth into most glorious fruition. He conceived the most noble of all enterprises, the evangelization of the heathen world. He studied upon this subject and then began to introduce to the notice and attention of others the grand project that was burning within his own soul. Full as the Old Testament is of predictions of that time, when God shall give to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

In the fulfilment of this covenant we must put in the foreign missionary list, the names of Abraham, Joseph and Daniel. It would seem that Christians had so far forgotten the ancient prediction and the royal command of their Lord and Master Jesus, to go into all the world, that Carey's project was looked upon by many good men as a wild scheme, if not a direct interference with divine providence. In the year 1789 he published an essay on missions, this not rousing the brethren, in 1791 he again brought out another entitled "An enquiry on Missions." Soon after we find Carey rising and proposing as a subject for discussion at a meeting of ministers at Northampton, "The duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the gospel among heathen nations." The venerable Rev. Dr. Ryland who had invited the young men to give a topic for discussion, looked amazed and indignant, when he heard this one announced, he sprang to his feet and in a voice of thunder exclaimed, "Young man, sit down! When God pleases to convert the heathen he will do it without your aid or mine." But Carey's faith in the great commission was unshaken, here his stronghold, like Dr. John Erskine, when about 80 years ago, it was declared in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, that the proposal to send the gospel to the heathen was the most absurd thing which had been uttered on that floor for fifty years; the doctor rose with burning heart and flashing eye, and in his Scotch brogue cried, "Moderator, ratch me the Bible, will ye." Even so, Carey appealed to the old book of records, and, in 1792, when preaching before the Association at Nottingham, he took his text from Isa. liv. 2, 3: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."

"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God," was the war cry of that sermon, and by it he swept down many opposers, and carried with him not a few who had a long time been fearing to enlist in such a struggle for truth and righteousness sake. Carey attempted great things, and in October of the same year at a ministers' meeting, after the public meeting was over, a few held a meeting in a private room, "and there, in a solemn covenant, pledged themselves to God and one another, to make at least an attempt for carrying the gospel somewhere into the heathen world."

Thus then was formed the Society, that dared to attempt and has done great things for God. Carey offered to go to any country the society might select.

Rev. Andrew Fuller was elected secretary, and a collection was taken, and subscriptions pledged to the amount of £13. 2. 6. My dear young readers you see, Carey had a real missionary heart, and dared to attempt 'great things for God,' because his expectation was in God and from Him to receive grace and strength to do the commands of his master.

Now, please answer me one question, Whom do you serve, do you love Jesus, are you a soldier of the cross, a follower of the lamb? If so, work and pray that others may hear and know about Jesus, for

If all the world, your Saviour knew, All the world would love him too. J. F. AVERY. Halifax.