

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

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

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 6-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong.” Acts iii. 16.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 John iii. 10-15. Tuesday, Psalm cxxxiii. Wednesday, Mark xvi. 15-18. Thursday, John xiv. 1-14. Friday, Isaiah xxxv. Saturday, 1 Corinthians xii. Sunday, Matthew ix. 1-8.

ANALYSIS.—I. Hour of Prayer. Vs. 1. II. Lame man observed. Vs. 2-5. III. Lame man healed. Vs. 6-8. IV. Wonder of the people. Vs. 9-11.

FRIENDSHIP OF PETER AND JOHN.—It is most interesting to note that Peter and John, once employed in a common occupation on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. iv. 18, 21), afterwards united to the Lord on terms of intimacy and honor (Matt. xvii. 1; Luke xxii. 8; Matt. xxvi. 37; John xx. 3), were after his ascension warm personal friends; John, however, as a silent actor rather than as a bold pleader and miracle worker, confirming by his companionship more than by public utterance the actions of Peter's early ministry. And so it comes to pass that men of different individualities, as observable as those of Peter and John, oftentimes become firm friends of each other and mutual helpers in the cause of Christ. Contrasted individualities are not necessarily disagreeing. They illustrate the wisdom of God in the diversity of gifts he elects in the furtherance of his kingdom. “For the body is not one member, but many.” 1 Cor. xii. 14. Bold Peters and retiring Johns, therefore, have place and power in the Church of Christ, so that boldness of spirit be not a warrant for indiscretion, or modesty a cloak for indisposition. Different, however, as the gift of each may be, each may and should love the other as sincerely and as warmly as Peter and John. 1 John iii. 14; Psalm cxxxiii.

EXPOSITION.—I. The hour of prayer.—Verse 1.—The Hour of Prayer. Three o'clock. The Jewish Christians continued to conform to the national usages even where those usages were typical of Christ, hence were superseded by Christ's coming, e. g., sacrifice and circumcision. These usages were “shadows” and symbols. Christ was still to be seen in them, and to be worshipped through them, just as we see and worship him, as we look upon them through the Scripture record of them. Paul refused and denounced circumcision when it was demanded as necessary for salvation, and in part ground of acceptance with God. So of the rest of the Jewish rites. Gal. ii. 1-5, 11-21. No command had been given forbidding the observance of such usages, and their practice was thus to be regulated by a truly Christian expediency, an expediency determined by Christian principles. Went up. The Temple was on an eminence.

II. The lame man observed.—Verse 2.—Lame from his mother's womb. From the time of his birth, born lame. This lameness was due to weakness in the “feet and ankle bones.” Vs. 7. [Luke seems to speak as a physician.] Was carried. Was being carried, that is, just as the Apostles were going up. Whom they laid, more exactly, were accustomed to lay. At the gate of the temple called Beautiful. Dr. Hackett says, on this: “Most interpreters think that this was the gate described by Josephus, as composed chiefly of Corinthian brass, and as exceeding all other gates of the Temple in the splendor of its appearance. The folds of this brazen gate were fifty cubits [75 ft.] high, and 40 [60 ft.] broad, and were covered with plates of gold and silver. Luke's epithet [Beautiful], could not have been a more pertinent application. To ask alms, etc. The place was well chosen, for if a man will ever give to the poor and unfortunate, it is when his religious feelings are most moved. Verse 3.—Seeing Peter, etc., asked an alms.—His request was evidently the same as of others, and without any thought of a miracle on his behalf. Verse 4.—Peter, [still foremost], fastening his eyes, whenever circumstances made it meet that a miracle should

be wrought, God made the heart of his servants to do their part in connection with it, and he then did his part, and so attested their mission and glorified himself. Look on us. Said to arouse and prepare the man for what was to come.

Verse 5.—Expected to receive something. No wonder the cripple expected something unusually liberal when these two distinguished teachers thus noticed him. This expectancy was a part of his preparation.

III. The lame man healed.—Verse 6.—Silver and gold, etc. Money then was coin, not scrip. Such as I have, etc. Something better than gold—even health. So has every man who preaches Christ health for the soul and wealth of grace. But how slow are men to see that there is a good better than gold. Men barter heaven for gold, and sell Christ for silver. Idolators abound still, not a few of them, even in the church. In the name of Christ, etc. This message, the authority to speak thus in Christ's name, this was what Peter had. He had not the power to heal, but to say that Christ was about to heal him. Peter did not work the miracle but the Lord.

Verse 7.—Took him by the hand.—to encourage him to help himself. Such help as this do we as Christians need to extend to the lost. There are many ways of doing it. Let each be true to his Master, his neighbor and himself—he will find the way in which he can take by the hand the needy, and encourage him into faith and life and health. Immediately. Proving thus beyond doubt that the healing was a miracle. For a natural cure time would have been required.

Verse 8.—Leaping up. Literally leaping forth, i. e., from his sitting place; the thrill of a new energy ran through his frame. Stood. For the first time in his life. Stood for a time before walking, trying his strength, making sure he had it, and that this was not a dream, or vision, but a reality and a fact. Amazed. And walked. After standing long enough to make sure of his recovery. What an experience that first walk! What an experience the first step in Christian walk for one who from birth has never even stood, much less stepped. Entered with them, etc. Clinging gratefully, eagerly to them. Vs. 11. How fit that his first steps should be into God's Temple after such an experience of God's goodness. The words translated walking and leaping, in the Greek indicate the movement of one overflowing with life, like a child or a lamb. Praising God. Doubtless a pious man before.

IV. The wonder of the people.—Verse 9.—All the people saw, etc. He was in the court where the multitude were gathered, and his movements and words would attract attention, and the recognition of the man would intensify the interest.

Verse 10.—They knew. He was generally known because he was wont to sit at the gate. Vs. 2. There was no doubting or denying the identity. Filled with wonder, etc. It was a very striking miracle, scarce less so than the raising of a dead man.

Verse 11.—Held Peter. Literally, keeping hold of him in a kind of intoxication of gratitude. But he knew how to ascribe the praise to God, not Peter. All the people. The whole multitude present. Press together. Thus making an earnest congregation, ready to hear the words of explanation which were to follow.

QUESTIONS.—How were Peter and John, early in life, employed? What was their relation afterward to Jesus? In what does their subsequent friendship appear.

Vs. 1. Why did the early Christians conform at all to Jewish customs? At the same time, did they not have private Christian worship?

Vs. 2. Why is this first miracle in the Acts so minutely described? What do we know of the gate “called Beautiful?”

Vs. 6. How does Peter's plea of poverty illustrate his honesty? May not a man be very wealthy, and still be very unselfish and Christ-like? What is meant by “in the name of,” etc.? How differently did our Saviour address the afflicted? See John v. 8.

Vs. 8. In what does the completeness of this miracle appear? What prophecy does this miracle fulfil? Isaiah xxxv. 6. How old was the man at this time? Acts iv. 22.

Vs. 11. Where was Solomon's Porch?—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 7th, 1876.—The Power of Jesus' Name.—Acts iii. 12-26.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

The Choice.

I would not be a leaf, oh, no,  
To wait for April winds to blow  
Before I should have power to grow  
I would not be a leaf, to lose  
The red and gold of Autumn hues,  
And drop when giddy winds should choose;

I would not be a brook that strays  
Through pastures and sweet hidden ways,  
And nowhere loiters or delays—  
A brook that hurries here and there,  
Whether the day be dark or fair,  
Till caught within the frost's white snare;  
I would not be a bird that waves  
Her dainty nest beneath the eaves,  
And has no peace for fear of thieves;  
I would not be a bird to trill,  
And teach my fledglings with a will,  
And find one day the nest quite still;  
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.

Little Sister's Lesson.

“Now, Freddy, dear, sit down and fold your hands, and fix your mouth, this way, and I'll tell you what mamma says. Smooth down your white dress, and put out your feet, so as to show your new boots, if you want to, and look very happy,—so!”

Sweet Freddy did just as his wise seven-year-old sister bade him, and then he ventured to unfix his red lips long enough to ask, “What did she say?”

“She said I might have a Sunday school to-day,—that I should be the teacher and you would be the class,” said Molly.

“There isn't nough of me for a class,” Fred ventured to say.

“Well, we'll play we had four, and that three musn't talk any. You are a great boy now, Freddy, almost four years old, and yet can't go to Sunday school because you talk and make the other ones laugh,” said Molly, soberly.

Here Fred said, “I only told the teacher I was four, and asked her how old she was. That wasn't any wicked.”

“This is my little lesson. Grandma gave it to me the day I was there,—Jesus was once a little child just exactly as old as you are to-day.”

“I'm four years, and one month, and more too,” said Fred, who was always very proud of his greatness. “But when Jesus was small He was a tiny baby in His mother's arms. I'm big!”

“I was just as silly as that too, when I was little,” said Molly. “I used to think that Jesus was once a baby, and next time a boy twelve years old, and after that a big man,—and that was all. But now I know He was first a tiny baby. Then He learned to walk, like cousin Bell; and by-and-by He could talk, and soon He could help His mother. I guess He went to school a good while before He was twelve years old and knew so much. He was just exactly as old, once, as you are to-day, and as all the children in the world are. And He was always good. He never grieved His parents, nor quarrelled with His brothers, nor His playmates.”

A strange look came into Fred's great eyes as he asked in a whisper, “Did Jesus play, sister?”

“Yes, grandma says He was just like other folks, only a great deal better. When He was little He played just right, and never got angry, nor pulled things away from His brothers, nor—”

“I don't always do that, too,” said Fred, blushing a little.

“And He was kind to every one, and helped poor tired folks, and—”

“I carried in seven sticks of wood in my own arms for lame Jimmy when he sawed here, and I gave my bright five cent piece to a beggar, and—”

“You musn't talk so much about yourself, Fred; the lesson is about Jesus.”

“I wonder what He did when He was four years, and one month, and a little more too; I wish I knew,” said Fred.

“I know. He obeyed His mother, and you can do that, Fred. He spoke kind, and smiled on every one,” said Molly.

“What did He do when He was seven and most a half, like you?” asked the boy.

“He obeyed His mother then, too, and was kind to all, and loved His

Father in heaven. Grandma says I can do all that, if I love Him, and ask Him, and ask Him to make me a holy child. I love to think that Jesus was once just exactly as old as I am all the time.”

“I'm glad Jesus was a child just like me,” said Fred.

“He wasn't like you, because you are often cross, said Molly.

“But I won't be again. I didn't know that Jesus was ever just exactly as old as I am, and good when He was a boy,” said little Fred. “This is a nice Sunday school, the class learns so much, and don't have to keep still, too,” said the dear little boy. “I mean to come next Sunday.”—Watchman.

A Mother's Words.

A mother on the green hills of Vermont was holding by the right hand a son, sixteen years old, mad with love of the sea. And as he stood by the garden gate one morning, she said:

“Edward, they tell me—for I never saw the ocean—the great temptation of a seaman's life is drink. Promise me, before you quit your mother's hand, that you will never drink.”

“And,” said he, (for he told me the story,) “I gave the promise, and I went the globe over, Calcutta and the Mediterranean, San Francisco and Cape of Good Hope, the North Pole and the South. I saw them all in forty years, and I never saw a glass filled with sparkling liquor that my mother's form by the gate did not rise up before me, and to-day I am innocent of the taste of liquor.”

Was not that sweet evidence of the power of a single word? Yet that is not half.

“For,” said he yesterday there came into my counting-room a man of forty years.

“Do you know me?”

“No.”

“Well,” said he, “I was once brought drunk into your presence on shipboard; you were a passenger; they kicked me aside; you took me to your berth, and kept me there till I had slept off the intoxication; you then asked if I had a mother. I said I had never known a word from her lips. You told me of yours at the garden gate, and to-day I am master of one of the packets in New York, and I came to ask you to come and see me!”

How far that little candle throws its beams! That mother's words in the green hills of Vermont! O, God be thanked for the mighty power of a single word!

The Great Master.

“I am my own master!” cried a young man proudly, when a friend tried to persuade him from an enterprise which he had on hand; “I am my own master!”

“Did you ever consider what a responsible post that is?” asked his friend.

“Responsible? Is it?”

“A master must lay out the work which he wants done, and see that it is done right. He should try to secure the best ends by the best means. He must keep on the lookout against obstacles and accidents, and watch that everything goes straight, else he must fail.”

“Well.”

“To be master of yourself you have your conscience to keep clear, your heart to cultivate, your temper to govern, your will to direct, and your judgment to instruct. You are master over a hard lot, and if you don't master them they will master you.”

“That is so,” said the young man.

“Now I could undertake no such thing,” said his friend. “I should fail, sure, if I did. Saul wanted to be his own master, and failed. Herod did. Judas did. No man is fit for it. ‘One is my master, even Christ.’ I work under His direction. He is regulator, and where He is master all goes right.”

“One is my master, even Christ,” repeated the young man, slowly and seriously; “everybody who puts himself sincerely under His leadership wins at last.”—Christian Weekly.

Locusts and Wild Honey.

Major-General Bisset, C. B., in his newly-published work entitled, “Sport and War in Africa,” gives an interesting illustration of a Scriptural narrative:—“About the year 1830 some of the dis-

persed native tribes from the interior of Africa migrated into the Cape Colony to seek employment among the farmers. My father engaged one family, consisting of a man named Job, and his two wives, with seven or eight children. Soon after their arrival a flight of locusts came from the interior, and night after night, whilst the locusts settled on the earth, the whole of this family, with great sandals of ox-hide tied on to their feet (very like Canadian snow-shoes), would walk about the whole night wherever the locusts were thickest. The next day the locusts would again take wing; but where this family had been walking about all night, you saw acres and acres of ground covered with swarms of disabled locusts, that could not fly away; and the natives would collect them and bring them home in baskets; they would then break off the wings, pinch off the tail end of the body, and pull off the head, and with it withdraw the inside of the locust; thus the body and legs alone remained, the inside of the body being covered with fat. This portion of the locust was then spread open upon mats in the sun to dry, and when dry packed away in huts raised from the ground and built on purpose. These people received a very good ration of food; yet this family preferred the bread made from these locusts to any description of food. Their mode of manipulation was as follows:—A basketful of the dried locusts would be taken from the store, and one of the women would sit down on the ground by a flat stone, and with another round stone in her two hands would grind or reduce the locusts to flour, and therewith make thick cakes, and bake them on the coals or in the ashes, and eat this locust bread with wild honey. Honey was most abundant in the country at this time, and I have seen Job, after a day's hunting, carry home leather bags full, weighing more than I could lift from the ground. Hence I believe it was thus that John the Baptist ‘lived upon locusts and wild honey’ in the wilderness.”

An Old Jersey Turtle.

The story of the knowing turtle which found its way back to its old home over seven miles of swamp and meadow, reminded me of another old turtle which came back every summer for twenty-two years to the farm of a friend who lives on the banks of the Raritan. One of the boys marked his shell with his initials, “W. S.” also the year in which he found him, and then left him to pursue his travels.

Having no fear of ghosts, he made his home in a hollow, in an old colored burying-ground near by. The sod had hardly been broken since the old days when Jersey was a slave State; so he was not likely to be molested. In the cool of the evening he would sally out, and make his way to the garden, and there they could hear him munching away at the tender cucumbers; which were the only things he disturbed.

It became a custom to look out for the old turtle as regularly as the season came around. But one year he failed to come. The next season he appeared, making what pace he could on three legs. He gave no account as to what bit off the fourth one; but it was thought likely he had got into a trap, and had been forced to lie by in hospital. If his whereabouts had been known, there was not a child in the house but would have taken him the best cucumbers in the garden to comfort him. He was given the freedom of the patch that year with a hearty good will.

Twenty-two years he had come and gone, and there had been many changes under that old roof-tree, which used to hum like a hive with merry child-voices. There were some to watch for the limping old turtle on the twenty-third summer, but he never came again. This time it was supposed he found his way into the soup pot of a neighbor, who was exceedingly fond of such fishy stews.

“They must have known,” said the gentle Miss Eliza to me, “that it was our turtle. Everybody about knew that. If they had only given us the shell to save, it would have been a great comfort.”

The house was full of relics of departed pets. On the mantel of the best bedroom was a beautiful bouquet of snow-white flowers, made from the feathers of an ancient goose, which always followed the house-mother about like a pet dog when she was taking her walks about the premises. You may depend that was not a goose that was “picked” every season.

The marked shell of the old turtle would have been a very suitable companion for the feather bouquet.—Congregationalist.