

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 15th, 1876.—Stephen's Martyrdom.—Acts vii. 51-60.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 59, 60.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Philippians i. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Matthew xxiii. 29-36. Tuesday, Luke xiii. 31-35. Wednesday, Matthew xxi. 33-46. Thursday, Isaiah vi. Friday, Philippians ii. 6-11. Saturday, Revelation vii. 9-17. Sunday, Luke xxiii. 26-34.

ANALYSIS.—I. Vehement denunciation. Vs. 51-53. II. Council enraged. Vs. 54. III. Vision of Jesus. Vs. 55, 56. IV. Martyrdom. Vs. 57, 58. V. Prayer and providence. Vs. 59, 60.

EXPOSITION.—The Final Charge. Verse 51-53.—These words, terrible and withering, are the natural, logical, inevitable outcome and conclusion of all that had gone before. Stephen had cleared the way for them, and, as he had spoken not his own words and message, or in his own spirit and name thus far, so now he does not. This is God's message.

Verse 51.—Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Omit "ye," as it is not in the original, and its omission in the translation gives more prominence to the following epithets. "Stiff-necked," taken from the resistance of oxen that will not bend their necks to receive the yoke, was familiar to Stephen's hearers as aptly designating the stubborn rebellion against God so often and so wrathfully charged against Israel in the Old Testament. See Ex. xxxii. 9; Deut. ix. 6, 13; x. 16; Neh. ix. 16. Circumcision was the sign of Hebrew nationality, and to be "uncircumcised" was to be a heathen—not of God's people. The pride and glory of the members of the Sanhedrim was that they were Israelites, and truly represented the national spirit. Hence the stinging of the charge. Stephen's hearers were stiff-necked, or rebellious, in both their inward disposition ("heart") and their obedience to express command ("ears"); and hence in both respects no true Israelites or Hebrews, no true representatives of believing, obedient Abraham, their natural father, but the very contrary, and hence heathen, or even worse. See this developed at length in Romans ii, by one who heard this very speech, and had the best of reasons for remembering it. Especially note verses 25-29. *Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost [Spirit].* "Ye" is here emphatic, as the original shows. It thus carries the spirit and power of Nathan's famous phrase, "Thou art the man." The "always" has been justified by the previous reference to Israel's history. *As your fathers did, so do ye.* More exactly, "as your fathers, ye also," thus emphasizing yet more the "ye," and also more expressly fastening upon the Sanhedrim the charge of having the very spirit of the rebellious Israel of the past.

Verse 52.—Which of the prophets? Persecution had been the rule. *And they have slain them, etc.* This has been the usual practice. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16; Matt. xxi. 33-40; xxiii. 29-38. In this last passage the Saviour sets home this same charge with a terrible majesty, surpassing even that of Stephen's words. Stephen characterizes God's prophets as a whole, and not merely a part of them, as those "who announced before Christ's coming." See iii. 21-24; Luke xxiv. 44-47. *Of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.* In this place nothing is left to inference. The worst and the whole is told. The Sanhedrim were the "betrayers," because though Judas betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrim, yet the Sanhedrim had arranged with him to do the deed, and so were sharers in its guilt. They acted not judicially, but in hate, and so in the spirit of murder.

Verse 53.—Who have received the law by the disposition of angels. The ministry of angels in connection with the communication of the law to Moses, is several times referred to in Scripture. Heb. ii. 2; Gal. iii. 19; perhaps Deut. xxxiii. 2. From these passages it seems that this angelic agency was regarded as giving special honor and authority to the law; as evidence of its heavenly origin. Only the ministry of the Son was more honorable. Heb. ii. 2. And

have not kept it. The higher the law, and the boast of its heavenly origin and nature, the greater the sin. See again Romans ii, and especially verses 1-16.

The Heavenly Vision. Verses 54-56. It has been conjectured that Stephen was at this point interrupted, and his speech cut short; but it seems to have risen to a natural climax, to be complete, wanting nothing. As there is no hint of an interruption, we may as well suppose that, as often occurs, the hearers were somehow overawed and silent till the servant of God had spoken the last word of his divine message.

Verse 54.—The effect of the speech upon the Sanhedrim, which was the occasion of Stephen's vision. *When they heard.* That is, while hearing. *Were cut to the heart.* Literally, "were being sawn asunder in their hearts." Were becoming more and more convulsed with rage—a vivid, powerful picture—the seventy-one dignitaries in a semi-circle, thus convulsed by the few brief words of their helpless prisoner, who had nothing on his side save God and the truth. *Gnashed on him with their teeth.* In consequence of their convulsive rage. This they could not and would not have done, if Stephen's words had been false, and their conscience clear. Ah, they knew too well that they, not the Christians, were the criminals. Already they were learning the awful import of their own shout to the remonstrating Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children." They were beginning also to learn the interpretation of Christ's own prediction, "On whomsoever it [this stone] shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matt. xxi. 44.)

Verse 55.—Full of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. See Acts vi. 5. *Looked up steadfastly into heaven.* Upward in the direction of heaven, though in the council chamber. *Saw the glory of God.* A vision, a spiritual, not a natural vision, a revelation to his spirit, not to his sense, and hence to him only. *The glory of God.* See verse 2. *Jesus standing on the right hand of God.* A confirmation of Stephen's faith in the gospel (v. 31), and in the Lord. Everywhere else Christ is represented as "sitting," and it has been plausibly conjectured that here he revealed himself as standing, as though having just risen from his throne to lend help to his faithful servant; to rescue him from the powers of hell that were besetting him.

Verse 56.—This was the climax of his speech; for it came as a voice from out the open heavens, taking up the prediction of Luke xxii. 69, which, as spoken by Jesus to this very council, was seized with feigned horror as evidence of Christ's blasphemy, taking up this very prediction, I say, and affirming its fulfillment.

The Execution. Verses 57-60. The rest was quickly done, as it is quickly told.

Verse 57.—Cried out. Ah, judicial dignity—thou hadst fled from that chamber. See ix. 32; Matt. xxvii. 23; John xix. 12. *Stopped their ears.* Too holy forsooth to listen to such blasphemy. *Ran upon him with one accord.* Not waiting even the formality of a vote; in a wild paroxysm and transport of madness.

Verse 58.—Cast him out of the city. Not "led," or "sent" him out, but "cast," hurled him out, as such madness must. Their law required that execution should be outside Jerusalem. Lev. xxiv. 10-14. With the Jews "stoning was the ordinary mode of execution," (Ex. xvii. 4), though other modes were sometimes employed; for example, hanging, burning, and the sword or spear. *The witnesses, etc.* John viii. 7. This was required by law. Deut. xiii. 10; xvii. 7. It doubtless served as a check against too hasty witness against one, and also served as a testimony that upon the false witness was the blood of the innocent slain, and of him God would require it.

Verse 59.—Calling upon God, and saying. The word "God," is not in the original, and should be struck out. He called upon the Lord Jesus, as his words show. The expression means, *saying in prayer*; that is, to Jesus. See on this custom ix. 14, 21; xxii. 16; Rom. x. 12-14. *Receive my spirit.* Compare Luke xxiii. 46; 2 Tim. ii. 12. No "materialism" or "soul-sleeping" in this prayer.

Verse 60.—Lay not this sin to their charge. His speech had been in sever-

ity, yet also in love. Compare Luke xxiii. 34. *Asleep.* "In Jesus." 1 Thess. iv. 14.

QUESTIONS.—How did the council show its rage? Is persecution ever hurtful to the cause of Christ?

Vs. 55. Why do you think Jesus was seen "standing"? How does the Psalm speak of Jesus? Psalm cx. 1.

Vs. 56. Why has God exalted Jesus to his own right hand? Why does Stephen call the exalted Jesus "Son of man"? How long will Jesus have dominion? Heb. x. 13.

Vs. 57. Why had the Jews no right to kill Stephen? How did they kill him?

Vs. 58. Who went at this cruel business first? Why? Deut. xvii. 7. To whom are we in this verse introduced? What was his name afterward?

Vs. 59. Did the prayers of the early Christians to Jesus indicate their view of his nature? What was their view? Does the prayer, "Lord, receive my spirit," favor soul-sleeping?

Vs. 60. When unkindness begins with others, what but kindness should begin with us? Of whose prayer does Stephen's prayer here remind us? Luke xxiii. 24.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, October 22nd, 1876.—Simon the Sorcerer.—Acts viii. 9-25.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Jick and Jock.

A STORY WITH A MORAL.

Jick and Jock were two young rooks who lived in the top of a tall tree in the wood; but Jick was the pet of his parents, and so got more than was good for him, while poor Jock got less.

All the fat worms and slugs fell to Jick's share; and he would call out, "More, more!" when he had just had some. So day by day Jick grew more fat, and still kept up that cry of "More more!"

Jock soon found that he must pick up his own food. So he tried hard to learn to fly, and did so well, that he soon could help himself. But Jick, who had all done for him, did not care to find food, or to fly. He grew so fat that he lay all day in the nest, and blinked his eyes.

"You spoil that child," said all the wise rooks to the parents: "Jick will be the worse for it, you will see."

"Oh, no! the sweet pet," said they. "When he asks in that teasing way for 'More, more,' we must give it to him."

So things went on; and all the young rooks could get their own food, but Jick.

One day the old ones brought him a large worm. "That will make you a good meal," they said, "and be quick, for we hear that some boys are near with their guns, and we want to be off."

Jick was quick; but as soon as the worm was gone, he gaped his great beak, and cried, "More, more!" "One might have done for you," said the old ones; "but what must be, must." And off they flew to find food for him.

Once, twice, thrice, did they bring him "one more" worm; and then Jick, too fat and sick to eat more, shut his eyes and went to sleep.

"Bang, bang!" went a gun. Two shots were fired: and the two old birds fell dead. But Jick did not know. Jock knew; and he, the one for whom they did not care, was the one who mourned when they fell.

"Wake, wake!" he cried to Jick; but Jick did not wake. "Wake!" cried Jock once more: "here is a boy at the foot of the tree. He will climb up. Wake, and fly."

But Jick still did not wake. The boy did climb, and Jock, when he drew near, gave Jick a great peck to wake him up, and then flew on a bough near by.

"There is one on that bough," cried the boy to a man who had a gun. "Don't shoot him, though; he is too lean."

"He is out of my reach," said the man: "I could not reach him, if I were to try." For Jock, when he heard the boy speak, had spread his wings, and flown off with ease.

"Hi! there is a fat young rook in the nest," cried the boy. "Why, he can't fly, I do think. Just look at him!"

Jick woke now. He stood on his feet and tried to fly, but could not. He was so fat and dull, and blinked so with his eyes, that the boy laughed, and said, "You might as well have hopped into my hand as to have sat here."

"Save me, save me!" the rook tried to say; but the words when they came

were, "More, more!" The boy did not know what they meant, though; he had never learned bird-talk.

And so the two old rooks and their pet child Jick were baked in the same pie. But Jock, who had learned to take care of himself, lived to be a wise old rook, and for aught I know, may be living yet.—Nursery.

Lord Dufferin's Tour.

It is known to our readers that Lord Dufferin is on a visit to the North West parts of the Dominion. Some of our exchanges give long accounts of his tour—what he sees, and what he says. His interviews with the various tribes of Indians, are full of interest. In the end of August he was in the more Northern parts towards Alaska. The following from the correspondence of the *Globe* will be read with interest:—

Yesterday morning we visited the first Indian village that it has been possible to stop at. It has been formed round a small Hudson's Bay post at Bella-Bella, where a supply of coals had been sent on for the Douglas. The Indian houses, situated on the very edge of the water, were built of roughly hewn cedar planks, and were each about fifteen or eighteen feet square. The planks are made by splitting cedars, which have grown to an enormous size, and smoothing them after a fashion with a rough kind of adze. Posts are stuck in the ground and the planks are nailed round them, and a plank, bark-covered roof is then put on, with an aperture in the centre for the escape of the smoke. Round the enclosure in several different corners were small rooms resembling large dog-kennels, which were doubtless the dormitories of the commingled families. In the centre of the main floor a fire smouldered, and over its smoke huge lines of dried salmon and other fish, together with berries, skins, bark, or any other article of household use that required drying or seasoning. Round the common chamber, squatted on its mud floor, were women smoking their pipes and busily engaged in making mats. They seemed quite content to be visited, and the elderly ones made light and amusing jests at our expense.

On the Western coast of Vancouver Island which is one of the principal hunting-grounds for the sea-otter, the Indians go out to great distances in canoes, sometimes thirty or forty miles, without paying great regard to the weather. When off on these expeditions, inflated bladders, or the inflated skins of young seals are attached to the side of the canoe, and then she may fill or not; her occupants can bail her out and go on with their hunt. The captain of a vessel coming to the coast met one day far out at sea a canoe half filled with water and with two men in her, as he thought dead. They were only asleep, however, and on being awakened bailed out their canoe and paddled off towards the land. The sea-otter hunting is now the remnant of what was once a large trade. The Indians hunt them in parties. Several canoes go out and make for some surf-washed rock on or near where the otter may be found. Sometimes he is found asleep on the rock, and shot either with a gun or bow and arrow. The fur is rich and heavy, of a dark pepper and salt colour. There are several kind of fish on this coast that repay the expenses of catching them. There is a great number of seals also, and there is a little fish called the ocalican, or candle fish, so full of oil that it can be lighted at one end and used as a candle, which is found in large quantities on this coast. The industries of this country are, however, in their infancy.

Since leaving Bute Inlet, our course has been northerly with hardly any variation, and the change of latitude—we are now in 54 deg. 20 min.—has made itself apparent in more than one way. The high mountains have sloped away to hills, the mist and rain come on with little warning; we wear our great-coats on deck, and have a fire in the cabin, and this before August has departed. There are no birds in the woods; and when we ask about game we are told that we are too far north for grouse. Seals are getting plentiful, and we see them lying on the rocks or swimming about the bays as we pass. We went ashore to-day to try and secure one, but the first bullet fell a little short of the round dog-like head that was raised out of the water, and we did not get another

shot. Everything is beginning to wear a northerly aspect. And it is nearly time, for the little vessel has steamed four hundred miles on her northward trip, and we are beginning to reach those regions where man abandons the effort to raise his food, and stands confessed the foe to death of all the quadrupeds that cross his path. The country through which we are passing is not dreary looking, for it is all thickly covered with trees of the resinous tribe, and pearly-looking streams run down the hills, but the woods are silent, gloomy, and apparently tenantless. There are probably deer, and wolves, and small fur animals but every step is through the growth of centuries, and the fallen trees have crossed and intertwined themselves, forming barriers that wear out strength and energy in overcoming them. If a wreck took place on such a coast, and the vessel sank there would be little but patience and cannibalism between the men and death.

The Indians of Metlakatla afterwards presented Lord Dufferin with an address. In reply to this the Governor-General made an impromptu speech:—

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—I have come a long distance in order to assure you, in the name of your great mother the Queen of England, with what pleasure she has learnt of your well-being, and of the progress you have made in the arts of peace, and the knowledge of the Christian religion, under the auspices of your kind friend Mr. Duncan. You must understand that I have not come for my own pleasure, but that the journey has been long and laborious, and that I am here from a sense of duty in order to make you feel by my actual presence with what solicitude the Queen and her Majesty's Government in Canada watch over your welfare, and how anxious they are that you should persevere in that virtuous and industrious mode of life in which I find you engaged. I have viewed with astonishment the church which you have built entirely by your own industry and intelligence. That church is in itself a monument of the way in which you have profited by the teachings you have received. It does you the greatest credit, and we have every right to hope that while in its outward aspect it bears testimony to your conformity to the laws of the Gospel, beneath its sacred roof your sincere and faithful prayers will be rewarded by blessings which are promised to all those who approach the throne of God in humility and faith. I hope you will understand that your white mother and the Government in Canada are fully prepared to protect you in the exercise of your religion, and to extend to you the benefit of those laws which know no difference of race or of colour, but under which justice is impartially administered between the humblest and the greatest of the land. The government of Canada is proud to think that there are upwards of 60,000 (? 30,000) Indians in the territory of British Columbia alone. She recognizes them as the ancient inhabitants of the country. The white men have not come amongst you as conquerors, but as friends. We regard you as our fellow-subjects, and as equal to us in the eye of the law as you are in the eye of God, and equally entitled with the rest of the community to the benefits of good government and the opportunity of earning an honest livelihood. I have had very great pleasure in inspecting your school, and I am quite certain that there are many among the younger portion of those I am now addressing who have already begun to feel how much they are indebted to the institution for the expansion of their mental faculties, for the knowledge of what is passing in the outer world, as well as for the insight it affords them into the laws of nature and into the arts of civilized life; and we have the further satisfaction of remembering that as year after year flows by and your population increases, all these beneficial influences will acquire additional strength and momentum. I hope you are duly grateful to Him to whom under Providence you are indebted for all these benefits, and that when you contrast your own condition, the peace in which you live, the comforts that surround you, the decency of your habitations—when you see your wives, your sisters, and your daughters contributing so materially by the brightness of their appearance, the softness of their manner, their housewifely qualities, to the pleasantness and cheerfulness of your domestic lives, contrastin