

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 8th, 1876.—Stephen's Defence.—Acts vii. 35-50.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 48-50.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." Hebrews x. 9.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Exodus ii. 11-25. Tuesday, Exodus xiv. 10-31. Wednesday, Exodus xxxii. Thursday, Deuteronomy xviii. 15-19. Friday, Joshua iii. 11-17. Saturday, 2 Samuel vii. 1-13. Sunday, 2 Chron. vi. 12-21.

ANALYSIS.—I. Ill treatment of Moses. Vs. 35-40. II. Israel's idolatry. Vs. 41-43. III. Tabernacle of witness. Vs. 44-46. IV. The Almighty unconfined. Vs. 47-50.

EXPOSITION.—Moses. Verse 35-40. Exodus ii. One part of the charge against Stephen was that he had spoken against Moses. As Moses was the nation's inspired law-giver, the charge virtually implied both treason and blasphemy. Stephen, therefore, dwells much longer on Moses than on either Abraham or Joseph, and so turns and forces upon his accusers the vague charge made against him. He brings out the points of agreement between Moses and Christ, and between the rejecters of Moses and his hearers. The following parallels have been drawn: "Moses, a man through whom God spake to the fathers; Jesus, he in whom God has spoken at the last. Moses, a mediator between God and the people; Jesus Christ, the mediator between men and God. Moses, disowned and rejected by his people; Jesus Christ, denied, cast out, and crucified by his people. Moses, highly favored of God, attested by miracles, and sent as the ruler and deliverer of the people; Jesus, sent by God, and anointed as the Redeemer, Messiah, and Saviour. The law given by Moses; grace and truth coming by Jesus Christ."

Verse 35.—This Moses whom they refused. "This" is here emphatic. This very man, refused, denied, insulted, thrust out by them; the same, the identical man whom they dishonored; the same not only in person, but also in spirit, character, aim and purpose. He had not been converted like Saul of Tarsus, changing sides completely. He, like Jesus, from the first espoused God's cause, and by the people was rejected for the very reason that he was accepted of God. Herein appeared their sin and guilt. Who made thee, etc. The very language of refusal. Exodus ii. 14. Though spoken by one man only, yet, like the Sanhedrim, he was the representative of the prevailing national spirit. Spoken by the man "that did the wrong," it was the language of injustice and unfairness, of hate, jealousy, and contempt. The same did God send, etc. The application of this fact to Stephen's hearers, made this emphasis most pertinent, telling and terrible. Stephen substitutes "deliverer," or more exactly, redeemer, in place of "judge." By the hand of, etc. This angel, as shown in former lessons, was the Word, not then incarnate. See in Exodus ii.

Verse 36.—He brought them out, etc. "He," Moses, not the angel, though it was Moses acting under the angel. This well-known fact is stated to show how then God actually gave Moses the place refused him contemptuously by his brethren, how their plan failed, and God's prevailed. And the silent assumption is, as then, so more signally, now, in case of the real "Ruler and Redeemer," typified by Moses. After he had showed, etc. Or rather, by showing. The miracles were those wrought in effecting the deliverance, and include both those in Egypt, and those which followed during the forty years.

Verse 37.—This is that Moses, etc. Note again the repetition of the word "this," for the same reason as before. Stephen has left his hearers to see for themselves the parallel between Moses and Jesus, and so between the rejection of Moses and the rejection of Jesus; now he notes that the parallel is justified, and even required, by the very words of this very Moses, whose honor Stephen's accusers would maintain as against him; this Moses against whom Stephen is accused of speaking in the

interest of Jesus Christ. A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up, etc. See Deuteronomy xviii. 15-19, and for its quotation and application by Peter, Acts iii. 22, 23. To "raise up" here signifies not the resurrection, but, as often, the sending or causing to appear. The resemblance between them was to consist chiefly in their office as mediator. In each case it was the mediator of one who had been constituted head, and redeemer of his people, for those whose sins made immediate approach to God impossible, and to constitute them the people of God under God's own revealed and attested law. Of your brethren. That is, of the seed of Abraham, which was true of Christ as to the flesh, or his human nature. Him shall ye hear. Rather, him ye will hear—stating a fact of the future.

Verse 38.—This is he. The very man they rejected was the very man God accepted. Was in the church. "The assembly," or congregation, the usual designation of Israel, as gathered for worship, as around flaming Sinai, when in their presence and for them Moses went up, in answer to Jehovah's call to receive the law. With the angel. . . and with our fathers. The angel of Jehovah, or the angel who was Jehovah (see on verse 35), and with our fathers, acting as mediator between them; true to both parties, though by one disowned. Who received the lively oracles. The living oracles from the living God. See Heb. iv. 12, 13. The statement and explanation are not less true of Old Testament than of New Testament. To give them to us. To make it felt that he was acting for his rejecters, not for himself, as "deliverer," and in his divine authority as a "ruler" also, and herein Christ's type.

Verse 39.—Whom our fathers would not obey. Even though divinely called into the mount. But turned back again, etc. As the next verse shows, this turning back refers here, at least primarily, not to the purpose formed at Kadesh to return to Egypt, recorded in Numbers xiv. 1-5, but to the desire for an image patterned after the cattle-worship of Egypt.

The Sanctuary. Verses 41-50. Stephen was charged with blasphemy in speaking both against Moses, the servant of God, and against the Temple, the house of God. With the first part of the charge he has dealt, hurling it back upon them. He comes now, naturally, to the second part. They complain of Stephen's want of reverence for the Temple. They dishonored Sinai, the first sanctuary, and the tabernacle and the Temple, just as you dishonor Jesus Christ, the true universal Temple—dwelling place of God, and meeting house for God and man.

Verse 41.—Made a calf in those days. Even then they turned from the mountain, and the God that was on it, to Egypt, and the contemptible copy of Egypt's idols. You, the Sanhedrim, may see in that how much the nation whom you represent honored the place where God dwelt and met man.

Verses 42, 43.—In the book of the prophets, Amos v. 25-27. Have ye offered me, etc. A question implying a negative answer. "No, ye have not," implying, what the history shows, a constant tendency to abandon Jehovah's worship. Took up the tabernacle of Moloch, etc. To carry it, implying its previous construction and permanent preservation. Moloch was the fire-god of the Ammonites. Deuteronomy xii. 31. The star of your god Remphan. A star-shaped idol. The original passage has Chiun instead of Remphan, and Damascus instead of Babylon.

Verses 44-47.—The idolatry of the Hebrews, bringing on their national destruction and dispersion, was all the more shameful and guilty because they had first the tabernacle, and then a Temple, both built by divine direction and according to the divine pattern. Despite all this, they turned to idolatry. Tabernacle of witness. That is, containing the law. Jesus in verse 45 is Joshua.

Verses 48-50.—See 1 Kings viii. 26, 27. That the Temple in itself was nothing, was reiterated at its dedication.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 35. How was Moses treated by his people in his day? In spite of his frequent abuse by the Jews, how did God honor him? Who was the angel that appeared to him in the bush? Ans. Believed to be the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word and Revealer of God. See Exodus xxxii. 20, 21, 23; xxxiii. 34.

Vs. 36. What wonders did Moses show in Egypt? What in the Red Sea? What in the wilderness? Exodus xvi. 11-15; Numbers xx. 11.

Vs. 37. Peter before this (Acts iii. 22.) and now Stephen, applied this prophecy of Moses to Christ; who, then, forsook Moses—Peter and Stephen, or their persecutors?

Vs. 38. What did Moses receive from God on behalf of the people? Where? Exodus xxiv. 12.

Vs. 39. Why did the Israelites turn back in heart to Egypt? From whom did they turn away in their hearts? Does God turn from us, or we from him first? 2 Chronicles xv. 2.

Vs. 40. What sorrowful idolatry did they indulge in while Moses was on the mount? Where do we see the spirit of idolatry still? Matt. vi. 24.

Vs. 42. To what did God give them up? What punishment can be greater than to be given up to one's sins? Romans i. 28-32. May not sin be eternal? Mark iii. 29.

Vs. 44. What tabernacle did Israel prefer to their own?

Vs. 48. The Jews gloried in their Temple; did it save them in their downfall? Ans. They perished in the flames. See Josephus' Jewish War, Book 6, chaps. iv, v.

—Baptist Teacher.

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

YOUTH'S DEPARTMENT.

Digging Clay.

By Fannie Boper Feudge.

A STORY FOR THE BOYS.

Some years ago a rich merchant of Baltimore died suddenly, leaving an only son, then nineteen years of age. This youth had always been indulged and waited on, and allowed to spend money as lavishly as he pleased, without a thought of its value. So he grew almost to manhood, knowing nothing of labor, self-denial, and economy. But when he entered college he was assigned a room-mate of very different character—a modest, sensible youth, who was not ashamed to be known as a poor man's son, and not above laboring for his own comfort, or that of others. He brushed his own boots, split the wood, and made the fires, laughing good-naturedly at the awkward attempts made by his room-mate to follow his example; but instructing him pleasantly, when he saw that his chum really meant to learn. By-and-by the father of the rich student died, and to everybody's surprise was found to be insolvent. The news of both these great troubles—the loss of his only parent, and the loss of the fortune he had expected to inherit—were conveyed to the son by the same mail. Deep as was his sorrow, he determined not to remain at college another day, incurring debts he might never be able to pay; but to go home and learn the value of money by earning it for himself. Without wasting time in useless regrets, he applied at once, to several old business associates of his father, for employment; but received from all very decided though very courteous refusals and regrets, on the ground that he knew nothing of business. Undaunted by these failures, the youth next called on the proprietor of an extensive brickyard, and asked for employment.

"But," said Mr. C—, "I have no use for employees, except for hard, manual labor, such as you would be unable to perform. Digging clay is the only work we have for the hands at this season of the year."

"Give me leave to 'dig clay' with the rest, then," was the earnest answer. "I can do it, if others can; and anything is better than begging or starving."

Pleased with the persistency of the youth, though almost sure that he was not strong enough for the work he sought, Mr. C— engaged him on trial, and started him off to dig clay with the other workmen.

The young man thanked the old gentleman heartily, then hastened to the yard, and set to work in good earnest. At sunset he had earned just seventy-five cents—the first money he had ever obtained by his own exertions, and it seemed more valuable in his eyes than a hundred times the amount had ever been before. The next day he made a little more; and so a week wore on, each day a slight improvement on the last in work and wages. His interest in his employment, though it was certainly not the vocation he would have preferred—increased instead of diminish;

he did his work faithfully; and was usually the first one on the ground in the morning, though he had to walk four miles to the brickyard. All this was soon apparent to his employer, who naturally became interested in one who had proved himself worthy of being aided by his diligent efforts to help himself. A clerkship, with a good salary was obtained by the old gentleman for his protegee, and this proved a stepping-stone to higher and more responsible posts, into all of which the young man carried the same noble traits of energy, perseverance, and true manliness. To-day he is the honored president of a prosperous banking house, loved and honored by those who have watched his career from the time he started out as the architect of his own fortune in "digging clay."—Young Reaper.

My Mother knows best.

A party of little girls stood talking beneath my window. Some nice plan was on foot; they were going into the woods and they meant to make oak-leaf trimming, and pick berries, and carry luncheon.

"Now," said they to one of their number; "Ellen run home, and ask your mother if you may go. Tell her we are all going, and you must go also." Ellen a pretty little girl in a green crape bonnet, skipped across the way, and went into a house opposite. She was gone some time. The little girls waited for her very impatiently. At length the door opened and Ellen came down the steps. She did not seem to be in a hurry to join her companions, and they cried out, "You have got leave?" "Are you coming?"

Ellen shook her head, and said that her mother would not let her go.

"Oh!" cried the girls; "It is too bad!"

"Not go!" It is really unkind in your mother. "What a shame?" "I would make her let you." "I would go whether or no."

"My mother knows best," was Ellen's answer, and it was a beautiful one. Her lip quivered a little, for I supposed she wished to go, and was much disappointed not to get leave; but she did not get angry or pout, and her voice was very gentle but firm, when she said, "Mother knows best."

There are a great many occasions when mothers do not see fit to give their children leave to go where, and to do what they wish; and they are rebellious and pouting and angry in consequence of it? But this is not the way in which children should receive their mother's orders? No? It is not pleasing to God. The right way is pleasing to God. The right is cheerful obedience to your mother's decision.

Trust her and smooth down your ruffled feelings by the sweet and beautiful thought that "Mother knows best." It will save you many tears and much sorrow. It is the gratitude you owe to her who has done and suffered so much for you.

What will Mother say?

To-day I stepped into a justice's court just as a young man, who had been arrested for theft, was being examined. Not more than eighteen years of age, he looked incapable of such a crime. Yet the evidence fixed the guilt unquestionably upon him. Surrounded by a crowd of jeering men and boys, he maintained a stolid silence until questioned by the Justice. He had pleaded with the owner of the stolen articles, pleaded with the sheriff, until he saw he could not avert the consequence—that of going to prison. When questioned as to his age and residence, he answered indifferently; but when asked his name he hesitated, then turning to the Justice he said, "Must I answer that question?" "Yes," was the answer. With a look of keenest anguish in his face he asked again, "If I give my name, can it be kept from my mother?" Oh! there was the thought that troubled him most. Here was the one to whom his thoughts turned in his hour of trouble, and for whose feelings he was solicitous, even when he was the one to be wept over; one thought awoke in him a desire to avoid publicity. "What will mother think?" How will she feel? How will her heart be wrung when she hears that her boy, whom in his infancy she nursed with tenderest care, is guilty of theft—has forgotten the prayer of her child-

hood, and broken God's commandment! Had he thought of this when tempted to commit wrong, when your feet have almost led you astray, stop and ask yourselves the question, "What will mother think when she knows this?" Make up your mind what that mother would say, and act as she would have you. Oh, mothers! weary not of well doing; fail not to lead your boys in such paths that when, in after years, they are thrown into the midst of the world's strife for gain they may be kept from evil, may be guided in wisdom's ways, by acting according to what they know "mother would say," and by doing as mother would have them. Boys! how many crimes would never have been committed, how many heartaches never felt, if, when we were about to do anything about which we were in doubt, we had asked ourselves the question, and acted upon its answer, "What will mother say?"

Indian Postman.

"Every morn, as sure as the clock, Somebody hears the postman's knock."

This cannot be said of India. There are no knockers, to begin with, and no postmen—such as are seen in London. The post-offices, too, are odd places, notwithstanding all that has been done to make them better.

A post-office in the country is a dark bamboo hut, only lighted by a lamp which is nothing more than a wick in a sort of shallow pan, more like a large inkstand than a lamp. Inside the place you find some men busy doing what they call "sorting letters," and you are asked to throw your letter in among the rest by way of posting it. You feel inclined not to do it, for it seems to you you may as well throw it anywhere, as on the heaps of letters lying about. There are plenty of other people there, who are standing looking on, evidently with nothing to do, and having no business where they are. But if you try to hint this, or ask the postmaster what they are doing there, he answers, "This man, Sahib! O, he's my brother."

"And this man?" you say, pointing to one who has been very industrious indeed in looking on at other people working.

"He? O, he has married my sister."

So, of course, you can say no more, though you don't see that being the postmaster's great-grandfather would give a man anything to do with the letters or the post office, and you walk away, feeling very much as if you had just dropped your letter out of your pocket instead of having taken it to a post-office. But if you were to wait until the end you would see all the letters were sorted and fastened up quite safely in their proper bags, and taken away to be sent to their different addresses.

Now, when there are many more railways in India, the letters go by trains to almost all the important places, but in old times, they were, and even the country places they are sent in different ways. One way is by means of men called runners. These men have to go for a certain distance carrying the letter-bags, and wearing a little bell, with which they give notice of their arrival at the place where they are to meet the next runners. Then they give the men the letters and these go until they meet fresh runners, and in this way the letters are delivered. But in parts of the country, where the mountains are very high, the torrents make the paths unfit for men, or even horses to travel on, so a runner of a different sort is chosen. This is no less a personage than the elephant. The elephant is strong enough to stand against any torrent, and able to wade through very deep water, so you see, he is just the proper personage for a postman. Perhaps some very little folks will ask if the elephant carries the letters inside his trunk, and certainly they are nowhere to be seen. But when we call the elephant the letter-carrier, it would be more correct to call him the carrier of the letter-carrier, for the letters are safely packed inside a bag, and a man takes care of them. Only, instead of using his own legs, he uses the elephant's legs to run with.

You may imagine how glad every one is to catch the first sight of the elephant post, and how they run to tell that it has come in, and now all hope to have a letter from home.—Little Folks.

Let us rather seek to be judges of ourselves than the executioners of another.