

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, December 17th, 1876.—Peter's Release.—Acts xii. 1-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 5-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Psalm xxxiv. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Matthew xx. 20-28. Tuesday, Psalm lxxvi. Wednesday, Exodus xii. 41-50. Thursday, Psalm lxxvi. Friday, James v. 10-20. Saturday, 1 Peter iv. 12-19. Sunday, Psalm xxxiv.

ANALYSIS.—I. Martyrdom of James. Vs. 1, 2. II. Imprisonment of Peter. Vs. 3-5. III. Liberation of Peter. Vs. 6-11. IV. The house of Mary. Vs. 12-17.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1. How long is it since the last persecutions in Jerusalem? What martyr was killed then? Who killed him? Who is persecutor now? Who was this Herod's grandfather? Of what descent were the Herods? What seems to have been their chief ambition?

Vs. 2. Who was James's mother? His father? Who was his brother? Which one of these brothers died first? Which last? How was James killed? Is it known how the other apostles died?

Vs. 3. What motive led Herod on to further persecution? Is popularity always a safe guide to action? Prov. xxvi. 28.

Vs. 4. To whose care did Herod subject Peter? Why did he not hasten Peter's death, as he seems to have hastened the death of James? Matt. ix. 13.

Vs. 6. How is it Peter could sleep? Had he any comforting promise? Luke xxii. 32.

Vs. 7-11. Review the liberation of Peter briefly? Luke iv. 18.

Vs. 13. What Gospel did Mary's son write. Under whose labors was he probably captured? 1 Peter v. 12.

Vs. 17. Did Peter tarry in Mary's house for joy or rest?

EXPOSITION.—Martyrdom of James. Verses 1.—About that time. Namely, the time of the visit mentioned in xi. 30, or x. 44. Herod the king, Agrippa I, grandson of the Herod of Matt. ii. 16-19. Paley remarks Luke's accuracy here, as "there was no portion of time for thirty years before, or ever afterwards, in which there was a king at Jerusalem, a person exercising that authority in Judaea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the last three years of Herod's life, within which period the transaction here recorded took place."

Stretched forth his hand. Caused them to be suddenly and violently seized. Compare iv. 3; v. 18; xxi. 27. His office of "king," representing Roman sovereignty, enabled him to do so arbitrarily, and without preliminary process. To vex, to harm. Certain of the church. The leaders—foremost in Christian influence. Killed with the sword. A Roman mode of death. Stephen, condemned by the Sanhedrim and killed by Jews, was stoned.

Imprisonment of Peter. Verse 3.—Pleased the Jews. They were rejoiced to find at last the Roman power moving readily and decisively to do what by themselves they had failed to compass. To take Peter also. No doubt simply because he was, and from the start had been, the most prominent preacher of the Gospel, and hence the greatest strength of Christians and opposer of Judaism. Then were the days of unleavened bread. The Feast of the Passover, so described because during the festival of seven days, no leaven was to be used in food, or to be kept in houses. Ex. xii. 15-18. This reference explains why Herod was present, from Caesarea his residence.

Verse 4.—Put him in prison. Herod, it seems, from the last clause of this verse, conformed to the Jewish scruple against executing a criminal during the time of their feast. Thus the deliverance was occasioned by this scruple, and Herod's politic respect to it, but caused by God's own gracious sovereign purpose and power. Four quaternions of soldiers. A "quaternion" consisted of four men; hence the name. Of the four it is usually regarded that two were those to whom Peter was bound, and the other two the inner and the outer guard or ward, mentioned in vs. 10. After Easter. The word here wrongly rendered Easter is that which elsewhere is uniformly translated "the Passover," and should be here.

Verse 5.—Prayer was made. They did nothing else, nothing else remained to be done. Without ceasing. Or, rather, earnestly, intensely, referring not at all to the continuousness of the prayer. The same word is used in Luke xxii. 44; 1 Peter iv. 8. Of the church. Of its members, though not assembled together in one place.

III. Liberation of Peter. Verse 6.—Would have brought him forth. Was about to bring him. Just when all seemed to be lost. Here, at least, "man's extremity was God's opportunity." The same night. "In that night." Time again. The night before the intended execution. Peter was sleeping. Yet he did not expect deliverance. Vs. 11. Between two soldiers, bound with two chains. "The soldier who was appointed to guard a particular prisoner had a chain fastened to the wrist of his left hand for greater security, the prisoner was chained to two soldiers, one on each side of him."

Verse 7.—The angel. Or, rather, an angel. God kept his servant, not less in the prison than when passing from city to city in freedom. Precious lesson! A light. Symbolizing a heavenly presence, and enabling Peter to make his way safely. Smote Peter, etc. To wake him. His chains fell off, etc. See on vs. 6. God's power unlocked them, so that Peter was separate from his guards, and, without waking them, could rise and leave.

Verse 8.—Gird thyself. His girdle, according to custom, had been loosened for rest; but now is made tight, as a sign of action. His hands are now free. Dand on thy sandals. The sandals contained simply of a sole attached to the foot by thongs (about the heels), and to bind them under was to fasten those thongs over the heel. Thy garment, etc. The loose outer garment worn over the tunic, but laid aside in the cell.

Verse 9.—Went out. Perhaps the cell-door had been opened on the angel's entrance. Wist not. Knew not. That it was true, etc. A vision from God was always "true" as a revelation. But not always true that the events occurred which, to the person perceiving the vision, seemed to occur. Thus Peter's vision of the "sheet" was certainly true, as a revelation; but probably a mere appearance, as an occurrence.

Verse 10.—See on verse 4. "Ward" means guard. Iron gate, etc. Evidently the gate of the prison-court or yard, and opening immediately upon the street. Forthwith, etc. Suddenly, as no longer needed.

Verse 11.—Said. Probably to himself—i. e., distinctly thought.

IV. The House of Mary. Verse 12.—This "Mark" is, with good reason, believed to be the Evangelist. On his connection with his cousin Barnabas, and with Paul, see vs. 25; xv. 37; Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11. From these and other passages, it seems that Mary was originally from Cyprus, in good circumstances, and both able and willing to make her house a place of resort for Christians. Many gathered, etc. The number and the time show the intensity of interest. Vs. 5.

Verse 13.—As Peter knocked. Peter having knocked. A damsel. Female servant. Compare John xviii. 16, 17. To hearken. To answer the knock or call of the door.

Verse 14.—Knew Peter's voice. Recognized it, as he had, no doubt, been a frequent as well as welcome guest there. Mark was, in subsequent time, his constant attendant and helper. Opened not the door for gladness, etc. How true to life, and how complimentary to Rhoda's heart!

Verse 15.—Thou art mad. Yet she only asserted what her prayer had requested! Constantly affirmed. Kept insisting. It is his angel. Seeming to imply a popular belief in "guardian angels."

Verse 16.—Continued knocking. After Rhoda left the gate he repeated his knocking, and, as the excited discussion within went on, he kept it up till "they" let him in.

Verse 17.—Beckoning, etc. To still the tumult of joy. Declared, etc. The story showed that God was still for and with his people. Unto James, the pastor of the Jerusalem Church. We see Peter's affectionate care for the brethren in this his advice. The change of circumstances required new plans and action.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 24th, 1876.—REVIEW.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT

The Angel Treasury.

It was evening when the Angel of Light sprang from the earth to go upward. There were sobbings and groanings as he left, for he came out of a half-lighted chamber. Upward and upward he flew, and soon soared out of earth's night. Then he saw the sun before him. Onward and onward he flew, leaving the planet Venus on the right hand, and then Mars and Saturn and Jupiter and the great Sun himself were left behind—far behind. Still upward he bent his flight through the milky way into the vast region of space, passing worlds and systems of worlds, strait upward and onward. At length he met a fellow angel on his way to a distant part of God's creation—so distant that it would take a great many thousands of our years to reach it. The beautiful and noble beings paused to greet each other.

"Wither bound, my friend?" "To that far-off world never yet passed by angels' feet."

"How long have you been in the Presence since your last great work?" "About two thousand years, yet they seem only a few hours. Time with us is hardly worth mentioning. I may be absent many thousand years, but they are nothing—a mere drop dipped out of eternity. What have you there so carefully folded up, and carried in your bosom so tenderly?"

"A jewel from earth." "Earth! Earth! O, how much I have heard of that little world since the Son, who is on the throne, went there to do his great work. I never had yet an opportunity to visit it, but I know all its history, and I have the promise that I shall go there some day before it is burned up and destroyed. Perhaps I may be sent on some errand of great mercy! I have seen multitudes who were created there, who came up to live with us in heaven. I have heard many songs, but none so sweet as theirs. They sing of redeeming love. How they sympathize with all that is done in their world! But I will not hinder you, nor will I inquire further as to your precious charge. Farewell."

"Farewell, noble one! May every blessing attend you!" So they separated. Then upwards still darted the angel, straight towards the heaven of heavens. As he entered the golden gates all made way for him, for they saw that he had brought some thing very precious. No one stayed to ask a question. Through the ranks of glorious ones he passed, till he stood before the great white throne, where was light, greater than a thousand suns would emit. As he bowed in awe and love, a voice came forth, "Good servant, hast thou done thy errand?" Carefully and gently the angel took from his bosom a beautiful thing. It seemed lighter than air, sweeter than the breath of morning, and seemed to float like music. The everlasting arms were stretched out to receive it. It was the soul of a child!

"Suffer it to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The beautiful little thing uttered no sound, but it seemed to thrill with joy unutterable. Then the thousand voices broke forth into songs of praise, and all the harps of heaven seemed to awake, and daughters of music came forth from every quarter, and united in His praise. For through all the courts the tidings spread that another jewel had come to shine in the eternal crown of Christ.

On earth there was a funeral. That night the mother dreamed that her little one was with her, and stretched out her arms to take it, but it was not there, as she awoke in tears. The little coffin held the beautiful body. Friends had put white flowers in the waxen hands as they lay folded on its bosom. The whole house was in deep mourning, for the sunbeam had been quenched. The mother wept and sobbed, and kissed the cold face of her child, and called it dead. And she thought of it as dead. She could not realize that Christ could love her child more than she did; or that anybody could take care of it as she could; or that any other world would be as good to educate and train it as this; or that any other bosom could shield it as could hers; or that it was far better off than to be here. Will she ever meet it again? Will she know it among the angels of day when she next sees it? Will it have anything by it, by which

any one would know that it was earth-born? Who can tell? Ah! mother, if you are a Christian, when you come to see as you are seen, and to know as you are known, you will see and feel that this removal of your child was all right, and just as you are glad to have it. Dry up your tears then, and trust all to the wisdom and goodness of your blessed Redeemer.—Dr. Todd.

How I behaved in Church.

I was visiting Lillipet's parents in another city, and she was to take me to church. Lillipet was Henrietta's baby way of abbreviating her home title, Little Pet. Everybody caught it up, and nobody, least of all herself, had dropped it, although she was now nearly four, and a very big girl in her own estimation. Somewhere in her childish brain lodged the fancy that my religious education had been sadly neglected, consequently it became her bounden duty to do all in her power for my enlightenment.

"They'll hand a basket of money around," she said, as we walked along, her four fingers and fat thumb trying their best to meet about my full-grown hand; "but you're not to take any"—warningly; "you're to put some in. A penny's plenty. I've got a penny."

As we drew near the sacred edifice the weight of her responsibilities increased. I was in her charge. She felt that any misbehavior on my part would reflect upon her and lessen the dignity of the family pew, so she gave me her parasol to hold, and came to a full stop, for the purpose of administering further advice and instruction.

"After we get in and sit down you must do this and pray"—illustrating the act of silent-communion with God.

"What must I say?" I asked, just to see what she would answer.

"You can't say 'Our Father who art in heaven,' 'cause there isn't time. I say 'Now I lay me down to sleep'—all of it, you know; then if Miss McFetridge—she's next us—if she hasn't got through, I begin, 'This pig went to market.'"

"O!" I exclaimed, hardly knowing whether to laugh or chide, and looking down into the blue eyes so brimmed with seriousness, "Why don't you say 'Now I lay me down to sleep' over again?"

"Cause," she answered gravely, "that's a prayer. I couldn't break off anywhere. I'd have to say it all. Everybody might get done, then I'd look queer bobbing up. The pigs are nothing—I can leave out any of them."

"Since you have so much time after saying, 'Now I lay me,' suppose you repeat 'I pray the Lord my soul to keep.'"

"Till Miss McFetridge gets through?"

"Yes."

"Very well." She took her parasol again, pink as a poppy, and not much bigger, and we walked quietly on. My height being fully five feet, it was comical to be pulled squarely face to face with that midiget when we reached the church door, and answer a question with which she doubtless, was familiar:

"Now is there anything you want to say to me before we go in?"

"No," I answered, dutifully.

"Be sure and remember you're not to get on your knees and look over into the back pew."

After promising to observe proprieties faithfully she allowed me to enter. No sound could have been sweeter than the twitter of the voice beside me, with its "Now I lay me," and "I pray the Lord my soul to keep." The minister had not gone very deep in his sermon before Lillipet was fast asleep, sure enough, and the Lord had her little trustful soul safe in his keeping. With her golden curls framing her cherub face, her blue eyes closed, her red lips parted, and violet rays from the stained window fluttering about her, she formed one of the prettiest pictures it has ever been my lot to see.

What happened next was this: In the midst of the reverend doctor's discourse Lillipet plunged both chubby hands into her cheeks, and slipped from the cushions to her feet with a "Ho, hi, hum!" that must have electrified the congregation. Then catching sight of the minister, her blue eyes drenched with sleep, as violets with dew, she ejaculated: "Pretty well, I thank you. Amen." —Christian at Work.

THE HOUSEHOLD.

Poisons and Antidotes.

It most frequently happens that serious and distressing results are occasioned by the accidental employment of poisons, and it occurred to us that we might do a service to some of our readers by presenting them with a brief and compendious list of the more common poisons and the remedies for them most likely to be close at hand.

Acids—These cause great heat and sensation of burning pain from the mouth down to the stomach. Remedies—Magnesia, soda, pearl-ash or soap, dissolved in water, then use stomach pump or emetics.

Alkalies—Best remedy is vinegar.

Ammonia—Remedy—Lemon juice or vinegar; afterwards, milk and water or flax seed tea.

Alcohol—First cleanse out the stomach by an emetic; then dash cold water on the head and give ammonia (spirits of hartshorn).

Arsenic—Remedies—In the first place evacuate the stomach; then give the white of eggs, lime water or chalk and water, charcoal and the preparation of iron, particularly hydrate.

Lead—White lead and sugar of lead. Remedies—Alum and cathartics, such as castor oil and Epsom salts especially.

Charcoal—In poison by carbonic gas remove the patient to open air, dash cold water on the head and body and stimulate nostrils and lungs by hartshorn, at the same time rubbing the chest briskly.

Corrosive sublimate—Give white of eggs freshly mixed with water, or give wheat flour and water or soap and water freely.

Croscote—White of eggs and emetics. Belladonna or night henbane—Give emetics and then plenty of vinegar and water, with a dose of either if handy.

Nitrate of Silver (lunar caustic)—Give a strong solution of common salt and then emetics.

Opium—First give a strong emetic of mustard and water, then strong coffee and acid drinks; dash cold water on the head.

Laudanum—Same as Opium.

Nux Vomica—First emetic, then brandy. Oxalic acid—Frequently mistaken for Epsom salts. Remedies—Chalk, magnesia, or soap and water freely; then emetics.

Nitrate of potash—Give emetics, then copious draughts of flaxseed tea, milk and water and other soothing drinks.

Prussic acid—When there is time administer chlorine in the shape of soda or lime. Hot brandy and water, hartshorn and turpentine are also useful. Hartford Courant.

To keep milk sweet for a whole year, put your milk into a clean bottle, set the bottle into a kettle or saucepan of cold water, so that the water is even with the milk in the bottle. Bring this to a brisk boil. Then cork tightly. Cover the cork with sealing wax. The milk thus prepared, will keep sweet any length of time in a moderately cool place.

An unwholesome odor can be removed from a room by burning within it sugar or ground coffee. Or, more properly, it can be disguised, but it is present and is as unwholesome as ever. Nothing can remove it but a disinfectant, or pure air and circulation, which is God's mode of disinfecting.

LEG OF MUTTON STUFFED.—Wash and wipe the mutton, grate a pint of bread crumbs, season with salt and pepper, a teaspoonful of sweet marjoram, two teaspoonfuls of sage, and half a one of sweet basil (all dried and rubbed fine), chop a medium-sized onion, and put it over the fire in a small saucepan, with butter the size of a large egg, stew for five minutes, pour over the bread crumbs and stir thoroughly, with a sharp knife make deep incision on the long side of the leg parallel with the bone, push the dressing in making it go all through the length of the leg, skewer it at the opening were you stuffed it, season the leg with pepper and salt, dust it with flour, and roast two hours in a hot oven, keeping a little water in the pan to baste it with, which should be done every fifteen or twenty minutes; thicken the gravy with browned flour, put a few spoonfuls over the meat when you place it on the dish, and serve the remainder in a gravy-boat. To be eaten with currant jelly.