

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, April 9th, 1876.—The Day of Pentecost.—Acts ii. 1-11.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."—Matthew iii. 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, John xiv. 15-18, 26. Tuesday, Exodus xix. 16-20. Wednesday, John xvi. 1-12. Thursday, Galatians v. 22-25. Friday, 1 Corinthians xii. Saturday, 1 Corinthians xiii. Sunday, Matthew xii. 22-37.

ANALYSIS.—I. Descent of the Holy Spirit. Vs. 1-4. II. Impression of the miracle. Vs. 5-11.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.—The second of the three yearly Jewish festivals. Passover came in April, Pentecost in June, the Feast of Tabernacles in October. The Passover was at the beginning of wheat-harvest, the Feast of Pentecost celebrated its full ingathering. Pentecost was called by Jews the "Feast of Weeks," in Greek Pentecost (fiftieth day), because it came after "a week of weeks," or fifty days from the second day of the Passover, the 16th of Nisan. Dr. Hackett thinks the 16th of Nisan was Friday, the day of the crucifixion. If so, Pentecost came on the Jewish Sabbath, our Saturday. Its rites lasted one day, and were of a free and festive character, attracting a larger concourse of Jews from all parts of the world to Jerusalem than any other festival. Hence the enumeration in verses 9-11. Passages in point are Lev. xxiii. 15-22; Num. xxviii. 26-31; Deut. xvi. 9-12. Pentecost came, by a singular if not designed coincidence, on the very day of the festival of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, fifty days after the first Passover in Egypt, securing to Israel national life and unity.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—This was an event next in importance to the birthday of the Lord. This was the birthday of his Church. It opened the second period of the New Testament dispensation. It brought down the same teacher, but with his method of instruction changed from external to internal guidance. It fused the facts of the gospel history into the inner life and experience of man. Hereafter we are to observe the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and interpreting them to the thought of believers. So the same Spirit is to spread and to operate through successive ages, bringing all the truth spoken by Christ and his apostles to remembrance. Its superiority over the first method consists in this: "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you."

EXPOSITION.—The Descent of the Holy Spirit.—The Preparation.—Verse 1.—And when the day, etc. Note on the "Feast of Pentecost." They were all with one accord in one place. Notice here (1.) the persons. The apostles and others who had since the ascension been waiting, according to Christ's command in i. 5. The word "all" is emphatic. It does not mean all who were really disciples, but all who had been together during the ten days, especially the apostles, i. 15. It reminds us of the time when Jesus met the apostles to find Thomas absent, and suggests how the meetings of a church should be attended by its members, so far as practicable. (2.) The Spirit. One mind, one purpose. No discord, contention, wrangling, or even coldness and indifference. The union with one another came through their union with the one Lord. (3.) The place. "One place." Not scattered. See on (1.). The accustomed place of prayer, hallowed by associations; not the Temple. See i. 13—perhaps the same house and room where the Lord's Supper was instituted. (4.) The whole event. Disciples concordant together, obedient to command, expectant of promised good, conscious of their own helplessness, doing yet what was for them to do, holding on to the very end.

Verse 2.—The sound. And suddenly there came, etc. The first token of the Spirit's coming was sound—evidence given through the sense of hearing. Of this notice, (1.) Its suddenness. Thus was made a deeper impression, a sharper contrast between the old and the new; a clearer, fuller demonstration that the

new was supernatural, and not "evolved out of their consciousness." The time had come, and for the church and the world, of that and of all future generations, it was to be marked, clearly, boldly, unmistakably, as a new time, and as God's time. (2.) Its source. Literally, "out of the heaven." How fitly! "The promise" was, "I will send" the Spirit. Into the heaven Jesus had been taken. "Out of the heaven" he sends the Spirit, and the sound tells this—symbolizes it. (3.) The comparison. As of a wind. It was not wind which made the sound, but the sound made super-naturally was such as the wind makes. This kind of a sound, therefore, was just the one to witness to the fact of the Holy Spirit's coming. Rushing mighty wind. The first of the words indicates speed, as of the gale which sweeps on over land and sea more swiftly than the swiftest bird, or fleetest horse, or quickest train of cars. The second word (mighty) denotes the power of such wind, power tremendous, majestic, resistless, awful. Blessed symbolism! Poor, weak, waiting worshippers, amid a hostile nation in a hostile world, with all earth and hell against you, yet "commanded" to go into all the earth and preach the gospel to every creature, do you catch the meaning of that sound? (4.) The extent. "It filled all the house," that is, the sound filled the house. What made the sound, as we just saw, is not said, but only what it was like. Hence the writer says only that the sound filled the house. It is described as it was—as it came to them through their hearing. This denotes the completeness, the fullness of that power which, by the Holy Spirit, was to be in the disciples, and shows that the baptism of the Spirit was indeed an immersion, and not a mere sprinkling, or even a pouring, baptized "in the Holy Ghost."

Verse 3.—The sight. First through the ears, now through the eyes, comes the evidence. Observe, here, that there was the appearance (1.) Of tongues. This betokened the more immediate purpose of this visitation; namely, to make the apostles and others heralds, teachers, "witnesses." They were to speak. How fit the symbol. (2.) As of fire. Not tongues which were fire, but which seemed like fire, a resemblance, just as in case of the sound. Fire is the special symbol of God, as the Pure, and the Purifier, the Holy, and the One who makes holy. See Rev. i. 14-16, and many other passages. The disciples were to speak the holy words which the Holy Spirit gave, and by which men were to be made holy. (3.) Distributed. Not "cloven," as in the Common Version. The thought is, not that each tongue was "forked," but that from a central mass of seeming flames were distributed single and separate flames. The common centre showed the unity of the Spirit and power, the oneness of its source. The distribution showed the diversity of operations of the power according to the multitude of individual souls receiving it. (4.) "Sat upon each of them." "It" is not in the Greek, but the verb is singular, showing that a singular subject is in mind. What is that one thing that sat on each? Not the fire, that is, the whole mass of apparent flame. But one of the tongues sat on each, as they were distributed from the common centre, thus showing that each disciple himself, by himself, was authorized and empowered to bear his own witness for Christ and his truth.

Verse 4.—The effect. This is represented as two-fold; first the filling of the disciples, and this effect straightway became a cause of a second effect, namely, the speaking with tongues. Notice here (1.) On whom. All, emphasized as again and again before. (2.) How largely. Filled, coming wholly under his power, so as to express his thoughts and his will rather than their own, "possessed" by the Spirit rather than possessing it. As to what followed, notice again, (1.) They testified, became witnesses. (2.) They spake out what was wrought in. Spake what the Spirit, and not their own reason gave. (3.) As an outward sign or symbol, and also proof of this, their very dialect or language, was given them. They spake in other tongues. No man hearing that should have doubted that their doctrine was of God. (4.) They did this at once, as soon as the power came upon them; for such is the meaning of the word "began"—began at once. II. The Impression of the Miracles.

Verses 5-11. The "devout" or pious Jews had come to the feast, though there may have been those from all the regions named who had settled in Jerusalem, as the word "dwelling" might suggest, but does not require. The noise or sound of the wind, was perhaps heard out on the thronged streets, and the report rapidly spread. One disciple spoke in one language, another in another, either apart or in succession, so that all could hear and understand.

QUESTIONS.—What were the three annual festivals of the Jews, and when did they occur? What did the feast of Pentecost celebrate? Why was it so called? How long did it last? What other festival occurred on this day of Pentecost?

How is the gift of the Holy Spirit to be regarded? What change in the method of instruction does it indicate? How was it celebrated by the early Christian Church?

Vs. 1. Where was this "one place"? Vs. 2. Is it said there was any actual wind? Of what in the Bible is wind an emblem?

Vs. 3. What is meant by "cloven tongues"? Of what is fire an emblem? Ex. iii. 2, 3; xix. 16-20.

Vs. 4. Did the Holy Spirit endow the apostles with permanent or transient power, or partly of both? Did they actually speak foreign languages? What did this gift of tongues attest? Did the believers understand what they spoke? What did they talk about mainly? Has the gift of tongues been withdrawn from the Church? and if so, when and why? 1 Cor. xii. 10, 11, 28, 30; xiv. 2, 4-6, 9, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 27, 39.

Vs. 6. What is meant by their being confounded? Does not the descent of the Holy Spirit commonly attract attention? Is curiosity ever a means to conversion?

Vs. 11. What are meant here by "the wonderful works of God"? Luke i. 49.

Partially from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 16th, 1876.—Peter's Defence.—Acts ii. 12-28.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Good Resolution for a Little Boy.

I'll never hurt my little dog, But stroke and pat his head; I like to see him wag his tail, I like to see him fed.

Dear little thing, how very good, And very useful, too; For do you know that he will mind What he is bid to do?

Then I will never hurt my dog, Nor ever give him pain; But treat him kindly every day, And he'll love me again.

—Our Little Ones.

Good Friends.

Little people sometimes do not agree; but when they "make up," every thing is pleasant again. It is very much better always to be careful of each others' feelings, and do right, so that there will not be any trouble, or need of "making up," in order to become good friends again. If you will always try to remember the words of Jesus, you will not have any trouble with your little friends, for he gave us the GOLDEN RULE. Try to learn it: WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM.—Ib.

For the Christian Messenger.

Notings for Boys and Girls about Missions.

1st. Let me ask you to read the following copy of a letter from Miss Rand:—

MAULMAIN, Jan. 5, 1876.

EXPERIENCE OF A HEATHEN BOY.—I have already written about a heathen boy fifteen years of age, who came to school for the first time about eight months ago. He very soon learned to read; and before the close of the term, having reviewed the catechism, he, with one or two others, was promoted to my Bible-class. I was gratified to see how eager he was to understand the truths of the Bible. He not only listened with good attention in the class, but also attended the children's prayer-meeting, and showed by his questions and remarks that he was "not far from the kingdom."

I had feared he would not return for the dry-season term, but was happily disappointed and gratified to find that his interest in the study of the Scriptures had not in the least abated. When he wishes an explanation, instead of reading the passage from the Bible, as the others do, he will repeat it, and then tell where it is found. He sometimes says with a sorrowful face, "It is very difficult to do right in the jungle, people revile one so." (This is a common complaint. The Christian scholars often say it is easy to live consistently here in

town; but it is very different in the jungle. I asked him, the other day, if he thought his sins had been forgiven. "I don't know," he answered. "My sins are very great. When the teacher" (a native preacher more zealous than wise) "was preaching in our village, I laughed." I asked him if he would have the heart to do it now; and he said, "No." I then told him I thought God had given him a new heart; and he answered that the people in the jungle thought he was different.

Hoping that he would wish to become a preacher, I asked him one day, after Sunday school, what he thought he should do when he had finished his studies. He said he did not know; he had no longing for the riches of this world; and added, "I can think of nothing now but how to stop sinning."

Are you desirous to 'stop sinning'? Can you say as a little girl ten years old said, "Khasha béya," 'I love much.' Just read her own testimony.

"She rose up in the midst of the congregation, and answered clearly and composedly the questions put to her by the white sahib, whom she had never seen before. Her little heart seemed all on fire with interest, and her bright eyes twinkled like stars. When I asked her if she loved Christ, in whom she had just said she was trusting, she answered, 'Khasha béya,' which, being interpreted, means, 'I love very much.' It indicated very clearly that somebody had revealed to her heart a person, whom 'not having seen she loved.'"

My dear young friends, is it not sweet to read, that the seed sown, is springing up and bringing forth such precious fruit, in the life and experience of a 'Heathen Boy.'

This glorious gospel of the grace of God, is the power of God unto salvation, not only to the young, but also to the aged, the following extract for an example:

"AN AGED CONVERT.—Among them was an old woman, wrinkled and tottering, who came all the way over that mountain-road to be baptized. It was most interesting to see the joyful eagerness manifest in her homely old face."

Here is another interesting incident: "About ten months ago, a wild Garo from far up on top of the mountain, was passing through this village. He casually heard a little of the gospel of Christ as it was spoken by Maljang. The words arrested his attention. He went up to his village, and told his friends what he had heard. They sent him back to hear more, and return, and report more fully. He came, and was instructed more fully. He went back home, and taught his friends all that he himself had learned. Among these things was the duty of going to meeting on the sabbath. They liked the new ideas; and so all of them began to attend Maljang's service on sabbaths. This they kept up through ten months, and received much instruction in the truths of Christianity. They received the Word with gladness of heart. We have just received them all, ten in number, joyfully into the fellowship of the saints."

They are manifesting also the fruits of the Spirit.

At the prayer-meeting on the evening of the following day, one of the ten above referred to, the leader in the movement, voluntarily led in prayer. And such a prayer for such a man! For confidence of utterance and heartfelt earnestness, I never heard it equalled by any new convert anywhere. I think these people were evidently taught by the Spirit of the Lord. One very remarkable thing about them is, that when they first decided that they liked the new religion, they at once gave up drinking, which they are all now taught is contrary to Christian living, and a bar to church-membership. This is an improvement on the old custom of bringing their drunken habits into the church, with the promise to wage a gradual warfare against them."

In writing this article for you I have culled largely from the Helping Hand, a very interesting Missionary paper. My desire is to lead you to lend a 'helping hand' in this good work for the Master.

Your friend,

J. F. AVERY.

Halifax.

Spanish Gypsy Proverbs.

Eyes which see not break no heart.

A bird in the hand is worth more than a hundred flying.

To God (be) praying and with the flail plying.

The dog who walks finds a bone.

It is worth more to be the head of a mouse than the tail of a lion.

Knowledge is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us in our advanced age; and, if we do not plant it while young, will give us no shade when we grow old.

Forget-me-not.

I am the flower that every age has sung; My name has trembled on the unwilling tongue; Midst sad farewells how mournfully has rung Forget-me-not!

I image best the heaven's eternal blue! Though transient clouds may hide it from the view, It shineth still, faith's never-changing hue, Forget-me-not!

The restless brook, the river's deeper flow, Beside my quiet home still come and go; I kiss the waters, murmuring soft and low, Forget-me-not.

The birds above me, hovering on the wing, List the hushed whisper, and the woodlands ring With the light choral as they answering sing, Forget-me-not.

The laughing eddies hastening to the sea With rippling echoes mock the symphony; The rude winds toss it on their pinions free, Forget-me-not.

And human voices catch the sweet refrain, In loving accents fraught with human pain, Repeating still in never-dying strain, Forget-me-not.

Golden Hours.

Prayer-meeting Hints.

Sit near the front.

Hold sacred the evenings of your prayer-meetings.

"Boil it down." A great deal can be said in three minutes.

Welcome strangers who drop into the meeting. A kind word to such has often done great good.

Did you ever hear any one complain that the prayers were "too short" in all prayer-meetings?—Sowing and Reaping.

Dream of a Spelling Bee.

A DICTATION EXERCISE.

Menageries where sleuth-hounds caracole

Where jaguar phalanx and phlegmatic gnu

Fight ptarmigan and kestrels cheek by jowl

With peewit and precocious cockatoo.

Gaunt seneschals, in crochety cockades,

With seine-net trawl for porpoise in lagoons,

While scullions gauge erratic escapades

Of madrepores in water logged lagoons.

Flamboyant triptychs groined with gherkins green,

In reckless fracas with coquetish bream,

Ecstatic gargoyles, with grotesque chagrin,

Garnish the gruesome nightmare of my dream!

Something worth knowing about this time is "how to get a situation." Something worth thinking about all the time is "how to keep a situation." There is one way, and one only, and that is, to do so much and to do it so well that your employer cannot afford to dismiss you.

There is dew in one flower and not in another, because one opens its cup and takes it in, while the other closes itself and the drop runs off. So God rains goodness and mercy as wide as the dew, and if we lack them, it is because we do not open our hearts to receive them.

Behavior is a mirror in which every one shows his own image. There is a politeness of the heart akin to love, from which springs the easiest politeness of outward behavior.

Don't be frightened away from any pursuit because you have only a little time to devote to it. If you can have nothing more, a smattering is infinitely better than nothing.

The more dew there is in a flower's cup the lowlier hangs its head. The more grace there is in a human heart the humbler it will feel.

The owner of a pair of bright eyes says that the prettiest compliment she ever received came from a child of four years. The little fellow, after looking intently at her for a moment, enquired, naively, "Are your eyes new ones?"