

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, July 23rd, 1876.—The Temple Dedicated.—1 Kings viii. 5-21.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 12-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Romans xii. 1.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Exodus xxv. 10-22. Tuesday, Joshua iii. Wednesday, 1 Samuel vi. Thursday, 2 Sam. vi. 1-17. Friday, 2 Sam. vii. Saturday, John iv. 19-27. Sunday, Ephesians ii. 13-22.

ANALYSIS.—I. Bringing in the ark. Vs. 5-9. II. The cloud filling the house. Vs. 10, 11. III. Promises referred to. Vs. 12, 13. IV. Blessing the congregation. Vs. 14-21.

THE OUTER COURTS.—But a small part of the religious services of the Jewish nation took place within the roofed Temple. The holy place admitted the officiating priests only. The holy of holies the high priest alone, and that but once a year. In the courts, however, about the temple—for priests, people, women, strangers, and foreigners, arranged in inner and outer quadrangles, separated by walls, pillars, porticoes, mainly under the open air—there was room for divine worship on an extended and an adequate scale, for great public and national rites, offerings and sacrifices, processions, addresses, and prayers. Now the roofed Temple, with all its outer courts and furnishings is all completed. The day of dedication comes. The time is in October, at the feast of tabernacles; but this year the ceremony covers two weeks instead of one. Tens of thousands of sheep and oxen are prepared for sacrifice: everybody contributes to the great propitiatory rite. Singers and musicians from all parts are invited, chieftains, officers, guards, and porters, priests without regard to courses, the whole tribe of Levi, indeed, all who can be brought, are summoned to the dedication, the greatest ever performed under the Mosaic economy. The ark, removed from the city of David, is come toward the holy of holies. The gates fly open. The God of Israel is installed in his new and appropriate dwelling. A cloud fills the Temple, so that the priests cannot stand in it to minister; and Solomon, acting in priestly character, standing upon an elevated brazen throne before the assembled people crowding the spacious courts, blesses the congregation of Israel. It was a great occasion indeed.

EXPOSITION.—Note.—The reason for choosing the feast of Tabernacles for the time of dedication was that this feast commemorated their tent life in the years of wandering, as an experience of the past, and in contrast with their fixed abode in the promised land. The tabernacle had been given to attend those wanderings, and now the fixed Temple took its place. Thus the dedication was in the very spirit of the festival, and it was worth their while to wait as they did eleven months in order to have the dedication come in connection with the Feast. See for parallel account, with our lesson, 2 Chron. vi. 1-11.

I. The ark brought in.—Verse 5.—All the congregation of Israel. Summoned especially for this great and long-anticipated service. Verse 1. The concourse must have been immense. Before the ark. Doubtless as it was brought into the priests' court of the Temple. For the furniture of this court see 2 Chron. iv. 1-8. It seems probable from 2 Chron. v. 5, that the tabernacle also was brought with the ark to be deposited somewhere in the temple. Sheep and oxen: Including both sheep and goats, and of the herds, or cattle. Could not be told, etc.

Verse 6.—The priests brought in the ark. Already brought up. Num. iii. 31; 1 Chron. xv. 25-29. Comp. Joshua iv. 10; vi. 12; 2 Samuel xv. 29. The Oracle—The Word—a name given to the Most Holy Place, because there was the place of God's presence, from which he spake or made revelations to his people. The cherubim. This plural is simply cherubim. The colossal figures described last week.

Verse 7.—Spread forth, etc. See vi. 27.

Verse 8.—The staves. The bars by which the ark was borne. Exodus xxv. 15. The ends [heads] of the staves. Came down against the partition curtain.

Verse 9.—Nothing in the ark, etc. Compare Hebrews ix. 4; Exodus xvi. 33; Num. xvii. 10. Either the articles here mentioned had before this been removed, or, as is perhaps more probable, they were not placed strictly within, but beside the ark. Horeb. Probably the name of the mountain of which Sinai was a peak.

II. The cloud filling the house.—Verse 10.—And it came to pass. The whole worth of the Temple depended upon God's acceptance of it, which he now by the cloud signifies. The cloud filled the house. Both of its apartments, but not till the withdrawal of the priests. The cloud was evidently one of thick blackness, and of awful grandeur on this account, verse 12. So on Sinai, Exodus xix. 16, and at the setting up of the tabernacle, Exodus xl. 34-38, especially verse 38. The cloud only was seen, the Temple disappearing in this supernatural symbol of God's holy and awful presence.

Verse 11.—Could not stand to minister, etc. Such a phenomenon naturally filled the priests with fear approaching to terror, as at Sinai. It unnerved them. The glory of the Lord. From out the black cloud we may suppose to have flashed the fire which at Sinai, and so commonly, betokens God's presence. Exodus xxiv. 17; Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3.

III. Solomon's words.—Verse 12, 13.—These verses contain the words of dedication. A recognition of Jehovah as in the cloud: Leviticus xvi. 2. He then says to Jehovah, I have surely built thee an house, etc. This is virtually saying, "Accept this house which I have built for thee, to be thine own house, and dwell in it as the settled place of thine abode forever."

Verse 14.—Turned his face. He was between the congregation and the cloud. Hence while addressing Jehovah his back had been turned toward them.

Verse 15.—Blessed be the Lord [Jehovah] God of Israel. Honest words from an honest and full heart. The chief hope of his father David's heart, and the chief hope of his own, was realized in the completion of this magnificent structure, in its devotion to Jehovah, and in its acceptance by Jehovah. If it was a moment of awe, and even of terror, to the people, it was also a moment of solemn and sublime joy. Spake with his mouth . . . with his hands fulfilled. Vivid particularity and anthropomorphism; that is, speaking of God as though having a man's form. Solomon saw no exclusion of divine agency in the fact of human agency.

Verse 16.—Chose no city . . . but I chose David. Not accidental that the choice of a city was postponed till after the choice of David, for David was the typical king of Israel, brought Israel to the summit of its national greatness, actually won and made a suitable city for the national capital which fitly took his name, and so brought into existence all the conditions requisite for the construction of a temple adequate for its glorious purposes.

Verse 17.—It was in the heart, etc. Compare 2 Samuel vii. 2.

Verse 18, 19.—Compare 2 Samuel viii. 5-16.

Verse 20.—And the Lord [Jehovah] hath performed his word, etc. It was a consideration which not only might well allay fear, but inspire assurance and joy, that the glory of that hour was but the fulfilment of explicit and cherished promises of good made to the honored David and to Solomon, and cherished and acted on by them and the people.

Verse 21.—I have set there a place for the ark, etc. Specially named, as the ark, with the tables of the law, was that which made the Most Holy Place to be the most holy. The law was God spoken and speaking. The stones bore that law, the ark contained those stones, the most Holy Place contained that ark. Such was the order of sanctifying efficacy radiating from the living centre of God's nature. We too are sanctified as we partake of the divine nature, through his words of truth and grace as a law hidden in our heart, to transform and glorify. As Solomon went back to the ancient days to link this with all covenant mercies and covenant promises of the past, so do we also go back along the same line in the eternal purpose of God's electing love to us in Christ.

QUESTIONS.—What year, and what month of the year was the Temple of Solomon dedicated? Was the dedication held under the roofed Temple?

Vs. 5. Where were the people assembled? With what was this inner court furnished? Where had the ark been of late? How large was the brazen altar? Did it answer for this occasion? Who made the brazen vessels of the Temple? Was he a Gentile?

Vs. 6. How often have the priests carried the ark before this? Where? Into what place was the ark borne? Under what wings was it left? Were there still other wings overshadowing it?

Vs. 8. Were the staves wholly drawn out? Why drawn out at all?

Vs. 9. What were these two tables of stone? Deut. x. 1-6. Was there ever anything besides these kept in the ark?

Vs. 10. What did this cloud symbolize?

Vs. 11. What was this effect upon the priests spoken of by "could not stand to minister"?

Vs. 12. What was Solomon's motive in speaking? Why his apostrophe unto Jehovah?

Vs. 14. How had Solomon been facing? What does his blessing the congregation of Israel indicate? Ans. A devout patriotism. Why has the day of such temples as this one of Solomon's passed? John iv. 19-25.

—Baptist Teacher.

Sunday, July 30th 1876.—Solomon's Prayer.—1 Kings viii. 22-30.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Robert's advice to Bessie.

One sunny Saturday morning, not long ago, Robert S.—sat on the bench in his tool-house, busily at work. Presently his little sister Bessie came in. "I've done something dreadful, Rob; though it wasn't my fault, either. You won't tell, will you?" she asked looking up doubtfully.

"No, I won't," he replied promptly, interested at the prospect of sharing a secret.

"Well"—and here Bessie drew a long breath—"I went to get a drink of water, and there was one of those thin fancy tumblers, you know, on the table. I wanted much to drink out of it because mother's so afraid about them that she never lets me. I was as careful as I could be; but when I was just going to put it back on the table, somebody opened the door. I thought it was mother, and I was so frightened that I let the tumbler drop on the floor, and"—Bessie then stopped to check back a rising sob.

"Went all to smash, did it?" inquired Rob sympathetically. Bessie nodded very ruefully.

"Whew!" whistled Rob. "What did mother say?"

"O! it wasn't mother at all. It was only Bridget. O, Rob! do you think I shall have to tell mother? It would only make her feel vexed if she knew one of them was broken; if I don't tell her perhaps she won't miss it, and won't feel grieved about it. I'm sure I don't want to vex her."

This was quite a plausible view of the matter, and Bessie longed to hear Robert approve of it. At last he said, "Do you really want my advice, Bess?"

"Yes. What would you do?"

"Well, if I were in your place, Bess, I'd tell her. You know that's the only honest thing to do, really. There are several reasons why it's better to be honest about anything of that kind. One is, perhaps she'll forgive you."

And so Robert took up his boat again, feeling that the minister himself couldn't have given better advice in the case. As for poor Bessie, she resented Robert's tone of superiority, and said, quickly, "I don't much believe you would tell her, after all, Rob. It isn't half as easy as you think."

"Perhaps it isn't easy. Who said it was? But I hope I should be honest enough for that." And self-righteous Rob brought down the hammer with all his might on the knife with which he was splitting a piece of wood. Alas for him! It struck on an unseen nail, which snapped off the slender point in a trice. When he drew out the pointless, blunted blade, he gazed at it in dismay; while Bessie, in spite of her troubles, couldn't help laughing a little at the sudden change in his face.

This was anything but soothing to Robert's feelings, and he muttered that he didn't see what business that old nail had there; and other not very amiable remarks to the same effect.

"Why Rob!" exclaimed Bessie, sud-

denly, "isn't that father's new knife, the one he told us not to touch?"

"He meant you," replied Robert, sharply; "but I know how to use a knife. I never hurt a knife before in my life, and this wasn't my fault. It was all on account of that nail; and I don't know who put that there; I didn't." Robert was about as unreasonable as unfortunate people are apt to be.

"Well, Rob," said Bessie, at length, "we've both done something now. Let's go and confess together."

"Confess!" rejoined Robert, slowly; "why, I—I don't believe—that is"—and without finishing the sentence, he carefully shut the knife, and going to his father's toolchest, put it exactly where he had found it. Bessie's blue eyes opened very wide at this proceeding, and Robert could not meet their look as he explained. You see, Bess, John's going to leave next week, and if father doesn't find it out before then, why, he'll think John did it, and you see, it don't hurt John, because he won't be here."

As soon as Bessie could say anything for her amazement at this speech, she began, "But, Rob, I thought you said if you were in my place"—but Robert rushed off to the garden, not caring to hear his own words repeated just then.

Bessie stood still on the barn floor, looking thoughtfully towards the door where Robert disappeared. A single streak of sunlight edged its way through a crack, making a perfect glory of her wavy, flaxen hair, so that she formed quite a pretty little picture, as she stood in a deep thought for full ten minutes. At last a light flashed into her eyes, and she ran out to find Robert. She came upon him, gloomily pulling up weeds in his garden.

"Rob," she said, "I've just this moment thought of that verse I learned this morning, and I'm going to do it."

"What was it?" asked Robert, without looking up.

"I don't remember exactly, but it's something about 'whose confesseth his sins shall have mercy'; and so I'm going to confess my fault to mother, because 'mercy' means she won't care much."

To this rather loose explanation Robert only replied, "Tell her, then," still keeping his eyes on the weeds.

Robert didn't see Bessie again till dinner time, and then he knew by her lively chatter that the burden was off her mind at least. How he envied her! If he could only have the same peace! But no, he hadn't the courage to pay the price—confession; so he ate his dinner silently enough, never opening his mouth except to put food in it.

As they arose from the table, Mrs. S.—said to her husband, "I wish you would fasten this window so that it won't rattle in the night."

"O yes, I will!" he answered. "It needs a wedge, doesn't it? Robert, run to the barn and get my new knife which you will find in the upper drawer of the toolchest."

Poor conscience-struck Robert! He did as he was bidden, and handed the knife to his father, hoping fervently that he wouldn't open that blade. Mr. S.—did though; and when questioned, Robert had to tell the whole story. When he had finished, his father said sternly: "Now let us look at what you have done. You have willfully disobeyed me; and besides that, you have concealed your guilt as long as possible in hope of throwing some blame on some one else. You may go to your room, and stay till I give you leave to come down."

All the afternoon Robert spent alone in his room, and when every now and then ringing peals of laughter reached his ears from the room below, where Bessie and Laura were having a fine time together, he thought bitterly that Bessie had forgotten him in his trouble and disgrace. But he was mistaken, for when Laura had gone home, and it began to grow dark, Bessie went to her father's study, and pleaded her brother's cause earnestly. "Poor Rob! He'll get so lonely; I'm afraid he'll throw himself out of the window, or do something dreadful."

Robert was sitting by the window in his room when Bessie softly opened the door and said, "Are you here Rob? Its so dark I can't see." She drew a breath of relief at his dismal answer, "Yes of course."

"I'm so glad! Well, father says you can come down now."

Robert jumped up eagerly. "Did you ask him to let me?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are a real good girl, you are," said Rob, falteringly, and after a pause added, "I'll take it all back, Bess, what I said this morning. You are twice as honest as I am."

"O no, Rob! but you did give me some good advice," said Bessie, mischievously. "Don't, Bess," pleaded Rob. "I'm so ashamed of myself!"

"Well, I won't ever say a word about it," And she kept her promise; but Rob never forgot that Saturday's lesson. —Early Days.

Lost and Found.

"May I go down in the meadow," said little Ellie, "and see the men make hay? I won't go anywhere else, mother; no, indeed, I won't! you may trust me this time."

Ellie said that because she had once been naughty, and gone down to the village, when her mother gave her leave only to go to a neighbor's house. When she was allowed to go to the hay-meadow she ran off merrily, quite intending to keep her promise, and stay just there until the men went home; when she knew they would give her a ride on the big hay-wagon.

But it was early in the afternoon, and the sun was hot in the meadow. Ellie grew tired, by-and-by, of tumbling the hay about, and jumping over the fragrant hillocks. Over in the woods it looked shady and cool, and somebody had told her there was a persimmon-tree there. So without stopping to remember that she promised to go nowhere else, she hurried across the meadow, and was soon in the cool shadow of the woods.

Once there she remembered suddenly that she was doing wrong: but she put the thought out of her mind. It was so nice there—and if she should really find the persimmons! "Mother won't care, I do believe," she said to herself. And she wandered on, picking flowers, and gathering huckleberries, and paddling in a brook that ran through the woods for a long, long time. She did not know how late it was, till she saw the sun lying in long red lines between the trees. Then she began to think it was time to go home, and started, as she thought, in the right direction.

But these were strange woods to Ellie; she had never been so far alone, and she did not know at all the right way. Every step took her farther and farther from the hay-meadow, and it was not long before she found, to her dismay, that she was lost. Then, indeed, she was frightened, and the recollection of her disobedience made her feel so much the worse. She ran to and fro, and tried many different paths, but all in vain.

At home, by this time, they began to miss her. The men came in to supper, and the mother asked, "Where is Ellie?" But nobody knew. They sent around to the neighbors, but no one had seen her. Then her father and brothers went into the woods to search for her, but she had strayed so far away that it was morning before they found her. She had cried herself to sleep, and God had taken care of the naughty little girl all through the dark night.

When she was found at last you can imagine how glad everybody was. They made a sort of chair out of green boughs, and Ellie rode on this, as it rested on the men's shoulders. When the neighbor's children saw her coming, they shouted, and ran to tell her mother. It was a joyful procession that marched through the hay-meadow, but Ellie looked down ashamed and sorrowful.

"You never can forgive me, mother; I was so naughty," she said. But her mother kissed her, and held her tight in her arms. "There is joy in heaven when a sinner repents," she whispered. "And I know my little girl is sorry." —Young Reaper.

Our prayer and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well; while the one ascends, the other descends.

To individual faithfulness, and to the energy of the private conscience, God has committed the real history and progress of mankind.

SELF.—Do you want to know the man against whom you have the most reason to guard yourself? Your looking-glass will give you a fair likeness of his face.