

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES. SUNDAY, June 25th, 1876.—Review of the past quarter.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH.

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GOLDEN TEXT.—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isaiah lx. 1.

EXPOSITION.—I. The Ascending Lord.

—This naturally joins itself with the resurrection, the two together constituting in some sense a single event, with a single lesson. For Christ it was the end of humiliation, shame, suffering, death; the end of the curse laid upon him, and taken upon himself as our sin-bearer. It was the entrance upon the joy set before him, the answer of the prayer, "Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

II. The Day of Pentecost.

—Of this great event note, 1. It came in answer to ancient prediction, and to Christ's promise. 2. It came to a band of obedient, united, praying, waiting disciples, who were thus prepared for it. 3. It came not before but after our Lord's ascension, because the salvation of souls, which the Spirit came to effect, was the purchase of Christ's death; because the new revelations which it was to make were of the crucified and risen Lord. The gift of the Spirit was the purchase of atoning blood. To man a gift; by the Son a purchase. 4. It was the inauguration of the Spirit's dispensation, or the vivid exhibition of the nature and power of his perpetual work among men.

III. Peter's Defence.—In this lesson we see how the Spirit can help a man to be a witness for Christ. To mockery Peter opposed sober truth. To unbelief he brought the clear, strong arguments of the "sure word of prophecy." To intimidation he presented the calm, holy boldness of one whom God sustains through faith; to the consciences of his hearers he brought in the closest, most direct, most forceful manner possible, the truths which just those consciences needed to know; the revelation of their guilt, and of the one only escape. Once he denied, now he confessed. He denied from want of faith, he confessed from fulness of faith. He denied when death seemed the end of Jesus, he confessed since he sees Jesus to be the Lord of life, the conqueror of death. So he preaches the resurrection.

IV. The Early Christian Church.

—We mark several particulars as to them. 1. They became such, through the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection. 2. From the Spirit's power. 3. In the way of pungent conviction of sin and condemnation. 4. They promptly and openly made known their conviction to Christians, and sought direction. 5. They at once believed in Jesus, though it cost a fearful struggle to break away from their old prejudices and their prejudiced fellow-citizens, as Peter's urgency of exhortation shows. 6. They took their stand resolutely from the first. 7. They stood by it afterward "steadfastly." 8. They were bound together in oneness of love, sympathy, interest, and so far as present needs demanded, community of property, because so closely bound to their common Head. 9. They had abundant joy and corresponding power, since there were daily additions of genuine disciples.

V. The Lame Man Healed.

—God cannot be sovereign over spirit unless he is also sovereign over matter, cannot be

supreme Lord of our souls unless our bodies also are under his supreme power. Jesus in the flesh had been at pains to keep before men the completeness of his power, by working miracles in every sphere, and Jesus the ascended pursued the same course for the same ends.

VI. The Power of Jesus' Name.

—The method of divine revelation from the beginning has been to give first a deed, and then a word; first a fact, and afterwards its explanation. God shows himself a being in the sphere of being, and then he shows himself an intelligence by speaking at once to our intelligence. The Holy Spirit gave Peter for his test the cripple's cure, by the same event drew about him his congregation, and prepared them to hear the gospel. The people blundered by glorifying the apostles. They were set right, and taught to glorify Christ whom God had glorified. This made it needful to draw the sharp contrast between his hearers' sin of rejection, and God's act of glorification. Goodness and severity blend; or rather the severity is that of goodness, the boldness is the fidelity of love, and the exposure of sin comes of the desire for salvation.

VII. Christian Courage.

—The Sanhedrim had silenced in death Jesus, they will now silence the apostles. They had not silenced Jesus, since he spoke more clearly after death than before; they cannot silence these men, and are restrained from putting them to death. The charges made against them they own, and show that it was a benefaction. Their charge against the Sanhedrim they show that God himself has taken pains to prove in the eyes of the universe, and thus to convict of the crime of all crimes those who now sit to judge Christ's witnesses. The judges, when by themselves, admit that fact is against them, that it is known to be against them, that they are helpless to compass their ends, that both justice and the people are against them, and so from sheer timidity command the apostles to be silent, and so dismiss them. The apostles tell them plainly that they neither can nor will be silent, and so leave them.

VIII. Christian Fellowship.

—Not what the council expected—just the reverse. Joy not sorrow, assurance not despondency, determination not intimidation, new zeal, and effort and success; the certainty that God was for them, exhibited in mutual fellowship, in holy songs, in incessant testimonies, in the bestowment of property for the needy. So did the cause gain new impulse from the first effort to destroy it.

IX. Lying unto God.

—Thus far dangers seem to lie outside; but now another worse and greater within appears. Hypocrisy may do what open resistance cannot. God through His Spirit had met and mastered the first, turning opposition into help. Can he do the same now? Just that he could and did accomplish. The Church of Christ is pure, without spot, and he has thus shown what a horrible sin it is to carry into it falsehood, treachery, hypocrisy!

X. The Apostles in Prison.

—The Sadducees hated the apostle and wanted to keep them from work by shutting them up; they thought that after this they would be afraid to disobey, and that it would disgrace them so that the people would not honor them as they had done.

XI. The Apostles before the Council.

—The high priest wishes he had dared to punish them, and asks why the command had not been obeyed. There were six rulers to each of the apostles, and the whole seventy-two great men looked angry threats. In the midst of their angry plans to kill the apostles, one calm voice was heard commanding their removal, which had been forgotten in their eagerness. Gamaliel was a celebrated teacher of the law, and head of the Sanhedrim when the high-priest was not present. The repeated command not to speak in the name of Jesus being disobeyed; rough them a Jewish scourging of thirty-nine stripes on the bare back, and very painful. They rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer for his sake.

XII. The Seven Chosen.

—As the num-

ber of believers grew greater, how difficult it would become to distribute these goods. What other work had the apostles to do!

Now that the work was divided, what would the apostles have time for? And if they prayed more and preached more, what should you think would happen? Many more would hear, and hearing believe. Among 'these new believers were a great many priests.

Stephen had not only great faith and power to do great wonders and miracles, but also great boldness to speak for Jesus, though so many were against him. The false witnesses colored his statements to suit themselves, partly because they did not understand.

Picture Stephen standing alone before the seventy-two. Are we right when we say Stephen stood alone? One was with him, whose company made his face shine. We leave Stephen here for three months.

QUESTIONS.

—Who in the Old Testament predicted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Who promised to send him after he went away? Does the Holy Spirit endow us outwardly or inwardly? What is the meaning of the two words Jesus Christ? Which is of more value to sinners, the life or the death of Jesus? What doctrine besides the atonement did the early Christians witness to with great power? After his resurrection why did not the Saviour remain long on the earth? What was his exaltation to heaven properly a reward of? Phil. ii. 8, 9. Did the apostles preach with timidity? What body of men imprisoned them? What doctrine did they preach that was peculiarly odious to unbelievers? Acts iv. 2. Who was the chief of the alms distributors? What evidence have we from his person that he was a very good man? When sinners ask us what to do, what should we say to them? Acts ii. 37, 38. Is there really any worship in giving? Ans. "It is a liberal and most vital element in a truly Christian form of Sabbath service."—Rev. A. J. Gordon. Why the appointment of "the seven" alms distributors? Were they at first called deacons?

—Baptist Teacher.

Sunday, July 2nd, 1876. — David's Charge to Solomon. 1 Chron. xxviii. 1-10.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

A Sunday in the Wilderness, and What came of it.

It was Saturday evening, and in the little log cabin the young wife sat with one foot on the cradle mending the stockings, while her husband was putting the finishing touches to an axe handle which he had been making. "Mary," at length said her husband when the handle had been brought to the last degree of smoothness, "seems to me you're uncommonly sober to-night; hope you are not getting homesick." "Not exactly homesick, John," Mary replied, "but I am thinking of the Saturday evenings at home when I was a girl. Mother always tried to have everything done up before tea and as soon as that was cleared away, the Bibles and question books were brought out, and we older ones studied our lessons, while mother taught the little ones the verses they were to repeat at Sunday school the next day. Here it hardly seems as though we had any Sabbath, and I have been wondering whether we have done right to bring our children so far away from Sabbath and sanctuary privileges."

"I am sure it was for the children's sake we came."

"Yes, we came for their temporal good, because we thought that in this broad, free country, they would have a better chance than in our eastern home; but I am afraid that we forgot their higher interests."

"Well, wife, in the course of two or three years the baby will be growing up, and if we do well I will get a good wagon and we will go to the Creek to meeting."

"Too far off, and too long to wait: I want something done now. Sunday brings me around of household duties that cannot be dispensed with, and baby is ready to occupy my spare time; after dinner you and Willie generally stroll off somewhere, and although I try to give the children a little religious instruction in the evening, yet Johnnie and Mamie are too sleepy to give much heed, and I go to bed feeling dissatisfied and condemned. To-night I have been thinking it over, and have resolved to do as well as I can."

"Why, really, wife, you are getting quite eloquent. It is well we are out of

the reach of the woman's rights party, or we should have you mounting the rostrum."

"I don't care about woman's rights, and wouldn't vote if I could, but I think it is every parent's right and duty to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord."

"Well, do as you have a mind to, only don't press me into the service."

"But I certainly need your help; I cannot do much alone with baby in my arms, and the children will feel a great deal more interest in it if you take part."

"Well, as 'wilful woman must have her way," said her husband, laughingly, "what's the programme for to-morrow?"

"Wait and see; but please, John, don't make fun of it, for you know that at heart you think just as I do."

"I know that my wife is good enough for both," said John, kissing her, "and as it is after nine I move that we retire."

The next morning there was breakfast to get and clear away, beds to make, sweeping to be done, four children to be washed and dressed, sweet and clean, and dinner to be prepared. By that time it was nearly noon; but after dinner was cleared away, Mr. Ross told the children that they must sit down and be very quiet, for they were going to have a meeting.

"A meeting, what is that?" exclaimed chubby little Johnny, "something to eat?"

Johnny was generally ready for anything in that line.

"O, mother," spoke up ten year old Willie, "do hear Johnny; he don't know anything scarcely, does he? Why, Johnny, when we lived in Compton, we used to go to meeting every Sunday, and there used to be a minister, and a choir, and an organ, and a Sabbath school, and— and lots of folks; and mother, don't you remember old Elder Brown that used to come along once in awhile, how he used to sing? Seems as though I can hear him now; he sounded so droll, didn't he mother?"

"Elder Brown was a very good man, my dear; but come, if you will be quiet, your father and I will sing one of the hymns we used to sing in dear old Compton, and if you listen you will soon be able to sing with us."

The singing ended, Mr. Ross read a chapter in the Bible, and then his wife knelt down and prayed. Very tenderly and earnestly she pleaded that God would bless the effort they were making, and that His Spirit might be in every heart, sealing the instructions given.

Baby Alice now asserted her claims to attention, and as John preferred taking care of her to taking charge of the exercises, his wife proceeded to hear the children repeat some texts, and then told them the story of David. Never did story receive better attention, and many were the comments on David's prowess in killing the bear and lion, and more especially the giant. Mother did not wish to weary the little ones, so, although they were eager for more, she told them they might repeat the Lord's Prayer in concert, and then close with singing.

"Why, mother," remarked Willie, "I don't see but we can have just as good a Sabbath school as anybody."

Visitors were very rare in the little home of our friends; the nearest neighbors (three miles away) were a family by the name of Nichols, who three months before had moved from Lyndon, Vt.

The Wednesday morning after our story opens, Mr. Ross heard a wagon drive up and a cheery voice say, "Good morning, neighbor Ross. I am going to the Creek on business, so I have brought my wife and children along to get acquainted with your folks; my wife is sort of pining for the old home and neighbors, and I thought perhaps it would cheer her up a little." "I am sure we are very glad to see them. Walk right in, we don't stand for ceremony out here," was the hearty response.

Most cordially were the new-comers welcomed by Mrs. Ross, and they were soon as busily engaged in talking as old friends; indeed, they already felt as such. An hour passed swiftly away, and they scarcely thought of the children, who had been sent out of doors to get acquainted, until they came running in.

"Mother," exclaimed Sadie Nichols, a sweet little girl of nine, "Willie Ross says they had a Sunday school last Sunday, I wish I could go."

"Is that so," said her mother; and turning to Mrs. Ross, "Sadie has grieved

so much over the loss of her Sabbath school, but I didn't suppose there was anything of the kind nearer than the Creek, and of course it is out of the question to think of going thirteen miles."

"There is one only a part of the time there; but we have undertaken a family one, and the children are delighted with the experiment. I expect the novelty will wear off after a few Sabbaths, but we do not feel right to let our children grow up without some regular religious instruction on the Sabbath. Don't you think there is a great responsibility resting on us mothers out here?"

"Well," said Mrs. N., "I haven't thought much about it, though I think religion is a good thing. Father and mother were members of the Baptist church in Lyndon, and husband and I went to church generally; that is, when it was pleasant and we were not too tired. Two years ago Sadie joined the Sunday school; she had a very good teacher, and fell in love so much with her and the school that the child seemed really infatuated, rain or shine, sick or well, she must go; and she talks so much about the Bible, and trying to do right, and heaven, that she fairly makes me nervous sometimes."

"Dear little Sadie," said Mrs. Ross, lovingly. "God hath had these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto babes. Oh, Mrs. Nichols, God has given you a precious treasure in these little daughters, and he wants you to train them for Him."

Household affairs now claimed Mrs. R.'s attention, and the conversation was changed to other things, Mrs. Ross, as the older settler, giving her friend the benefit of some of her experience. All too soon the hours passed away and Mr. Nichols came for his wife and children. They went home quite enthusiastic about their new friends, and in one little heart an idea had taken root which was to bear fruit. Some other time we will tell our little readers what came of this little effort in the wilderness.—Zion's Advocate.

The Conversion of a Lady.

When the revival in Brooklyn was at its height, a very wealthy, cultivated, and sceptical lady from New York, went over there to hear Mr. Moody preach. She was amazed and a little disgusted by his style of oratory. But for some reason, which probably she could not have defined, she went again. Still again. On her fourth visit she passed into the enquiry room, and said to Mr. Moody that she would like to hear from him, directly and privately, his argument how she should become a Christian. He answered her saying, "Madam, I know of no surer way to reach your heart than through prayer. Let us pray." Mr. Moody knelt. His manner was such that the lady could not choose, but knelt beside him. He asked her to repeat after him his prayer. In low, earnest tones, and with all the tender and pathetic phraseology of which on occasions he is master, he uttered his supplication, pausing after each sentence for his companion to follow. The prayer concluded with the vow:

"And now O Lord, I give my life to thee!"

"Mr. Moody," said the lady, in a hard painful whisper, "I cannot say that; truly I cannot."

Mr. Moody made no reply, nor did he change his position. There was a pause of half a minute. Then again he uttered the words:

"And now, O Lord, I give my life to thee!"

The lady, trembling, did not respond. The evangelist paused for about the same space as before, motionless. And now, with a voice still more resolute and fervid, he repeated for the third time the pledge. After a momentary interval of silence, the new convert said,

"And now, O Lord, I give my life to thee!"

Mr. Moody rose, took his weeping charge by the hand with the words, "Madam, I devoutly thank God!" and led her quietly to the door. She has ever since been actively employed in religious work.

This title, "King of the Jews" written in three languages, signifies that our Lord is king of the whole world, practical, natural, and spiritual.