

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, February 13th, 1876.—Saul and his son slain.—1 Samuel xxxi. 1-6. B. C. 1056.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 3-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."—Prov. xiv. 32.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Samuel xxvi. Tuesday, 1 Samuel xxvii. Wednesday, 1 Samuel xxviii. Thursday, 1 Samuel xxix. Friday, 1 Samuel xxx. Saturday, 1 Samuel xxxi. 1-6. Sunday, 2 Samuel i. 17-27.

ANALYSIS.—I. Battle going hard with Saul. Vs. 1-3. II. Suicide of Saul. Vs. 4. III. Suicide of his armor-bearer. Vs. 5. IV. Roll of Death. Vs. 6.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION.—With 3,000 men Saul again pursues David, now in the wilderness of Ziph, and again David refuses to improve a most favorable opportunity for taking the king's life. Then, convinced that Saul's feelings had undergone no permanent change, David departed once more to Achish, king of Gath, by whom he was assigned the town of Ziklag for his abode. He remained here sixteen months, and would have joined Achish as his vassal with 600 men in a renewed attack upon the Israelites but for the protest of the Philistine chiefs. On returning to Ziklag, David found it in ruins by the act of the Amalekites; pursuing whom, he defeated them with great slaughter, and recovered his captured wives. Meanwhile, the Philistines were in the plain of Jezreel, pitched on the southern slope of Little Hermon, while Saul and his camp were on the opposite range of Mount Gilboa. Smitten with panic Saul took counsel of "the witch of Endor," a town seven or eight miles north of Mount Gilboa and beyond the Philistine camp, and was forewarned of death on the morrow. The next morning the Philistines made their onset. Saul's army was routed, and many fleeing were slain on the heights of Gilboa. Of these, three were Saul's sons, including the valiant Jonathan. Saul himself, being wounded, fell bravely yet stoically upon his sword.

EXPOSITION.—For another account of the battle and its issue see 1 Chron. x.

Verse 1.—Now the Philistines fought [were fighting] against Israel. See xxix. 11. Our last lesson showed us David still in the land of Israel, loyal and proving his loyalty. The present lesson finds him in Philistia, with the enemies of Israel, driven thither by murderous envy, loyal at heart, but saved only by a kind Providence from joining his country's enemies in their war against Israel. David would fain have helped Saul. The day of distress had come; but the mischief had been done. The Philistines were a powerful people, occupying the fertile plain on the Mediterranean in the southwest corner of Palestine. The word Palestine, which came to be the name of the whole land of promise, is another form of Philistia. Palestine and Canaan, are names taken from the names of the worst enemies of Israel. The word Philistines means wanderers, emigrants. These people had, before Abraham's time, emigrated from Egypt into this land. Gen. x. 14. It was no uncommon thing for them to be at war with Israel. See Judges v. 6; xii-xvi.; 1 Sam. iv. 1; x. 5; xiii. 3-19; xiv. 21-32; xxiii. 1; xix. 11; Joel iii. 6; Am. i. 6. They were subdued under David after he gained the throne, and remained subject to Israel until after Solomon's time. Their territory, in subsequent years, was an object of ambition to Egypt on the one hand, and to the great eastern nations on the other, from its position as the passage-way between the east and the west. And the men of Israel fled, etc. The celebrated plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon is triangular in general form, the base of the triangle toward the east, and from this base run still eastward to the Jordan three minor valleys, like fingers from a hand, the central valley lying between Little Hermon on the north and Gilboa on the south. The valley was between the two camps. The Hebrew word translated "slain" means pierced, and may therefore include the wounded also.

Verse 2.—And the Philistines followed hard, etc. "Stuck to," vividly picturing the closeness and hotness of the pursuit. The chief interest of the victor was, of course, to kill or capture the king and his family. The Philistines came first upon the three sons, and slew them. At least three other sons of Saul are mentioned, namely, Meribbaal or Mephibosheth, Armoni (2 Sam. xxi. 8), and Esh-Baal or Ishbosheth. 2 Sam. ii. 12. Of the three Ishbosheth became king for a time. Of those slain, interest centres chiefly in Jonathan [Jehovah-given], because, as the oldest, he was heir to the throne, and especially because of his relation to David as his sworn and true friend. We have seen him equally true to both his father and David. He was loyal to his father, both as son and subject. Knowing that his father's house was to fall, and that on its ruins David's was to rise, he yet staid where Providence had put him, and died faithful. A nobler nature can scarcely be found than Jonathan.

Verse 3.—We had in verse 1 disaster to the army, in verse 2, disaster to Saul's sons, and now in verse 3, disaster to Saul himself. The battle was sore. About to crush him; too heavy to be borne, making also a heavy heart, crushing both his spirit and his life. The archers hit him. Literally, "the archers, men with the bow, found him." The meaning seemed rather to be that in the hot pursuit these fleet warriors were nearing him, were close on his track, were so near that escape seemed to be hopeless. He was sore wounded of the archers, rather, "was sore afraid of the archers." Saul knew that both he and his house were doomed; that David was to reign in his stead. He had predicted it and knew his hour had come.

Verse 4.—Then said Saul to his armor-bearer. The office was one of trust and honor, and was given to a person trusted and beloved. This appears from David's appointment to the place when he came into favor with Saul. Draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith. Saul backs his command by a reason. Lest these uncircumcised. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant with Abraham, and so of Hebrew nationality. For an Israelite the term uncircumcised was much like the word heathen with us, only more reproachful. Thrust me through, and abuse me. Mock. The word in the original signifies "to gratify themselves further. This danger explains in part the terror of Saul. But his armor-bearer would not: for he was sore afraid. The fear of devoted loyalty, not unlike David's. This is, at least, preferable to the view that he feared simply as being held responsible for the King's life. The refusal was thus right. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it. He committed suicide to escape disgrace, a thing which has often been done, but always foolishly and wickedly.

Verse 5.—And when the armor-bearer, etc. The act of suicide seems to have been rather from attachment to Saul, and the consequent power of his example, than from fear of personal disgrace.

Verse 6.—A sad summary. In 1 Chron. x. 6, we have instead of "all his men," the phrase "all his house." The men of his house are here intended. The word "all" is not to be taken too strictly. Ishbosheth survived to become king. The fact that all fell on Gilboa shows how swift and hot was the pursuit. We naturally think of David. Would not he rejoice at this downfall of his enemies, and in the near advent of his predicted power? We could not have anticipated the beautiful, pathetic, and sublime outburst of songful, sorrowful, loyal, loving lament recorded, in 2 Sam. i. 17-27.

QUESTIONS.—Where are the Philistines encamped?—Where Saul and his army? What great battle was once fought on almost this very spot? See Judges vii. 1, 2. Of whom has Saul inquired in vain? 1 Sam. xxvii. 5, 6. Whom does he visit in his distress? What information does the witch of Endor give him? Ans. She predicted his death, possibly being a good clairvoyant, and knowing this already to be in Saul's mind. Possibly her jugglery was overruled by God. What does John say of spirits? 1 John iv. 1-3.

Vs. 2. Why was it possibly well for Jonathan thus early to die? Vs. 3. Can you recall the reason of Saul's doom, even though it has been delayed? 1 Sam. xv. 23; xxvii. 18. Will the dreadful threatenings God has uttered against the wicked be fulfilled? 2 Thess. i. 9; 2 Peter ii. 9.

Vs. 4. Does Saul show in death the least penitence for sin?

Vs. 6. Who survived Saul? How long did Ishbosheth continue the dynasty? Ans. Seven years and a half. How long was Saul's reign in all? Acts xiii. 21. B. C. 1095-1056.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 20th, 1876.—David established King.—2 Samuel v. 17-25. B. C. 1056-1046.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Lazy Jim.— What in the world's the matter with him? Oh, I know, His father told him to clear the snow.

His mother said, She must have a fire to bake her bread, And 'twas understood That Jim should fetch her a load of wood.

But Jim forgot— He was playing ball in the corner lot. So he went to bed, And never brought the wood from the shed.

In the night Down came the snow, so cold and white. Soft and thick, It covered the wood-pile every stick, And blocked the way To the shed where all the kindlings lay.

When morning came, Jim, of course, had to bear the blame. "Now you'll go And clear a pathway through the snow," Said his father stern— "And have nothing to eat till you return."

Lazy Jim— Work goes against the grain with him. Out of sight, He sulks and grumbles with all his might. "Pretty way To treat a fellow it is, I say!

"Guess he'd see, How he'd like it if he was me. "But he'll find out One of these days, what I'm about.

"I'll let him know I won't stay always to shovel his snow. "For when I'm a man, I'll go and leave him as quick as I can."

Naughty Jim— Do any of you boys talk like him? If you do, I've a little sermon to preach to you.

Under the sun, Nothing worth having is ever won, Except by work, Which a boy right manly will never shirk.

One of these days, Jim will discover that laziness pays The wages of shame, Want, and discomfort—and who is to blame?

Work with your might While you are young, boys, and work for the right. If you do your best, You may safely trust the Lord for the rest. —Young Reaper.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Fox Adventure.

"The light is out and I must go," Said Reynard, gazing from the height, "You'd better not," said Mrs. Fox, "We've lots of meat, stay home to-night."

"The more the better," he replied, "We'll store it up for future use; That old tough gander hurts my teeth, To-night I'll nab the fattest goose."

Then down and o'er the waste he hied With nimble foot and flowing tail, Thence through a belt of forest dark Until he reached the interval.

He walked a log across the stream, And glancing through the moon-beams mellow, Said he, "If that is me below I guess I am a handsome fellow."

Now through the burnt field up he goes, By many a giant hemlock stump, On through the older pasture land, By shady beech or maple clump. The clover field was gained at length. The barn-yard right before him lay, "Now use your craft, old fox," he said, "Creep slyly on and seize your prey."

But lo when he had gained the spot, And sprung from out his grassy cover, A fiery flash, a deafening noise, Bang, bang, and his night's sport was over. The double barrel slightly erred, And Reynard fled, much grieved to find That though his head was safe and sound His handsome tail was left behind.

Why? Say Why. "Mother," cried a little girl running into the sitting-room, "I want a little walnut bedstead like Jennie Day's. I hate pine furniture."

The mother went on with her mending and did not speak. "Say, mother, can I have one?" "No, my dear child, you cannot."

"Why, mother? Say why," repeated the child, pettishly. Still there was no answer. "I know the reason; it is because we are poor!" said the little girl with a frown. "I hate to be poor and not have pretty things like Jennie's. Why are we so poor, mother? say why."

"We are not poor, Abby," said the mother. "We have all the comforts of life."

"Then why?" "Wait a moment till I ask 'Why?'" said the good woman. "Why? When Jesus, who has all power in heaven and earth, was cradled in a manger, and in manhood had nowhere to lay his head, should you, an ungrateful child, have that sunny little room with a soft bed, and all those pretty little things about you? Why? say why, my dear child."

Little Abby thought a moment of the manger of Christ's infancy, and the homelessness of His manhood; then she dropped her head and blushed with shame.

She went up to her own little room. The sun was shining through the white curtains, her pillow looked pure as snow, and the room itself seemed like one in a fairy palace. She whispered to herself, "This isn't much like a manger. Why has God given me such a home and such kind parents to care for me. I will try to be thankful and good, and not envy rich children any more."

Watchman.

The Organist's Dilemma.

A good story on himself is told by one of our southern D. D.'s. He was pastor of the church in the city of C. The organ loft and choir gallery were immediately to the rear of the pulpit, and a little elevated above it. The organist was a German who, though a fine performer, was not remarkable for great presence of mind, and was easily disconcerted. The hour for afternoon service had arrived, and though the organist was in his place, the choir had not yet arrived. By some mishap, also, the key of the organ had been misplaced. The minister, not knowing these facts, slowly and solemnly arose and, after announcing a hymn and reading it through, took his seat. There was no response from the organ or choir. Silence reigned supreme. Time passed on. The minister and congregation were becoming uneasy. All eyes were turned to the organ loft. At length the organist, with fidgety manner and face as red as a beet, came to the railing in front of the loft, and in a tone evidently intended as a whisper, but which was distinctly heard by all, made the following startling announcement: "Mister breacher, mister breacher, ve von't have no singing dis afternoon. De key's not-coomed, and de lady vat sings de sobrano bees not coomed, and de rest of de peobles vat sings bees not coomed, and de organ bees not obened, and ve von't have no singing dis afternoon."

Little Foxes.

One little fox is, "By and-by." If you track him, you come to his hole.—Never. Another little fox is "I can't." You had better set on him an active, plucky little thing, "I Can" by name. It does wonders.

A third little fox is, "No Use in Trying." He has spoiled more vines, and hindered the growth of more fruit, than many a worse-looking enemy.

A fourth little fox is "I Forgot." He is very provoking. He is a great cheat. He slips through your fingers like time. He is seldom caught up with.

Fifth little fox is "Don't Care." Oh, the mischief he has done!

Sixth little fox is "No Matter." It is matter whether your life is spoiled by small faults.—Good News.

"You never saw my hands as dirty as that," said a mother one day, reproachfully, to her little eight-year-old girl.

"Cause I never saw you when you was a little girl," was the prompt answer.

Why are you not a Christian?

First—Is it because you esteem temporal things more than eternal things? "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—Mark 8: 36.

Second—Is it because you are indulging in some sinful practice which you are not willing to give up? "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—James 1: 15.

Third—Is it because you think there is no danger in living as you are doing? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—Hebrews 2: 2.

Fourth—Is it because you fear you are too great a sinner to come to Jesus? "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1: 7.

Fifth—Is it because of the inconsistent conduct of some church members? "But why dost thou judge thy brother? So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."—Romans 14: 12.

Sixth—Is it because you are ashamed to confess Christ before the world? "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory."—Luke 9: 26.

A correspondent inquires:—"How can I prevent my little boy from wearing out the knees of his pants?" We only know three sure ways: You can kill the boy, or you can make his pants without any knees; or perhaps the best way would be to get some other little boy about the same size, to wear the knees out, if you have such objections to your own boy's doing it.

No one can be happy without a friend, and no one can know what friends he has until he is unhappy.

TEMPERANCE.

Dottie's Temperance Sermon

Well, well; what did ail Dottie? She had positively refused to kiss her father for a whole week. He went to his work very early in the morning, long before her blue eyes were open, and did not come home till dark. Dottie always watched for him, and ran to meet him, and when he came in would sit on his knee; but when he tried to kiss her, she would shake her head so emphatically as to set the sunny curls dancing about her eyes, and then tuck her rosy face down on his shoulder.

At last he grew almost angry, and one evening he put her down, saying sternly, "I won't have any little girl that does not love me."

Dottie went to her mother with a grievous look, and stealing into her eyes: "I do love papa, ever so much—five bushels!" And by her childish mode of measuring affection, this seemed immense.

"Then why did you treat him so?" asked the mother. "He does not see his little daughter all day; and when he comes home so tired she refuses to kiss him. Why is it?"

"Because, because"—and here Dottie stopped.

"Speak out, darling, don't be afraid; or suppose you whisper to me; now—" And she bent down her head.

Dottie put both chubby arms around her mother's neck, and putting a rosebud of a mouth close to her mother's ear, and in what she supposed was a whisper, said:

"He drinks some medicine or something in the even' time before he gets home and it must be dreadful stuff, for it makes me feel sickish to smell it when he puts his face close to mine—and that's all; and I do love papa." And she sobbed as if her loving little heart would break.

As the wife's glance met that of her husband, his face crimsoned with a flush of shame. The secret was out. For the week past he had been in the habit of stopping a few moments at the house of a friend, who had just returned from a voyage to Europe and had a great many interesting things to relate. He always took a glass of something strong at night, and insisted that Dottie's father should drink with him; and that was how it happened. But he never touched a drop afterward; the pure caresses of his innocent child were of more value to him than even the good-will of his friend; and the little Dot never had cause to refuse him his evening kiss.