

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, May 21st, 1876.—Christian Fellowship—Acts iv. 23-37.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 32, 33.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“We being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans xii. 5.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psalm ii. Tuesday, Psalm lxxii. Wednesday, Jas. ii. 1-17. Thursday, Romans xii. Friday, Acts xvi. 19-33. Saturday, Acts xv. 35-41. Sunday, Matthew xxv. 14-30.

ANALYSIS.—I. Going to their own. Vs. 23. II. Praise and prayer. Vs. 24-30. III. Descent of Holy Ghost. Vs. 31. IV. Unity and community. Vs. 32-37.

COMMUNITY OF GOODS.—The greater number of the members of the early apostolic church were extremely poor. But their brotherly love was so perfect that alms-giving was quite as spontaneous as it was necessary. It at once impelled them to renounce all their earthly possessions, and to establish a perfect community of goods. Still, it does not appear that there was any abolition of the rights of property, as the words of Peter to Ananias very well show. Acts v. 4. Nor was it designed, even to the extent that it was literal and absolute, to be an ideal for imitation in all succeeding ages. Only the spirit of bountiful benevolence, especially on the part of the rich to the poor, is a model for the church in all time.

EXPOSITION.—I. Peter and John's Report.—Verse 23.—Being let go. Dismissed by the Sanhedrim. See vs. 22. To their own company. Literally, “to their own [friends.]” That is, to the Christians who were made to feel keenly that with the enemies of Christ they could not be at one. So intense was the feeling that separation was inevitable. We need not suppose all the Christians assembled together. One meeting would represent all. Reported all. It was matter of common interest and utmost importance to the rising church. Those events constituted a crisis. Peter and John, and they to whom the report was made, so understood them, as the following verses show. Verse 24.—Lifted up their voice. On hearing the report. The language betokens strong emotion. One accord. We may suppose that in the assembly one spoke and expressed the feeling of all which, by responses, or in some other way, would manifest itself. 1 Cor. xiv. 13-33. All, however, could repeat together the Psalm, chanting or singing, when some one had proposed or begun it. Lord. The word signifies Sovereign Ruler.

Verse 25.—Who by the mouth of thy servant David. The second Psalm does not bear David's name in the inscription, but it occurs in the first collection of Psalms, i-xli, which all save four bear his name, and probably without exception are from his pen. The words are here understood as being from God, through David. Why did the heathen, etc. See Ps. ii. It was doubtless occasioned by events in David's own rule, but looked beyond David and his reign to the great Son of David, and his rule. Rage. The commotion of great multitudes moving for rebellion. People. In Heb., “peoples.” Imagine. Devise, plot that which is vanity.

Verse 26.—The kings stood up. Took a hostile stand. Gathered together. Combined, organizing and heading up the universal rebellion. The Lord. That is, God, though in the New Testament currently used of Jesus Christ. Christ. In Hebrew, Messiah; in English, Anointed. This verse brings out the doctrine so often insisted upon by the Saviour, that all hostility to Christ, his words, works, and reign, arises from enmity to God.

Verse 27.—Thy holy child [servant] Jesus. Jesus was hated and hunted, because he was holy. Whom thou hast anointed [didst anoint]. Hence the title Messiah, Christ. The people of Israel. In the Psalm it is “peoples”—simply and most naturally parallel with “heathen” [nations], and not referring to Israel. But there Israel is conceived as loyal, and here the nation is recognized as in fact disloyal, and hence essentially heathen, or even worse.

Verse 28.—To do, etc. Here we see

God's holy purpose carried out through man's wicked purpose, yet without the holiness of God's purpose becoming thereby even tinged or touched with the wickedness, and without the wickedness of man becoming thereby even palliated. This must be, not in exceptional cases of wicked doing, but universally; otherwise there is no all-comprehending providence. No man need be troubled by or about God's decrees, if he has no trouble with God's dealings. Verses 29, 30.—Their view of the situation, given above, prompts their prayers for help to enable them to meet it. With all boldness, etc. As Peter and John had already been enabled to do, even before the Sanhedrim. By stretching forth, etc. Or, “while” so doing—God's visible action sustaining their faith and giving boldness. And that signs, etc. A prayer, based partly on Christ's promises (John xiv. 12-14), partly on the miracle of healing, and partly on the inward prophetic teaching of the Spirit. These external works and signs would and did strengthen the early Christians, and hasten their conquests. Holy child. Or rather “servant,” the same word as in verse 25, and in verse 27.

II. The unity of the Spirit.—Verse 31.—When they had prayed. As in verses 29, 30. In answer to that prayer.—The place was shaken, etc. As by an earthquake, though the clause “where they were assembled together,” seems by implication to limit the phenomenon to that place. Filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit.] A new communication coming to give power for the new emergency, and as a pledge of adequate help in every future emergency. God both inspired and answered their prayers.

Verse 22.—The multitude, etc. Literally, “the heart and the soul of the multitude of them that believed was one.” Drawn close to Jesus, they were thus drawn close to each other—with one spirit. The intensity of life, and so of the fellowship, was greater by reason of the intensity of the opposition. Neither said any of them, etc. The fellowship of spirit showed itself in outward fruits. Many of the converts were poor, many of them probably visitors to the feast at Jerusalem, and remaining beyond the time for which they had made provision; very many of them very poor, all of them doubtless in the midst of these unwonted displays of God's power, giving much if not all of their time to religious services. Under such circumstances special provision would be needed to meet their expenses, to furnish food, etc., and it is very properly noted by Luke, as an evidence of the power of the new religion, that men of wealth had their hands as well as their hearts opened by God's grace. It has been said that conversion has three stages: (1) of the head, (2) of the heart, and (3) of the purse—when it is complete. They simply obeyed the injunction in Phil. ii. 4-9.

Verse 33.—With great power, etc. Doubtless referring to the effect of their testimony on the people, which was partly due to the spirit and authority with which they spoke, partly perhaps to the accompanying miracle. Besides, the word fitted the people's wants, and the Spirit opened the people's hearts to receive the word. See Matt. vii. 29. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The central fact in the gospel, as it presents Jesus as our finished and accepted atonement, our living and exalted Lord, the eternal life. There was special reason for pressing into prominence the bare fact of the resurrection just then, as it was not, as now, generally accepted; and as the apostles were speaking to those who had actually killed Christ, and gloried in that as the end of him and his. Of course the magnificent import of the resurrection must ever make that fact central in all gospel preaching. Great grace. Probably here, as usually, favor from God, rather than from men—spiritual, not worldly prosperity.

Verses 36, 37.—Joses, etc. This Barnabas became the associate of Paul, and a celebrated laborer—xiii. 1, and following. The title given him indicates the power and nature of his ministry. On the laws concerning the Levites, in the respect of property, see Num. xviii. 20, 25-32; xxxv. 1-8. No law existed prohibiting them from holding property when living, like Barnabas, away from Palestine.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 23. Where were

“their own” to be found? Acts ii. 46. What did they report?

Vs. 25. What is the distinctive character of the second Psalm? What other Psalms are Messianic? Ps. lxxii. 10, and others. What does the citation of Old Testament Scriptures by Jesus and by his apostles teach us respecting their inspiration? 2 Peter i. 21.

Vs. 28. How could this be “determined before” and man be responsible?

Vs. 29. Why did they not pray to be delivered from their enemies? How came they to be so careless of trial?

Vs. 30. Why did they pray for healing power? Had it been promised? Matt. x. 1.

Vs. 31. Does not this verse teach that there are degrees of spiritual influence?

Vs. 32. In what sense were “all things common”? Did the early Christians have the right of property? How did the apostles afterward provide that money should be distributed to the poor? Acts vi. 1-4.

Vs. 36. What did Barnabas afterward become? How should money be used?—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 28th, 1876.—Lying unto God.—Acts v. 1-11.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

A Superintendent writes: “It is the custom in our school to open the library half an hour before the school-session begins, and teachers and scholars are supplied with books. When the time for opening the school arrives, the library is closed, and those who are late receive no books.”—Teacher.

In answer to the question, “Should a Superintendent make a formal address to the school, interspersing it with queries?” Dr. Vincent recently answered as follows: “Sometimes an address of two or three minutes is good. If questions are asked, put them wisely. I would ask four questions on each lesson, and then, when you come to the review, you will have an excellent basis for that exercise when the four queries of each preceding Sabbath can again be repeated.”

In Cincinnati, at a Sunday-school meeting, the little children were repeating verses, and one of them, a little child only four years of age, got up. She was so small she had to be stood up on a seat. She got scared at the people, and was afraid to repeat the verses her mother had been teaching her through the week—“Suffer little children.” With trembling lip and heart she said, “Suffer little children,” and then broke down. She commenced again, “Suffer little children to come,” and broke down the second time. She attempted it the third time, “Suffer little children to come, and don't any of you stop them from one and all to come.” She had got the meaning of the phrase. She could not have given a better one.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Dog-gerel Lines.

Here are some lines with blanks which need the names of different varieties of dogs to make rhyme. Boys, try and fill them up.

- There was a man whose name was Daniel,
1 He had a handsome —,
He thought he'd change it for a better,
2 So, he bought instead, a splendid —;
Though soon he sold it to a farrier,
3 And tried to buy a well trained —;
But found the salesman a deceiver,
4 And took instead a black —;
And then to make him all the merrier,
5 He purchased a most lively —;
Then stepped aside and bought an eagle,
6 Yet fancied he should like a —;
Which undesirable he found,
7 So changed it for a young —;
Then saw upon a crimson rug
8 What he declared “a lovely —,”
He wished to own it when his eye
9 Fell on a little dog from —;
But as he whistled “Yankee Doodle”
10 Up sprung a very clever —;
While close behind him there did stand
11 A huge black-coated —;
And yet to purchase it was folly,
12 He'd rather have a faithful —;
Or though to get one might be hard,
13 He'd like to have a —;
Just then a man like an Albanian
14 Led by a snowy —;
But how the little creature snarls,
15 ‘Tis snappish as a small —.
So many dogs did quite confuse,
And Daniel found it hard to choose,
And quite impossible to find
One that was suited to his mind;
Some were too large and some too small,
And so he'd have no dog at all.

A Country Boy.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

Jack was a little country boy, brought up upon a farm, where he'd good wholesome food to eat, and clothes to keep him warm; but as for books, and toys, and games to interest and please, why Jack knew very little of such articles as these.

He had the cows to milk and drive, the chickens all to feed, and in the spring-time he must plough and early

sow the seed. Then he must hoe, and pull the weeds, and do a thousand chores, that kept him busy all the time and mostly out of doors; so when the sunset hour arrived, the cattle housed and fed, Jack was so sleepy he was glad to tumble into bed.

You'll think, of course, this little country boy, Jack Bunce, grew up quite ignorant, or in other words, a dunce; but Jack knew more of Nature's ways and all her curious nooks, than he could learn by sitting down and poring over books.

He knew the name of every bird that lived within the wood, and saw just how they built their nests, and where they sought their food; and every leaf and tree Jack knew extremely well, although he couldn't read or write, and never learned to spell.

But when the winter days came on, Jack had much less to do, and thinking over many things he got a little blue; and so one morning he exclaimed, “You ignorant Jack Bunce, do you intend to live this way and be a stupid dunce? You'll want to see the world, perhaps go prowling round New York, and how'd you like the girls to say, ‘There goes a country gawk?’”

So Jack began to think ‘t was time to polish up his mind, if in the race he'd not be left a dozen leagues behind; “and though I may not leave the place where I was born,” Jack said, “I'll make a better farmer if I cultivate my head.”

He had not learned to smoke or chew; he was afraid to swear; and so had grown up pure and good in that sweet country air; and in whatever way he chose his talents to employ, he'd always be in any place an honest country boy!

And so he rose by dint of downright steady work, (for any task Jack entered on he never meant to shirk,) until the people in the place began to see at once there couldn't be a better man for Mayor than Jack Bunce.

His heart is in the country though his head has come to town, and he keeps his country manners, though he never was a clown; but what I mean is this, that Jack retains, in very truth, the freshness, and the purity, the tenderness of youth; so that whatever cares may come, whatever ills annoy, Jack Bunce can drop the robes of state and be a country boy.—Christian Weekly.

How the French do it.

The French butcher separates the bones from his steaks, and places them where they will do the most good. The housewife orders just enough for each person and no more, even to the coffee. If a chance visitor drops in, somebody quietly retires and the extra cup is so provided, but nothing extra by carelessness of intention. When the pot has boiled, the handful of charcoal in the little range is extinguished, and waits for another time. No roaring cook-stoves and red-hot covers all day long for no purpose but waste. The egg laid to-day costs a little more than the one laid last week. Values are nicely estimated, and the smallest surplus is carefully saved. A thousand little economies are practised, and it is respectable to practise them. Cooking is an economical as well as a sanitary and gustatory science. A French cook will make a franc go as far as an American housewife will make three, and how much farther than the American Bridget nobody knows—we should probably be greatly astonished, could the computation be made how much of the financial, recuperative power of France is owing to her soups and her cheap food; better living, after all, than the heavy bread and greasy failures of our culinary ignorance.

The French man's or woman's financial conscience will not permit waste, or exceeding the income, no matter how small. The Paris workman saves something every day out of his little wages, despite all the city enticements, and by-and-by is apt to go back to his native village and purchase his little plot, and live on it contented, never poor enough to be insolvent. With French economy, we should not only be richer than France, but our rapidly accumulating material resources would help to build a national prosperity and renown that France with her antecedents and encumbrances can never emulate. The want of our financial future and our national honesty is—not more greenbacks, but—more economy.—Springfield Republican.

Lightning

The celebrated experiment of Benjamin Franklin, by which he demonstrated the identity of lightning and the common electric spark, was performed by him in June, 1752, at Philadelphia, Pa. Having made a small cross-stick kite, he covered it with a silk handkerchief instead of paper, so that it would stand rain, attached a tail, etc. The upper end of the cross had an iron point, connected by a string to the usual kite cord, which was of hemp. To the lower end of the cord an iron key was attached, and to that a short length of silk ribbon as a non-conductor, by which the kite string could be safely held in the hand. On the approach of a thunderstorm he proceeded to a common near the city, and with the assistance of his son, sent up the kite. Ere long the thunder cloud approached, the electricity came down the kite string, and Franklin, standing under a shed, received the electric sparks through his knuckles which he applied to the key, and charged his Leyden jar by putting its conductor in contact with the key. The rain then fell, which improved the conductivity of the kite cord, and the electricity appeared in increased quantity.

The news of this wonderful experiment rapidly spread over the world, and was extensively repeated. In France, Professor Romas made a kite seven feet high, with a fine wire interwoven in the string. The kite was raised five hundred and fifty feet, and is alleged to have yielded flashes of electric fire ten feet in length. In St. Petersburg, Professor Richman, while attempting to repeat Franklin's experiment, received so heavy a charge of electricity that he fell dead. This was in 1793.

Whittier's Centennial Hymn.

Our father, God! from out whose hand The centuries fall like grains of sand, We meet to-day, united, free, And loyal to our land and thee, To thank thee for the era done, And trust thee for the opening one.

Here where of old, by thy design, The fathers spake that word of thine. Whose echo is the glad refrain Of rended bolt and falling chain. To grace our festal time from all The zones of earth our guests we call.

Be with us while the New World greets The Old World, thronging all its streets, Unveiling all the triumphs won By art of toil beneath the sun; And into common good ordain This rivalry of head and brain.

Thou who hast here in concord furled The war-flags of a gathered world, Beneath the western skies fulfil The Orient's mission of good will, And, freighted with Love's golden fleece, Send back the Argonauts of peace.

For art and labor met in truce, For beauty made the bride of use, We thank thee, while withal we crave The austere virtues strong to save, The honor proof to place or gold, The manhood never bought or sold!

Oh make thou us, through centuries long, In peace secure, and justice strong; Around our gift of freedom draw The safeguards of thy righteous law, And, cast in some diviner mould, Let the new cycle shame the old!

The music for the above was written by J. H. Paine and was first rehearsed on the 3rd of May by the Centennial chorus, numbering nearly 900 voices. The music of the hymn, like the hymn itself, is so natural and simple in the flow of its measures that but few repetitions were necessary before the expression, as well as the music, was fully acquired and rendered.

A little boy, eleven years old, of a small village in Bohemia, called Greiffendorf, wrote, without the knowledge of his parents, to the Emperor of Austria, the following letter, of which we give the literal translation:—“Mr. Emperor at Vienna, I should like to become a priest or a teacher. My father is a poor weaver, and has no money. Have the kindness, Mr. Emperor, and send me some money that I may learn to be a priest or a teacher, just as you wish. I salute you, the Mrs. Emperor, and the children.—(Signed) JOSEPH BENNESCH.” The above letter duly reached the private secretary, and was forwarded to the Emperor at Hungary. The innocent style seems to have found favour, as shortly afterwards the burgo-master of the village received an official telegram to report about the circumstances of the case, and these having turned out satisfactory, the school inspector of the neighboring town, Zwitterau, was instructed to take the boy into board and give him every facility for his education.

Marriage

The vexed deceased wife's difficulty of getting on by her own means. It is ages are ill-ter considered her advice, question. This A a new elult? A out to Ausried to he. The law t she contr “English of an Eng Yorkshir tion by thorties i cial Act w Majesty t ia an hon are legit round th a compet at home, who was and acco self no w declared ceed to t be such This is a The A statute, in Austr Parliam fishman. now aski by the I such ma tion and the colo ever an should b determ nuptial evade th assured cording ing that it be so imagine cate ma ize, in c declare cestuou of the p wrong i either c to watd acts in is givn have ve the Im what is in Aust marria legitim Englan in exa other a mony t though tralia, bidden An we are terfly, mere ing the highest atus a habits able to occup which out so great that v travai tion, body. Tw One of The yaww three ably man his fi The ways plain some