

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

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

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 26-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength."

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Kings viii. 22-54. Tuesday, Daniel ix. Wednesday, Nehemiah i. 1-11. Thursday, Genesis xviii. 23-38. Friday, Psalm lxxviii. Saturday, John xv. 1-8. Sunday, Matthew xxvi. 36-46.

ANALYSIS.—I. Attitude of prayer. Vs. 22. II. Pleading the promises. Vs. 23-26. III. Humble supplication. Vs. 27-30.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER.—The prayer of consecration offered by Solomon kneeling was a little remarkable, in that it was not offered by a member of the Aaronic family, but by the king, who might minister about but not in holy things. Still, it breathed the deepest humility and the loftiest piety. It was simple, comprehensive, sublime. It specified seven cases in which the merciful interposition of God would be required. It implored the perpetual presence of the Almighty, and acknowledged his spiritual and illimitable nature. It witnessed to the dependence of national prosperity upon conformity to civil and religious law. The prayer, taken as a whole, is "a prophecy of the history of Israel and of God's chastisement for their sins, ever to the captivity." Again fire came down from heaven. Again the Shechinah filled the temple. Sacrifices were multiplied. The feast continued for twice seven days. Then the people returned to their homes, "glad and merry in heart for all the goodness that Jehovah had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people." Vs. 62-66; 2 Chron. vii.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 22.—And Solomon stood before the altar. He took his stand there upon the "brazen scaffold" or platform erected for the occasion, and then before beginning his prayer knelt, and in this attitude of reverence made supplication. Vs. 54; 2 Chron. vi. 13. The platform was "brazen," seven and one-half feet square, and four and one-half feet high. "The altar" before which it stood was the great brazen altar. The temple with its altars and significant symbols was well fitted to impress upon the worshipper the sense of God's presence, and so to produce the spirit of prayer; but when to all were added the solemnities of the occasion, and of the signal manifestation of the divine presence, this adaptation was more than doubled. God was pleased to have his house known as "a house of prayer." Matt. xxi. 13. In the presence of all the congregation. The courts would accommodate an immense number standing compactly together, as at this time. Spread forth his hands toward heaven. As Jesus in his prayer of intercession (John xvii. 1) looked to heaven, because the heavens by their exaltation, infinity, unchangeableness, purity, and glory symbolize God and his dwelling-place. This, with much else, shows that Solomon and the men of his time and nation had no thought of God as a mere local national divinity, confined to the Temple. Vs. 27. Scripture recognizes three attitudes in prayer—standing, kneeling, and prostration. It depended upon circumstances which was adopted. The attitude should correspond to the spirit, and so help the expression.

Verse 23.—Lord [Jehovah] God of Israel. He uses the covenant name of both God and his people, and refers to the covenant relation. It was no arrogance for the Hebrews to speak of aid to God as specially theirs, for so he was, so he had revealed himself, and so their history proved, and was proving him. It was not that he was not thought of as also God of the whole world, but he was not so acknowledged by other peoples, and had not himself established with them such relations. No God like thee, etc. The grand difference between Jehovah and all the heathen deities was usually found in this, that Jehovah was truly God, and the rest were nothing, merely imaginary. Kepest covenant and mercy. Kepest the covenant of

mercy, kepest it by continuing to show the mercy pledged and promised in the covenant. Hence both the covenant and its keeping showed the gracious goodness of God, while in the keeping was specially established God's truth, and all the more strikingly as so many provocations and affronts were given him, calculated to stir up and bring down retribution instead of grace. Which walk before thee with all their heart. Not as though any servants walked before God in sinlessness. A whole heart is one which takes God, and him only, as Sovereign and Master, single in his service, as did David, even though erring often, and shamefully. We are to notice that Solomon speaks of this as a universal fact, both that God keeps mercy, and that the required condition is wholeness of heart in his service. This, then, is a lesson for us.

Verse 24.—Who hast kept, etc. From the general principle he here proceeds to one example of its application. The promise here referred to, was clearly the promise with reference to the construction of the Temple. Vs. 15-19. Solomon's heart is full of the one thought of the Temple, and so out of this fullness his language flows. No vague generalities make up his prayer. Thou spakest also with thy mouth, etc. Vivid and emphatic repetition. As it is this day. That day saw and witnessed the fulfillment of the promise.

Verse 25.—Therefore now, etc. The fulfillment of one promise is ground for his plea for the fulfillment of another. God will be true to himself, and continue to do as he has done. There shall not fail thee a man, etc. Literally, "there shall not be cut off for thee a man." See the promise in 2 Sam. vii. 11-16. This promise had its first reference to Solomon, but also looked to the whole line of succession. It was an object of earnest desire that the royal line might be thus perpetuated. So that thy children take heed, etc. It is noteworthy how in promises to king and people alike the condition of blessing is insisted upon. It reminded of the tendency to disobedience and to consequent forfeiture of the promises, and is evidence of the inveterate activity of indwelling sin. The indirect and incidental proofs of depravity are often more striking and impressive than the direct. Thus the word for holiness meant, or came to mean, separateness, and that was "unclean" which was "common," indicating that man unredeemed was as a mass depraved, was in fact a mass of depravity, and that only that which God the Holy, the Separate, separated was pure and clean.

Verse 27.—But will God indeed dwell on the earth, etc. In this verse is a sublime recognition of that infinite majesty and greatness of God which made it impossible for him to be confined to any place or places, to be appropriated by any one person or peoples, which was his as the Creator, Upholder, and Sovereign Ruler of the universe. It was not that Solomon doubted whether God could and would make the Temple a place for the special manifestation of his grace and goodness and care of Israel. This he doubted not. The house was rather for them than for him, for him only as coming into visible relation to them. Hence, as we saw, Solomon spread his hands, not toward the Temple, but toward heaven, and lifted his heart to God, not as confined in those walls of stone, but as enthroned above all worlds. Solomon had lavished the untold wealth of gold and precious stones and goodly woods and fabrics, and of artistic skill, and patient planning and multitudinous labor upon the Temple, yet most fitly does he think and speak of it with contempt, as a mean and worthless thing as compared with the glory of Jehovah for whom it was builded, and to whom it was dedicated.

Verse 28.—Yet have thou respect, etc. Solomon thinks of this petition as one which is to secure the acceptance or rejection of the Temple, and hence the bestowment or refusal of future favors in connection with it. "The respect" is the honor shown to the prayer. The hearkening was the way in which the honor or respect was to be shown. To hearken with favor, as accepting, involved of course the answering, as with a servant to hear or hearken implies obedience.

Verse 29.—That thine eyes may be open towards this house, etc. We watch

with interest that which we greatly love and prize. Solomon would have God thus regard his house, as he goes on to show, not for the sake of the house, but for the sake of Israel. The house was not the end. It was for Israel, not Israel for it. It was to bring to Israel blessing, not to be an object of wonder or worship. My name shall be there. A reference here to Deut. xii. 11. God dwells where his name is, for his name is himself as revealed. We worship the name, because we worship him as made known. That thou mayest hearken, etc. Explaining what is meant by having the "eyes open toward the house." They who would honor God would honor him in the way of his appointment, and hence the Jew of reverent spirit would come to the Temple with his offering, or at least would in heart and thought turn toward the temple as the established seat and centre of the national worship. So may no one who knows of Jesus Christ hope to meet with God's favor, save as he comes to God in Christ.

Verse 30.—And hearken thou, etc. See Daniel vi. 10, who no doubt cherished the memory of these very words of Solomon. Solomon in the subsequent part of the prayer goes on to enumerate the condition of national and individual calamity when the house would be especially the meeting place of a gracious God and needy supplicants. It would seem as though his eyes were prophetically opened to see the varied disasters into which sin was to plunge his people, and the unfulfilling mercy of God which would bring repeated deliverances. Hear thou in heaven, etc. Again recognizing the house as simply a place erected in Israel's interest, where the God of heaven would meet them. Forgive. Alas, that this must be in part the burden of every prayer. Oh, that we who need and expect forgiveness so much, may have and show the spirit of forgiveness.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 22. What were the noticeable features of Solomon's prayer? Was it very long? Do not long prayers often indicate indefiniteness of desire? What is the true posture of prayer, standing or kneeling? What in prayer is better than all posture? John iv. 24. Still, is not kneeling an index of humility?

Vs. 25. What may all supplicants plead mightily? Upon what condition is God's mercy given to us? See John xv. 7.

Vs. 27. With whom does God delight to dwell? Isaiah lvii. 15.

Vs. 29. Who, after Solomon's time, prayed as he predicted? Did God hear them? If the Jews should pray penitently to him now, would not God hear them? Will the Jews ever become followers of Jesus? Romans xi. What has Jesus told us ever to do? Matt. xxvi. 41.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, Aug. 6th, 1876.—Solomon's Prosperity.—1 Kings x. 1-10.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

Making Sunshine.

Jenny Adams don't know what to do with herself. She wandered about her room, dusted the bureau with its pretty ornaments, took down her dresses and hung them up again, and finally found a piece of lace in the drawer and began making a frill for the neck. But that only took her fifteen minutes, and then she was out of work again. Of course, there is always enough for a girl to do; but it was vacation, and Jenny was trying to enjoy herself; and one soon tires of that when one makes a business of it. Finally the young malcontent wandered into her aunt's room, and found that good lady darning stockings with a serene smile on her face.

"O, aunty," said Jenny, "how can you sit there looking so happy over those old stockings? I'm just wild and distracted."

"What is the matter?"

"Why I've read, and skated, and visited, and embroidered, till I'm sick of it all."

"Will you take my remedy, if I'll suggest one?"

"Yes, aunty, anything."

"Go down stairs and help Ellen."

"Help Ellen!" said Jenny, astonished at the advice.

"Yes; she looks sick this morning, and I'm sure she'll be very glad to have you iron a few pieces, and help her to get lunch."

"Ellen was a new girl, or rather woman, for she was fully forty-five years old. She was intelligent and industrious, and in many ways quite above the ordinary servant. Jenny, in accordance with her promise, went down stairs, having first tied a big kitchen apron over her neat calico wrapper.

"Ellen, Ellen," she called in a cheery tone, "where are you? I've come to help you."

The woman emerged from a corner behind the clothes-horse, and Jenny saw that her eyes were red with weeping.

"Why Ellen," she said, "what is the matter?"

"O, miss, I've been thinking of my own blessed child all this morning. I get along with my trouble when I'm well but when I get down a little, then it all comes back. O, miss, it's a hard thing to live where there's nobody in the world to help you bear your grief a little.

"Don't cry," pleaded Jenny, as Ellen sank into a chair and began sobbing. "Tell me what the matter is. Aunty sent me to help you; she said you didn't look well. I'm so glad I came; though I never should have thought of it myself; but aunty is always thinking of other people."

As she chattered in gentle, sympathetic tones, she took a roll of towels and began ironing.

"What are you doing, miss?" asked Ellen, springing up; "surely it's not for you to come into the kitchen and do my work."

"I came down on purpose to help you. I'll iron on the table, and you take the board, and when you feel like it you must tell me about your daughter, where is she?"

"She's in heaven, I hope, dear: she died with the fever a twelvemonth ago, the day before Christmas. O, Miss Jenny, the holidays are black days to me. You see," she went on, taking a roll of linen from the basket, "my little Ellen was not like what you'd think my child would be. She took to her books from a baby, and she was a born lady in all her ways. I worked hard and kept her in the public schools; and she graduated two years ago, and was a teacher, the poor darling, and doing so well. We had our own little home, poor as it was; and my girl coming home o' nights, and the suppers, when she told me all about the day, and the little ones, and—"

"Don't try to tell me any more," said Jenny, setting down her iron, and putting her arms around the poor mother, and crying heartily with her.

"O, miss I love to talk about her; I feel better now. You've cheered me up wonderfully. My heart gets like a cold, dead lump, sometimes, going on, day after day, with nobody to care. It's ungrateful I am, and a poor Christian, for the good book says that He loves us; and now I believe he does, or he wouldn't have sent you to me, so near the age of my own blessed child, and so sunshiny like her. Now I can go to my work." And the strong hand seemed suddenly to have new power, and the linen grew smooth and glossy, and the horse was rapidly laden with the ironing, as girl and woman worked side by side.

That afternoon Jenny told Aunt Lizzie, between laughing and crying, that she never was so happy in her life. "I didn't think I could do any good," she said; "but I did help Ellen, I am sure I did; and O, I am so glad."

A Shrewd Irishman.

Telegraph operators like to see the money before sending a message, but, sharp as they are, they are sometimes taken in by a shrewd customer. An Irishman did the business for one:

Said an Irishman to the telegraph operator: "Do you ever charge anybody for the address of a message?"

"No," replied the operator.

"And do ye charge for signing his name, sir?" said the customer.

"No, sir."

"Well, then, will ye please send this? I just want my brother to know I am here," handing the following: "To John M'Flinn, at New York. (Signed) Patrick M'Flinn."

It was sent as a tribute to Patrick's shrewdness.

Dancing is said to be on the decline in London, and polite society appears to be acting on the hint given by the Shah of Persia, when he inquired of the Prince of Wales at a ball, "Why don't you employ servants to do this for you?"

The Prisoner of War.

BY MRS. HUNT MORGAN.

Closed in by four grey walls,
Grim, and grimy, and hard!
One only break in the slimy dark,
A window, iron-barred!

Quivering on tiptoe there,
I spy at the world without,
And wearily scan that blue sea-bay,
Where the white sails glide about.
I gaze, till my hot eyes ache
With the changeful, flashing light,
That billowy blue, so terribly blue,
That white so intensely white.
And I step from my trembling hold,
Down on the loathsome floor;
Then bruised, half-blinded and sick,
I climb, and gaze once more.

Out of this fearful daylight,
Darkness made visible,
I gaze on the summer sunlight
Which never visits my cell—
Out on yon summer glory
Flooding the golden sand,
And I sigh for the distant freedom.—
I weep for my far-off land.

So I cling at the bars and wonder
If my lot will ever be
To float in that skifflet yonder,
Home o'er that tempting sea.

O! I loathe the foreign banner,
And its fluttering, flaunting brag,
And my soul is sad and weary,—
Heartsick for the dear old flag!
O! could I loose from her moorings,
Could I reach yon tiny boat,
With what glad, wild-heart boundings,
Away, away, I'd float!

But the sunbeams lie still and burning
On ocean and on land,
While scarce by one breezy flutter,
Is my burning forehead fanned!

'Tis maddening!—this awful still
Round me in my hollow stone!
Though yonder the glad notes thrill,
I hear not, I hear not one!
But out of my terrible silence
I can see those voices yonder,
While over my tugging heartstrings,
Creep echoes dearer, fonder.

I ache for liberty,
Over the far blue sea,
O'er the blue sea so wide!
And I hear the angels singing,
"Keeping time,
In silver rhyme"
With that boat so slowly swinging,
On the restless, heaving tide.
Ripple, dipple,
Plashing, dashing,
The wavelets sleepily lap the shore;
Lazily, lazily,
Drearly, wearily,
I cling there listening o'er and o'er.

To the sobbing, oozing gurgle
Slushing underneath the keel,
And the restless, dipping murmur
Which I cannot know by the outward ear,
The tide is too far for me to hear,
But deep in my soul I feel.

And I see yon boat so slowly swinging,
I hear the far-off home-bells ringing,
Ringing through my heart!
Sweet bells of home I must be free!
Yon skiff shall bear me o'er the sea,
If but these stanchions part!

Then will I dare the tempest's wrath,
While seeking out the homeward path,
For liberty's dear sake;
And my frail bark shall boldly drift,
Where mightier ships have passed, and
left
Lines of snow-foam in their wake.

Ha! the iron bars are loosening!
So! gently on the floor!
I am mad for yon shifting sea,
Frantic I'll spring to liberty!
Now! there goes one bar more!

Another! And now I'm free! I'm free!
Wide is my path to liberty;
For a sailor's foot and hand
Make light of castle-wall,
In its rugged fall
To the golden strand.

Down! down! down!
Beneath the castle's frown!
Surely I fell!
For blood is flowing, and wounds are wide;
I know it, I know it, 'tis life's swift tide,
In crimson swell.
(The boat is empty, I lie on the sand,
Far from those bells of my own dear land!
I am dying, alone, BUT FREE!
Out in God's glorious sun and light,
Loyal in heart, and true in hand,
To the royal flag of my native land!
Dying, but FREE,
By the solemn sea!
Mother, good night!

—From Grand Rounds.

A young lady, in a class studying physiology, made answer to a question put, that in seven years a human body became entirely changed, so that not a particle which was in it at the commencement of the period would remain at the close of it. "Then, Miss L—," said the young tutor, "in seven years you will cease to be Miss L—." "Why, yes, sir, I suppose so," said she, very modestly, looking at the floor.