

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, June 3rd, 1877.—The Lamentation of Amos.—Amos v. 1-15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 4-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever." 1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Amos i. Tuesday, Amos ii. Wednesday, Amos iii. Thursday, Amos iv. v. Friday, vi, vii. Saturday, Amos viii. ix. Sunday, v. 15; Ezekiel xxxiii. 11-19.

ANALYSIS.—I. The prophet's lamentation. Vs. 1-3. II. Begs Israel to seek the Lord. Vs. 4-9. III. Portrays their wickedness. Vs. 10-13. IV. Repeats his entreaties. Vs. 14. V. With encouraging words. Vs. 15.

QUESTIONS.—Did Elijah or Elisha leave any writings? Why not? With what had they chiefly to do? In whose reign did prophetic literature begin to be written? With what prophets? What book of the Bible do these prophecies fill up? Why is it written largely in poetic form? His avocation?

What was the native place of Amos? His circumstances? Was he a trained prophet? Why was Israel the scene of his labors? When did he prophesy? See ch. i. 1. (B. C. 800). Character of his prophecy?

Vs. 1. Against whom thus far has Amos pronounced judgments? Against whom is he now writing?

Vs. 2. What does this elegy of Amos describe?

Vs. 3. How extensive was to be the depopulation of the ten tribes?

Vs. 4. As long as divine judgments are withheld, for what has Israel-space?

Vs. 5. From what is Israel entreated to turn away? Who introduced calf-worship into Israel? What brother of Moses set him the example? How far does the sin of even one man reach?

Vs. 7. Did idol-worship ever avert divine judgment? What is the symbol of judgment in this verse?

Vs. 8. What sublime description of omnipotence have we in this verse?

Vs. 9. To what does Amos in this verse appeal? Has fear a place in religion?

Vs. 10. State some of the common sins of Israel?

Vs. 11. When is silence better than hasty speech?

Vs. 15. What reason have we to feel sure that God will pardon the penitent soul? Has the day as yet passed for penitence of spirit before God? Acts xvii. 30.

THE PROPHETIC OFFICE IN ISRAEL AND JUDAH.—Moses prophesied, but with him prophecy for a long time expired. With Samuel the gift was renewed and continued in unbroken succession down to Malachi (B. C. 1100-400). At the time of the disruption, the northern kingdom became the kingdom of the prophets; so it continued for two centuries. Here prophesied Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, and Hosea; here were many prophetic centres, Beth-el, Jericho, Gilgal, Carmel; here prophecy at first was oral, not written, since it was mainly designed for the preservation of the religious and national unity; hence few prophecies of this period remain, save in the fragments of the book of Kings. But in the reign of Jeroboam II (B. C. 825-784), the greatest king of Israel, there arose the first gleam of that prophetic light which, from the brilliant constellation of prophets, gleamed over the fall of both the northern and southern kingdoms, shone in their captivities, and flashed still further forward in the prediction of the forerunner, who should precede the Sun of Righteousness. To the reign of Jeroboam belong the prophecies of Amos and Hosea, now to be studied. They fill up the brief narrative of the kings by the light they throw upon the internal condition of the Hebrew state, the prevalence of idolatry, the almost universal drunkenness and oppression.

Amos was a native of Tekoah, in Judah, twelve miles southeast from Jerusalem; his father is unknown; his circumstances poor; his avocation that of a shepherd; not a prophet nor son of a prophet until called by Jehovah to be a prophet, and that not in Judah, but in Israel. Here was the scene of his labors. These were chiefly occupied in denouncing the evils of his times, and in uttering some anticipatory evan-

gelical strains. The scene of his ministry was Bethel.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 1.—Hear ye. An appeal to the "power of Israel," i. e., to the citizens of the kingdom of Israel comprising the ten tribes; to give ear to an unwelcome message. This word, etc. The nature of "this word" is described as "a lamentation," or elegy. Take up. That is, begin.

Verse 2.—The virgin of Israel. Israel in her ideal independence, freshness, purity, beauty, desirableness, as contrasted with the miserable condition into which sin was about to bring the nation, described in the verse as "fallen."

Verse 3.—This is the interpretation of the figurative language which gives the piteous, poetic picture of verse 2. The absolute certainty of the coming woe is assured, as being affirmed by the Lord Jehovah. The terribleness of Israel's calamity is seen in that only a tenth should be left. The city that went out, etc. Referring to the marching forth of her men of war, as they went to battle. The cities here represent the nation.

Verse 5.—Seek not Bethel. Bethel and Dan were the two seats of the calf-worship, or as Jeroboam would fain have put and made it, of Jehovah's worship by the aid of the calves. But the second commandment cannot be broken without loss to the first, and always, practically, to represent God by an idol, is to make the idol God. As Beersheba lay out of the kingdom and just to the south even of Judah, it was appropriate to speak of "passing," or crossing over, to that place.

Verse 6.—Seek ye, etc. This exhortation and promise recur as a refrain, the burden of the message, reminding us of Hosea xi. 8, 9. Like fire. Here, as so often before, we find God likened to fire; in this case as executing judgment. Very terrible is fire as an avenger, though delightful and invaluable as a friend. None to quench it in Bethel. So, in Sodom, when Lot and his daughters had escaped, there were none left to quench the flame. Ripe for retribution.

Verse 7.—Ye who turn judgment [justice] to wormwood. The nation had broken the second table of the law, not less than the first. As usual, irreligion brought in immorality. When the love of God died, the love of man ceased to live. Dishonoring God, his law in both tables and all its precepts was dishonored. Leave off righteousness, etc. Henderson more correctly translates, "And cast righteousness to the ground."

Verse 8.—Compare Job ix. 19; xxxviii. 31. Pleiades, "the seven stars." Orion. "The brightest constellations thus fitly represent the whole starry host. The glory of God, as the creator of the stars, was felt to be great when Amos lived and wrote, but what vast wealth of meaning have the discoveries of astronomy put into the prophet's statement. Turneth the shadow of death, etc. The changing seasons reveal God's glory. Scripture, unlike all other professed revelations, grows ever richer and grander in the meaning of its references to nature as illustrative of the theology and religion. That calleth for the waters, etc. This, with considerable probability, is understood as referring, not to the distribution of water into seas on the earth's surface, but to Noah's flood sent in judgment for sin, and thus representing God's power as specially exercised in holy judgment.

Verse 9.—God would visit Israel much as he visited the ungodly world of Noah's time—as he then did, namely, with suddenness, with destruction, with irresistible and all-embracing, all-whelming destruction.

Verses 10, 11.—Returning again to a description of the nation's sin as the procuring cause of its impending doom. Verse 10 represents the people as enlightened, but wilfully quenching the light, or trying to quench it by rejecting the light-bearers. Abhorrence of these was wont to take shape in persecutions, usually murder. See Heb. xi. 36-38.

Verse 12.—This verse is intended simply to emphasize the greatness of the nation's degradation. The oppression of the righteous and the poor, and that, too, through corrupt legal practice, is the climax of ungodliness.

Verse 13.—Be silent. No intercession, nothing to plead for the doomed people.

Verses 14, 15.—Perhaps. Not as

doubtful to the prophet. Joseph. Ephraim was the leading tribe in Israel, and Ephraim was Joseph's son. —Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 10th, 1877.—The Promise of Revival.—Hosea xiv. 4-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."—Hosea xiii. 9.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XIX.—AT THE GRAVE-SIDE.

On the following Thursday Dora Haldane was buried. Matthew's shop was closely shut up, as on Sundays, and he and Hughie, decently attired, went out to attend the funeral.

The day was fair overhead, but the ground was covered with snow, which was frozen, and a keen north wind blew, setting at defiance the attempt of the sun to warm men and things generally.

This man and boy were the only mourners at the funeral, but they were genuine mourners; and the two were worth a grand retinue of those who are such only in name. Matthew had laid aside all his own prejudices for the nonce; and had tried with all his heart to have everything just as he thought poor Mrs. Haldane would have wished it to be. He had arranged for her to be buried in Presbyterian fashion, and the funeral was of the simplest description.

As they stood beside the open grave after the brief service was concluded, and leaned forward to take a last look at the coffin, Hughie broke out into a fit of irrepressible sobbing, and Matthew kept using his red pocket-handkerchief, and stealthily wiping away tears that would not be kept back. For in that hour he was living over again an hour that he had spent thirty years ago; and the long period of time between those two hours seemed to him a miserable blank, an epoch of cold loneliness and desolation which he shuddered to contemplate. He stood lost in thought, holding his handkerchief to his mouth, his other hand hanging listlessly down beside him. Suddenly a little cold hand was slipped under his broad palm, and small fingers tried to clasp it round. He looked down and met the lustrous eyes of the orphan boy, wet with tears, looking up at him with an expression of yearning and confidence. He closed his big hand over the little one and held it in a close, kind clasp.

"Please, sir," said Hughie, brokenly, "I haven't got anybody but you now."

"No, my little chap, and I haven't got anybody but you," said Matthew; "and so we must be friends till death do us part." And Matthew finished his sentence as brokenly as Hughie, and stood perfectly still, holding the boy's hand for a minute or two afterwards. He then said, "We had better go now; and just as they were turning away they caught sight of a slight little figure coming bounding over the snowy graves towards them, contrary to the regulations of the place.

"Why, it's that little body as called in on Tuesday to ax what day the funeral was to be!" exclaimed Matthew, quietly. And they stood waiting for her to come up.

"Oh, I've bin lookin' all over the place for ye," she said breathlessly, "and waitin' about ever so long." And she tucked her wind-tossed hair behind her ears, and tried to cover up her red arms under the small cloak which she wore. Oh, I'm so glad I ain't too late! she said. "So this is the grave? Oh, how deep, how deep and cold!" And with a quick gesture she covered her face with her hands for a moment. "Please take hold o' my hand and let me peep in, little boy," she added, holding out her hand to Hughie. He held it fast, while she timidly crept to the very edge of the grave and looked in. "Ah, that's her coffin!" she exclaimed softly, "and the sad, gentle lady is in it that sung my hymn so sweet about the happy land." She stepped back then, and looking into Hughie's eyes, while her own filled with tears, she added, "And she's up there now, with Jesus and the beautiful angels, singing Glory, glory, glory! 'Oh, you mustn't cry for her!' she exclaimed, as Hughie's tears burst forth afresh at these words. 'She's

happy to-day, ye know: she ain't cold and hungry and tired like we've got to be. She've done asking for daily bread, and waitin' a long time till the Lord sends it. I guess the golden streets ain't the same to stand singin' in as that street where she was singin' o' Saturday night. You needn't cry for her to be down here again: I guess she's wantin' you ever so much badder to be up there with her. I wish we could all go straight off out o' the cold and the hunger!" Her thin little voice rose to a passionate cry, and then she, too, burst into a flood of tears. "Bless these poor children!" exclaimed Matthew, very much perturbed in spirit. "Here, come away with ye out o' this freezin' wind, else you'll have yer wish sure enough, and very soon be in yer graves!" And he led the way back into the broad walk, where stood the modest hearse and the mourning coach which had brought the party to the cemetery.

"Please, sir," asked Hughie, timidly pulling at Matthew's coat, "couldn't we give the little girl a ride home?"

"Yes, she shall have a ride," said Matthew, readily. And he straightway lifted her into the coach.

The forlorn child could scarcely believe the evidence of her senses when she found herself actually going through the streets in a grand carriage. "How soft and warm it is!" she quietly exclaimed, nodding at Hughie who sat opposite, and smiling with pleasure into his sad face. "And there's a soft mat for our cold feet," she added, rubbing her benumbed feet delightedly upon it. "P'raps yours is the only ones as is cold," said Matthew. "We've got stout boots on; and why haven't you, I'd like to know? You say you've got a father: well, why don't he keep you warm and comfortable, and not let ye go about such a poor starved critter as you are?"

The colour rose to Lisa's face, and she did not reply. She wished she could hide away somewhere from Matthew's eyes, which one moment were full of sympathy, and then almost flashing with indignation on her behalf.

Matthew saw her distress and said no more; but when they were set down some distance from his home, according to the instructions he had given, he said to Lisa, brusquely, "Have ye had any dinner to-day?"

"No, sir," she answered, looking half frightened at him.

"Well, then, come along with me," he said. And the three went on in silence until they reached Matthew Pedder's shop. He unlocked the door, went straight through to the back kitchen, and in a minute or two returned with half a loaf of brown bread, a piece of cheese, and a red herring. "There," he said to Lisa, who was standing just inside the shop-door, "run off home with that as quick as ye can; toast the herring, and see that you eat it all yerself, and the cheese after, with that good bread; and tell yer father that Matthew Pedder says he ought to be ashamed of himself for not feedin' you well, and clothin' ye well. There now, off with ye!"

Lisa eagerly took the precious food and tucked it up under her little cloak, and with her face crimson, partly with pleasure, and partly with shame at Matthew's words about her father, she said, "Thank you, sir, two or three times, and went her way."

"Poor little girl!" said Hughie, compassionately. "I wonder how it is her father doesn't take better care of her." "I don't know nothin' about the fellow," exclaimed Matthew fiercely; "but I'll bet a penny he wants hangin'!" "Pon my word, little chap, it makes me ready to swear, it do, to see a bright little lass like that forsook, as you may say, by them as ought to be prizin' and cherishin' her! What'll become o' that child goodness only knows, without some kind soul snaps her up off the streets. Ah, deary me! if one half o' the children was never born it 'ud be a deal better for 'em!" And with that Hibernian sort of reflection Matthew jerked himself almost angrily out of his best coat and waistcoat, tied on his apron, and went outside to take down his shutters. Hughie stirred up the fire, put some fresh coals on with the tips of fingers, taking the utmost care not to soil his new clothes. Afterwards he took off his jacket, folded one of Matthew's aprons and pinned it round him, tidied the hearth, set the kettle on, and got tea ready,—all without being told. This gratified Matthew exceedingly.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Christ versus the Calves, or what Communion hath Light with Darkness?

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—JOHN iii. 16. If ye continue in my word, THEN are ye my disciples indeed.—JOHN viii. 31.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—JOHN xv. 14.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, EVEN unto the end of the world.—MATT. xxviii. 19, 20.

Howbeit when He, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.—JOHN xvi. 13.

From the passages above cited, it will be seen, that Jesus not only taught his disciples to believe on him, as the only Saviour, but also, that they should obediently follow all his divine teachings, making his word their law. And, having, both by example and precept, taught them his will, concerning their future duty; and being about to leave them, He promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to be with them, to the end of time, who should qualify them to teach his will to all men. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Spirit descended upon them, and they at once entered upon the grand and glorious mission committed to them. Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and taught the assembled multitude that the same Jesus, whom they had crucified, God had raised from the dead, and had exalted him to be both Lord and Christ. As Peter thus spake, many of his hearers were pricked in their heart, and enquired, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, &c. (See Acts 2, 37-38.) Then they that gladly received (believed) his word were baptized; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2, 41-42.) From these passages last cited we may learn how the Apostles understood the teachings of Jesus, and especially his last and great command. (Matt. 28, 19.) We see, too, that those thousands who received Peter's word were immediately baptized: for so had Jesus commanded, and so had Peter taught. From the foregoing it is plain that so soon as any person has been brought to repent of sin and believe on Christ, the next thing required of them is to be baptized. This fact is substantiated by every case of conversion recorded in the New Testament. It is true we sometimes read of persons having believed, where it is not mentioned that they were baptized, as in Acts 4, 4. But if we examine closely we shall find that all who were recognized by the Apostles as believers were baptized. When the people of Samaria believed Philip's preaching they were baptized, both men and women. (See Acts 8, 12.) When the eunuch believed, both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8, 38.) When Peter preached to Cornelius and his company, and the Holy Ghost fell on them, he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10, 48.) When Saul was converted he was forthwith baptized. (Acts 9, 18.) When Lydia attended to the things spoken by Paul, she was baptized. (Acts 16, 15.) When the jailor at Philippi, and his household believed, they were baptized straightway. (Acts 16, 33.) When Crispus and all his house, and many of the Corinthians believed Paul's preaching, they were baptized. (Acts 18, 8.) Surely it is needless to quote further to show that the first christians were all baptized believers. None were baptized without first having professed faith in Christ. No unconscious infants were baptized.

That the mode was immersion is clearly indicated in the case of the baptism both of Jesus and the eunuch. But if any one thinks otherwise, let them listen to Paul writing to the Romans, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death." (Romans 6, 4.) See also Colossians 2, 12. After examining these passages it seems impossible for any person that can understand the English language to suppose