

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, June 10th, 1877.—The Promise of Revival.—Hosea xiv. 1-9.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 1-7.

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

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Hosea i, ii. Tuesday, Hosea iii, iv. Wednesday, Hosea v, vi. Thursday, Hosea vii, viii. Friday, Hosea ix, x. Saturday, Hosea xi, xii. Sunday, Hosea xiii, xiv.

ANALYSIS.—I. Israel entreated to return. Vss. 1-3. II. Promise of abundant mercy. Vss. 4-8. III. Conditioned by obedience. Vss. 9.

QUESTIONS.—Who were the first prophets after Elijah and Elisha? What scenes did they depict? What did God through them urge his people to do?

To what kingdom did Hosea minister? When? Why is he placed first in the order of minor prophets? Why are they called minor prophets? What does the book of Hosea comprise? What is its chief burden? If its foreground is dark, what is its distant view?

Vs. 1. To what moral condition does Hosea desire to bring Israel? If sinners are lost, whom have they most to blame? Hos. xiii. 9.

Vs. 2. Are silent prayers as profitable as oral ones? What is meant by the "calves of the lips"?

Vs. 3. Who is Asshur? What is meant by "Asshur will not save us"? What by "we will not ride upon horses"? What gods were the work of Israel's hands? Who are meant here by the "fatherless"?

Vs. 4. On condition of this repentance of Israel, what does God say he will do?

Vss. 5-7. To what will this revival in Israel be like? Of the lily? Of the roots of Lebanon? Of the olive tree? What is meant by "they that dwell under his shadow shall return"? What by "revive as the corn"?

Vs. 8. Why is it well for Ephraim thus to speak? What contrasts have we in this verse?

Vs. 9. To what is this last verse a fit conclusion? What states are contrasted in it? What Psalm does it remind us of? Ps. i.

A few facts must be kept constantly in mind. (1) that under the disruption of the monarchy the Jews became two bands, Israel and Judah; (2) that we have studied about Israel because it became the chief of the two kingdoms, and the centre for nearly two centuries of the prophetic school; (3) that this northern kingdom, beginning ill under Jeroboam (b. c. 975) went on from bad to worse, relaxing all the bonds of religion and morality; (4) that the first of the minor prophets (so called not from less importance or authority, but from smaller bulk) directed their prophecies chiefly against the kingdom of the ten tribes. Of these were Amos and Hosea; (5) that the evils which were first tending to the captivity and dissolution of the northern kingdom were not permitted as yet to infect the southern kingdom of Judah, save in a mitigated form; (6) that Elijah and Elisha were oral prophets only to their age (b. c. 910-838); (7) that within a century after the death of Elisha we have Jonah, Amos, and Hosea, with written prophecies, bringing us into contact with the heathen world, and holding before us scenes of terrible retribution to Israel in the very near future; (8) that in spite of the afflictions sent at first upon Israel, and at last upon Judah, God repeatedly urged them to return to their long-sighted Lord, with promises of rich and abundant mercy.

HOSEA.—It is generally agreed that the ministry of the prophet Hosea covered the years between b. c. 784 and 725. In the former year Jeroboam II died; in the latter, Hezekiah began to reign. See chap. i. 1. Hosea was contemporary with Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. His mission was to Israel. He stands first in the order of minor prophets because his prophecy is the largest. During Hosea's ministry the ten tribes were fearfully corrupt. The able reign of Jeroboam II did not save them from threatened anarchy and ruin. Hence, Hosea was sent to them, as Jeremiah to Judah afterward, to mourn over their sins and to offer them terms of salvation.

The book of Hosea may be divided

into two parts, comprising, I. Symbolical representations (chaps. i-iii), and II. Prophetic discourses. Chaps. iv-xiv. The first part gives a figurative representation of the shameful infidelity of Israel to God. "The marriage relation of Jehovah to his people constitutes the burden of the book." David Brojen. The second part contains several prophetic discourses delivered at different times. The foreground is full of approaching calamities, but by degrees the horizon becomes clear, and the glory of the latter time shines forth with unclouded lustre.—Anno. Bible. This of this latter day glory or revival our present lesson treats, than which nothing more attractive is to be found within the whole volume of Old Testament prophecy.

EXPOSITION.—This chapter falls into three divisions. The first (vss. 1-3) is on Repentance; the second (vss. 4-8), on Restoration; and the third, (vs. 9), a Vindication.

I. Israel's Repentance. Vs. 1-3.—Verse 1.—"O Israel. Referred to as the objects of this loving appeal. Return unto the Lord [Jehovah] Thy God. Israel abandoning Jehovah and his worship for Baal and idol worship. Jehovah, calls to her who has been false to him, and invites her to come back. For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Verse 2.—"Take with you words and turn to the Lord. God regards; "the broken and contrite heart," without which both words and sacrifices are not merely worthless, but offensive. Say unto him. God is about to give the words of repentance which will be acceptable. Take away all iniquity. Forgive it. In an awakened sinner, the first cry is for forgiveness. "Take away," is used in the sense of bear, or atone for, as for example, Isaiah liii. 12; Lev. v. 1. "All" is emphatic, as shown in the Hebrew, as nothing less than a complete, a full salvation can satisfy the soul. And receive us graciously. The very opposite of our desert. Render the calves of our lips. "Offer our lips as calves"; that is, instead of calves, or the victims required for sacrifice by the law, offer the words of the mouth.

Verse 3.—"Asshur shall not save us. "Asshur" was Assyria, whose capital was Nineveh, to which Jonah went. Assyria and Egypt had at the time of Hosea become rival kingdoms. We will not ride upon horses. Comp. Deut. xvii. 16; Isaiah xxxi. 1, from which passages it appears that the horses were imported from Egypt, but in violation of God's command, Confidence in Egypt is rebuked. Our gods. Idolatry also is denounced. For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. The "fatherless," or forsaken, those who not only really are helpless, but who see and feel their helplessness.

II. God's Restoration of Israel. Vs. 4-8.—Verse 4.—"I will heal their backslidings. To heal "backslidings," or "apostasy," was to restore both the old relations and the old prosperity; to remove the evil, root and branch. I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him. God moved first, and he could not be still hostile to the returning penitents.

Verse 5.—"The dew in the dry season takes the place of rain, and makes fresh, glad, and fruitful all the land. Grow as the lily. Flourish, or blossom thus into beauty. Compare Matt. vi. 28. Cast forth [strike] his roots as Lebanon. The trees of Lebanon, so exposed to winds must have taken deep root to uphold them, or as some understand it, as the mountain itself, which seems to be firmly rooted in the solid earth. Branches shall spread. The consequence of the deep rooting just mentioned. His beauty shall be as the olive tree, on account of its beautiful green. His smell as Lebanon. Due to "the number of odoriferous trees and plants with which it abounds." Thus are set forth the piety, stability, increase, beauty and loveliness of God's people when enjoying God's favor.

Verse 7.—"They that dwell under, etc. These dwellers are the people of Israel as individuals, and the trees under which they gather is the national government, though not separately, but as both prophecy and history teach, in Judah. The corn. The grain, such as barley, rye, etc. These grains in an incredibly short time change a dry field into a dark, rich, delightful green—a mass of compact verdure. Grow as the

vine. Rapidly multiplies its branches, and extends them in all directions and to great lengths. See Ps. lxxx. The scent thereof. Literally, his memorial, or remembrance. Henderson explains it as being the fame.

Verse 8.—"Ephraim shall say. Shall say are in italics. If we omit them, Ephraim can be regarded as addressed by Jehovah in the language of the verse, which is thus Jehovah's address to him rather than his to Jehovah. Jehovah affirms his assurance that in receiving Ephraim, he will receive a people that will not again relapse into idolatry.

III. The Vindication. Vs. 9.—Verse 9.—"Who is wise, etc. God's law, judgments and mercies, are all the products of wisdom, and can be understood only by the children of wisdom. The ways of the Lord are right. God acts, not capriciously, but on the holy principles his own nature and law. He was the same God when he smote and when he healed. Blessed the man who walks in God's ways. Not less blessed now than of old.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 17th, 1877.—The Captivity of Israel.—2 Kings xvii. 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them." 2 Kings xviii. 12.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

There was still another good prophet, named Hosea, who preached to the Israelites for many years. He not only told them how the Lord said, "I will punish them for their ways," and showed them the sad state to which they would come, but he tenderly begs Israel to return to God and say to him; "Take away our sins and receive us kindly, and we will praise thee with our lips." Then he tells them they should do this because they have no other help. The king had asked help from the king of Assyria; but, said Hosea, "Asshur or Assyria cannot save us"—we will not trust in numbers of horses or chariots, for there is no safety in them; neither will we say to the very idols we have made with our own hands, "Ye are our gods;" for in God alone can we find mercy. And he gives this wonderful promise from God, if, after all their wrong-doing, they will yet return to him; "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away." He will do even more; he will make them grow into beauty like the olive-tree and blossom like the lily, and be strong and wide-spreading as the trees of Lebanon. He even promises that Ephraim, which was the tribe that Jeroboam and most of the wicked kings belonged to, should leave off serving idols.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XX.—"YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME."

When the shop was closed that evening, and Matthew and the boy were seated cozily beside the kitchen fire, Hughie said, after a long silence, during which both had been thinking deeply of the event of the day, "Please, Mr. Pedder, will you give me a nice piece of paper to fold up mother's hair in?"

"Yes, surely," replied Matthew, rising at once from his hard arm-chair, and going to a drawer in the shop for a large sheet of writing-paper. "Will that do?"

"Oh, that's just the thing, thank you," said Hughie, as he got the little old Bible, and carefully took the tress from its leaves.

Matthew watched him in an absent manner, leaning on one side of his arm-chair with his chin on his hands. When Hughie had folded it up very neatly, Matthew remarked, "Guess you'll do most things as falls to your hand through life neat and well. I never yet saw a fellow as couldn't pack up a parcel neat and exact, but what went through life doin' all his business slovenly and all awry. Give me a fellow as can pack up a parcel neat and proper, and I'll show ye a man as'll go through life doing his dailly work, whatever it is, decent and in order."

After this sententious observation, Matthew relapsed into silence again. Hughie looked pleased at these words of praise; and when he had laid aside his neat little package, he stood fidgetting at the table whereon lay his old Bible. Matthew was lost in thought, and did not heed him; so presently, after repeatedly failing to summon sufficient courage to speak, Hughie at last managed to say, "Please, Mr. Pedder, shall I read a little bit of my Bible to myself?" Mother would have me read a psalm or something to her every day, and I promised her that I would always do it after she was gone."

"Yes, surely; read away to yer heart's content, my lad, and I hope it'll do ye good," said Matthew, heartily.

Hughie was surprised to receive so favourable an answer, and he said timidly, "I thought that perhaps as you didn't like it 'yourself' you wouldn't like me to read it while I'm with you, sir."

"Oh, I don't interfere with nobody's religion, my boy, so long as they keeps it to theirselves, and don't try to stuff it down my throat. There's the woman now as comes to do the cleanin', why, you'd think as she made my old soul the chief concern of her life, to see how she talks away at me about religion every time she gets the chance, and yet she don't know much more about it than my shoe. I happens to know what religion is, cos I've seen it lived out really and truly, and so nobody needn't talk to me about it. If they've got it, let 'em live it, and then I shan't pick a quarrel with 'em; if they haven't got it, why they'd better keep their mouths shut, cos if they talk theirselves black in the face it wouldn't take no effect on me!"

Hughie turned over the leaves of his Bible, absently; he was thinking of what Matthew had just said. Presently he ventured to remark, "But don't you think, sir, people must speak about it if they feel it in their hearts very much? I am sure my mother loved religion, sir, and she was a good woman; and I know that she often talked about Jesus and good things."

"Yes, of course," assented Matthew. "There's words in season, ye know; but in a general way I've always noticed that them as talks the most about religion lives it the poorest."

There was silence again, which Hughie did not attempt to break. He soon became absorbed, that he was not aware that Matthew was closely watching him as he leant intently over the book, his lips involuntarily moving as he went along.

After a long time Hughie suddenly looked up with a bright face, and met Matthew's fixed eye.

"Well, what is it, little chap?" he asked.

"Oh, this is so beautiful!" exclaimed Hughie. "And it seems to be all about you,—this bit, I mean: I wish you liked to hear it, sir."

"If it seems to be about me I guess I shouldn't like to hear it. But you can read it, if you like," said Matthew, feeling curious to gather something of the boy's opinion of him in this novel way. "Is it about Jonah you're readin'?"

"I remember he got nabbed by a big fish, though, so that ain't much like me at this present."

"No, sir," answered Hughie, smiling. "I've been reading the twenty-fifth of Matthew: there's a lot of things in it that I like,—about the wise and foolish virgins; the servants with their talents, and all that. Mother used to explain all about it to me, and tell me anecdotes to make the meaning plainer. But what I meant seems to be about you, sir, is this,—may I read it?"

"Yes, read away," said Matthew, turning round away from the boy to the fire, leaning back in his chair, and closing his eyes to listen. And Hughie read slowly and distinctly: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee

in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have it done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Matthew's face flushed with a strange feeling during the reading of this passage, but he did not move. When Hughie had finished, he said, in his old-fashioned way, "You see, Mr. Pedder, that's just what you've been doing: giving me food, taking me in, clothing me,—all just the same as it says in this chapter. And I dare say you don't think that all the time you were doing it for the Lord Jesus. I'm sure He must love you for it!" the boy added, enthusiastically.

Matthew was too overcome to speak, so he sat quite still and silent. The boy's words had suddenly carried him far away from his old regions of thought, where everything connected with God was hard and cold and dark and hopeless, and had set him down in a sunny plain where was light, warmth, beauty, and where he caught a glimpse of a benignant, loving Being, "like unto the Son of God," and heard words soft and sweet as the echoes of the music of heaven. And then it seemed to be slowly dawning upon him that he was not altogether shut out from this light and love and beauty: that he might partake of it now and for ever, if he only would. Was it not too good to be true? Could it be that this Lord Jesus took the smallest interest in him, to say nothing of His being pleased with the little kindness he had shown to this desolate boy?

He thought and thought, and felt bewildered by this new revelation; then he tried to get back to his old views of things, and put out of mind all that Hughie's words had suggested. But he found that this was not easy: they had more deeply stirred his soul than anything that he had heard, or that had happened to him for years; and it would take time to restore it to its customary stagnant repose.

Hughie wondered that he sat still so long, and did not make any response to his words. He thought that perhaps he was displeased at his wanting to read to him out of the Bible; so he did not venture to break the strange silence by any further remark.

Presently, Matthew roused himself all of a sudden, coughed once or twice, and looked round at Hughie to say, in his old manner, "What did ye say yer name was, little chap?"

"Hugh Haldane, sir; but mother always called me Hughie."

"Well, I must take to call ye by a name, I suppose; and so I will call ye Hugh, and you can put by Hughie in remembrance of yer poor, dear mother Will that suit?"

"Yes, very nicely, please, sir," answered the boy.

"And what was the name o' that grandmother o' yours?"

"Mrs. Sharpe, sir."

"Sharpe? you're sure it was Sharpe, eh?" said Matthew, anxiously.

"Yes, sir; I've often posted letters for mother to her."

"D'ye know what her other name was? Mary or Jane, I suppose?" asked Matthew, trying to appear indifferent.

"No, sir; it was Dorothy," answered Hugh. "I've often heard mother speak of her."

Matthew wheeled round quickly with his face to the fire, and became lost in thought again. After a long time he seemed to wake up suddenly from his reverie again; and, turning round with a very dejected expression of face, he said, "Little Hugh, I guess you're very tired; you'd better be off to bed."

Hugh wished him good-night; and felt relieved to get away from the silent room to his own, where, at any rate, the silence would not be strange and oppressive. (To be continued.)

WHAT A CHILD CAN DO.—A little boy who attended a temperance meeting was asked by his father when he returned:

"Have you learned any thing, my boy?"

"Yes, father, I have. I have learned never to put strong drink to my lips; for it has kill fifty thousand persons annually, and how do I know that it will not kill me?"