

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, May 20th, 1877.—Jonah at Nineveh.—Jonah iii. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 5-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” Matthew xii. 41.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Jonah i. Tuesday, Jonah ii. Wednesday, Jonah iii. Thursday, Jonah iv. Friday, Nahum i. Saturday, Nahum ii, iii. Sunday, Matthew xii. 38-50.

ANALYSIS.—I. *Jonah's new commission.* Vs. 1, 2. II. *Goes to Nineveh.* Vs. 3. III. *Declares his message.* Vs. 4. IV. *Repentance of Nineveh.* Vs. 5-9. V. *God's sparing mercy.* Vs. 10.

QUESTIONS.—Who was Jonah's father? Where was his native place? Who was king of Israel then? What aged prophet still lived? What reasons have we for believing the book of Jonah to be true history? Why is there no necessity for believing that God created a great fish specially to swallow Jonah? State the grand object of the book of Jonah, and some of its most profitable lessons.

Vs. 1. What new commission does Jonah now receive? How did he act upon receiving the same once before? Where did he embark for flight?

Vs. 2. Where was Nineveh? How long had it existed so far? How large was it? Number of its people? Who was its present king? How long after this did the city exist? Who destroyed it finally? Nahum i. 8, 9; ii. 10. What should be the preaching of God's messengers to the world? Gal. i. 8, 9.

Vs. 4. Why is this limit of “forty days” put to Nineveh's existence?

Vs. 5, etc. To what acts does Nineveh at once surrender herself? How extended is her penitence? Are not national fasts sometimes timely?

Vs. 10. How does this penitence affect God? Was this change in God, or in the Ninevites? Can God change? Num. xxiii. 19; Mal. iii. 6; Jas. i. 17. Why was Jonah afterward angry at this divine mercy? ch. iv. 1, 2. What does he ask God to do? How does God chasten his vindictive thoughts? Vs. 4-11.

JONAH was a son of Amittai, a native of Gath-hepher, in Lower Galilee (2 Kings xiv. 25), an hour's ride only north-east of Nazareth. He was to Jeroboam II, the great-grandson of Jehu, what Elisha had been to Jehu. He was born about B. C. 850, and began to prophesy about B. C. 825-810. He was a contemporary, if not a disciple, of the now aged Elisha; “a child when Homer was an old blind bard, a century the senior of Romulus, and four centuries more ancient than Herodotus.”—Dr. C. E. Stowe. He is prior to Isaiah by a hundred years: the oldest of the prophets whose writings have reached our times (see *Smith's Dict.*) His personal history has been set down by German critics as fictitious, in whole or in part. Of its absolute truth, however, we need have no doubt. The hoary antiquity and simplicity of the language of the prophecy ascribed to him; the historical allusions in Job xiv. 4-6, 15, of Josephus, *Ant.* ix. 10, & 2; the historical and geographical notices, concurrent with facts as exploration has revealed them; the thought that all miracles might as well be doubted as those this prophecy records; and above all, the explicit sanction our Lord has given to the prophecy of Jonah as much as to that of Elijah, Elisha, or Isaiah (Matt. xii. 39, 41; xvi. 4; Luke xi. 29)—justify us in its full belief. But say some, “The miracles recorded in it are hard and undignified, not easy to be believed. The whale could not have swallowed Jonah, nor could he have lived three days in his belly.” To this it may be answered that the *Cacharias* is a fish of the Mediterranean, of sufficient size to swallow a man whole (see *Bib. Sacra*, x. 950; *Bochart, Hieroz.* iii. 688.) Besides, there is no question of hard or easy, probable or improbable, in regard to a real miracle. Human notions of dignity are small matters with God. *Matt.* xix. 26

The great object of the book of Jonah (possibly a fragment of the original) is to show that the divine regards and mercies are not confined to the Jews alone, but are extended to all nations. “Jonah is the first apostle, though involuntary and unconscious, to the Gentiles.”—Stanley. In Jonah's despondent

and rebellious flight there is a message to preachers of every age not to shrink from the call of truth and duty.

EXPOSITION.—*Verse 1.*—The word of the Lord. A particular message committed to a prophet. *The second time.* Compare i. 1, which refers to the first time. Only “to those who love God” do “all things work together for good.”

*Verse 2.*—*Arise and go unto Nineveh.* Form the nearest point of the Mediterranean coast to Nineveh was a journey of about four hundred miles; and from the heart of Palestine it was at least one hundred miles further. Nineveh was northwest of Palestine, and the great traveled route was through Damascus. *That great city.* Called in vs. 3, “a city of three days' journey,” that is probably in circumference—making about sixty miles, or fifteen miles square, if that were its form. Its inhabitants were about 600,000. The capital of Assyria, and mistress of the East for centuries, and was possessed of immense wealth and great architectural grandeur, as is shown by the results of modern excavations. Layard, who has done so much to bring to light the long buried monuments, writes that the city was probably “an aggregation of strong holds” (Nahum iii. 14.) The fortified enclosures, whilst including the residences of the king, his family, or immediate tribe, his principal officers, and also the chief priests, may also have served as places of refuge. The Assyrian edifices were built upon artificial mounds or platforms, varying in height, but generally from thirty to fifty feet above the level of the surrounding country. The portions of the edifices still remaining, consist of halls, chambers, and galleries opening for the most part into large, uncovered courts. The wall above the wainscoting of alabaster was plastered, and painted with figures and ornaments. The whole region was surrounded by a strong wall. *Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.* This is God's commandment to every prophet and preacher, not less now than anciently.

*Verse 3.*—*So Jonah arose,* etc. Not caring again to take to a ship and sail west when God told him to cross the county eastward.

*Verse 4.*—*Began to enter into the city a day's journey.* If the view as to the extent of Nineveh taken above on vs. 2 is correct, this is not to be understood as a day's journey of twenty miles in a straight line, but rather that after entering the city he spent his first day in going into the heart of the city. *Yet forty days.* Forty years was regarded as a generation, and the forty days represented the forty years? *Nineveh shall be overthrown.* The message as here given may not be the whole that was made known to Jonah to be made known to Nineveh. No promise of escape on condition of repentance is stated, and from vs. 10 it may be inferred that none was given. Still, the prediction was not intended to exclude such condition. So the message was intended and so it was taken.

*Verse 5.*—*The people of Nineveh believed God.* The message was from Jehovah (vs. 1), God as revealed and known to Israel; but Nineveh is throughout said to have regarded it as from God, the general name of the Supreme Being as apprehended by all. *Put on sackcloth.* The sign of humiliation throughout the Eastern countries.

*Verse 6.*—This universal act of humiliation originated from the king, and was in obedience to the royal decree and example.

*Verse 7.*—*Caused it to be proclaimed,* etc. As in vs. 5. *Let neither man nor beast,* etc. Fasting is an appropriate and natural method of manifesting sorrow. This fast was peculiar as including flocks and herds, but is said to have been done in other cases. Their cries would increase men's sorrow.

*Verse 8.*—*Let man and beast be covered,* etc. Thus far is carried the fellowship of the beasts with man. *Cry mightily.* The construction of the sentence requires us even in this to include the beast, as also in the repentance.

*Verse 9.*—*Who can tell.* See Rom. ii. 14, 15. The hope that God might be appeased and show mercy has also been prevalent, though less pronounced and assured than the conviction of his wrath. So here, mark the doubtful hopefulness, “Who knows?” Oh, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ which shows

the infinite, and hence immeasurable compassion of God, which lays the valid foundation for trust, peace, assurance.

*Verse 10.*—*God saw,* etc. All nations are under his eye, the objects of his care, dealt within his holy, loving wisdom. *Repented,* etc. The change in them enabled God to avert the stroke, and this was to appearance as though he had repented.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 27th, 1877.—The Death of Elisha.—2 Kings xiii. 14-21.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

God told the prophet Jonah, who lived in Israel, to go to Nineveh and tell the people that God saw, and would punish their wickedness. Jonah was afraid, and foolishly thought that he could get away from the sight of God. Instead of going to Nineveh, he went to the nearest town on the sea, and paid his money to be taken far across the sea to Tarshish. But the Lord sent a great wind that frightened the sailors; and when they found it was Jonah who had done wrong, they threw him into the sea. But God sent a great fish, which swallowed Jonah whole, and after keeping him safely for three days, cast him out on dry land. Then God told him again to go to Nineveh, and preach what he bid him. This time Jonah obeyed. Nineveh was so large a city that it would take three days to walk around it. Jonah walked all day till he got into the middle of the city; then he began to cry out aloud, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” All the people believed him, from the smallest child to the great king, who put off his royal robes, and sent all over the city this command. “Let neither man nor beast eat nor drink, but let them put on sackcloth, and cry mightily to God, and turn from their evil ways, and not be cruel to the poor: and perhaps God will turn away his anger.”

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest.

DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XVII.—A NEW SUIT.

“Now, look here, my lad,” said Matthew, when Lisa Maurice had left his shop that morning, “I've bin and gone and made a purchase for ye; and I hope they'll suit, and give satisfaction, and that you'll have health to wear 'em out. Now, what d'ye think of them?”

And Mr. Matthew took off the news-paper wrapper, and brought to view a pair of new, strongly-made boots, which appeared to be just Hughie's size. The boy's eyes grew bright and wide open, and his face coloured with astonishment and pleasure, as Matthew placed the boots in his hands. He smoothed one hand up and down the shining soles, and looked admiringly at the semi-circle of spurs in the heels, and then looked shyly at Matthew, as if he wanted to be further assured that they were his own, before he could venture to appropriate them.

“They're yer very own, my little chap, and not afore yer wanted 'em, we'll say. Come, try 'em on, and we'll jest chuck them others into the dust-bin, and very well they've served their day and generation, seemingly. To-night, you shall take yer first walk in 'em, to see yer poor mother; and you shall have summat decenter on yer back than you've got at this same present. I called in at old Moses's jest now; and thinks I to myself, when the quality buys things, they has 'em sent up to try on; and when I've got the money in my pocket to pay straight down for what I buys, thinks I, let 'em send the things to old Matthew. So I walks in to Moses, and puts on the grand, I does, and I surprised him some small bit when I axes him, very swell-like, to send me up a suit or two, says I, to try on a little chap of eight. And so they're comin' up presently for ye to try on. For in the first place, ye know, I said as I'd take ye with me to buy 'em; but I've got a bit o' policy in this old noddle o' mine: so as I walks along I says to myself, No, I'll jest go and order things down like a lord, and keep that little chap out o' sight till he's rigged out. And for why? Cos, says I, folks are

such fools as to think of ye accordin' to the clothes you wears; and so, as you've got to go in and out afore the people in this street for many a year, may be, I ain't jest goin' to let 'em have any remembrance of ye as a ragged, poor-lookin' lad: they ha'n't seen anything of ye yet, and so I says to myself, they shall see ye nobby from the first, and then they can't afford to look down on ye. So I'll jest keep you in the back-ground, ye know, when old Moses comes in with his bundle; and we'll nip off this summery suit o' yours in a twink, and pop ye into some of his'n, afore I brings ye face to face with him. He's a old stager, is Moses, and as 'quisitive as Paul Pry hisself, which same I once saw at the play-house. There 'now, that's what I calls a fit, that is! And Matthew looked down with pride and pleasure at the neat appearance of Hughie's foot laced up in the new boot; for while Matthew's tongue was running at such a rate, the little fellow had seated himself on the floor, and tried on one of the boots. “Stand up, now,” added Matthew, “and stamp yer foot on the floor—so—to get him into his place. That's it, now! And a real splendashus fit it is! Why, I might have had 'sperience all my life in buyin' of boys' boots, judgin' from that 'ere fit; and yet that's the first pair I ever did buy for a small little chap like you. Now, is it comfortable? Do it pinch anywhere? Cos say the word now, while I can get 'em changed.”

“No, it's beautiful, and as comfortable as it can be!” exclaimed Hughie, looking up delightedly into Matthew's face, while he gave another proud little stamp or two to settle his foot nicely in its new covering. Then he sat down and put the other one on, and when he stood up he felt quite a head taller than before; such a wonderful influence had these new boots upon his spirits that he could draw himself up now in a manner that his depressing rags had prevented his doing for many a long day.

Matthew's sharp eyes noted this, and he said, “Why, them boots have made ye spry already! You'll be a new critter when ye gets into yer new toggery—see if you don't. I knows the vally of decent clothes myself, and I alays keeps myself decent and clean in consequence. Why, if I went about in shatters I should feel that limp as I could never stand up for myself, and as speritless as a cat shut out in the wet on a very rainy day. But when I've got a good suit o' clothes on my back, why, I've got that impence in me as I could stand and chatter to a lord as if he was a rag-and-bone-man! The decent clothes puts sperit into ye, ye know, that's what they does. And your sperits 'll rise like barn when I've done my bizzness with Moses—see if they don't now!”

Hughie looked up and smiled, full of faith in Matthew's words; for judging by the inspiring effect of the new boots, he felt sure that a new suit of clothes would help to raise his spirits, which had been sadly drooping for a boy of eight, during many months past.

“Why, that's one reason why I couldn't abear to think of ye goin' to the workus,” continued Matthew, warmly. “That uniform as they puts ye into 'ud break a little chap o' your sort clean down—slouchin' along in them smock-frock things, as many of 'em has, and walkin'—no, not walkin', but shufflin' as if it was out-and-out impossible for 'em to lift a foot from the ground. Like enough you haven't seen 'em, but I have many a time; and oneasy I've felt somewhere in my 'art to see the poor bits o' lads shuffle and pound along, as if they'd got no more sperit in 'em than a lump o' lead, poor things! Well, if I was a Methody I should say, “The Lord be praised as you haven't got to be one o' them same!” Only I ain't a Methody, and so I can't say it.”

“But I say something like it in my prayers now,” said Hughie, in a low voice, “because I'm so glad you've taken me in.”

“Well, I s'pose that's right of ye,” responded Matthew, as he stooped to pick up the boy's old boots. “And now you jest get out o' the way a bit till Moses comes; go into the kitchen and stay there till you hears somebody very snuffly come in and say, “Good mornin', Mr. Pedder,” and then skit ye upstairs in double quick time, and stop there for me.”

Hughie went away smiling into the kitchen, and instead of sitting down in a dejected attitude, he put his hands in his old trousers-pockets and strutted up and down the kitchen, every now and then looking down at those precious boots. Once he even felt inclined to whistle; but just as he was about to do so, the thought of his mother lying still and cold a quarter of a mile away deterred him; and the tears crept up into his eyes as he thought how vain it was to long for her to see what beautiful boots his kind friend had given him.

Presently he heard the signal for his flight upstairs; and he mounted the narrow staircase leading from the kitchen with as much speed and as little noise as he possibly could. When in the room above he could distinctly hear all that was said below, no doors being closed between him and the shop.

“Well now,” began Moses in a wheedling tone and with a peculiar accent, “where is the young gentleman?”

“Let me see what you've brought, Mr. Moses,” replied Matthew, pompously. “I've brought what'll suit, no doubt, if you'll have the goodness to bring the young gentleman forward and let me try on,” said Moses, very graciously.

He was evidently unpacking his parcel, for after a brief silence Hughie heard Matthew say, “Ah, them looks jest the thing. Sit ye down a minute, and I'll fetch the boy to ye,” he added, and in a few moments he appeared before Hughie, his face shining with a mischievous, triumphant smile.

“Quick! get into 'em,” he whispered; “he's rare savage, and mutterin' to hisself like thunder! He puts his arm round the parcel and grabs it close, cos he's that determined to try the things on hisself and find out all about ye; but I jest whisks these out, and says as cool as a cucumber, says I, as if I thought he was mighty willin' for me to do it, I says, “These looks jest the thing,” and then off I cuts with 'em. He! he! And Matthew was so vastly amused at his own cleverness that he pinched his old nose unmercifully to prevent his exploding into loud laughter.

“There! now you're in 'em, and they fits like sacks, they do, after all my braggin'! But never mind; they'll do jest to let you leave these rags behind. Come along, or else old Moses 'll be showin' his 'andsome phiz up here in a minute!”

They went down together; and when Hughie stood before Mr. Moses in a suit that was two or three sizes too large for him, that gentleman indulged in a very prolonged whistle, with his keen, black eyes open to their widest extent. He was a small man, with rather long, curly, black hair, and a very Jewish type of countenance. Three or four valuable rings glittering on his small, dirty hands: the wearing of these trinkets sturdy Matthew regarded as a piece of womanish affectation; and he had had the bad manners to speak superciliously about them to Moses on more than one occasion.

The dealer in new and second-hand clothes turned to his big bundle in the most business-like manner, to select something more suitable for the boy. Matthew left him to it, now he had no further interest in trying the things on himself; and when Moses pronounced one of the suits a good fit, and very becoming to the boy, Matthew assented at once, asked the price, and went to his till for the money.

The curiosity of Mr. Moses was at white heat concerning the lad; but he knew Matthew Pedder, and almost despaired of getting his curiosity gratified, for Matthew also knew him, and was as wary as a lawyer, and as repellent as a porcupine, when he was attacked by questions.

(To be Continued.)

The interest awakened throughout Brooklyn by the recent conversion to Baptist views of the Rev. Emory J. Haynes, a prominent Methodist minister in that city, has induced the editor of the *Baptist Weekly* to make inquiry of pastors as to their previous training. He found that the majority had come from other denominations. While thirteen were brought up Baptists, five being sons of Baptist ministers, fifteen had come as follows:—Five from the Methodists, two from the Episcopalians, one each from the Lutherans, Quakers, and the Reformed, and one had never been trained to any belief, but had become a Baptist from reading the New Testament after his conversion at the age of seventeen.