

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1877.

STUDIES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

SUNDAY, June 17th, 1877.—The Captivity of Israel.—2 Kings xvii. 6-18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: VSS. 13-18.

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.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Kings xvii. 1-18. Tuesday, vs. 7; Leviticus xxvii. 21-46. Wednesday, vs. 7; Deut. xxviii. 20-59. Thursday, vs. 15; 2 Peter ii. Friday, vs. 18; 2 Kings xvii. 19-41. Saturday, Ezekiel xii. 1-16. Sunday, Romans xi.

ANALYSIS.—I. The captivity. Vs. 6. II. Idolatry its leading cause. Vs. 7-12. III. Protest of prophets against it. Vs. 13. IV. Disobedience persisted in. Vs. 14-17. V. Delayed retribution comes. Vs. 18.

QUESTIONS.—When did the captivity of Israel occur? Under what king? After what siege? How completely did he take Israel captive? Did the ten tribes ever return to Palestine? Where has it been thought their descendants were to be found? From the sins of what king did Israel never depart? How many years did the kingdom of Israel last? Why was it politically advantageous to Assyria to carry the Jews into captivity? What did it, however, providentially fulfill? Of what is it an undeniable evidence?

Vs. 6. What king of Israel was Hoshea? Why were his patriotic efforts in preserving his country unsuccessful? Where has Sargon, the king of Assyria, recorded the captivity of Israel? Was the depopulation of Israel at first complete? When was it so? To what provinces of Assyria were the captives carried? By what river? In what direction from them was Nineveh?

Vs. 7. State some of the reasons why the kingdom of Israel was carried into captivity? What ten or eleven phases of idolatry are recorded against it in vs. 9, 10, 11, 16, 17?

Vs. 18. Under what successive Assyrian kings did Judah afterwards share Israel's fate? Ans. Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 13-16), Esar-haddon, (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11), and Nebuchadnezzar thrice. How many years, then, did the kingdom of Judah last? Ans. 390 (b. c. 975-585). How many years did we say the kingdom of Israel lasted? Ans. 254 (b. c. 975-721). What, then, was the difference in the length of the two kingdom? Ans. 136 years.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.—This occurred b. c. 721, after a three years' siege of the city of Samaria, under Shalmaneser and Sargon, his successor, kings of Assyria. It was the despairing effort of a dying nation, a memorable defence, but all in vain. The removal of the people was of that complete character frequently practiced by the conquerors of Western Asia. Josephus states that the king of Assyria transplanted all the people. Not a remnant was left, as in the case of the captivity of Judah a century and a half later, when the poor of the land were left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. The ten tribes never returned to their land as a distinct people, and the contrast between their fate and that of Judah marks the favor of God to the house of David and to the people who never cast off his worship. Thus ended the kingdom of Israel after a duration of just two hundred and fifty-four years (b. c. 975-721), under nineteen kings and seven dynasties, not one of which kings is commended either for morality or piety, all being idolaters and traitors to Jehovah. They departed not from the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings xvii. 22), notwithstanding their nearness to the Temple and the succession of inspired prophets. Humanly speaking, it was a great advantage to the Assyrian king to remove a people on the border of his empire notoriously well affected toward Egypt. With God, however, it was the fulfillment of threatenings long before uttered in the event of the disobedience of his people. Lev. xxvi. 36-39, 44; Deut. iv. 27; xxviii. 20-68. It was distinctly foretold that they should be removed and scattered into the uttermost parts of the earth. Jer. xv. 4; Ezek. xii. 10-16; Hosea ix. 17. First under Sargon, of Assyria, b. c. 721, then under Nebuchadnezzar, of Babylon, b. c. 685, then under Titus, of Rome, A. D. 70, the absolute dispersion of the Jews was brought about. It is a case without a parallel. And yet the Jews survive in

their dispersion as no distinct people have ever done in their own country. It is a standing miracle. It shows prophecy fulfilled.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 6.—In the ninth year of Hoshea. Hoshea and Hosea are one and the same name; but the king was quite another person than the prophet whose words we last week studied. They were contemporaries. The king of Assyria, etc. Shalmaneser, the same as Shalman in Hosea x. 14. According to Assyrian inscription, Sargon, the successor of Shalmaneser, took Samaria. See in xviii. 10 "they took." On the length of the reign see vs. 5. In Halah, etc. These places, according to Keil, are all to be found far off to the east of the Tigris, where certainly the cities of the Medes were. Others would find Halah, Habor, and Gozan in Mesopotamia. xviii. 11, xix. 12; 1 Chron. v. 25, 26.

Verse 7.—For so it was that. Or rather, It was so, i. e., this took place because. Had sinned against the Lord [Jehovah] God, etc. In Scripture, right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness, moral distinctions are the supreme facts in the nature of God, man, angels, demons, and all events and causes are subordinate to these.

Verse 8.—The statutes of the heathen. Especially those pertaining to worship, which involved, of course, the rejection of Jehovah and his statutes. See the law forbidding this course in Lev. xviii. 3; xx. 23, and elsewhere. Frequent, pointed and emphatic were the warnings against this very thing, which God foresaw would be done, but took care should not be done for want of instruction and appeal. Cast out, etc. For the very sins committed by Israel (Lev. xviii. 25; xx. 23), and often. The sin was greater in Israel than in them, and hence the greater reason why Israel, too, should suffer like them. Of the kings of Israel, etc. As though it were not enough to adopt heathen statutes, these kings framed laws ordaining forms of wickedness unknown to the heathen.

Verse 9.—Did secretly, etc. By their words they perverted God's laws so as to hide his true nature and misrepresent him. From the tower. Built for the "watchmen" to watch the flocks from their summits. See xviii. 8. It seems to have been a proverbial expression.

Verses 10-12.—Images. Or pillars, in Baal-worship. Groves. Or wooden pillars used as symbols of Ashteroth, the female deity corresponding to Baal as the male. The burning of incense was common to the regular Temple service of Jehovah, and most forms of heathen worship. The more significant the rite the more reason it should be employed only in the service of the true God. Comp. Hosea ii. 13; iv. 13; xi. 2. To provoke the Lord [Jehovah] to anger. Not to malice, or passion, but to a holy, righteous "wrath." Ye shall not do this thing. Deut. iv. 19.

Verse 13.—The Lord [Jehovah] testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets (and by) all the seers. Judah is here joined with Israel, because both were doomed to a like judgement for the same sins, and had been treated in the same way. The oneness of the nation, even when it existed as two kingdoms, was never lost from sight. The list of the prophets named as belonging in the separate kingdoms of Israel has been made out as follows: Ahijah (1 Kings xiv. 2); Jehu (xvi. 1); Elijah, Micaiah (xxii. 8); Elisha, Jonah, Oded (2 Chron. xxviii. 9, Amos and Hosea. Only three of these have left writings bearing their names. Turn ye, etc. This was the burden, the practical endeavor of all prophecy. The sin of breaking the written law was aggravated by rejecting the testimony of God's living prophets.

Verse 14.—Notwithstanding, etc. On one side such effort of love, on the other such requital of love. Hardened their necks. For resistance, like a bullock in pushing against his antagonist with locked horns. See Deut. x. 16; and often.

Verse 15.—Rejected his statutes, etc. Of set purpose. The Lord [Jehovah] had charged them, etc. See Ex. xxiii. 24; Deut. xii. 4, 30, 31.

Verse 16.—Left all the commandments, etc. And went off to other statutes. The host of heaven. The stars—doubtless in connection with Baal-worship, which, as we have seen, was the worship

of the sun, as Ashteroth worship was of the moon. Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3; Job xxxi. 26-28.

Verse 17.—Caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire. See xvi. 3; Jer. vii. 31; xix. 5; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3. Divinations and enchantments. This was to reject the revelation of God and choose imaginary, spurious revelations.

Verse 18.—Removed them out of his sight. God used Assyria as his instrument. He meant it for one purpose, Assyria for another. None left but the tribe of Judah. Such was the predominance of the tribe, that here it is regarded as being the sole and whole of the kingdom. A century and a half sufficed for her to fill her cup also, and then her glory departed, her holy city and holy Temple were destroyed.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 24th, 1877.—Review Lesson (with Nahum i. 1-13.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." Nahum i. 3.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, made war against Hoshea, king of Israel, and made him promise to pay a large sum of money every year. Hoshea paid it for a while, but at last he got tired and broke his promise. Shalmaneser was very angry, and came back to Israel and placed his soldiers all around Samaria. He kept siege over the city three years, and the people suffered terribly. Then he carried away almost all the people, and made them live in the cities of Assyria; he also took king Hoshea and put him in prison, where he died. Thus the kingdom of Israel was all broken up, and Hoshea was its last king; for so few ever went back to the land of Israel that they never were a nation again. Even the land lost its name: for the king of Assyria sent some of his own people to live there, and they called it Samaria, after the chief city, and the new inhabitants were called Samaritans. God allowed all these sad things to happen because of the sins of Israel. They did not obey the Lord, who had brought them out of Egypt, but worshipped the idol-gods of the heathen. They had set up images on every high hill and under every green tree; they made two golden calves, and worshipped the stars, and served Baal, and even burned their own children in a horrid image called Moloch.

Select Serial.

From The Day of Rest. DORA'S BOY.

BY MRS. ELLEN ROSS.

CHAP. XXI.—DOROTHY SHARPE.

During Matthew's long silence after Hugh's expressing such a high opinion of him, he was thinking deeply, but in a peculiar and disjointed way. First he was overwhelmed with surprise and a glad satisfaction that his behaviour towards the orphan boy could be construed into anything half so good as that passage of Scripture seemed to declare. In a new and very dim way he ventured to think upon God for a few minutes, and he was conscious that his cramped-up soul stirred a little, as if struggling faintly after liberty, light, room to expand and rise. Then he thought, with something approaching to delight, that Hughie was thinking well of him, that at last he had met with a human being who, instead of deprecating him far more than he deserved, actually esteemed him far more than he deserved; and he grew suddenly anxious and jealous lest in any way he should lose the boy's good opinion; lest his child's faith in him should be weakened; and then he wished heartily, for a moment, that he were really and truly a good man.

Following this, came Dorothy Sharpe's adverse opinion of him, and her frequent habit of speaking her mind pretty freely about his faults and failings. If Hughie were to hear her his ardent regard for his benefactor would probably die out at once, or, to say the least, be chilled for ever. Then he began to think how he could get the boy out of the way on the following Saturday, until

he should have a long talk with Dorothy about him, and warn her to set watch on her hasty lips while he was near her.

But later on, when he had learned from the child's straight-forward answers to his questions that this very Dorothy Sharpe was no other than Dora Haldane's mother, the grandmother whom Hughie was diligently to seek, poor Matthew was overwhelmed with dismay. He felt that he should burst out into some tell-tale expression of feeling that would reveal all, if his self-control for a moment failed him; so making a desperate effort to keep calm, he quietly sent the little lad to bed, as we have seen.

"This is worse than I was dreadin'!" he moaned to himself, as he hid his face in his big hands and leant over the fender. "I did think as how I should have to lose him some time or 'nother; but so soon as this! Oh dear! and jest when I was beginnin' to feel that he was vallyble to me. It seems, old Matthew, as you're doomed to be a lone old critter; so what's the use o' kickin' against yer fate!"

But argue as he would, Matthew could not bring himself to feel reconciled to the loss of this treasure; and he tossed about sleeplessly that night trying to find out what he could do to avert this separation. Could he manage anyhow to prevent their recognizing each other, to conceal their real names from each other? Then he asked himself whether he had ever mentioned his charwoman's name in the boy's hearing? And on this point his troubled brain was exercised for some time, until at length he cried to himself, "Why, Matthew, you old goose! what ever are ye botherin' about that for?" If ye did mention her name to him it's jest the same as if ye didn't, cos he never took no manner o' notice of it. 'Course if he had, he'd ha' spoke about it right off at once, and caught at it, too. So far as that goes I'm on the right side. Well, I must see if my old noddle'll turn up anything afore Saturday, and if it don't, I must see what Saturday itself'll turn up; and if I've got to lose the boy why I must, and I can't help it, and so there!"

And with that Matthew tried hard to gird up the loins of his mind, and go forth with indifference to meet the future. But he miserably failed in the effort; and his perturbation of spirit was so great during the next day, that on Saturday morning he felt really unwell; and looked so, too.

Mrs. Dorothy Sharpe was expected to be at his establishment by half-past eight every Saturday morning: so on this fateful Saturday, Matthew and Hughie were up early, and they got breakfast with more despatch than neatness; and then, in a nervous, excitable way, which he strove hard to conceal, Matthew deputed Hughie to go an errand for him, which he could not accomplish in less than an hour.

Having watched him down the street in a direction opposite to that which Mrs. Sharpe would come, he took down his shutters, looked round at his birds; and then waited, with anxious eagerness, the arrival of Dorothy Sharpe.

Matthew was dusting his fine glasses, and feeling as nervous and unstrung as ever he had done in his life, when Dorothy Sharpe entered. She was a woman of medium height, rather broad in figure, and comfortably clothed with flesh without being stout. She had good features, but her pale face was wrinkled, and puckered with an anxious and ungracious expression. A little child, looking at her would never be moved to run up to her with open arms and loving confidence. She had restless, dark eyes, which could not fix themselves for half-a-minute upon any person to whom she was speaking; and her grey—almost white—hair was carried back neatly under her cap. She looked to be about sixty, and could boast of considerable vigour for her age. The clothes which she wore on her weekly visits to Matthew were poor and shabby; but she had an air of respectability, and looked superior to the general run of char-women.

Her sight had so failed that she could no longer get a comfortable living by the trade at which she and her daughter had worked in years gone by; so, having a sister comfortably settled in London, as she thought, she decided to go and live somewhere near her, to do what she could for her living, and to look to this sister for any help she needed.

One thing that prompted her to take this step was, the hard and unnatural desire to be where her daughter would not know of her whereabouts. The tone of Dora's recent letters had seemed to infer that she might one day appear with her boy at her village-home. "No!" said Dorothy Sharpe, with grim sternness; "I'm not going to be bothered with her and her boy in my old days, and, p'raps, have to 'slave my fingers to the bone for 'em. As Dora has made her bed so she must lie on it. I must look to myself now as long as I live: I've got nobody else to look to." So she decamped, to avoid possible future responsibilities, to add a little to those of her married sister, and to take care of herself.

Disappointment awaited her at the end of her journey: she found that her sister had a husband with failing health, a declining business (they were small shop-keepers), and a large family to provide for. So Dorothy found no cosy corner, no bountiful help in that quarter: she had to go into lodgings, and strive long and strenuously for a decent living amongst a throng where many failed to earn daily bread anyhow.

After the small stock of money which she had brought with her was gone, she ceased to be particular about the way in which she earned an honest shilling; and after striving long to resist the resistless, and partaking largely of humble pie, she at length found herself willing to do a day's cleaning for Matthew Pedder and others like him. Many and many a time she wished herself back in quiet Kent, in her lonely cottage-home; but as she had 'made her bed so she must lie on it,' and she went grumbling on through the last chapter of her loveless life.

Rigorous attendance at all the services at the church of the parish in which she lived, she got help from the clergyman and from some of the more benevolent of his flock; by the same means she got also a comfortable sense of self-satisfaction, of doing all that was required of a poor working-woman like herself to ensure salvation; and she regarded herself as a most religious person.

Not so did Matthew however, and he let her know it, just as soon as she let him know that she considered him nothing better than a heathen, but rather worse, seeing that he lived in a land of light and knowledge. So, although their business relations were satisfactory—she doing her work tolerably well, and he promptly paying what she asked for it—still, in a social sense, they were always at loggerheads.

(To be Continued.)

"Pray on my plate, too."

A little bright-eyed three-year-old was seated in his high chair at the dinner table. Mamma had arranged the little uneasy, while for the moment his sprightliness and fun had made him the observed of the family. She had placed him snugly up to the table, pinned on his bib, and succeeded in getting the little mischievous hands quiet, and making him "hush," when father proceeded to ask the blessing. While this was in progress our little chubby made a discovery. It was that all the plates on the table, except his own little plate, were in one pile at "papa's place," and as it seemed to him were put there to get the benefit of the solemn ceremony. So scarcely waiting for the "Amen," he held out his own plate in both hands, saying, "Please, papa, pray on my plate, too."—Christian at Work.

A blind mendicant in Paris wears this inscription round his neck: "Don't be ashamed to give only a sou. I can't see."

My first (syllable) is company; my second shuns company; my third calls company; and my whole entertains company. Give it up? Why, co-nundrum, of course!

A baby, says a recent French writer, is an angel whose wings decrease as its legs increase.

One of the curiosities at a recent silver wedding in St. Louis was a cake twenty-five years old, which was baked on the occasion of the original wedding.

When a Jew fails, he pores over the old accounts.