

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, July 21st, 1878.—Ministry of John the Baptist.—Luke iii. 15-22.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 15-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink." Luke i. 15.

DAILY READING.—Monday, Luke iii. 1-22. Tuesday, Isaiah xl. Wednesday, Malachi iii. Thursday, John i. 15-51. Friday, Acts xxiv. 22-27. Saturday, Mark vi. 14-30. Sunday, Rev. xxi.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Messiah anticipated. Vs. 15. II. The Messiah preached. Vs. 16-18. III. John's imprisonment. Vs. 19, 20. IV. Jesus baptized. Vs. 21, 22.

QUESTIONS.—Whose son was John the Baptist? How much older was he than Jesus? To what class did he belong? What was his dress? His food? What prophecies did his coming fulfil?

I. The Messiah Anticipated.—Vs. 15.—What proof have we that the Messiah was at this time generally expected?

II. The Messiah Preached.—Vs. 16-18.—What is baptism in the Holy Ghost? Does baptism in the Holy Ghost make baptism in water needless? Does baptism in water regenerate the soul? Explain the meaning of "fan" in John's words. Of "wheat." Of "chaff." Of "unquenchable fire."

III. John Imprisoned.—Vs. 19, 20.—State the reasons of John's imprisonment and death. Mark vi.

IV. Jesus Baptized.—Vs. 21.—Why was Jesus baptized? Matt. iii. 14, 15. Is baptism "non-essential"? Where did God say, "This is my beloved Son" again? Matt. xvii. 5.

Where do we see boldness in John the Baptist's preaching? Vs. 7. Where directness? Vs. 12-14. Where humility? Vs. 16. Where solemnity? Vs. 17. Where faithfulness? Vs. 19. Where martyrdom for the truth? Mark vi. 18, 19, 25, 27, 28.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.—For the account of John the Baptist's birth, see Luke i; for prophecies relating to him see Matt. iii. 3; Isaiah xl. 3; Malachi iii. 1. His birth preceded by six months that of our Lord. Luke i. 26, 36. A single verse contains all that we know of him for thirty years after his birth. Luke i. 80. He was a Nazarite (Luke i. 15); his dress was that of the old prophets (Matt. iii. 4; 2 Kings i. 8); his food such as the deserts afforded (Leviticus xi. 22). When the time arrived for him to come forth from his secluded life, he performed no miracles (John x. 41), but attracted a great multitude to hear him. His preaching was brief, searching, and startling. His baptism was unto repentance, that pre-supposes regeneration; hence, essentially Christian. His great mission was to announce the Messiah. This announcement being made, his work ceased. For his boldness in speaking the truth he went as a willing victim to prison and to death. Mark vi. 21-29.

EXPOSITION.—Parallel accounts in Matthew iii. 11-17; Mark i. 7-11.

Verse 15.—And.—The preceding verses (1-14) have set forth the general tenor of John's ministry. Here begins a statement both of the consequent impression in respect to the great national hope of the Messiah, and of John's treatment of that impression. The people. The Jewish nation as a whole. All men. "All" here indicates a very general prevalence. Mused in their hearts of John. Literally, "were reasoning in their hearts," not as though it were not also a common topic of conversation, but as implying the deep, personal interest of each. Whether he, etc. We can understand how the mistake could be made, if we remember the extraordinary life, habits, doctrine, power and influence of John, and also, his new ordinance of Baptism, presented as of divine origin and authority, and for the separation and organization of the true sons of the kingdom.

Verse 16.—John answered, etc.—This general questioning, no doubt, culminated in some definite, tangible form, and was so brought to John's notice as to occasion and require his open, explicit and final answer. It can hardly be called a mark of extraordinary humility or self denial, that he did not act a part which would have made him the most conspicuous and infamous of traitors. I indeed. Emphatic by contrast with "he" in the last sentence of this verse. He admits his singular pre-eminence in respect of his office and

ordinance as related to the kingdom. Baptize you with water. In this passage, and in Acts i. 5, xi. 16, the original construction is such as would equally well allow us to translate either "with water" or in water. Elsewhere, in connection with "water" (Matt. iii. 11, Mark i. 8), and with "Spirit" or "Holy Spirit," as with "Jordan," etc., the original Greek uses the preposition meaning in, in harmony with the meaning of the word baptize [immerse], and with the Biblical description of the ordinance. One mightier than I. Or rather, the one, etc.; definite, as referring to Jesus. Cometh. Is coming to self-revelation, and that very soon. The latchet of whose shoes, etc. The strap which bound the sandal to the foot. This sandal was little more than the sole of a shoe, and it was removed on entering a house, etc. To remove and care for it was the most menial service. The degree of Christ's superiority to John is thus forcibly and fitly asserted by the faithful and true witness and forerunner. He shall [will] baptize you with [in] the Holy Ghost [or Spirit] and fire. An obvious reference to the baptism of the infant church on "the Day of Pentecost," and so to all that permanent presence and work of the Spirit which that event signified. (1.) In the original, the preposition in is not repeated. Hence "fire" is joined closely to "Holy Ghost," as though together the two constituted one idea. (2.) Mark does not add the word "fire." (3.) The persons baptized are evidently regarded as the penitent, such as John baptized. (4.) Baptism is an ordinance of separation and consecration unto God.

Verse 17.—Whose fan is in his hand.—This "fan" was in fact a shovel, with which the grain, threshed and heaped up on the solid, level, open space of earth called a threshing floor, was thrown into and across a current of wind which carried off the chaff, and let fall the grain. Thoroughly purge. Clear up by separating his grain from both the straw and the chaff. Floor. The threshing ground, usually on a hill top, for the sake of the breeze. Into his garner. Storehouse or granary. With fire unquenchable. The choice of this word by the Holy Spirit is significant. See Matthew xxv. 41, 46, etc.

Verse 19.—Herod the tetrarch.—See verse 1. Son of Herod the Great, who was king of Palestine at Christ's birth. Herodias. A grand-daughter of Herod the Great. Philip. A son of Herod the Great.

Verse 20.—Shut up John, etc.—"In the fortress of Machaerus, on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea." This imprisonment took place, it is estimated, about a year after Christ's baptism. Matthew xiv. 3; Mark vi. 17, and the context of each.

Verse 21.—All the people.—"All" and "people," as in verse 15. Baptized and praying. The prayer followed the immersion. Both were acts of public worship. The heaven was opened. The language of appearance. Stating what was seen by the natural eye. An answer to the prayer. Acts vii. 56.

Verse 22.—A bodily shape.—This was the visible sign and symbol, not of course the Invisible Spirit himself. The dove symbolizes peace, and the Spirit of God creates peace with God. A voice from heaven. The Father. Thus the Father, Son and Spirit are revealed, one God. The new era in Christ's life, viz., his entrance upon his public ministry, required for his own sake, and for the sake of others, descent of the Spirit, and testimony of the Father. Compare Ex. 35. Christ's baptism was his atoning death and resurrection in symbol and by anticipation, and so, like the Christian's baptism, not a mere outward form, but his own death to sin and resurrection to life. He was baptized as the sin-bearer, and thus symbolically fulfilled all righteousness which he actually fulfilled by his self-sacrifice, so becoming to the believer, "the end of the law for righteousness." Matthew iii. 15.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, July 28th, 1878.—Jesus at Nazareth.—Luke iv. 16-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power."—Luke iv. 32.

How can five persons divide five eggs, so that each man shall receive one, and still one remain in the dish? One takes the dish with the egg.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

We do not hear any more of Jesus till he was thirty years old. Then John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness, calling on all to repent. People expected something wonderful was going to happen, and asked of themselves and each other whether this could be the Christ who was to come. But John knew their thoughts, and said, "Do you think I am the promised One? I am not worthy to even loose his shoes as a servant would do. I indeed baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost; he will give you the Spirit from on high. But take care that you are ready; he will separate the wheat from the chaff, and burn the worthless and bad with fire that cannot be put out." Though John said this, he had never seen Jesus, but one day while he was preaching, Jesus came and asked to be baptized. As he went up out of the water the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God came like a dove and lit upon him, and lo, a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John reproved all men alike, and he told Herod, the governor that he was doing great wrong, and Herod, instead of repenting, sinned still more by shutting John up in prison.

Booths' Department.

The Silly Goose.

AN OLD STORY RE-TOLD.

There's a queer old story which you shall hear. It happened, once on a time, my dear, That a goose went swimming on a pond, A pleasure of which all geese are fond. She sailed about, and to and fro, The waves bent under her breast of snow, And her red feet paddled about below, But she wasn't a happy goose,—oh, no!

It troubled her more than she could tell That in the town where she chanced to dwell, The saying of "stupid as a goose," Was one that was very much in use. For sneers and snubbings are hard to bear; Be he man or beast, I do not care, Or pinioned fowl of the earth or air, We're all of the same opinion there.

Now, as she pondered the matter o'er, A fox came walking along the shore; With a pleasant smile he bowed his head, "Good evening, Mrs. Goose!" he said. "Good evening, Mr. Fox!" quoth she, Looking across at him tremblingly, And, fearing he had not had his tea, Pushed a trifle farther out to sea.

She had little harm to fear from him; For with all his tricks he could not swim, And, indeed, the voice was sweet and kind.

"Dear Mrs. Goose, you've a troubled mind; I only wish I could help you through, For such a beautiful bird as you," Which sounded nice, and was really true.

"Well, then, Mr. Fox," the goose replied, "It hurts my feelings, and wounds my pride, That in these days my sisters and I, Who saved old Rome by our warning cry, Should be called the silly geese. Ah, me! If I could learn something fine, you see, Like writing, or reading the A, B, C, What a happy, happy goose I'd be!"

"Now, would you, indeed!" Reynard replied, As the floating fowl he slyly eyed; "I hardly know what 'tis best to say, Let's think about it a moment, pray; I may help you yet, my dear, who knows?"

So he struck a meditative pose, And thoughtfully laid his small red toes Up by the side of his pointed nose.

"Ah, yes!" he cried, "I have it at last: Your troubles, dear Mrs. Goose, are past; There is a schoolmaster, wise and good, I know where he lives in yonder wood. To-morrow evening, you shall see In yon broad meadow his school will be, He'll bring you a book with the A, B, C, And he'll give his little lesson free."

But now just listen, and you shall hear About that fox; he went off, my dear, And he bought a coat, and a beaver hat, And a pair of specs, and a black cravat. Next evening he came dressed up to charm, With the little "Reader" under his arm, Where the goose stood waiting without alarm, For, indeed, she hadn't a thought of harm.

Had she looked at all, you would have thought She need not have been so quickly caught, For the long red bushy fox's tail

Swept over the meadow like a trail. But 'twas rather dark, for night was near, And another thing, I greatly fear, She felt too anxious to see quite clear; She was simply a goose of one idea.

The schoolmaster opens wide his book, The goose makes a long, long neck to look,

He opens his mouth, as if to cough, When, snippety-snap! her head flies off. Now cackle loudly her sisters fond, Who are watching proudly from the pond, While off to the town that lies beyond, The whole of the frightened flock abscond.

That day the geese made a solemn vow, Which their faithful children keep till now,

That never shall goose or gosling look At any schoolmaster or his book. So if ever you should chance to hear Them talking of school, don't think it queer

If they say some hard things, or appear To show a certain degree of fear; It is always so with geese, my dear. E. A. SMULLER.

A Little Sermon for the Little Folks.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—John xiii. 17.

I. "These things," that is your duties. You have duties, wherever you are:

1. At home, obedience and respect to parents, and kindness to brothers, sisters, and servants.

2. At school, respect to teachers, and faithfulness in study, and fairness in play.

3. At church, be quiet, listen, worship and give your hearts to the Saviour.

5. On the street, good manners, modesty, kindness, minding your own business.

II. How should you do your duty?

1. Not for pay. That is a low motive. Some always ask, "What will you give me?"

2. But from love. So the Saviour did when a boy at Nazareth. So the angels do God's will (which is only another name for duty). This will make you do it cheerfully.

3. Better every day. By trying to do your duties, you will become more skillful. So you improve in reading, writing, and music. The Apostle Peter says, "Grow in grace."

III. Doing your duty makes you happy. Sin can not make you happy. Sin did not make Eve happy, nor Cain, nor Judas. Disobedience at home does not make you happy: idleness, unkindness, bad manners, no kind of sin can make you happy.

But happiness comes from doing your duty. That is God's reward. Think of this every day for just one week, and see how true it is.

Try, then, to know your duty. Be faithful in duty in doing it for love to God and man; then you will be happy every day on earth, and forever happy in heaven.—Standard.

Hold of Papa's Hand.

The patter of little feet on my office floor, and a glad voice exclaiming: "Papa, I've come to 'scort you home!" made known to me the presence of my little six-year-old darling, who often came that hour "to take me home," as she said. Soon we were going hand in hand to the homeward way.

"Now, Papa, let's play I am a poor little blind girl; and you must let me hold your hand tight, and you lead me along and tell me where to stop and how to go."

So the merry blue eyes were shut tight, and we began. "Now step up, now down," and so on, till we had safely arrived, and the darling was nestling in my arms, saying, "Wasn't it nice, papa? I never peeked!"

"But," said mamma, "didn't you feel afraid you'd fall, dear?"

With a look of trusting love came the answer: "Oh, no, mamma! I had a tight hold on papa's hand, and I knew he would take me safely over the hard places."

The Sheep's Sense of Hearing.

It is said that so acute is the sheep's sense of hearing that she can distinguish the cry of her own lamb among as many as a thousand others all bleating at the same time; and the lamb, too, is able to recognize its mother's voice, even though it be in the midst of a large flock. James Hogg, who was a shepherd as well as a poet, tells us that it

was very amusing to watch the sheep and lambs during the shearing season. While the sheep were being shorn the lambs would be put into a fold by themselves, and the former would be sent to join their little ones as soon as the operation of shearing was over. The moment a lamb heard its mother's voice it would hasten from the crowd to meet her, but instead of finding the "rough, well-clad, comfortable mamma," which it had left a short time before, it would meet a strange and most deplorable-looking creature. At the sight of this it would wheel about, uttering the most piteous cry of despair, and perhaps run away. Soon, however, the sheep's voice was heard again; the lamb would there-upon return, then once more bound away, and sometimes repeat this conduct for ten or a dozen times before it fully understood that the shorn ewe was in reality its mother.—Little Folks.

Ears of Corn.

1. The Bible nowhere provides for the want of common sense; that is taken for granted.

2. The commandment "to live peaceably with all men," is not a command for the fist only, it is a command to the head—to the heart—to the knuckles of the understanding.

3. A man who is in the right, knows that he is in the majority; for God is on his side, and God is multitudinous above all the populations of the earth.

4. How can men have faith unless they are compelled to go where they cannot see?

5. A select church is a dead church. A church's power consists in cutting the loaf of society from the top to the bottom.

6. A grindstone that has no grit in it, how long would it take to make an axe sharp; and affairs that had no pinch in them, how long would they take to make a man?

7. When God means to make a man strong and useful in his day and generation, He generally puts him into the forge and on to the anvil.

The Horse's Name.

One day my brother was out driving in the country, when a stranger stopped him by exclaiming, "Halloo! that used to be my horse!"

"Guess not," replied my brother; "I bought her at a livery stable and they told me she came from Boston."

"H'm!" said the man, "what do you call her?"

My brother answered that the horse was sold to him under the name of "Pink."

"Ho!" said the man; "that isn't her name."

Suddenly he cried out sharply, "Nelly!"

Quick as a flash, the horse pricked up her ears and looked around.

"Nelly," said the man, stepping in front of her, "shake hands!"

Up came the horse's right hoof for the man to take.

"Now give us the other hand, Nelly," and she raised her left forefoot.

"There!" said the smiling man; "d'ye suppose that wasn't my horse?" —Youth's Companion.

A little boy, hearing some one remark that nothing was quicker than thought, said: "I know something that is quicker than thought." "What is it, Johnny?" asked his pa. "Whistling," said Johnny.

"When I was in school yesterday, I whistled before I thought; and got licked for it, too."

Sign in an obscure London shop-window: "Goods removed, messages taken, carpets beaten, and poetry composed on any subject."

"That parrot of mine's a wonderful bird," said Smithers; "he cries, 'Stop thief!' so naturally that every time I hear it I always stop. What are you all laughing at, any way?"

An old salt sitting on a wharf, the other day, very soberly remarked: "I began the world with nothing and I have held my own ever since." A terse and suggestive biography.

What's honor? asks Falstaff. That's easy. Any woman who sits behind another woman in church can tell what's on her in two minutes.