

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, December 8th, 1878.—Luke xxiii. 33-46.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 44-46.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Gal. vi. 14.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xxxiii. Tuesday, Matt. xxvii. Wednesday, Mark xv. Thursday, John xix. Friday, Matt. xx. 1-16. Saturday, Ex. xxv. 31-37. Sunday, 1 Cor. i. 18-31.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus and the malefactors: Vs. 33. II. Prayer for his murderers. Vs. 34. III. Mocked. Vss. 35-38. IV. The penitent thief. Vss. 39-43. V. Miracles. Vss. 44, 45. VI. Prayer and death. Vs. 46.

QUESTIONS.—What time of the day was Jesus nailed to the cross? Who followed him thither besides his murderers? What did Jesus say to them? Luke xxiii. 27, 28.

I. Vs. 33.—Where was the place of crucifixion?

II. Vs. 34.—What precepts of his own did Jesus illustrate in this prayer? What prophecy did it fulfil? Who afterwards imitated him? Acts vii. 6. What is meant by "they know not?" Into how many parts were the garments of Jesus divided? John xix. 23.

III. Vss. 35-38.—Who mocked Jesus? What did they say? Why did Jesus not come down from the cross? John xix. 30.

IV. Vss. 39-43.—What was the prayer of the penitent thief? What was the reply of Jesus? What does the reply prove? What other Scriptures prove the same blessed truth? Phil. i. 21, 23; 2 Cor. v. 8.

V. Vss. 44-45.—What miracles attended the crucifixion? What others also not mentioned by Luke? Matt. xxvii. 51, 52. What veil was rent in twain? Ex. xxvi. 31-33.

VI. Vs. 46.—At what time of the day did Jesus die? When was he taken from the cross? Ans. Some time before night.

The crucifixion began about 9 a. m. It was made familiar to the Jews by the Romans. The place of crucifixion was "without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12), and probably not far from the public street. Of the two thieves crucified with Jesus we know nothing. Besides the supernatural darkness and the rending of the veil of the temple, spoken of by Luke as attending circumstances of the crucifixion, there was a quaking of the earth and rending of the rocks, and an opening of the graves. Matt. xxvii. 51-53.

WORDS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS.—The order may be given as follows: First, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," while being nailed to the cross or just after. Second, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," during the forenoon. Third, "Woman, behold thy son;" "Behold thy mother," about noon, just before the darkness began. Fourth, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" while the three hours of darkness continued. Fifth, "I thirst," as the darkness passed away. Sixth, "It is finished," just after the darkness. Seventh, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And he gave up the ghost. That Christ should have died so early in the afternoon, while sufferers from crucifixion lingered often in life twelve hours, may be attributed to great physical prostration, aggravated by intense mental distress.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 33.—When they were come.—The same as those that "crucified him" in the next clause. As to others in the throng, see vss. 16-32. What contrasts of character and of thought, feeling, purposes. The place which is called Calvary. Calvary is the English form a Latin word, which means skull, as does the Hebrew word Golgotha. See Matt. xxvii. 33; Mark xv. 22. The malefactors. The two criminals mentioned in vs. 32, and described as "thieves," or, more exactly, as robbers, in Matt. xxvii. 38; Mark xv. 27. One on the right hand, and the other on the left. As though he were the chief of criminals, and in fulfilment of a prediction in Isa. liii. 12.

Verse 34.—Then.—Or, rather but Father, forgive them, etc. Prayer for those who were active in effecting his death. The Roman soldiery and the Jewish instigators, and all mankind.

They parted, etc. More fully explained in John xix. 23, 24; comp. Psalm xxii. 18. Verse 35.—Stood beholding.—In what spirit is told in Matt. xxvii. 39, 40, and Mark xv. 29, 30. The rulers also with them. This implies that the crowd decided, and that the rulers led off in the derision. Derided. More exactly, were deriding—keeping it up. The Greek word for deriding, is literally nosing, as one shows contempt and scorn by turning up the nose. Saying in derision. He saved others, etc. Christ's miracles of healing are here in mind. The revilers either own them to be genuine, but yet useless in support of his claim, or else they would cast doubt upon all his miracles, and upon his power of working miracles, because if he had such power, he would now exert it in his own behalf. Unconsciously in their blindness they proclaimed a great truth. Only by not saving himself could Christ save others. Saved by his blood. Christ. More exactly the Christ. The Messiah, who in their judgment, was not to die, but to live in all worldly pomp and power.

Verse 36.—The soldiers.—Romans, as executioners. They caught the spirit of the rest. Coming to him, etc. In mockery. The "vinegar," derisively offered, was rather the soldiers' sour wine. The drugged wine to stupefy (Matt. xxvii. 34), and the sour wine afterward at Christ's call (Matt. xxvii. 48), were both given in kindness.

Verse 37.—If thou be the King of the Jews, etc.—This was the title placed on the cross above his head in their own language (vs. 38), and the claim to kingship was to the Romans the chief offence, as the claim to Messiahship was to the Jews.

Verse 38.—A superscription.—Customary, to indicate the crime for which the person was crucified. Greek and Latin, and Hebrew. These three languages were known and spoken at Jerusalem. The first was most generally known, and was hence used between those of differing nationalities; the second was that of the ruling nation; the third was that of Christ's own nation. For the variations in the accounts of the title, see Matt. xxvii. 37; Mark xv. 26, and John xix. 19. Combine these, and we get the entire title.

Verse 39.—One of the malefactors.—Matthew and Mark write as though both joined. If thou be the Christ. These robbers were Jews, and hence speak of the Christ, or Messiah. This robber may have known and rejected Christ in previous days, for men usually die as they live.

Verse 40.—But the other, etc.—Some have argued from the language of Matthew and Mark (see above on vs. 39) that this man began with mockery, and was struck with sudden conviction as here expressed. Dost thou not fear God.—Even were Christ an imposter, a godly spirit would not come out in scoffing, especially toward one, and from one, who were both crossing the threshold of eternity.

Verse 41.—Justly.—Admitting their guilt. But this man, etc. Showing an intimate knowledge of Christ's character and history.

Verse 42.—Lord, remember me, etc.—Faith in Christ the Messiah, as he claimed, and hence to be King. A wonderful faith for such a man at such an hour, shaming the unbelief even of apostles.

Verse 43.—Verily, I say, etc.—Christ accepts this robber as his, owns his request, and promises even better, and more than the man thought; "to day," instead of the future; "paradise," instead of the worldly kingdom. On "paradise," see 2 Cor. xii. 4; Rev. ii. 7; and for the doctrine in another form, see Phil. i. 23.

Verses 44, 45.—Sixth hour.—Noon. The crucifixion began at 9 a. m. Mark xv. 25. Over all the earth. Either that, or "over all the land;" that is, of Palestine. The ninth hour. About 3 p. m. The veil of the temple. Between "the holy" and "the most holy place." In the midst. Immediately before the ark, the symbol of God's seat and throne. Compare, on this event, Heb. ix. 7, 8, and context. On the meaning of the darkness, see xxii. 53.

Verse 46.—Father, into thy hands, etc.—Comp. Stephen's words in Acts vii. 59. Our hope is grounded in the certainty that Christ's spirit was received. Gave up the ghost. Expired, breathed out the last breath of life.

THE CROSS.

(1.) The prayer on the cross.—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That prayer, at such a time, would be enough to prove Jesus divine.

(2.) The praiseful derision.—Tauntingly, they said: "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God." Christ's whole life had been devoted to the saving of others. He could not save himself, without abandoning his purpose of saving them.

(3.) The significant inscription.—In mockery, it was written, "The King of the Jews." As on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles were supernaturally endowed with such gifts of speech, that every man heard, in his own tongue, "the wonderful works of God."

(4.) The penitent thief.—There was real penitence, in that he realized he was "justly" condemned.

He had faith. Just how it was awakened, we are not informed. However that may be, the Spirit of God wrought in him conviction of sin, and faith in Christ. Very short was his prayer, but it brought a quick answer: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "Thou shalt be with me." That is enough to satisfy a saintly soul.

(5.) The supernatural omens.—"The sun was darkened." Darkness is the symbol of the doom of sin:

Now the true Paschal Lamb is slain; for "Christ, our Passover (paschal lamb), is sacrificed for us." And to this the darkened sun bears witness. "And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."

In the ninth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told how a veil shrouded the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle. But now, we may, with humble boldness, "enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh."

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 15th, 1878.—The Walk to Emmaus.—Luke xxiv. 13-32.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"—Luke xxiv. 32.

For the Primary Class Teacher.

It will not be well to confine the attention to the passage which contains the lesson. The links which connect it with the Last Supper, must be furnished.

The story of the lesson may be divided into nine points; writing them on the blackboard, counting them on the fingers, taking nine children, and having each repeat one.

Place—Calvary.

Cross—Nails in hands and feet.

Prayer—"Father forgive them."

Mockings—By people, rulers and soldiers.

Writing—"This is the King of the Jews."

Thieves—One mocked, one prayed.

Promise—To-day shalt thou be with me.

Sun darkened—Earth shook, veil torn.

Last words—"Father into thy hands," etc.

Explain that God had said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." We all deserve death. But Jesus said: "I'll bear the punishment instead." Illustrate by the story of a whole school breaking the rules; one boy, who was not there, who had not done wrong, stepped up and asked to be punished instead of the whole school; the one innocent one for the many guilty.

A little girl whose mother had a withered hand, asked her how it became so. Her mother said that her crib had taken fire, and that in saving her, she had burned herself. "It was for you, my child, that this poor hand suffered."

PITYING CAIN.—This pleasant bit is from the China Hunters Club, recently published by Harper & Brothers: "Now the baby was named Abil himself, and when pa cum to where Cain hit his brother an' killed him as dead as a door nail, his little mouth puckered, an' the tears they came a-rollin' down his face, an' he says, 'Poor Tain!' said he, poor Tain.' 'Why, it's Abil that's dead,' says pa, 'an' Cain he was the bad man that killed him.' But it didn't make no difference; the cretur kep' a-sayin', 'Poor Tain! Abey gone ter hebbin, hab good time. Poor Tain!'"

Boys' Department.

Save the Boy.

L. F. COLE.

Once he sat upon my knee,  
Looked from sweet eyes into mine,  
Questioned me so wondrously  
Of the mysteries divine;  
Once he fondly clasped my neck,  
Pressed my cheek with kisses sweet;  
O my heart! we little reck  
Where may rove the precious feet.

Once his laugh with merry ring  
Filled our house with music rare,  
And his loving hands would bring  
Wreaths of blossoms for my hair;  
O the merry, happy sprite,  
Constant, ceaseless source of joy!  
But to-night, O God, to-night,  
Where, oh! where's my wandering boy?

Midst the glitter and the glare  
Of the room where death is dealt,  
Scare you'd know him; but he's there,  
He who once so reverent knelt  
At my knee, and softly spoke  
Words into the ear of God;  
O my heart! 'tis smitten, broke;  
Crushed, I bend beneath the rod.

O this curse that spoiled my boy,  
Led him down and down to death,  
Robbed me of my rarest joy,  
Made a pang of every breath!  
Mothers, fathers, hear my plea!  
Let your pleadings pierce the sky;  
Pray and work most earnestly;  
Let us save our boys, or die!

CHORUS.

Save the boy! oh, save the boy!  
To the rescue quickly come!  
Save the boy! oh, save the boy!  
Save him from the curse of rum!

Out of the Bible.

A story is told of a minister who taught an old man in his parish to read. He proved a proficient scholar. After the lesson had finished, the minister was not able to call at the cottage for some time, and when he did he only found the wife at home.

"How's John?" said he.

"He's canny, sir," said the wife.

"How does he get on with his reading?"

"Nicely, sir."

"Ah! I suppose he will read his Bible very comfortably now."

"Bible, sir! Bless you! He was out of the Bible and into the newspaper long ago."

There are many other persons who, like this old man, have long been out of the Bible and into the newspaper. They have forsaken the fountain of waters, and have gone about among muddy pools and stagnant morasses to seek something which might slake their thirst. From a multitude of voices goes up a perpetual complaint about a weakness of faith, and coldness of love, the cause of which no one seems to suspect. Nothing but the word of God can sustain and strengthen the inner life of a child of God. "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." And that divine life must be begotten or implanted in the soul. Nothing can supply the place of this heavenly bread, and going "out of the Bible and into the newspaper" is the direct road to spiritual starvation, feebleness, and death. The effects may not be immediately visible. So a person may live upon inferior food for a few days without appreciable results, but ere long the lack of suitable nutrition tells upon the failing constitution, and health is wrecked and life is lost for the want of that which should sustain and nourish both. Let Christians see to it that they do not get "out of the Bible and into the newspaper." Let God's word be the daily sustenance of their souls, and we shall hear little complaint of lack of faith,—for men nourished by the word of the Lord, will be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."—The Christian.

Mr. Moody's Brother.

The story of this prodigal son comes right home into our own family. The first thing I remember was the death of my father. It was a beautiful day in June, when he fell suddenly dead. The shock made such an impression on me, young as I was, that I shall never forget it. I remember nothing about the funeral, but his death has made a lasting impression upon me. The next thing I remember was that my mother was taken very sick. And the next thing that oc-

curring in our family that impressed itself on my young mind was that my eldest brother to whom my mother looked up to comfort her in her loneliness and in great affliction, became a wanderer—he left home. I need not tell you how that mother mourned for her boy—how she waited day by day and month by month for his return. I need not say how night after night she watched and wept and prayed. Many a time we were told to go to the post office to see if a letter had not come from him. But we had to bring back the sorrowful words, "no letter, yet mother." Many a time have I waked up and heard my mother pray: "Oh, God, bring back my boy!" Many a time did she lift her heart up to God in prayer for her boy, when the wintry gale would blow around the house, and the storm rage without the door, her dear face would wear a terribly anxious look, and she would utter in piteous tones, "Oh, my dear boy; perhaps he is now on the ocean this fearful night. Oh, God preserve him!" We would sit around the fireside on an evening and ask her to tell us about our father, and she would talk for hours about him. But if the mention of my elder brother should chance to come in, then all would be hushed; she never spoke of him but with tears. Many a time did she try to conceal them, but all would be vain, and when Thanksgiving Day would come a chair used to be set for him. Our friends and neighbors gave him up, but our mother had faith that she would see him again. One day in the middle of summer a stranger was seen approaching the house. He came up on the East piazza and looked upon my mother through the window. The man had a long beard, and when my mother first saw him she did not start to rise. But when she saw the great tears trickle down his cheeks she cried, "It's my boy, my dear, dear boy," and sprang to the window. But there the boy stood and said, "Mother, I will never cross the threshold until you say, you forgive me." Do you think he had to stay there long? No, no. Her arms were soon around him, and she wept on his shoulder, as did the Father of the prodigal son. But what joy on earth can equal the joy in Heaven when a prodigal comes home! At once your Father wants you, dear son, come home to him. Confess your sins and He will have mercy upon you and forgive you.—D. L. Moody.

LORD SHAFTESBURY AND HIS DONKEY.—Lord Shaftesbury has lost his donkey, the gift some time back of his costermonger friends of Golden-lane. The following letter, which was addressed to the brother, who has conducted the mission among the poor in one of the lowest parts of the city for so many years, will explain the circumstances attending the loss:—

CASTLE WEMYSS, WEMYSS BAY, N. B.,  
Sept. 26, 1878.

Dear Orsman—I am grieved to tell you that "Coster" is no more. He broke away one day from the stable, and made a dash for the paddock. In so doing he fell, and smashed his thigh. The veterinary surgeon was sent for, who pronounced him incurable, and advised that he should be put out of his pains.

The friendly and useful creature was buried with all honours in a place I have within a thick plantation, where the pet dogs, horses, &c., that have served the family and deserved our gratitude, are gathered together.

I hope to see you soon: "I return, God willing, to London on Tuesday next. Remember me very warmly to my brother costermongers, their wives, and their children.

Yours truly,  
SHAFTESBURY.

The Society of Friends in Philadelphia have expelled a member for a "crooked" failure in bankruptcy. What a panic it would create in the Finance Committees of some of the wealthy churches if such a proceeding were demanded! And yet—why not? Is cheating under the cover of law any less dishonest than more open robbery?

A medal has been adjudged to the Religious Tract Society at the Paris Exhibition. The terms of the award have not yet been made public, but it is understood to be for the excellence, cheapness, and beneficial tendency of its publications.

The grand and awful difference between a tree and a bore is: the tree leaves in spring; and the bore—why, he never leaves.