

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, May 19th, 1878.—Nebuchadnezzar's Dream.—Daniel ii. 36-45.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 44, 45.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."—Daniel ii. 28.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Daniel ii. Tuesday, Genesis xl. Wednesday, Gen. xli. Thursday, 1 Corinthians xii. Friday, Isaiah xiv. 4-32. Saturday, Ephes. iii. 14-21. Sunday, Psalm lxxii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The dream told. Vs. 36. II. Nebuchadnezzar's glory. Vs. 37. III. First kingdom, "of gold." Vs. 38. IV. Second kingdom, "of silver." Vs. 39. V. Third kingdom, "of brass." Vs. 40. VI. Fourth kingdom, "of iron." Vs. 40-43. VII. Kingdom that "shall stand for ever." Vs. 44, 45.

QUESTIONS.—Who were unable to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream? Vs. 10. Who alone could interpret the dreams given by God to the heathen? The statues of Babylonia were usually made of clay, in what was the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream peculiar? Vs. 36. Why does Daniel say "we will tell?" Vs. 37. From whom do all rulers receive their power? Dan. v. 21. Vs. 38. What kingdom is meant by "the head of gold"? How does Isaiah describe Babylon? Isa. xiv. 4. Vs. 39. What kingdom followed the Babylonian? What part of the image did it form? By what metal was it symbolized? Vs. 40. What kingdom followed the Medo-Persian? Under what king? How extended was its dominion? What metal symbolized it? Vs. 41. What was the fourth kingdom? Why was it symbolized in the image of iron? With what was the iron mixed? What did this indicate? Vs. 44. Before these kingdoms passed away, what kingdom did God set up? How does Daniel describe it? What does Jesus call himself? Luke xx. 17, 18. What does the image as a whole represent? Why does its substance deteriorate from a golden head to feet of iron and clay? What two kingdoms were east of Palestine? What two west? What kingdom is to be universal?

We have in this second chapter of Daniel a dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation by Daniel. The dream itself contains a general outline of the subsequent revelations to Daniel in regard to the kingdoms of this world. Babylon was now approaching its highest glory. In the later visions of Daniel it was in its last extremity. It is to be observed here that God occasionally gave revelations by means of dreams to the heathen, but that his servants only could interpret them. Gen. xl. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 30.

The following is a brief extract from the inscriptions left by Nebuchadnezzar of his own deeds and glory, and with so much besides, recently exhumed: "Behold besides the Ingur-Bel the impregnable fortification of Babylon I constructed inside Babylon on the eastern side of the river, a fortification such as no king had ever made before me, viz: a long rampart 4,000 ammers square as an extra defence. I excavated the ditch; with brick and mortar I bound its bed; a long rampart at its head (?) I strongly built. I adorned its gates. The folding doors and pillars I plated with copper," etc.

EXPOSITION.—We have in this chapter the revelation of exactly the same series of events as in the seventh chapter. Here the vision was to the heathen monarch; there to Daniel. Here the successive kingdoms are represented as one whole, and that in the noble human form; there they are presented separately, and as wild beasts. Yet the substantial agreement of the visions, even in their diversities, is clear and undeniable. The revelations in chapters viii, xi, and xii, coincide with those of these two chapters, to a certain extent. But those late revelations, unlike these, were written, not in the Chaldee, or language of Babylonia, but in the Hebrew; and were specially for the Hebrews, after their return to Palestine. They become full, and set forth, at length, the events which chiefly affected the Jewish nation between the return and the first coming of Christ. Unless we identify those horns of the he-goat which succeed his first great horn (viii. 8-12; 22-25) with the fourth beast, or fourth kingdom, after the seventh chapter. How in-

congruous it would be to regard those horns of a beast as representing a kingdom, when the plan of this, as of the revelation in chap. vii, makes the beast itself represent a kingdom, is obvious. Besides, the whole account of the vision of the he-goat and his horns implies that the he-goat, with all his horns, is one whole, one kingdom, namely, the third. Why the revelations there should stop short with the third, and not include the fourth, is doubtless because the Jews, as a nation, had need to be instructed minutely only with reference to their relations to the third kingdom. With the fourth they had comparatively little to do before the first coming of Christ, when full, practical instructions were to be given by him and his apostles. The knowledge of that mighty fourth kingdom's rise, and of its relation to Messiah's kingdom, there was need to know so far as to furnish to the godly solid ground of hope and satisfaction, but no farther; and thus much of knowledge is given in chapters ii, and vii. The five chapters above referred to should be carefully compared together. They all constitute the real Scripture of our present lesson, which is certainly sufficiently difficult and important.

Verse 36.—This is the dream.—As just repeated by him. Vs. 31-35. Mark his assurance. He did not need to ask the king whether it was.

Verse 37.—A king of kings.—Jehoiakim was king of Judah under this Nebuchadnezzar, and the other subject nations, in like manner, had each its king under him. He was "a king of kings"; God is "the King of kings." The God of heaven hath given thee. A clear, frank confession of his own God as the only God, to the exclusion and denial of the Babylonian divinities. See also in vs. 28. The confession was enforced by the revelation. Power [possession], and strength [authority], and glory. These are explanatory of the word "kingdom"—a kingdom characterized by these—and that in the highest degree. Profane history confirms the statements in this and the next verse; and Rawlinson says that "modern research [especially in the uncovering of the city of Babylon, its buildings and literary treasures], has shown that Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest monarch that Babylon, or perhaps the East generally, ever produced."

Verse 38.—Whosoever the children of men dwell.—The whole known world. There was no rival power. The beasts of the field, etc. See iv. 21, 22, and Jer. xxvii. 6. This strongly expresses the absoluteness of his dominion. Gen. i. 28; Ps. viii. 6-9. Thou art this head of gold. The head was, in fact, the Babylonian kingdom, which continued, under Nebuchadnezzar's successors, some 65 years longer; but Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom, and so is spoken of as though he were the kingdom or "head."

Verse 39.—Another kingdom inferior to thee.—This was represented in this vision by "the breasts, and arms of silver" (vs. 32); in the vision of chap. vii. by "the second beast, like a bear" (vii. 5); and in viii. 3-7 by "the ram." This second kingdom, thus variously, but consistently symbolized, is in chap. viii. said to be the Medo-Persian kingdom. This is throughout represented in a two-fold aspect—for example, the two arms and two horns—constituted as it was by the combination of Media and Persia into one power, while yet the two elements of the combination always retained somewhat of their distinctness. Of this kingdom, Cyrus the Great, a Persian, was the founder. "It succeeded Babylon B. C. 568; and lasted about 200 years." (538-330). Comp. xi. 1, 2. In extent of sway, it surpassed even the Babylonian kingdom, but had not the same golden splendor. Another third kingdom of brass. Represented in vs. 32 as the "belly" and "thighs," or, more properly, haunches; in vii. 6, as a winged leopard, with four heads; and in viii. 5-8, as a he-goat. In chap. xi. symbolism is laid aside, and the king of this kingdom, and his successors, are spoken of without symbolism. This was the Macedonian, or Grecian kingdom, which Alexander the Great founded, B. C. 330; and, as respects the objects of the visions, was terminated B. C. 164, by the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom the eleventh chapter contains so full and explicit an account. This was the he-goat, whose one great horn was Alexander the Great, and whose

subsequent horns were the several divided, but affiliated monarchies of his successor, the "little horn" of viii. 9 being Antiochus Epiphanes, whose monstrous cruelties and insults to the Jewish nation and its religion, explain the great space given to his description. Bear rule over all the earth. There was to the Macedonian kingdom no rival, though in the east of Asia, entirely separate from the theatre of these events, the Chinese empire, and the Indian empire, were already not only great, but old.

Verses 40-43.—The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron.—This is the legs, feet, and toes of the vision (vs. 33, 41, 42)—the nameless beast of vii. 7-14, 19-28. In the specific revelations for the use of the Hebrew nation, between the return from the seventy years' captivity and the coming of Messiah (chaps. viii-xi), nothing is said expressly of this kingdom; but in the generic, all-comprehensive visions of chaps. ii and vii, its part is the most conspicuous. That the description of it in chap. vii. has such resemblance to the last stages of the great kingdom in chaps. viii. and xi, is doubtless due to the same principle which enabled Christ to combine in one description the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. Matt. xxiv. That the great interest of the pious Hebrew, in all times, centred in the last days—in the culmination, and not in the process, of his Israelitish destiny—needs no proof; and to this the first visions have respect. Rome had consolidated its power before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and it is better known than any or all others as a world-power, and that too of iron; but also, in these later days, not without an abundance of clay with the iron, and quite enough of divisions to answer to the symbolism even of the ten toes of the two feet.

Verses 44, 45.—Compare vs. 34, 35; vii. 9-14, 26-28; chap. xii. That there is here a description of Christ's kingdom, from its "setting up" at the First Advent, to its culmination in glorious and terrible judgment at his Second Coming, no one can doubt. The world-powers are destroyed gradually, though at the last there will be an opportunity and a necessity for a culminating conflict of the two hostile powers. Naturally the visions and predictions fasten upon results mainly, and so have to do with final glories of Messiah's reign. Compare Rev. xii. xxii.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 26th, 1878.—The Fiery Furnace.—Dan. iii. 21-27.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace."—Dan. iii. 17.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, which he forgot. He ordered his wise men to find out what the dream had been, and tell him its meaning. No one could do so, until Daniel came; who told him that he had seen a great image with a gold head—his breast and arms of silver, the rest of the body of brass, and of iron, and iron mixed with clay. Daniel said that God had told him that Nebuchadnezzar himself was this head of gold, because he was so great and powerful a king. The rest of the body meant three other great kingdoms which should come after, and each in its turn should rule the world. Nebuchadnezzar also saw in his dream a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, which seemed to break to pieces the image, and become a great mountain, which filled the whole earth. This meant that Jesus, who is King of kings, will rule over the whole earth. He will break all earthly kingdoms to pieces. But his kingdom shall never be broken. It shall have no end; for there will never come another stronger king than he is. Some day the world will be filled with his love. But each of us must begin now to have King Jesus to reign in our own heart.

Let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this precept well to heart: "Do the duty which lies nearest to thee," which thou knowest to be a duty; thy second duty will have already become clearer.

Booth's Department.

What is it?

"So many curious things about it, and yet you can spell it with four letters," said Mrs. Stanley at breakfast.

"Now for one of papa's riddles," said the little folks. "What is it?" "Please let us guess. Do we have it for breakfast?"

"Occasionally," said Mr. Stanley, smiling.

"Papa says 'occasionally' in a tone that means often."

"But that will not help us, for we always have so many good things," said grateful little Bertha.

"We are not the only ones who like it," said Mr. Stanley; "it is said to be one of the principal articles of food with nearly one-third of the people on the globe. I must give some hints. First, it has to be planted every year; second, it grows from one to six feet; once it was found only in the East Indies, now it is in nearly every land; the best places, though, are where there is plenty of warmth and moisture. Indeed, in China I have seen men wading through deep water to sow the seed. It springs up quickly; sometimes they transplant it, and at certain times let in a great flood of water to kill the weeds, then draw off the water for a time, and when it is nearly ripe let in the water again. What Bible saying do you suppose I thought about when I saw those Chinamen casting seed into the water?"

Little heads went down in thought. "If I guess, will you give me five cents for an orange?" asked Bertha.

"Papa doesn't want us to guess for money," said George, reprovingly.

But papa soon discovered that Bertha wanted the orange for somebody she called her "poor sick old woman."

"If I wasn't trying so hard, I could think," said Bertha. "I cannot tell the text when some one asks it suddenly."

"Don't you remember how Solomon says, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many day'?" It didn't seem to me that the men would get any good from the grain they were throwing into the water, and yet by-and-by it sprang up."

"O yes, papa, as though Solomon had said, 'Do good to all, even to those who don't deserve it; by-and-by you shall know that it was not wasted any more than the seed you seemed to cast away upon the water.'"

"That's it, Bertha. You shall certainly have two oranges for your old woman."

"Have you seen it anywhere but in China, papa?"

"Yes; in India. There you may have your choice of one hundred and twenty kinds. If you happened to be in Egypt or Ceylon, or on the plains of Lombardy, or in some parts of Spain, or were in South Carolina or Georgia, you would see men and oxen, perhaps, in water, sowing the same."

"O, it's cotton," exclaimed Fred. "Who ever heard of cotton for breakfast?" cried two or three merry voices.

"But you said South Carolina."

"So you thought of cotton, little boy! No wonder! Graver persons have made graver mistakes. Guess again."

"Is much money made by it?" asked George.

"About twelve millions a year in India; four millions, not long ago, in Carolina."

"Why, papa, it almost takes away my breath to think of it."

"If we were to see it growing, what would we think of it?"

"Bertha might call it barley, George oats, and Fred, perhaps, would think it wheat."

"How do they prepare it for sale?"

"Clean it like other grain, and dry it quickly. By-the-by, part of it never comes to table except in the form of stiff aprons and dresses. I heard Bridget asking Harry to get a package from the corner store."

"That was starch," said Harry.

"Yes; in Great Britain they make patent starch from this article. The straw, too, is used. I have seen whole families making a living by plaiting the straw into hats and bonnets. In China I have seen men drunk from a strong wine made from it."

"What! out of the same we have for breakfast?"

"Yes; one way, you see, of turning God's good gifts into hurtful things. In Japan they make beer out of the same."

"You have seen a great deal about this one thing, papa—tall Chinamen wading in water to sow it; foolish Chinamen drunk on the wine; folks in factories making it into starch; families plaiting the straw for hats; a dish of it on our breakfast-table almost every morning."

"Chemists, who have a way of separating things into parts, you know, tell us it is made up of the very best kind of substances for food for hot climates. There is so much design in it, you see, just as in a thousand other of God's works."

"It must be something we ought to be very glad to have," said little Fred. "Don't you think we are stupid not to guess?"

"How do you know I have not got it?" asked George, "I am pretty sure it is rice."

"Of course it is rice!" exclaimed the others. "We will never look at the pretty white grains again without thinking of all these things."—S. S. Visitor

A tale of a Tub.

AN INCIDENT IN THE BOYHOOD OF SYDNEY SMITH.

We believe it was Sydney Smith who said that in time of danger absence of body was better than presence of mind, and most people will be inclined to agree with the genial divine. The following anecdote of his boyhood will show, however, that the future wit evinced the possession of the latter quality at an early age.

At the time of which we write his father occupied, with his family, the habitable part of a ruinous old castle near Woodford, in Essex, and at a short distance from the castle was a sheet of water, large enough, in English eyes, to be dignified with the title of lake.

Young Sydney, although unable to swim, was passionately fond of boating, but his aquatic aspirations were sadly restricted by the fact that he had no boat, and his father being decidedly opposed to his venturing upon the water at all, was not likely to provide one for him.

In this dilemma Sydney's inventive genius soon found a way of overcoming difficulty. Taking his little sister into his confidence, he surreptitiously possessed himself of a large tub from the castle laundry, and persuading her to accompany him, launched it upon the lake. Provided with a small piece of board as a paddle, the adventurous young navigator managed to paddle his unwieldy craft to the very middle of the lake.

He was greatly elated by his success, and waved his paddle triumphantly aloft with the air of a conqueror. Alas! it slipped from his hand, fell into the water, and floated off beyond his reach, leaving him without any means of propulsion, at the mercy of the winds and waves.

There was nothing for it but to cultivate patience, and wait for succor; so, like a new Diogenes, he remained seated in his tub, trying to calm the fears of his sister, who was now badly frightened and crying bitterly.

It was not long before the perilous position of the two children was noticed from the house, and soon the father and mother, with all the household at their heels, ran down to the bank in great alarm. Indeed, the situation was one of real peril. The crank, topheavy craft in which they were embarked seemed ready to capsize every instant, and the agonized father could think of no means of rescuing his darlings that did not involve so much loss of time as to invite a catastrophe.

A favorite dog had followed the others to the shore, and, as if understanding that something was amiss, several times plunged into the water, and after swimming out a little way, returned, apparently conscious of his inability to help.

Young Sydney, however, who had remained cool and collected, despite the lamentations of his mother and the others, suddenly exclaimed: "Get a rope, father, get a rope, and tie it to Jack's collar; perhaps I can call him to me!"

His father, filled with admiration for the courage and self-possession of the boy, quickly procured a rope, and tying