

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, June 9th, 1878.—Daniel in the Lions' Den.—Daniel vi. 14-23.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 20-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."—Daniel vi. 22.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Daniel vi. 1-30. Tuesday, Mark vi. 7-29. Wednesday, 1 Samuel xvii. 20-54. Thursday, Job i. Friday, Matt xxvii. 1-25. Saturday, 1 Samuel xxiv. Sunday, Ps. xviii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Darius entrapped. Vs. 14. II. The unalterable law. Vs. 15. III. Daniel in the lions' den. Vs. 16, 17. IV. Sleeplessness of the king. Vs. 18. V. Daniel's deliverance. Vs. 19-23.

QUESTIONS.—Why did Darius continue Daniel in honor? Who were envious of him? What was done to draw him into the net of his enemies? Vs. 11-13.

Vs. 14. Why was Darius "sore displeased with himself"? With whom in New Testament times is this displeasure aptly compared? Matt. xiv. 9; xxvii. 24. What advantage had Herod and Pilate over Darius?

Vs. 15. Did these men love law, or hate Daniel?

Vs. 16. What events may Darius have heard about? Chap. iii.

Vs. 17. What did the double sealing prove?

Vs. 18. Which gives the sweeter sleep, right or wrong action? Ps. cxvii. 2.

Vs. 19-23. How was Daniel delivered? What became of his accusers? Vs. 24; Ps. vii. 15, 16.

After conquering Babylon, Darius continued Daniel, now upward of eighty years of age, in honor, for his personal merit and fitness for business. This was an example of civil service worthy of imitation in every age. The true secret, however, of Daniel's prosperity was his steadfast godly character. He was kept in power for being an oak, and not a willow. Nevertheless, he had jealous adversaries, who, in the absence of existing law, contrived to make one that would operate against him. "The three Hebrew youths had been thrown into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin. Daniel would be cast into the lions' den rather than omit a known duty."

EXPOSITION.—I. Historical Explanations.—The date of this lesson is near that of the last, as Darius ruled in Babylon only two years. Probably the events of our lesson were in the early part of that reign, and hence B. C. 528, or 537.

Of Darius, the Median. Till lately it was the fashion to identify him with Cyaxares II, the son of Astyages. In the great prophecy of Isaiah, it is Cyrus that takes Babylon; and even in Daniel, the Persians are the conquerors. There are "many arguments in favor of identifying Darius with Astyages, former king of Media, but nearly twenty years before dethroned by Cyrus, and subsequently treated with the greatest honor. The weak character of that Astyages agrees entirely with the impulsive and vacillating conduct of Darius toward Daniel and his enemies." This Astyages or Darius was thus, by appointment of Cyrus, ruler of the conquered Babylonia, but not of the whole now dominant world-empire of Medo-Persia. With such restriction must this sixth chapter be understood.

The position of Daniel, under this king, needs to be explained; he had been in dishonor, or at least obscurity, under the successors of Nebuchadnezzar, and only by the miraculous interposition and judgment of God was, at the last moment, raised to "the third place in the kingdom." The knowledge of that dishonor, and especially of its causes, and of the related cause of his final promotion, would be a ground of promotion by Darius, while the capacity, efficiency, and integrity of his administration after promotion were so exceptional, and so pleasing to the king, as to lead him to purpose, and doubtless to express the purpose, to advance him still further. Daniel was, at this time, probably about eighty-five years old. He lived at least four years longer. (x. 1.)

II. Textual Explanations.—Verse 14.—When he heard these words.—The words of the official conspirators, by which Daniel was shown to have dis-

obeyed the king's commandment. (Vss. 12, 13. Was sore displeased with himself. His displeasure at the conspirators seems to have been less than his vexation at himself that he had allowed himself to become their dupe, in signing their decree (vss. 4-9). He was also troubled in view of the future, as he saw that he was in danger of losing the one only man on whom he could rely perfectly in governing. Set his heart on Daniel, to deliver him. Determined to do so. Self-interest, conscience, patriotism, affection—all combined to make him hearty in the effort. He labored, etc. More exactly and emphatically, was laboring. He tried to hit on some expedient to save him; turning hither and thither, as the original suggests. There is a striking difference between this king and Nebuchadnezzar, in his relation to the "three worthies." He was the prime mover, and absolute autocrat; but here the king is first in the hands of the conspirators, and then in the hands of the Medo-Persian custom; and so not doing his own will in either the first or the last step.

Verse 15.—This explains why he had need thus to labor—why he did not cut the knot at once by pardoning Daniel. We must remember that Darius was king only by permission, and hence might, on accusation to Cyrus, have lost at once his head and his office, if he had not honored the Medo-Persian tradition. He knew well that Daniel's accusers to him would become his accusers to Cyrus.

Verse 16.—Then the king commanded, etc.—When the dilemma was, "I must do right and live, or I must do wrong and die"—he would not question for a moment. Neither did Daniel; only Darius took the one alternative, Daniel the other. The den of lions. Newman's "Thrones and Palaces of Nineveh," says "In a depression, four feet deep, was found a lion, of dark gray granite, ten feet long, standing over a man with outstretched arms. Here, no doubt, was the lions' den into which Daniel was thrown, and the sculptured lion, with a man beneath, unharmed, was to commemorate the wonderful deliverance of the prophet." Thy God, etc., he will deliver thee. So he wished it might be, but clearly feared it would not be. The knowledge of God's miraculous interpositions for his servants, had doubtless come to him from Daniel, if not from others.

Verse 17.—The king sealed, etc.—Sealing was more common than with us. The seal of the lords was affixed to make sure that the king did not interfere in their absence.

Verse 18.—Fasting.—Because of his great distress of mind—his grief, vexation, possibly remorse. Behold on the one hand this king, on the other that Daniel; and remember, too, the successful conspirators. Which would you choose to be?

Verses 19, 20.—Very early.—So anxious. Went in haste. Doubtless alone, or at least not attended by his conspiring officers. He wanted to know whether God had really saved Daniel. Lamentable voice. Showing his fear of the result. Servant of the living God. As having and giving, and therefore saving life. A recognition of Daniel's view of God, as being, at least, perhaps right.

Verses 21, 22.—Live for ever.—Expression of loyalty, and justifying the use of phrases in their current established sense, in distinction from their literal meaning. Sent his angel. Whether this is or is not to be taken literally, it refers the salvation to God. Before him innocency. A believing and obedient spirit, as toward God. Before thee, etc. He denies not his disobedience of the command, but the disloyalty of his spirit, and the wrongfulness of disobedience in such case for such a cause.

Verse 23.—Commanded, etc.—No doubt the conspirators were speedily summoned, that they might see their own seal broken, and their own doom sealed. No manner of hurt. Compare iii. 25. A perfect salvation. Because he believed, etc. See Heb. xi. 33.

III. Principles Inculcated.—1. Integrity sometimes wins worldly success.

2. Success breeds envy, and envy plots mischief.

3. It is duty to obey God rather than man, at whatever risk.

4. God will cause the way of duty to end in safety.

5. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel alike to their instruments and their victims, as here, to Darius and to Daniel.

6. Weakness has often its root in wickedness, and brings to the weak, punishment, and to others calamity.

7. The righteous shall, at the last, appear in glory, with a complete salvation.

8. The wicked shall perish for his wickedness and in his wickedness, and there shall be none to help.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 16th, 1878.—Messiah's Kingdom.—Daniel vii. 9-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."—Psalm xlv. 6.

The Story of the Bible Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

The one hundred and twenty princes and the presidents over whom Darius had set Daniel were envious and hated him, and tried to get him into disgrace with the king. But though they watched him closely, he was so faithful that they never saw him do anything wrong. Then they said to each other, "We shall find no fault against this Daniel, unless we find it about the law of his God." They knew that he often prayed to his God; so they went to King Darius, and asked him to make a law that no one should pray or ask a favor of any god or man, for thirty days, but himself. Darius foolishly made such a law, and promised not to change it. But, though Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he still went on praying, as before—not with his face toward the sun, as those heathen did—but toward Jerusalem and the Temple he loved so well, and hoped that, some day, his people might see again. He prayed at the same hours when the morning and evening sacrifices used to be offered at the Temple—that is, at nine o'clock and at three o'clock, and again at noon. The wicked men quickly found it out, and as quickly told the king, who was now sorry he had made such a law. He loved Daniel, and set his heart on finding some way to deliver him. Read the words of the lesson, to see what he did.

Youths' Department.

Boys make Men.

When you see a ragged urchin Standing wistful in the street, With torn hat and kneeless trousers, Dirty face and bare red feet, Pass not by the child unheeding; Smile upon him. Mark me, when He's grown old he'll not forget it; For remember, boys make men.

Have you never seen a grandsire, With his eyes aglow with joy, Bring to mind some act of kindness— Something said to him, a boy? Or, relate some slight or coldness, With a brow all clouded, when He recalled some heart too thoughtless To remember boys make men?

Let us try to add some pleasure To the life of every boy; For each child needs tender interest In its sorrow and its joy. Call your boys home by its brightness; They avoid the household when It is cheerless with unkindness, For remember, boys make men.

Outdone by a Boy.

A lad in Boston, rather small for his years, works in an office as errand boy for four gentlemen who do business there. One day the gentlemen were chaffing him a little about being so small and said to him:

"You never will amount to much, you never can do much business, you are too small."

The little fellow looked at them:

"Well," said he, "as small as I am, I can do something which none of you four men can do."

"Ah, what is that?" said they.

"I don't know as I ought to tell you," he replied. But they were anxious to know, and urged him to tell what he could do that none of them were able to do.

"I can keep from swearing!" said the little fellow. There were some blushes on four manly faces, and there seemed to be very little anxiety for further information on the point.

Never mind where you work; care more about your work.

Home Happiness.

Probably nineteen-twentieths of the happiness you will ever have you will get at home. Some of you will get pleasure in the theater, and some of you will get delight in the church; but happiness you will find only at home. The independence that comes to a man when his work is over, and he feels he has run out of the storm into the quiet harbor of home where he can rest in peace with his family, is something real. It does not make much difference whether you own your house or whether you have only one little room in that house, you can make that one little room a true home to you. You can people it with such moods, you can turn to it with such sweet fancies, that it will be fairly luminous with their presence, and will be to you the very perfection of a home. Against this home none of you should ever transgress. You should always treat each other with courtesy. It is often not so difficult to love a person as it is to be courteous to them: Courtesy is of greater value and a more royal grace than some people seem to think. If you will but be courteous to each other you will soon learn to love each other more wisely, profoundly, not to say lastingly, than you ever did before.—Murray.

A HUGE BALLOON.—The dimensions of M. Giffard's captive balloon, which is being constructed in Paris, are 180 feet by 118 feet. The car will contain fifty persons, and the cable will be above 2,000 feet long.

TEMPERANCE.

(Published by special request.)

A Call

From the Windsor Temperance Reform Club, and the other Temperance Organizations in Windsor and vicinity, by and with the advice of their United General Council-board comprising ministers of several congregations and members representing all Churches, duly appointed.

Knowing that every well disposed person in our community is desirous of seeing the cause of temperance in all its forms, well supported, both for the good of individuals, and society in general, the members of the Reform Club and other Temperance bodies make bold to approach you upon the subject.

Our present object is to solicit from you a careful, well-weighed consideration of the evils attending the use of intoxicating liquors, and the blessings attending abstinence therefrom. Will you not kindly consider how much you may do in this good work, and how much your simply holding aloof may damage it? It is well to weigh the teaching of our Divine Master, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Consider that each one of us has an influence upon others, and that for that influence he is responsible to his Heavenly Father. Consider that though your keeping aloof may influence but another, that other influences still another, and soon indefinitely. Consider that men are influenced largely for good or for evil by popular movements, and that every one coming decidedly on the side of Temperance at this critical juncture is helping to extend the popularity of the movement. Consider how much positive good may be done by one person leaving the ranks of neutrality and becoming an active supporter of the cause. Consider how many calls there are to every one to give this hearty co-operation. God's law, which enjoins "Loving our neighbor as ourselves," calls us; our churches all call us; humanity every where calls us. The cries of the suffering, the injured, the imperilled, fathers and mothers, wives and children, and the victims themselves when moved by remorse to better thoughts, call us. Say not "Am I my brother's keeper?"

God, in His providence, has of late been raising up faithful helpers of both sexes, and honoring their labors with great success; but these are not sufficient for the work to be done. While many remain indifferent they are virtually placing upon God's work the ban of their disapprobation. Who can kneel and ask God's blessing on himself and his house, or repeat our Lord's prayer and not feel that his conscience binds him to throw into the scale on the side of Temperance at least his personal influence, if it be but to help another weaker in will than himself.

Windsor, N. S., May, 1878.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. United States Correspondence.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 21, 1878.

The last few weeks have been strongly suggestive of the spring and summer of '76, when the common and general salutation was in the form of the question, "Are you going to the Centennial?" Now it is, "Are you going to Paris?" Perhaps more people will attend the Paris Exposition from here than from anywhere else in the United States in proportion to the population. It is even within the reach of Department clerks to go across the water, since such arrangements have been made that one can go for two months for less than \$200, which includes all expenses. The clerks are entitled to one month's absence without their salaries stopping, and can easily obtain an additional month's leave without pay. And so all our little world is going abroad. The moment Congress adjourns our legislators with their families will start in a body, for, poor things! they feel as if they were already in need of rest for recuperation.

A correspondent who has gone from New York to the French Capital to "write up the Exhibition" gives an account the reverse of glowing of our exhibit there. He says the American portion will be the laughing-stock of the whole Exposition and a disgrace to our Republic. He adds that Commissioner-General McCormick, who has charge of the United States' interests there, has done the best he could with the paltry appropriation granted, and is depending very much upon paint yet to be applied for the appearance of the U. S. Building. But our own Lucy H. Hooper, who has resided in Paris for years, writes us that England's department is interesting and the nearest ready of any, and "next to England, her go-ahead daughter, the United States, promises to come out 'a good second,' notwithstanding her tardiness in participating. Most of her show-cases are up and many of the things in order." She mentions Prang's chromos, Blabon & Co's oilcloths, and other displays, adding: "But it is almost impossible to see anything to advantage, owing to the busy hurrying to and fro, and the excitement that pervades the representatives of our irrepresable nationality."

Congress has been in session almost continuously since last October, and history asserts that no previous Congress has ever attempted so much and accomplished so little in the same period of time as the one now in session. Of nearly 6,000 bills that have been introduced, not over 100 have passed both Houses and become law, and of these but half a dozen or so are of a general nature and in behalf of the national interest.

Whether or not the loud Communistic mutterings heard all over the land, and growing fiercer and louder each week, will amount to anything more than growling and teeth-snapping threats remains to be seen and experienced. But one thing is certain, powers not faintly smouldering exist that could execute the threats, and those who know say that the power to stop that execution does not exist.

There are many reasons why the army and navy of the United States should be in its very best strength and condition just now. Everybody knows at least, that the country is literally swarming with tramps, vagrants and under-paid laborers, who are more than ready to join any lawless movement against right and authority. Then, the Indians are promising us more trouble. Mexico is already giving it, there is prospect of an extensive European war, in case of which we must be more or less implicated, Fenians, and threatening in Canada, and surely our military force would scarcely be deemed efficient for all these should they come upon us at once. There is no question but the country's chief executive should be vested with power to increase our army in an emergency by at least 100,000 men, and to have on the stocks a few ships of war useful for defensive purposes. The riots of last summer contained good lessons, and it behooves the ruling powers of the land to profit by them to the fullest possible extent.