

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, June 2nd, 1878.—The Handwriting on the Wall.—Dan. v. 22-31.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 25-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."—Daniel v. 27.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Daniel iv. Tuesday, Daniel v. Wednesday, Exodus xii. 21-31. Thursday, Acts xii. 20-23. Friday, Jeremiah i. Saturday, Proverbs x. 21-32. Sunday, Psalm xxxvii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The accusation. Vss. 22-24. II. The Handwriting. Vs. 25. III. The interpretation. Vss. 26-28. IV. Daniel promoted. Vs. 29. V. The kingdom departed. Vss. 30, 31.

QUESTIONS.—How long did Nebuchadnezzar reign? What lessons were taught him? Did these have any influence for good upon his successors? What successor was particularly worldly and impious? What great feast did he make? What sacrilege did he commit? Vs. 3.

Vs. 22. Why should Belshazzar have led a humble life? Why is sin against light a grievous thing? Luke xii. 47, 48.

Vs. 23. What judgment does Daniel pronounce upon idolatry? Comp. Ps. cxxv. 4-7.

Vs. 24. Was all the hand visible? Vs. 25. What was the meaning of each of the words written?

Vs. 29. In keeping his pledge what may Belshazzar have hoped to do? Why was his hope unrealized? Why does Daniel now accept what before he had refused? Vs. 17.

Vs. 30. What Scripture is here fulfilled? Prov. x. 25, 27.

Vs. 31. What kingdom now is introduced? Which one of the four was it as seen in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar? What two are to follow?

We see men under the influence of strong drink doing strange and impious things? Why is their punishment delayed? 2 Peter iii. 9.

The many ways of access God has to the conscience of men. Vs. 5.—The effects of the terror of a guilty conscience. Vs. 6.—The disclosure of the judgment-day. Rev. vi. 17.—In what the merit of the righteous, when "weighed in the balances," consists. 1 John ii. 1.

Nebuchadnezzar died in the year B. C. 561, at an advanced age, having reigned 43 years. But the lessons which he had been taught, in dreams, in miracles (iii. 28), and in personal humiliation (vi. 30-37), were lost upon his successors, who gave themselves up to voluptuous indulgence. This was particularly true of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, who began to reign B. C. 555. This impious king at one of his feasts (B. C. 538) profaned the vessels that had been brought from the temple in Jerusalem, and thereby filled up the measure of his sins. v. 1-4. Immediately a divine hand wrote his doom upon the wall. It was the last night of Babylon's greatness, and "impressively illustrates the tendency of sensuality to impiety, and the hopeless ruin which ensues." The same narrative brings Daniel before us in the vigor and glory of his old age.

EXPOSITION.—I. Historical Explanation.—The interval of time between our last and our present lesson has been about 40 years. Of this time 23 years have been occupied by the reign of the successors of Nebuchadnezzar. Their names in the order of their reigning are Evil-merodach (2 years), Neriglissar (34 years), Labarsoarchad (3 years), Nabonadius [or Nabonidus] (17 years), and associated with the latter his son Belshazzar for the last two years of his reign. Of these the first was son of Nebuchadnezzar; the second, a nephew; the third, a son of this nephew; and the fourth, according to Geo. Rawlinson, not of the royal family. The successors of Nebuchadnezzar are, however, all called his sons, being such officially. Jer. xxvii. 7; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20. That Belshazzar is so constantly called the son of Nebuchadnezzar by the queen-mother, and by Daniel, in Daniel v. is due partly to the celebrity of Nebuchadnezzar, and, also, particularly to the relation of the events of that chapter to those of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

The destruction of Babylon has been the subject of frequent, extended, minute, solemn, sublime, and terrible prophecies. The predictions of Isaiah are in chaps. xiii, xiv, xxi, xli-xlvi, uttered 175 years before the event. See also Jer. xxv. 12-14; l. li. In these prophecies it is repeatedly said that

destruction was to come from the armies of the North. These were the armies of Cyrus who twenty years before had consolidated the Medes and Persians into one nation, becoming their monarch, and after conquests in the West turned against Babylon. Belshazzar guarded the city, but over-confident in its strength kept insufficient watch, and recklessly indulging in untimely and impious festivities allowed the enemy to enter by the channel of the river. In the carnage which ensued Belshazzar was slain. Nabonidus, after receiving the intelligence, submitted.

The causes of that destruction are obvious. The Scriptures make prominent what may be called the Meritorious cause. God had determined upon its downfall because of its sins, especially in connection with his people Israel. The destruction of Judah, and Jerusalem, and of the temple; the removal, and, doubtless, subsequent oppression of the Israelites; the contempt of God's signal revelations by words and works to Nebuchadnezzar, and that studied contempt of him of which doubtless Daniel v. gives only a single representative instance, all are indicated as reasons in God's mind for the judgment. The hostile power of the rival Medo-Persians was the immediate cause. The occasion was the undue confidence of Belshazzar in the defences of Babylon. The city, as described by Herodotus, an eye-witness, "built on both sides of the Euphrates, forms a vast square enclosed within a double line of high walls, the extent of the outer circuit being about 56 miles [14 miles on each side]. The streets were straight, crossing each other at right angles; the cross streets leading to the Euphrates being closed at the river end with brazen gates, opening to the quays which lined the Euphrates through the whole length of the city. In each division of the town was a fortress or stronghold, of which the east one was also the royal palace, the west one the great temple of Belus, the two connected by a bridge across the Euphrates." The height of the wall enclosing the city was 337 feet, its thickness 85 feet. These measurements Rawlinson regards as those of the outer wall. Those given by Ctesias are less, namely, circuit of city 42 miles, height of walls 300 feet, breadth 60 feet. Rawlinson supposes these to refer to the inner wall. Towers rose all along the wall, according to Ctesias 250 in number. The river approaches were also effectually closed. Hence, as Babylon had several years' supply of provision, the king, and all the citizens could be quite at ease. They had not suspected Cyrus' cunning device of turning aside the waters of the Euphrates.

II. Textual Explanation.—Verse 22.—Hast not humbled thyself.—Before God. See vss. 17-22. Though knowest all this. See the queen-mother's remark. Vss. 10-16. The very act of contempt in the use of the vessels was doubtless due to his knowledge of God's revelation to Nebuchadnezzar, and the royal proclamations consequent.

Verse 23.—Lifted up thyself, etc.—In pride. The vessels of his house. Of the destroyed temple of God, of Jerusalem. Vss. 24. Wine was drunk from them in honor of the Babylonian gods. In this lay the sin, and not simply in using them at a feast. It was a studied and gross insult to Jehovah. Thy wives, etc. The queen of vs. 10 was not his wife.

Verse 24.—The part of the hand.—Rather its palm. It seems to have remained visible on the wall of the illuminated banquet hall during all the time covered by the events of vs. 1-23.

Verses 25-28.—MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.—These are Chaldaic words. Their explanation shows that each had a double import, and both meanings of each is given as applicable, and as divinely intended.

Verse 29.—They clothed, etc.—According to promise (vs. 7). The scarlet robe, and golden chains were tokens of royal rank. Comp. Gen. xli. 38-44; Matt. xxvii. 28. Joseph was made second in the kingdom, in Egypt, because there was then no king but Pharaoh; but Daniel could be only third, because Nebuchadnezzar himself was second, his father, even then with his army shut up in Borsippa, being first. The proclamation, as well as the clothing of Daniel, was made at once in the presence of the assembled nobility.

Verses 30, 31.—That night, etc.—The

enemy had secretly entered the city by the river bed on both the north and the south, and, says Rawlinson, "in the darkness and confusion of the night, a terrible massacre ensued. . . . Bursting into the palace a band of Persians made their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry. If Daniel's relation to the king and the nation were known to these Persians we can understand why they should have spared him."—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

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

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

Youths' Department.

The wonderful Lamp.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet." A ragged little errand boy was printing this text on a gate with a piece of white chalk. So absorbed was he with his work that he never noticed a kind-looking old gentleman who, after walking slowly past twice, returned and stood behind him.

"M—y," said the boy, repeating the letters aloud as he found them with care. "F—double e—t, feet."

"Well done, little lad, well done?" said the old gentleman. "Where did you learn that?"

"At the ragged school, sir," replied the boy, half frightened, and thinking the old gentleman was going to deliver him up to the police for writing on the gate.

"Don't run away; I'm not going to hurt you. What is your name?"

"Nicholas."

"Nicholas what?"

"Nicholas Lambert, sir."

"You are an errand-boy, I see: isn't that your basket?"

"Yes, sir."

"So you learned the text at the ragged school. Do you know what it means?"

"No, sir," said Nicholas.

"What's a lamp?"

"A lamp? why a lamp! a thing what gives light!"

"And what is the lamp that the text speaks of?"

"The Bible, sir."

"That's right. How can the Bible be a lamp and give light?"

"I don't know, less you set it afire," said Nicholas.

"There is a better way than that, my lad. Suppose you were going down some lonely lane on a dark night with an unlighted lamp in your hand and a box of matches in your pocket, what would you do?"

"Why, light the lamp, sir," replied Nicholas, evidently surprised that any one should ask such a foolish question.

"What would you light it for?"

"To show me the road, sir."

"Very well. Now, suppose you were walking behind me one day, and saw me drop a shilling, what would you do?"

"Pick it up, and give it to you again, sir."

"Wouldn't you want to keep it for yourself?"

"Nicholas hesitated: but he saw a smile on the old gentleman's face, and, with an answering one on his own he said, "I should want to, sir, but I shouldn't do it."

"Why not?"

"Because it would be stealing."

"How do you know?"

"It would be taking what wasn't my own, and the Bible says we are not to steal."

"O," said the gentleman, "so it's the Bible that makes you honest, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you had never heard of the Bible, would you steal, I suppose?"

"Lots of the boys do," said Nicholas, hanging his head.

"And the Bible shows you the right and safe path, the path of honesty?"

"Like the lamp!" said Nicholas, seeing now what all these questions meant. "Is that what the text means?"

"Yes; there is always light in the Bible to show us where to tread. But suppose you kept the slide over the lamp, would it be of any use?"

"No; there 'ud be no light, sir."

"Neither will the Bible give us light

if we keep the slide down?" How can you keep the Bible slide down?"

"By keeping it shut and not reading it?" said Nicholas doubtfully.

"That's it. Now my lad, do you think it worth while to take this good old lamp and let it lead you through life?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think you will be safer with it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"Because if I'm honest I shan't stand no chance of going to prison."

"And what else?"

"Nicholas thought for a few minutes. "If I minds the Bible I shall go to heaven!" he said at last.

"Yes, that's the best reason for taking the lamp. It will light you right into heaven. Good-bye, my lad."

Here's a shilling for you, and mind you keep the slide up."

"Sir," said Nicholas grasping the shilling, and touching his ragged cap; "I'll mind."

Helping a Convict.

Many a convict, after getting out of prison, would lead a respectable life if he would only begin well. But people are afraid of him, and won't trust him or give him employment, and so he falls into roguery again to make a living. The late Henry Raymond, of the New York Times, made a convict honest by lending him \$10.

One day, while busy in his room, there appeared to him a man saying, "Is this Mr. Raymond?" Being assured of this, he continued—

"Can I speak to you a few moments, sir? The MS. was shoved aside."

"I have just come from Sing Sing," hesitated the man.

"Not from the prison, I hope," said the editor, by the way of putting the caller at ease with a joke.

"Yes, sir," said the visitor, "I got my discharge a few days ago."

"Well, my man, I hope you were innocent."

"No, sir," replied the convict, "I was guilty. You see, sir, I am an engineer and machinist by trade. I want to lead an honest life, and when I got a place to work all went very well, until some kind friend came along and told my boss that I was a prison-bird, and I had to be out of that. Then I got another place and got well to work, and the same thing happened there. Now I am looking for another job, and I am going to begin by telling what I am, and when I get anything to do, I shan't lose it in the same way."

"How much is it my man?" said Mr. Raymond.

"Well, sir," replied the man, "I haven't got the price of a dinner about me now, and I don't know where I am to sleep to-night. I think if I had ten dollars I could get on until I found somebody to take me for what I am worth, and give me some honest work to do. I don't want to go down hill, sir."

The ten dollars closed that conversation on the instant. Perhaps a year afterward, Mr. Raymond was at a fair of the American Institute, and while looking at some machinery on exhibition, a decent man in charge of it approached him and said—"Is this Mr. Raymond?"

"Yes," he replied, "I don't remember you."

"Don't you remember the man from Sing Sing?"

"No," said Mr. Raymond, "I don't remember any man from Sing Sing."

"Why," said the man from Sing Sing, "don't you recollect?" and then he rehearsed the story here recorded. He had subsisted on Mr. Raymond's loan until he found employment in his own line with a good man who knew his story and was pleased with him, giving him good wages, and steady work in a place of honorable trust and responsibility. Taking a bank-note from his pocket the engineer repaid the borrowed money, saying that he had carried it for some months without finding an opportunity to leave his work and come to town for the purpose.

"It's a good ten dollars, Mr. Raymond, for it's just the cost of saving me from ruin." When he told the story afterwards, Mr. Raymond thought it was cheap, and said he had charged all his other loans to the account of the engineer and balanced it.

A Thrilling Incident.

In the winter of 1870, I had occasion to go from Green Bay to Chicago, on the N. W. Railway. At Oshkosh we were joined by a delegation of lawyers, on their way to Madison, the capital, to attend the legislature, then in session. They were all men of more than usual intellect, and of exceptional character. Two were ex-judges of the circuit court, and one I had seen chairman of the Young Men's Christian Association. The party found seats near together, and after the first salutations were over, and the news duly discussed, began to look about for means to while away the time. After awhile some one proposed a game of cards. No sooner said than done. Two seats were turned apart so as to face each other, a cushion improvised for a table, and three of our lawyers, including the chairman of the Young Men's Christian Association, and a Chicago runner on good terms with them, were soon deep in the mysteries of a game of euchre.

I was surprised to see Christian gentlemen and judges of law and equity; leaders of society, makers of public sentiment, lawgivers for a great state, directors of public morals, supposed to be public exemplars of all that is good, and guides to the young, thus setting publicly their seal of approval to a most dangerous and evil practice. To be sure they played for stakes no higher than the cigars for the party. But it seems to me that in the eyes of all discreet persons this does not change the act nor lessen the danger of its example, but rather heightens it; as from the less to the greater is the invariable course of crime. But I did not intend to moralize on paper, but was about to say that while I was filled with such thoughts as these, one of the party grew tired of the game, and our remaining judge was invited to take his place. I saw the blood mount in an honest blush of disapproval to his manly face, and he hesitated and drew back. But the game had become interesting, and his excited companions urged him. "Come Judge, take a hand," they cried, "we can't go on without you." So the judge slowly rose from his seat, inwardly condemning the act as I evidently saw, and stepping forward took a seat among the players, and the game went on.

I had noticed an old lady in a seat to the rear of the players, who had got on board at Menasha, I believe. Gray and bent with age she had sat abashed, and, with eyes closed, seemed asleep most of the time until the train, stopping at Oshkosh, took on board the company of lawyers. She then underwent a change and became greatly interested in the company, looking often from one to another as if she recognized them all, or was trying to recall their faces. When the game of cards was started she became very restless, would hitch uneasily about in her seat, take up the hem of her faded apron and nervously bite the threads. Once or twice I thought she wiped her eyes under the "Shaker bonnet," but could not tell. She acted so strangely, it became more interesting to her than in the players, and watched her closely. She got up after a time and tottered forward, holding on to the seats as she passed. She brushed against Judge — in passing, but he had become interested in the game and did not notice her. Reaching the water-tank at last, she drank a cup of water and took a seat near the door with her back to the players. But she did not long remain there; rising again with difficulty, she tottered back towards her former seat, but reaching the players, she paused directly in front of them, and now, greatly excited, threw back her bonnet from her face and looked around the company. Her action at once arrested their attention, and pausing in their play, they all looked up inquiringly.

Gazing directly in the face of Judge —, she said in a tremulous voice: "Do you know me, Judge?" "No, mother, I don't remember you," said the Judge, pleasantly. "Where have we met?" "My name is Smith," said she; "I was with my poor boy three days off and on, in the court in Oshkosh, when he was tried for—for—robbing some body, and you're the same man that sent him to prison for ten years, and he died there last June."

All faces were now sobered, and the