

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, March 3rd, 1878.—Persistent Wickedness of Ahaz.—2 Chron. xxviii. 10-27.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 22-24.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz."—2 Chron. xxviii. 22.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xxxviii. 1-27. Tuesday, 2 Kings xvi. Wednesday, vs. 13; Genesis iii. Thursday, vs. 19; Exodus xxxii. 25-25. Friday, Revelation iii. 14-22. Saturday, Galatians vi. Sunday, Proverbs i.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Judah brought low by the Lord. Vs. 19. II. The tender mercies of the wicked. Vs. 20, 21. III. Ahaz hardening in sin. Vs. 22-27.

QUESTIONS.—Who succeeded Uzziah? What was his character? Who succeeded Jotham?

I. Vs. 19. What is meant by Ahaz making his people naked? How does sin uncliothe man of his original glory? Eccles. vii. 20; Rom. v. 12. Who alone can replace that glory? Rom. v. 20, 21.

II. Vss. 20, 21. How did the Assyrian king cripple rather than strengthen Ahaz? The Evil One helps men into trouble; why does he never help them out? How does Ahaz trespass more and more? What shows his stupidity?

III. Vss. 22-27. What honor in death was denied to Ahaz? Where in this lesson do we see that no human arm can shield from divine vengeance? Where do we see bribery defeating its own end?

One sinner doeth much harm. Vs. 19.—Sin has in itself no reforming power. Vs. 22.—That which is thought to be helpful is often hurtful. Vs. 23.—Sin in its course becomes desperately sinful. Vss. 24, 25.—The memory of the wicked shall perish. Vs. 27.

Jotham, the son and successor of Uzziah, reigned sixteen years, imitating his father in the best part of his conduct, yet failing to prevent his people from acting idolatrously. God, however, mercifully removed him from the sinful age in which he lived, in order that others might take his place, whose follies and vices would be a severe punishment upon a people who did not begin to value their blessings until they were withdrawn. And thus we come to the wicked reign of Ahaz, an ill son of a good father, whose abominations brought him and his people by Divine chastisement into the power of Syria and of Israel. In his distress he vainly sought aid, not from the Lord, but from Assyria; after which he went from bad to worse, "as if hell itself were broken loose upon God's inheritance." "This is that King Ahaz."

EXPOSITION.—With the Scripture of this lesson compare 2 Kings xv, xvi, and Isaiah i-vii, but especially vii. By such comparison one can gain a much clearer and fuller view of the situation, and of the motives of the king.

Verses 19-21.—The Lord [Jehovah] brought Judah low. The King, with his people, were low in morals, and so were made low in outward condition as a judgment. "Judah" is here the name of the Kingdom, not the tribe. He [Ahaz] made Judah naked, that is, pursued a lawless course, regardless of the restraints of God's law, which yet was the fundamental law of the land. Tiglath-pilezer. In Kings the name is written, Tiglath pilezer. From his own inscriptions we learn that his reign lasted at least seventeen years; that beside warring in Syria and Samaria, he attacked Babylonia, Media, Armenia, and the independent tribes in the upper parts of Mesopotamia. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian kingdom. Came unto him. Or, rather against him, and that despite the fact of his covenant with him. Vs 16. It is not improbable that Judah was threatened by the army of Assyria after that army had destroyed Syria, and overrun a large part of Israel, and that this threat was to compel Judah to pay more tribute. This would account for the meeting at Damascus recorded in 2 Kings xvi. 10-16. Thus Ahaz had hired the Assyrian to relieve Judah by attacking Syria and Israel, the confederate enemies of Judah (2 Kings xvi. 1-9). This attack was successfully made, and then the success was made the occasion of a most degrading enslavement of Judah. From the connection of verse 21, it would seem that there the treasures first sent to secure

Assyrian aid is meant, while verse 24 refers to the subsequent enforced tribute.

Verses 22-25.—In the time of his distress.—Going back to the time when Syria was prevailing against him, as he would hardly have first reasoned thus after Syria had been annihilated by Assyria. This is that King Ahaz. Omit "is that," and put a comma after Ahaz. Which smote him. Were smiting: in some true sense, though strictly it was Jehovah who dealt the blow, and not the idol-nothings. They were the ruin of him, etc. They ruined him as being the occasion of his sin; but the sin was the true cause of his ruin, unless, indeed, it was the ruin itself. The vessels of the house of God, etc. See on this 24th verse, 1 Kings vi, vii. The doors were those into the Holy Place (1 Kings vi. 31-35), and not into the courts, as it appears from 2 Kings xvi, that in the courts' service, such as it was, was continued. Altars in every corner of Jerusalem. Not to be understood as a mathematically exact statement, but as a strong exhibit of the great number of these altars. Other Gods. Other than Jehovah; "strange" or foreign divinities; counterfeit, not genuine gods.

Verses 26, 27.—Book of the Kings. The books of Chronicles were written much later than those of Kings, and both frequently refer to other writings, which were known and in use. Slept with his fathers. Died. In Jerusalem Compare 2 Kings xvi. 20. The refusal to bury him in the sepulchres of the kings was due to his infamous character.

Our subject is "The Persistent Wickedness of Ahaz." We are shown its Punishment, its Increase, and the End.

I. The Punishment.—Verses 19-21.—(1.) It fell upon the whole nation. King and people together were humiliated; a national, and not merely personal infiction. In this respect it is unlike the punishment of Jehoshaphat. (2.) It was specially for the King's sin. The language is "because of Ahaz, King of Israel." It is often that the many suffer for the sins of one, and especially when that one represents the many. We know, however, from the first chapter of Isaiah, that the people sinned grossly with their king. (3.) God was its Author. "God brought Judah low." Evil did not, and does not, "come out of the ground," nor merely from a blind law, but from the Righteous Judge. (4.) Yet it came through another wicked man acting wickedly. The Assyrian king was treacherous and cruel in the very deed, which was a deserved punishment of Ahaz and his kingdom. (5.) It was for an aggravated sin. Ahaz "transgressed sore," with "unbridled" wickedness breaking out of all restraint, and acting against God, like the rebel that he was. Between an erring child and an obstinate rebel, men distinguish, and so does God. (6.) His punishment was the exact reversal of his hope. He sinned in order to be helped by Assyria, but Assyria it was that "distressed him."

II. The Increase of Wickedness.—Verses 22-25.—(1.) This increase was "in the time of his distress." Many talk as though punishment by its own nature purified, as though suffering by itself, and necessarily, were corrective. Nothing is more false to fact, or has been more widely and manifestly proved false. Afflictions "work together for good to them that love God," but they do not create love. (2.) The increase was along one and the same line of sin. He lost faith in Judah's God, Jehovah, in the reality of his being, the sacredness of his law, house, service, in the verity of his word, both of promise and warning; he gained faith in the pretended gods of other nations. This is the common law of man's moral nature. The profane becomes more profane, the licentious more licentious, the covetous more covetous. (3.) The increase showed itself in a missionary activity. The king exerted himself to corrupt others, and to bear them along his way. The whole nation must share his crime. Altars in every corner of Jerusalem, high places for profane incense in every city! Tempters are the missionaries of Satan.

III. The End.—Verses 26, 27.—He died. His day ended. His account was made up, and he went to the judgment.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 10, 1878.—Hezekiah's Good Reign.—2 Chron. xxix. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And in every work that he began, . . . he did it with all his heart, and prospered."—2 Chron. xxxi. 21.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Ahaz kept on growing more and more wicked, making Judah sin also. The Lord sent more enemies against them, because of their sins. The king of Syria carried away a great many prisoners to his city of Damascus. Instead of asking the Lord for help in his trouble, Ahaz sinned still more by sending to the great king of Assyria, although the Lord had told him that this was the nation that would destroy Judah. But Ahaz did not believe God, and even sent this word to that heathen king: "I am thy servant, and thy son; come up and save me." He also sent large presents of silver and gold, which he took from the house of the Lord and from his own palace. So Tilgath pilezer, the king of Assyria, came to Damascus, and took it, and slew the king of Syria, who had troubled Ahaz. But he did him no real good; but made him poorer than before. For, though Ahaz saw that the idol-gods of the Syrians had not helped them, he said, "I will sacrifice to them; they may help me." Ahaz went to Damascus to meet the king of Assyria; and he saw there an altar he liked so much that he sent the pattern to Urijah, the priest, and told him to have one made. He had the brass altar taken out of the Temple, to make room for it; then he offered sacrifices on this, instead of on the Lord's altar.

Booths' Department.

Jack Frost's Flowers.

King Winter sat on his glittering throne, In his palace of ice and snow, And listened to hear what his sons had done In the wide earth lying below.

Then first spake the oldest, the North Wind bold, And his voice was piercing and clear: "I've brought from the North Pole plenty of cold, And I scattered it far and near!"

Then the North-West Wind, he laughed as he cried, "When frozen and hard was the earth, I gathered the clouds, and opening them wide, Out tumbled the snowflakes in mirth!"

Then growled out the East Wind, surly and gruff: "When the snow lay so smooth and white, I made an ice-storm, and slippery enough Are the fields and the streets to-night!"

King Winter laughed loud, so merry was he; His sons had all pleased him right well; "But how does it happen there are but three? Has Jack Frost no story to tell?"

"He is my youngest, my pet, and my pride, And I love to hear of his jokes; How he capers about on every side And teases the dear little folks;

"How he pinches children's noses and ears, And makes them all rosy and cold; He laughs when they cry, and freezes their tears, And plays tricks with young and with old."

"Ah! there is my Jack! But what does it mean? He looks very sober and sad; Such a pitiful face I ne'er have seen, He's always so merry and glad!

"Speak up like a man, Jack Frost, and be brave! What may be the matter with you? Whatever you want you surely may have, Now speak out without more ado!"

"Father," he whimpered, "I'd fallen in love With a rose, a beautiful flower; She stood in a window, the street above, And I watched her many an hour."

"When nobody looked I crept through the door And kissed softly her petals red; She faded and drooped, was lovely no more, But hung brown, and frozen, and dead!"

"I kissed another as sweet by her side, As gently as zephyr in May, And whispered, I love you! Oh, be my bride! But dead like her sister she lay."

"Then I knew a flower could never be mine, And I wept for my lovely rose: I walked homeward quite sad, and children nine I passed, and pinched never a nose!"

King Winter looked grave, and said, "My dear Jack, Though foolish yourself you have shown, And I cannot give you the roses back, Your shall have some flowers of your own."

"Kiss softly the windows of many a room When the world is asleep to-night; Wherever you go fair flowers will bloom, Lovely blossoms, not red, but white."

When the north wind blows and makes it so cold, In our quiet slumbering hours He journeys about; next morning behold! On the glass are the Jack-Frost flowers! Susie M. Day.

Two Street-corner Boys.

While Mr. Moody was holding meetings in the Depot building at the corner of Market and Thirteenth Streets, Philadelphia, several years ago, a lady rose in one of the evening congregations and asked prayers for her two wild and reckless boys. They had both taken to wicked practices, and were helping each other on to ruin, and their course was breaking her heart. Sometimes she would not know where to find them, even in the hours when steady people sleep, for one or both would be in evil company, and spend the whole night away. The very next morning after the mother had made her sad request, these boys (knowing nothing of the meetings) were to join each other, by agreement, on the street-corner just named, and start out together for a "spree." One arrived some time before the other, and as it was near the appointed hour for the morning religious service, he found himself in the centre of a crowd of people, who were going into the meeting. The scene arrested his attention; his mind was diverted from the engagement he had made with his brother, and half curious and half confused he followed the throng inside. The sermon reached his heart, and brought him to repentance. When the other boy came, he looked about him for a while, and, failing to find his brother, would have gone into the meeting too, but the place was full. There was an "overflow meeting" near by, and there he finally went in. The message of God was faithfully and affectionately spoken in his hearing, and he, too, was melted, and bowed with many other inquirers at the feet of Christ.

When next these two boys met each other, it was in their mother's presence at home, whither each had hurried in his own time to pour into her astonished and delighted ears the story of what the Saviour had done for him. They had gone forth that morning bent on wickedness, defiant and profane, and both, to all appearance, sure of a drunkard's future and a drunkard's fate. What a change divine mercy had made! The home they had saddened and disgraced was turned into a happy home. The dear mother-heart they had well-nigh broken now sung for joy. The voices of the boys, but lately heard in depraved carousal, were now heard in holy testimony and the pure service of Christian praise. "It so happened," is the common human phrase to describe so remarkable a turning of two immortal lives. But in the operations of the All-Knowing, who heard and answered the prayers of that mother and her loving friends, nothing "happens." And many a result, as happy as that related here, may be expected and has been realized, when Christ's saving Gospel is carried where sinners meet, and the means of grace are placed to catch the sinner's idleness and surprise his lawless thoughts. — Watchman.

Full of the Bible.

There was once a little boy who went to a Sunday-school regularly and learned all his lessons well, so that he had a great many Bible verses in his mind. He was a temperance boy. This boy was on a steamboat making a journey. One day, as he sat alone on deck, looking down into the water, two ungodly gentlemen agreed that one of them should try and persuade him to drink. So the wicked man drew near to the boy and in a very pleasant voice and

manner invited him to drink a glass of liquor with him."

"I thank you, sir, but I never drink liquor."

"Never mind, my lad, it will not hurt you. Come and drink with me."

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," was the boy's ready answer. "You need not be deceived by it. I would not have you drink too much. A little will do you no harm, and will make you feel pleasantly."

"At last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder," said the boy. "I think it is wiser not to play with adders."

"My fine little fellow," said the crafty man, putting on a most flattering air "I like you. You are no child; you are fit to be a companion of a gentleman. It will give me great pleasure if you will come and drink a glass of the best wine with me."

The lad looked him steadily in the eyes and said, "My Bible says, 'If sinners entice thee, consent thou not' "

This was a stunning blow to the tempter, and he gave up his wicked attempt and went back to his companion.

"How did you succeed?" said he.

"Oh, the fact is," he replied, "that little fellow is so full of the Bible you can't do anything with him."

And every boy's and girl's mind should be so full of the Bible that wicked tempters can not do anything with them.

Now, there is one verse which shows that this is just the right use to make of the Bible: "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Intoxicating Wine at the Lord's Table.

A correspondent of the Christian World writes as follows:— Has it ever occurred to our Christian brethren who maintain so firmly the use of the intoxicating wine at the Lord's Table to consider how many are shut out from the privilege of communion by their conscientious objection to partaking of an alcoholic wine? I know it will be said they voluntarily exclude themselves. Yes, 'tis true, they might join the church and pass the cup, while they partook of the bread and, when in the church, might seek for an exchange of the wine; but, then, as others before them have found, in the one case they would be called singular beings, or suspended—as were five elders of a Scottish congregation—for passing the cup untasted, and in the other case charged as disturbers of the churches. Surely, seeing ravages of intoxicating drink in the Church, as well as in the world, it would be a little matter for those who like alcoholic wines to yield and follow the advice of the great apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. xiv. 1-4). Many years since I was asked by a member in communion how I could reconcile the use of that which produced such terrible evils on the most sacred occasion by giving a place for it on the Lord's Table. I could not then, and I cannot now; the reconciliation rests with those who adhere to its use at that table. Mr. Wilson on "The Wines of the Bible," may satisfy some minds as to the use of an intoxicating wine; but the researches of the Rev. Dr. Burns and Dr. Lees in their Bible Commentary give to others a firm basis for maintaining their appeal for the substitution of an unalcoholic wine; and in the plea for the fruit of the vine, and the sequel to it, by the Rev. Wm. Reid, of Edinburgh, based upon Scriptural authority, "he reasons out the duty of the Church to use at the Lord's Supper the 'fruit of the vine,' with an earnestness and dignity, a courage and a courtesy, worthy a Christian minister, and of the grave interests involved in the discussion;" and in another pamphlet on responsibility Mr. Reid adduces "the case of a lady, the wife of a medical gentleman, who became addicted to intemperance, and was disowned by her family. She was induced to become an abstainer. In course of time she recovered her wonted sense of propriety, and was received anew into the society of her family and friends, and in due season restored to the fellowship of the Church; but partaking of the wine in use at the Lord's table, she relapsed, was found drunk in the street, and ultimately died the inmate of a lunatic asylum." Mr. Reid adds:—"Did delicacy