

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, February, 10th, 1878.—Jehoshaphat helped by God.—2 Chron. xx. 14-22.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 17-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."—2 Chron. xx. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xx. 1-30. Tuesday, 2 Kings vi. 8-18. Wednesday, Exodus xiv. Thursday, 1 Sam. xvii. 32-54. Friday, Jeremiah xlviii. Saturday, Matthew xii. 22-30. Sunday, Psalm cxxxvi.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jahaziel inspired. Vss. 14. II. His cheering prediction. Vss. 15-17. III. Its popular effect. Vss. 18, 19. IV. The turn of battle. Vss. 20, 22.

QUESTIONS.—What people now invade Judah? How far have they marched? To whom does Jehoshaphat at once go? Who besides the king come before the Lord? Why the "little ones" with the rest?

I. Vss. 14. By whom does God answer his people? What is it to be inspired? 2 Peter i. 21.

II. Vss. 15-17. What does Jahaziel predict? What other examples have we of this truth in the Bible? 2 Kings vi. 8-18; Exodus xiv; 1 Sam. xvii. 32-54. How is Christianity "the Lord's battle"? John xvi. 33.

III. Vss. 18, 19. What is the effect of this prediction on Jehoshaphat? On the people? On the Levites?

IV. Vss. 20-22. How far does the army go? What is Jehoshaphat's counsel? How is the enemy confused and smitten?

Where have we learned in this lesson that God answers prayer? Where that the promises of God are always fulfilled? Where that the people of God may rejoice in the presence of their enemies? Where that song is a power with the army of the Lord?

Man's necessity is God's opportunity.—Vss. 2-15. Works and faith must ever go together.—Vss. 16, 18. It is a beautiful sight to see a king and his people worshipping God.—Vss. 18, 19. "A house divided against itself cannot stand"—Vss. 22, 23; Matthew xii. 25-27. How great is the debt of God's people to his prophets!

The whole chapter should be studied in order to understand that portion which our lesson specially covers. An invading horde of Moabites and Ammonites, inhabiting the northern and eastern coasts of the Dead Sea, had come around its southern end, and marched as far north as Engedi (situated on the western shore, at a point equidistant from both extremities of the Lake), before the news thereof had reached the court at Jerusalem. As soon, however, as Jehoshaphat had tidings of it, he was alarmed by the gravity of the crisis. The enemy was in number a multitude. He therefore took refuge at the altar, and implored the aid of God. He prayed earnestly and impressively. He echoed the prayer of Solomon. 1 Kings viii. 22, etc. He used every topic and argument he could urge in an appeal to the justice and merciful help of God. How his prayer was promptly and strikingly answered, our lesson shows.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 14.—Then—When Jehoshaphat had ended the prayer recorded in verses 6-15. The mixed multitude from Jerusalem and all Judea were gathered at the king's call to prayer and fasting on account of the approach of the vast army of invaders. Jahaziel—This name means "whom God sees," and was borne by five different persons mentioned in Scripture. 1 Chron. xii. 4; xvi. 6, etc. His genealogy is traced back in Jewish style, perhaps because of the importance of the service here rendered. The eighty-third Psalm is connected with this event, "and was composed in confident anticipation of the victory." The Spirit of Jehovah—Revealing to him the result of the invasion, and inspiring him to announce the revelation. An inspiration which gave to the words spoken, or written, full divine authority. Such is the character of our Bible.

Verse 15.—All Judah—See vss. 3, 4. We are not to suppose that military preparation was neglected because the religious gathering was called. Jehoshaphat was practical enough to do the best he could with his means, even while he prayed for help from above. With the soldiers from all Judah, he also

called the families and friends of the soldiers. Only the religious meeting is reported, because the victory came in answer to prayer without any fighting, and to show that Jehoshaphat's course now was wisdom and safety in contrast with his previous course in joining Ahab. Great multitudes.—Vs. 2. The purpose was complete subjugation of Judah, and occupation of its territory. For this an extended confederacy had been formed, with forces vastly outnumbering even Judah's large army. xvii. 12-19. Not your's but God's—A battle in which their service would not have part.

Verse 16.—The Cliff of Ziz—"The difficult and perilous pass of Engedi (On the west side of the Dead Sea). The ascent of some fifteen hundred feet is made by zigzags along projecting shelves of rock, smooth and slippery as glass, often at the steepest angle practicable for horses." The distance from Jerusalem was only about twenty miles. The desert lay between the northern end of the Dead Sea, and Hebron, to the south of Jerusalem. The brook—Or rather, ravine, narrow valley, or pass.

Verses 18, 19.—Bowed his head, etc. In token of worship, thus recognizing the word of the Levite as God's own true word, and expressing humble, devout gratitude. Kohathite—Descendants of Kohath, second son of Levi. Gen. xlvii. 11. Aaron and Moses were of this family, and consequently all the priests, and those Kohathites "who were not priests were of the highest rank of the Levites." Korahites—Also, written Korahites, and Korathite, descendants of Korah (Exodus vi. 24), who was a Kohathite. To this family the authorship of eleven or twelve psalms is ascribed, as follows: Psalms xlii. (perhaps xliii included) xlv-xlix, lxxxiv, lxxxv, lxxxvii, lxxxviii. They, like the "sons of Asaph," were pre-eminently a musical family. 1 Chron. ix. 19; xxv. 2-4.

Verses 20-22.—Tekoa—"A town on the range of hills which rise near Hebron, and stretch eastward toward the Dead Sea." The "wilderness" was the barren region lying to the east and south of this town. Stood and said—probably near the gate of the city, addressing his army as they went out, exhorting them to trust God, and not their leaders or their swords. Appointed singers, etc. An arrangement perfectly in harmony with the promise given them, and indicating the king's faith; not intended as a model arrangement for every military expedition. Praise the beauty of holiness—Keil translates, "praise in the beauty of holiness," that is clothed in their holy and beautiful garments. Ambushments—Men in ambush, possibly robbers, of the desert, creating a surprise, and so confusion; and hence the result. Others have understood it of God's army of angels. Mount Seir—The range running south from the south end of the Dead Sea, and in part occupied by Edomites.

Our subject is "Jehoshaphat helped by God," and the Scripture assigned us presents this help as Promised, Expected, Prepared for, an Experienced.

I. The Promise. Verses 14-17. (1.) It was genuine, of full divine authority, vs. 14. Human lips spake it, but God's Spirit prepared those lips. Heaven's message is not less heaven's because coming to us through men. God is not less the Author of Scripture because its writers are also authors. (2.) It required attention. The first word was "hearken." "All" and each should hearken. Vs. 15. The gospel as such demands from every one special and earnest attention, as though God were to come to each singly with a separate revelation. (3.) It called for hope. It came to men in extremity, without hope. So does the gospel come to the lost. (4.) It assured of help, of salvation. "The battle is not yours, but God's." Vs. 15. God promises to do what they cannot; makes their cause his. (5.) It requires of them acceptance and action. Vss. 15, 16. They are to believe it, and to act on it; must go when and where and as they are bidden. This is the condition of our salvation. (6.) The promise adds comfort to command. It closes as it begins. It makes assurance doubly sure to make man's heart rest in the solid peace of God.

II. The Expectation. Verses 18, 19. (1.) It was instant and universal. The promise was at once believed by king

and people. (2.) It created devout gratitude. Vs. 18. No room for pride where we save not ourselves, but are saved by divine grace. (3.) It kindled holy joy. Vs. 19. In loud and hearty songs it swelled forth. So have the redeemed always been a joyful people. The wells of salvation are also wells of gladness.

III. The Preparation. Verses 20, 21. (1.) It was prompt. They rose early. They believed, and so acted out their belief. (2.) It was in the right spirit. Mark the king's exhortation to all to keep and cherish their confidence in God and his prophets, the leader cheers them on, and repeats the original message. (3.) It was with an open, formal manifestation of that spirit. Vs. 21. What they felt they expressed. They let out in song what was burning in their hearts. As we march to heaven we fitly do it to the sound of sacred song, in public, formal worship.

IV. The Experience. (1.) God keeps his word. They found what was promised, and all that was promised. (2.) God caused his enemies to destroy each other. It was none the less his work.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, February 17th, 1878.—Joash Repairs the Temple.—2 Chron. xxiv. 4-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord."—2 Chron. xxiv. 4.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Three different nations made war together on Jehoshaphat. But the king called his people to the Temple, to ask help from the Lord, and he himself stood in the court, and prayed aloud. While the king was praying, the Spirit of the Lord came to one of the Levites; and he said they need not be afraid, for the battle was not theirs, but God's. The next day they must go to the cliff on the hill of Ziz, in the wilderness. They would find the enemy there; but they would not need to fight, but only to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." "Fear not," he repeated, "for the Lord will be with you." When the king heard that, he bowed his face to the ground, and all the people did the same; while the Levites sang with a loud voice. The next morning they rose early, and went out to the wilderness. The king told them to "believe in the Lord," and, instead of fighting, they sang praises to the Lord. Some of them climbed into a tower, to see where their enemies were. They saw the ground covered with dead bodies, decked with jewels; and so many treasures, that it took three days to carry them away. The fourth day they assembled in the valley, to bless the Lord; and they named it "The Valley of Blessing"; for not a man from Judah was lost, though all their enemies were killed.

Boys' Department.

The Coming Man.

A pair of very chubby legs, Encased in scarlet hose; A pair of little stubby boots, With rather doubtful toes; A little kilt, a little coat, Cut as a mother can; And lo! before us strides, in state, The Future's "coming man."

His eyes, perchance, will read the stars, And search their unknown ways; Perchance the human heart and soul Will open at their gaze; Perchance their keen and flashing glance Will be a nation's light— Those eyes that now are wistful bent On some "big fellow's" kite.

That brow, where mighty thoughts do dwell In solemn, secret, state; Where fierce Ambition's restless strength Shall war with future fate; Where Science from now hidden caves New treasures shall outpour— 'Tis knit now, with a troubled doubt, Are two or three cents more?

Those lips that, in the coming years, Will plead, or pray, or teach; Whose whispered words, on lightning flash, From world to world may reach; That, sternly grave, may speak command, Or, smiling, win control— Are coaxing now for ginger-bread With all a baby's soul!

Those hands—those little busy hands— So sticky, small and brown; Those hands, whose only mission seems To tear all order down— Who knows what hidden strength may lie Within thy future grasp, Though now 'tis but a taffy stick In sturdy hold they clasp!

Ah, blessings on those little hands, Whose work is yet undone! And blessings on those little feet, Whose race is yet unrun. And blessings on the little brain That has not learned to plan! Whate'er the Futurs hold in store, God bless the "coming man!"

Keep your Eye on the Mark.

A light snow had fallen, and the boys of L— desired to make the most of it; and as it was too dry for snowballing, and not deep enough for coasting, they thought it would do very well to make tracks in. Near by there was a large meadow, and it was proposed that they should go to a tree which stood near the centre of the meadow, and that each one should start from the tree to the boundaries of the meadow. The proposition was assented to, and they were soon at the tree. They ranged themselves around the tree with their backs toward it, and started, each one retracing his steps to the tree. After they had returned, they each looked back to see how straight the tracks were.

"Whose is the straightest?" said James Allison to Thomas Sanders, who was first at the tree.

"Henry Armstrong's is the only one that is straight at all," said Thomas.

"Why," said Jacob Small, "how could we all contrive to go so crooked when the meadow is so smooth, and nothing to turn us out of the way?"

"How happened you to go so straight, Henry?" said Thomas.

"I fixed my eye on that tall pine-tree on the hill yonder, and never looked away from it till I reached the fence," answered Henry.

"I went as straight as I could without looking at anything but the ground," says James.

"So did I," said another.

"So did I," replied several voices at once.

It appeared that no one but Henry had aimed at a particular object.

They attempted to go straight without any definite aim, but they failed. Men cannot succeed in anything good without a definite aim. General purposes, general resolutions will not avail. You must do as Henry did—fix upon something distinct and definite as an object, and go steadily toward it.—Young Pilgrim.

"I go a-fishing."

"Now it seems to me that the first thing is to set ourselves to do it. 'Tis just like everything else, it wants doin'." It won't do to be always talkin' about it, an' desirin' it, an' prayin' that we may be useful. We must get up an' do it. Simon said, 'I go a-fishin'.' An' he might have talked about it, an' prayed about it all his life; he never would have caught anything till he went. We keep sayin', Dear brethren, let us go a-fishin', or, You know we really must go a-fishin'. We talk of how very right and proper it is, an' how we decide to do it, an' we go prayin' that we may be stirred up to go a-fishin'.

"But Simon gets out his bait-box, an' his cross lines, an' he shoulders his oars, an' he shoves off the boat an' settlin' down he calls out to the rest of 'em, 'I go a-fishin'.' Then the rest who perhaps had been talkin' about it, shoved off their boats, too, an' said, 'We also go with thee.' An' that's the way in fishin' for souls. You must set about it. Why, we stand in on the shore, loungin' about the quay, with our hands in our pockets, thinkin' that if the fish are to be caught, the Lord will send 'em to us. If we want them we must go a-fishin'. An' then there's another thing I like about Simon, he didn't mind goin' alone.

"I'm afraid a good many of us would have seen Simon goin' out in his boat, an' never have said what the rest did. We would have kept our hands in our pockets, an' have said, 'Quite right an' proper; he's called to the work.' Or we should have said, 'Oh, he's a leader; he ought to go, or we should have said, 'There goes Simon again; what a gift he's got for it! Pack o' stuff an' nonsense. A gift for it! Why, he had a hook an' line, an' bit o' bait: an' so he went out to do what he could. That was his gift for it, an' that was his callin' too. I want for every one of us to say, 'I go.'—Daniel Quorn.

Wedding-fee Extraordinary.

It is not uncommon to hear of good-natured clergymen who accept a half-bushel of beams or a few pounds of dried apples as a recompense for performing a marriage ceremony; and there are instances on record where they have even officiated on credit. But the Dominion ministers are made of sterner stuff. A clergyman at East Bolton, Quebec, recently seized a bride as security for the non-payment of his fee by the impecunious bridegroom, and the husband had to give security for the \$1.25 ere he could obtain his spouse.

We clip the above item from one of our exchanges, but do not believe that many clergymen ever had a more laughable experience in that line than one of our best known New York preachers, who once accepted a strange fee, nolens volens. This is the story:

Many years ago, he was sitting in the office of a lawyer who was one of his members, chatting on various subjects, and as the pastor happened to speak of the hard times, and the dilatoriness of the church in paying his small salary, the lawyer remarked:

"Now I hardly agree with you, pastor, in your assertion that ministers are paid less for their work than any other class of professional men. They have a great deal given to them in one way and another, donation parties, Christmas presents, etc. Then the item of wedding fees alone, which you seldom hear them speak about, but which must amount to quite a sum, several hundred dollars in the course of the year, brings them in a good revenue."

"Do you think so?" said the clergyman. "Now to come right down to dots, what do you suppose is the average fee that I receive?"

"I should say twenty dollars was a low estimate," said the lawyer. "Here in New York I have often known persons to give one hundred dollars, and a fifty-dollar fee is quite common, but considering the fact that you marry a good many of the poor, or those who are only moderately well off, as well as the rich, I should think, as I said, that twenty dollars was a pretty low average."

"That calculation is rather large," said the minister, "but still I cannot tell exactly, as I have not reckoned up what I have received this last year."

"No, I presume not," said the lawyer.

"I have noticed that ministers don't generally know how much they have received, when the sum is pretty large, but I rather think they would if it was a small one. But I will tell you what I will do. I will give you ten dollars for half your next fee, and don't believe I shall lose anything by it, either. Do you accept that?"

The minister hesitated a moment and then said, "Yes, well, yes; I'll accept that—ten dollars for half the next fee."

He soon bade him good morning, and went home to his dinner. While he was at the table the bell rang, and the servant came in, saying a man at the door wished to see him a moment. He found a rough-looking farmer standing there, who accosted him thus:

"Good morning, Dr. A. I came in to see if you could just tie me up, this morning. Sal and I have been talking about it a good while, and we've come to the conclusion that 'tain't any use to wait no longer."

"Oh, yes," said the Doctor, "walk in, walk in. Where did you want to be married?"

"Right here," said the farmer, "if you're willin'. Sal's in the wagon, and I'll bring her in."

So he brought in a blooming country maid, and the minister, who had doffed his gown and slipped on his best Sunday-go-to-meeting coat, made them one, in his most impressive style. After the ceremony and the congratulation, the farmer said:

"About the fee, pastor, we hain't much money, but I thought your children might be fond of pets, so I told Sal I would just bring one of our pups." Saying which he tipped up a small box, and out rolled a little white pup upon the piano.

The minister could scarcely contain his mirth, but thanked the bridegroom, and told him the children would be glad of it, and bade him a pleasant good-morning. He finished his dinner, then putting the pup carefully back into the box, started with it under his arm for the lawyer's office.

His friend was quite surprised to see him so soon again, but the pastor relieved his curiosity by saying: