

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lesson for 1878.

SUNDAY, December 22nd, 1878.—The Saviour's Last Words.—Luke xxiv. 44-53.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 49-53.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—Matt. xxviii. 20.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Luke xxiv. 33-53. Tuesday, Vs. 44; Psalm cxviii. 22-29. Wednesday, Vs. 47; Acts ii. 14-36. Thursday, Matt. xxviii. Friday, Mark xvi. Saturday, John xxi. Sunday, Acts i. 1-14.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Last words of Jesus. Vss. 44-49. II. His ascension. Vss. 50, 51. III. The disciples in Jerusalem. Vss. 52, 53.

QUESTIONS.—How many days did Jesus remain on earth after his resurrection? How many times did he show himself to his disciples? For the last time where?

I. Vss. 44-49.—What did Jesus say to his disciples? Vs. 44. To what "words" may he have referred? Luke xviii. 31-34; Mark x. 33. What prophecies had been fulfilled in him? What books were in the law? Ans. The Pentateuch. What in the prophets? Ans. Former prophets, or Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings; later prophets, or Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets. What in the Psalms? Ans. All other books including the Psalms, whence its name.

II. Vss. 50, 51.—Where was the ascension? What angelic word was uttered at this time that should not be forgotten? Acts i. 11.

III. Vss. 52, 53.—What homage did the disciples render to Jesus after his ascension? What does this worship of him prove? Where did the disciples, after the ascension, meet? Where besides "in the temple"?

Our present Bible lesson, vss. 44-49, appears to contain a summary of our Lord's instructions to his disciples during the forty days that intervened between his resurrection and his ascension. In these forty days the New Testament gives us record of ten appearances to his disciples: five on the day of his resurrection—to Mary, to the other women, to Peter, to the two disciples, to the ten; the sixth, one week later; the seventh, by the Sea of Galilee; the eighth, on the mountain-side of Galilee; the ninth, to James (1 Cor. xv. 7); the tenth and last, to all the apostles, on the day of his ascension. The place of the ascension was probably not from what is now known as Mount Olivet, facing Jerusalem, but from that part of the Mount of Olives farther on, that overhangs Bethany.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 44.—And he said unto them.—Apparently to the company just mentioned (vss. 33-43); called in Mark xvi. 14 "the eleven"; in 1 Cor. xv. 5 "the twelve," though Luke says there were others than apostles present; and John says (xx. 24) that Thomas, one of the eleven, was not present. These are the words. "These," which follow in vs. 44, and which constitute a sort of text for the discourse of which vss. 45-49 contain the substance. Which I spoke, etc. During his public ministry, before the crucifixion, Christ was then "with them" as our friends are with us while alive, and as he was not with them after his resurrection. As a sample of the words referred to, see Matt. xvii. 22, 23. That all things, etc. That Christ made the Jewish Scriptures the foundation of such prediction in regard to himself, as also of all his teaching, is obvious throughout the gospel narrative. See, for example, Matt. v. 17; John v. 39. This designation of the Old Testament by the three parts was common, and it is here worthy of note as showing how careful Christ was to put them on the same level as to authority, and to make that level nothing lower than Divine infallibility, eternal truth. The three divisions, as made by the Hebrew text, comprised respectively (1) the Pentateuch, (2) Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and all known to us as "The Prophets," except Daniel; (3) "The other books," sometimes called, as in this passage, the Psalms, because of the prominence of the Psalms in this division. The Septuagint (that is, the Greek version in use at Christ's time) did not strictly maintain the old arrangement, while the arrangement in our versions is unlike both.

Verse 45.—Then opened he their un-

derstanding, etc.—Compare Acts xvi. 14, and John xvi. 13-15. These, and many other passages, together with the well-known facts of Christian experience, are full and sufficient evidence that God effects an inward preparation of heart for the understanding and reception of the truth.

Verse 46.—Thus it is written.—"Thus," according to the facts of his own life, and that which he now sets forth before them. Thus it behoved Christ, etc. Thus it was necessary. The veracity of God would have been disproved if event had not conformed to prediction. However, Christ does not teach that the event was solely because of the prediction, for, on the contrary, the prediction was made because the event was to be, and the event was to be, because of all that good which was to be accomplished by it. The fundamental reason why God gave his Son, was his love of man, not his previous promise to man.

Verse 47.—Repentance.—The Greek word so translated, means, literally, change of mind, and in the New Testament, is used of that inward spiritual change by which one becomes a child of God. It is that transition from "a state of nature," to "a state of grace." Remission [forgiveness] of sins. Scripture more commonly connects forgiveness with faith, that through which we have the forgiveness. But as the inward state of repentance always expresses itself in the inward act of faith the two forms of speech are at one.

Forgiveness, here as ever in the New Testament usage, is not removal of sinfulness, but the removal of condemnation on account of sinfulness. The impenitent man, rejecting Christ and God, is under condemnation; accepting Christ, he is accepted as Christ's, and, indeed, as Christ. Should be preached. The word here, and in many other places, translated "preached," means, more exactly, heralded. Preaching, in this sense, is a public official authoritative proclamation from the King Eternal by a qualified ambassador of the Eternal. In his name. Or upon his, Christ's, name. The authority of Christ, proved and manifested, as the Son of God by his resurrection, goes with that sweet message, to assure those who hear it, to make them know that it is God's, and not man's message. Among all nations. The sphere of this proclamation, and of their duty as heralds. This, of course, implies the equal universality of the blessings of grace and of the provisions of the gospel. An old truth to us, also the old, old truth of revelation from its very dawn in Eden, where the first gospel was preached. Beginning at Jerusalem. As God illumines a whole system of worlds from one central sun, so does he the whole race of man from one Sun of righteousness, and the election of a nation, tribe, family, mother, capital, was simply an adjustment to that Divine plan.

Verse 48.—Witnesses.—This English word has two related meanings, (1) spectators, (2) testifiers, or "bearers of witness." The original is only used in the latter sense, though the fact that the eleven had been witnesses in the sense of attendants upon the Lord, was one important reason why they were made the fundamental witnesses in the second sense. To bear witness was not the same as to herald, but heralding was the method in which they were to bear witness when empowered by the Holy Spirit. They were to bear witness as God's ambassadors.

Verse 49.—The promise of my Father.—The Holy Spirit, promised by the Father to the apostles and church through Christ. John xiv. 26. They could not become ambassadorial witnesses without this promised Spirit. Tarry ye, etc. Only nine days from the Ascension to the Pentecost. Acts i. 3; ii. 1-13.

Verse 50.—Led them out.—From the city Jerusalem. As far as to Bethany. It is thought that they did not go into the village, but to an eminence of Olivet just over Bethany. Acts i. 12. Lifted up his hands. In token of invocation and communication. And blessed them. And with them all who are, or were ever to become, his.

Verse 51.—While he blessed.—In blessing, in the act. Carried into heaven. Be still vain idle curiosity with all thy questions of where and how. Trust God, and trust the Son of God, who is in God's bosom in heaven.

Verse 52.—Worshipped him.—As

being God, and never have Christians ceased to do so, and never will in this or the next world. With great joy. As he had promised. John xvi. 22. No longer is there the sad countenance and the sad words, "we had hoped."

Verse 53.—In the temple, etc.—Comp. Acts i. 13, 14. Whether the upper room was in one of the buildings connected with the temple, or in a private house (xxii. 12) the temple being resorted to with the people at large at the regular hours of worship, is not quite certain, though the latter would seem the more probable opinion.

TOPICS.—(1.) The preaching.—For forty days after his resurrection, Christ was appearing, at intervals, to his disciples; thus certifying to them the reality of his resurrection, and, by various instructions, qualifying them for their great work of preaching the gospel. They were to be his "witnesses."

(2.) The promise.—"Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you." And just what that means, we may learn from Isa. xxv. 3, and from John xiv. 26. One may have very little native strength of mind, and very little learning, and yet be a very successful worker in the cause of Christ.

(3.) The parting.—Notice, Christ leaves us often, not in anger, but in benediction. "While he blessed them, he was parted from them."

The sense of Christ's absence should lead us to the place of his perpetual presence. "They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Christ had been taken, but the temple was left. The temple was the place of Divine manifestation. God's "way" was "in the sanctuary."

Had they "stood gazing up into heaven," hoping to see Christ return, their hope would have been disappointed—they would not have received "the promise of the Father." They obeyed and worshipped; and in obedience and worship lies our only hope.

We have received commands—let us obey them.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 29th, 1878.—Review.

For the Primary Class Teacher.

Question on the walk, the supper at Emmaus; what Cleopas and his friend would be likely to do after Jesus left them. Would they feel like sleeping? No, they were too happy, these two friends of Jesus hurried back to tell the glad story. Tell how he proved to them that it was really himself. Then just as he had opened the eyes of the understanding of the two, so now he taught the true meaning of the Scriptures to them all. How it was not only written that Christ should die, but that he should rise again, and that if we repented, our sins should be forgiven for his sake.

Teach what it means to be witnesses for Christ and how even little children have often witnessed so sweetly for Jesus, have so shown by their lives that they have been taught by the Holy Spirit, that others have been brought to love him also.

We have come to the parting scene; after describing which, ask why the disciples spent their time in praising and blessing God, when they had just parted with him.

Boys' Department.

Twenty Dollars.

"Thou God seest me."—Bible.

CHAPTER II.

The indulgence of a vain unreasoning hope had only unsettled my thoughts and rendered me less capable of facing the difficulty of my position, while my affairs had not improved in the slightest degree.

By the sale of an antique silver watch, valued only because it had been my father's, such work as could be obtained in the sparsely settled place, and more than all by the kindness of my neighbor Green—heaven reward him!—I had managed to live through the long hard winter. But the goodness of Him who sent his angel to "Hagar in the wilderness" had not taught me to "trust in safety under the shadow of His wings." The cloud that hung over my household had thickened and blackened, hiding my star of faith and shutting out from

my vision all that makes life beautiful and blest, until, sick at heart "with hope deferred," I seemed to struggle with a fate that seemed too hard to resist. I grew fretful, selfish and despairing, and— heaven forgive! poverty had such a chill and dwarfing touch—if I was less gentle, patient and forbearing with the loved ones who claimed my tenderest care. Weary in body and mind, hopeless of the future, and disgusted with the hard, and unlovely life in which Divine Providence had placed me, my unsanctified spirit rose in rebellion against His holy will. Prayerless and unbelieving, my daily duties became aimless and irksome, and my heart filled with useless repinings, vain longings for ease and comfort mixed with envious feelings towards happier women, who, sheltered by strong arms from every stormy blast, could feel only pity or contempt for the friendless poor. Sinful? Yes, I knew; but "the Maker of our frames remembereth that we are dust." His pitying eye follows His children in all their wanderings, and if we take thought of "what we shall eat, or drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, our Father knoweth we have need of these things."

A cold blustering day in March was closing in. Suffering intensely from the effects of a severe headache, I sat near the window watching the heavy snowflakes fall, while indulging in the gloomy train of thoughts that had become a sort of luxury. Listless and unemployed, the prattle of my innocent child annoyed me, and even the cheery chirping of the cricket grated harshly on my weakened nerves. The click of the gate-latch startled me, and I trembled violently when a heavy footfall fell on the gravelled path leading to the door. It was only good-hearted farmer Green who, without the idle formality of knocking, entered with a hearty "How do ye do?" and friendly inquiries after the health of my little family.

"Thankee, sonny," he said, removing his great mittens and taking the chair Charley had hastened to place for him near the hearth, "your fires are cheerful arter a long drive in the cold. Being at the post-office this arternoon, Mr. Dapper asked me to bring yer ma a letter as has been there nigh onto a month," and diving into an immense side-pocket he brought up a red silk handkerchief, a plug of tobacco, a copy of the Bandtown Banner, a steel spectacle case, and lastly a yellow, dirty envelope, which he handed me, remarking, as he carefully replaced his treasures, "Dapper says how its from New York, an' he b'lieves—"

The room swam round, there was a choking feeling in my throat, a gasp for breath, and hysterics was only checked by the gruff voice of my friend, asking if there was any bad news in my letter.

"No, no! Mr. Green; nothing bad," I answered at last, holding up a new crisp twenty dollar bill that had fallen in my lap from the open letter. Then warm, grateful tears came to my relief, as I shook his honest hand and thanked him over and over again for all his kindness.

"I'm proper glad of yer good fortun', Miss Lynn," he replied, with undemonstrative but genuine sympathy. "I was afeared some of yer people was dead or somethin': you looked so awful pale and scard' like; you'd best be careful of yerself if ye want to 'scape the fever. Good night, mum."

I was glad when the door closed on the burly form of my generous friend, leaving me alone in my joy.

Before you smile or sneer, my prosperous sisters—you who know nothing, absolutely nothing, of "poverty, hunger and dirt"—realize, if you can, what that twenty dollars meant! It meant food for my table; it meant books and boats for Charley; a new blanket for the invalid; and, above all, it meant independence—which is one of the sweetest sounds that ever fell on mortal ears. The note that contained my unexpected treasure was as follows:

NEW YORK, March 1, 1871.

MADAM:—Your contribution is accepted. Find enclosed the sum we consider a fair remuneration for the work. Will engage your services the coming year on same terms.

Respectfully,

RANKIN & RANSON,
Editors of New York.

Long years have passed since then; brighter days have dawned; but all has not been sunshine. My cares have not

vanished. I have my seasons of gloom and despondency, but no fear of want or pauperism before my eyes. I have no magnificent salary, no wide-spread fame; but enough for my simple wants, and the approval of my own heart. I work early and late, and my honest labor has been abundantly blessed. The same lowly roof shelters us, but an improvement here and there has made it a pleasant home, and it is our own. I have no costly silks, rare old laces and sparkling jewels—which many, who sneer at "ink-stained fingers," deem indispensable to happiness; but an English print gown and Paisley shawl are quite genteel in the little village church where I go every Lord's day to confess my sins, break the break of remembrance, and pray God's choicest blessings to rest on those who help feeble, struggling women to help themselves.

HOW TO MEET A DOG.—A gentleman gives the following advice in relation to dogs:—"If," says he, "you enter a lot where there is a vicious dog, be careful to remove your hat or cap as the animal approaches you; hold the same down between yourself and the dog. When you have done this you have secured perfect immunity from attack. The dog will not bite you if this advice is followed. Such is my faith in this policy that I will pay all doctors' bills from dog bites and funeral expenses for deaths from hydrophobia."

The Rev. Dr. Jeter, of Richmond, told this story at his own expense: Many years ago an artless stranger, whom I casually met, said to me, "I hear you preach every Sunday. You are the greatest preacher I ever did hear." "Ah," said I, "you have not, I suppose, heard Mr. M. preach." (At that time Mr. M. was attracting great attention by his sermons.) "Yes," he replied, "I have heard Mr. M. several times. He is a great preacher; but he is not so great a preacher as you are. You have the most mournfullest voice of any man I ever did hear."

The San Francisco Bulletin of Aug. 27 says:—A resolution was adopted in the Board of Supervisors last evening directing the Health and Police and Hospital Committees to erect a hospital on the grounds of the Alms-house, to which all Chinese lepers found in this city are to be removed until an opportunity is found to ship them back to China. It will not do to trifle with this terrible disease any longer. That there are Chinese lepers living among us does not admit of a doubt. Several of them were shipped back to China by Supervisor Gibbs some time ago. But all the cases evidently were not reported to him, for there are still lepers in the city. Two have recently been discovered.

Recently in Chicago a gang of men headed by a woman marched into court amid a great deal of discussion and angry verbal disagreement. They arranged themselves along the rail, and then it was made known that the woman had hired one of the men for \$10 cash to hold her husband while she committed suicide by jumping into the lake. She went at it, but before she got through made up her mind that suicide was wrong. She and her husband made up, and now they want the \$10 returned. The man who was hired says that he had to work like a hero to hold the husband of the fell destroyer; and he don't intend to return the money. Besides that, his labours extended over a time long enough to admit of the suicide of both man and wife, and he can't work for nothing. The case was adjourned.

A serious accident occurred near Kingsville the other day to a lady named Mrs. Cloutier. She was driving out of a neighbour's farm-yard when the waggon happened to up-set a bee-hive, the result being that the bees attacked both horse and driver, stinging them furiously. Mr. Frank Montrose coming to their assistance became entangled in the harness had his leg fractured. Mrs. Cloutier was badly stung about the head and face, and the horse died the same night from the effects of the stinging.

At Chicago the other day two boys of eleven and nine years of age quarrelled about a girl of eight. The nine-year-old lad shot his rival dead.