

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, April 14th, 1878.—The Scriptures found and searched.—2 Chron. xxxiv. 14-22.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 20, 21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”—John v. 39.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14-33. Tuesday, Deuteronomy xxviii. Wednesday, Deuteronomy xxix. Thursday, Deuteronomy xxx. Friday, 2 Timothy iii. 14-17. Saturday, John v. 17-47. Sunday, Psalm cxix.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The book of the law found. Vss. 14, 15. II. The book carried to the king. Vss. 16, 17. III. The book read to the king. Vss. 18. IV. Its effect upon the king. Vss. 19-22.

QUESTIONS.—On what were ancient books written? What is meant by the term “Scriptures”? By whom were they written? 2 Timothy iii. 16, 17.

Vss. 14, 15. Of what discovery does this lesson speak? What book of the law was found? Where?

Vss. 16, 17. Who was king at this time? How long had he reigned? What work had he already accomplished? Vss. 33.

Vs. 18. What portions were read to the king?

Vss. 19-22. What effect was produced on Josiah? What did Josiah order at once? Is it a sign of strength or weakness for earthly rulers to be men of prayer? Why are those times regarded as safest when praying men are in power?

Why did God give to men his inspired Word? Why is the Bible the best book in the world? Will the world ever have a better book than the Bible? Rev. xxii. 18, 19. To whom now is the Bible hid? 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. What use should we make of it? (Golden Text.)

The books of ancient times were written on papyrus, or parchment rolls. The sacred books were called, therefore, “Scriptures,” or holy writings. Possibly there was here and there a copy of the Scriptures, as far as such were inspired, in the times of the early prophets of Israel and of Judah. This is thought to be probable, considering their extensive knowledge of God’s will. Whether this was the case or not, it is certain that a time of ignorance of God’s law had at last come upon the people. For even the Temple copy of the Scriptures, that was laid in the side of the ark in the holy place (Deuteronomy xxxi. 24-26), had passed from the knowledge and thought of the priesthood and of the people. It was lost, and, what was worse, no one seemed to treat the loss as any serious misfortune.

EXPOSITION.—Compare the account in 2 Kings xxii. 8-14.

Verse 14.—And when they [the men mentioned in verse 12] brought out the money that was brought into the House of the Lord [and there deposited for payment of repairs, verse 9], Hilkiah, the priest [that is, the high priest, verse 9], found a book of the law of the Lord [Jehovah]. Instead of “a book,” we may read “the book.” The original has here the same construction as in Joshua viii. 31, and 2 Kings xiv. 6, where the translation is “the book of Moses. Given by Moses. The translators supplied the word “given.” Deuteronomy xxxi. 26, if not the original copy, its successor. The language does not necessarily imply that this was the copy originally made by the hand of Moses, the autograph copy. The books of that time were rolls. Parchment, which is the dried and prepared skin of an animal, was written on one side, and then rolled together. Such parchment will keep in good state for many centuries. From Moses to Josiah was nearly eight centuries, there are extant manuscripts that have been preserved from ten to fourteen centuries. That the book found was the whole Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), rather than some fragments of it, is most probable. Some godly priest may have hidden it when the Temple was first profaned, in order to preserve it, and died with the secret untold.

Verse 15.—Shaphan, the scribe.—“Scribe” here means Secretary of State, and not one of the Levitical order or scribes, first mentioned in verse 13, as having been definitely organized at this period. Hilkiah, the high priest, and head of the religious worship, gave

it to Shaphan as a civil officer, representing the king.

Verses 16-18.—Carried the book to the king, etc. The report of the Secretary as to the work done, is introduced because the discovery formed a part of that report. Shaphan read it before the king (vs. 18). More exactly, read in it, or as our idiom is, read from it, that is, read parts of it, to show the tenor of its contents. The reading of the whole of it is mentioned in verse 30, where the expression is, “all the words of the book of the covenant.”

Verse 19.—He rent his clothes.—It would at first seem that he had never before heard these Scriptures read. In the period of corruption this would have been done publicly much less than formerly by prophets and Levites. It is not necessary to suppose that all copies of the Pentateuch, save this one, had been destroyed, or lost, and that the preservation of the books of Moses hinged upon this discovery.

Verses 20, 21.—Go inquire, etc.—There were prophets well known to Josiah, and he would learn from them whether the impending judgments were at once to fall upon him and his people. He thus continued, as at the age of sixteen, “to seek after the God of David his father.” Great is the wrath, etc. The wrath was already experienced in part, in the state of the nation, and Josiah trembled at the thought that its full flood might speedily overwhelm all.

Verse 22.—Huldah.—God has ever honored women, not less than men, in his work of redemption. Why she, rather than Jeremiah or Zephaniah, was visited, is not told; perhaps because she was near at hand. Wardrobe. The vestments worn by priests and Levites in the Temple service were kept in a room connected with the sanctuary. College. Literally, “the second,” or “lower city, built on the hill Akra,” wrongly translated “college,” a place of repetition would be a “college,” or school. See Huldah’s answer in vs. 23-28.

I. The Discovery.—Verses 14, 15.—(1) The loss of the book had been due to impiety. Neglect of the book shows neglect of God. (2) The discovery of the book was due to piety. The godly care for God begot care for his house, and this care led to its repair. God often rewards his faithful servants with incidental, unexpected blessings which even surpass those at which they aim. (3) The preservation and recovery were emblematic of the permanency of divine truth. Even though for a time it disappear, God takes care that it shall reappear in new power. (4) The discovered treasure was at once put to its right use. It was not thrown on one side, nor laid up as a curious relic, but brought before the king. The Gospel is given to us that we ourselves may use it, but also that we may put it in the hands of others.

II. The Delivery.—Verses 16-18.—The minister of religion and the officer of state co-operated in the matter. Civil officers should be active Christians. Whenever and wherever this shall become true there will be a prosperous people.

III. The Reading.—Verse 18.—Shaphan read from it before the king. (1) The book was valued for what it contained, not for its antiquity, or as a curiosity. (2) The law in that book was law to the king, and therefore had need to be read to him. (3) The high Secretary and the king alike are fit examples for all to whom God’s word is sent.

IV. The Effect.—Verses 19-22.—(1) It was powerful. Mighty and urgent truth is in Scripture, we cannot be too deeply impressed by it. (2) The effect was to alarm. Sin in man, wrath toward man, judgment upon man, nay, rather upon those men, of that very time and place, were announced; and Josiah believed that sin, wrath, judgment, were words that stood for realities, and not mere imaginings. Therefore, terror fell upon him. (3) The king was moved to action. A terror that stirs one to God, not from him, showing that it was a godly terror or fear. The cause of the judgment was seen as clearly as the judgment. (5) Confession was made. (6) God’s prophet was honored. The despiser of the true minister is not he who trembles at God’s word.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, April 21st, 1878.—Jeremiah in Prison.—Jeremiah xxxiii. 1-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”—Jeremiah xxxiii. 3.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

Josiah gave the money that was collected for repairing the house of the Lord in the charge of three men, who took it to Hilkiah, the high priest. He counted it, and then gave it to the workmen. When Hilkiah received the money, he said to Shaphan, the scribe, one of the men who brought it, “I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.” And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. Then he went to the king, and first told him about the business on which he had been sent—how the money had been gathered together, and given to the workmen. Then Shaphan said, “Hilkiah, the priest, hath given me a book.” It was the book in which the law which God had given to Moses, was written. Shaphan read some of it to the king. Josiah had never heard it before; and now, as he listened to the words which told him what dreadful things God would bring on those who disobeyed him; and when he thought of the wickedness of his father, and what the people had done; he was afraid lest God should punish the nation. He tore his clothes, to show his grief; and told Shaphan and Hilkiah to go and find a prophet, and ask what they could now do about the words which were written in the book.

Youth’s Department.

Truth.

[Translated from the German.]

BY MRS. ELLIS.

The following beautiful illustration of the might of truth, was related by one who was an eye-witness of the interesting scene in a court of justice.

A small nine year old child was brought forward as a witness in a case in which the prisoner was charged with a capital offense.

“Now, Emilie,” said the prisoner’s counsel, “since you are called as a witness, I wish to know if you understand what an oath is?”

“I do not know what you mean,” was the simple answer.

“Now, Your Honor,” said the counsel, “is any further proof necessary that my objection to the witness is valid. Why! she does not even know what an oath is.”

“Let us see,” said the judge. “Come here, my daughter.”

Encouraged by the kind tone and manner of the judge, the child came near him and looked up in his face with a confident, steadfast gaze, yet without so artless, as to leave an impression of confidence in her truthfulness on the minds of the bystanders.

“Did you never swear, my child,” said the judge.

With a look of horror the child shrank away from him and answered: “No, sir, never.”

She understood him to ask if she ever used profane language.

“I do not mean that,” said the judge, who perceived her mistake, “I mean to ask if you were ever a witness before?”

“No, sir, I never was in a court before,” she answered.

He now handed her an open book.

“Do you know what book this is, my daughter?”

She gave one look at the book and answered, “Yes, sir, it is the Bible.”

“Do you ever read it?” asked he.

“Yes, sir; every evening.”

“Can you tell me, my child, what the Bible is?” said the judge.

“It is the word of God,” answered she.

“Now lay your hand on this Bible and listen to what I say,” and he spoke slowly and solemnly the words of the oath witnesses are required to take.

“Now,” said the judge, “you are sworn as a witness; will you tell me the consequence if you fail to speak the truth?”

“I would be sent to prison,” answered the child.

“Anything else?” asked the judge.

“God would also punish me,” replied she.

“How do you know this?” said the judge.

The child took the Bible and sought the chapter in which the ten commandments are written, and read the command, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” “I learned this,” said she, “before I could read.”

“Did anyone tell you that you would be called in court as a witness against this man?” asked the judge.

“Yes, sir,” answered she, “my mother heard that I was to be a witness, and called me to her room and bade me repeat to her the ‘Ten Commandments;’ and then we knelt together, and she prayed that God would give me knowledge to understand how wicked it was to bear false witness against my neighbor, and that He would help me, a little child, to speak the truth as in His presence.”

“And as I started with my father to come here, she kissed me, and told me to remember the ninth commandment, and that God would hear every word I said.”

“Do you believe this?” said the judge, while a tear shone in his eye and his lips trembled with emotion.

“Yes, sir,” said the child with a voice and manner which gave evidence that she was fully persuaded of the truth of her mother’s admonition.

“God bless you, my child,” said the judge, “you have a good mother. This witness is competent,” proceeded he; “were I on trial with my life and death at stake, and innocent of the alleged offense, I would thank God for such a witness as this. She is accepted.”

She told her story with childish simplicity, and yet with an earnestness that carried conviction of its truth to the minds of her hearers. In the cross-examination she never, in any instance, varied from her first statement.

By her simple testimony falsehood and perjury were exposed, the confederates of the prisoner overwhelmed with fear, and the truth made to shine forth in all its majesty.

The strength and wisdom with which her mother prayed she might be guided, shone forth in her artless speech and manner, like a manifestation of Providence, before which the false testimony of the wicked was completely overthrown.

Domestic life in Rome in Paul’s time.

A good idea of a first-class Roman house may be got by visiting the Pompeian Court in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. The principal apartments were on the ground floor. Passing through the unroofed vestibule, often between rows of graceful statues, a visitor entered the house through a doorway ornamented with ivory, tortoise-shell, and gold. On the threshold, worked in mosaic marble, was the kind word, “Salve;” while behind the door, where the porter sat, was a dog, or its picture; with the warning, “Cave canem.” Then came the atrium, or great central reception room, separated from its wings by lines of pillars. Here were placed the ancestral images; and here, too, was the focus, a family fire-place dedicated to Lares. In the center of this, or perhaps of an inner hall, was a cistern, into which the rain plashed through an opening in the roof. Further in lay a large saloon called the peristyle, while smaller rooms for eating and sleeping were placed according to fancy or convenience. The floor, though sometimes boarded, was generally a mosaic of colored marble, tiles, or glass; the walls, whitewashed in the old simple days of the early Republic, were now carved and painted, or perhaps glittered with costly mirrors; gilt and colored stucco-work adorned the ceiling; while the window frames were filled with talc or glass. On the roof were gardens, bright with leaf and blossom.

In houses like these might be found ivory bedsteads, with quilts of purple and gold; tables of precious wood—cedar, citron, or cypress—supported on marble pedestals; sideboards of gold and silver, loaded with plate; amber vases, beakers of Corinthian bronze, and glass vessels from Alexandria, whose tints rivalled the opal and the ruby.

The household work was done by slaves of various classes. In earlier times a few sufficed; but in the days of

the Empire it was thought a disgrace not to have a slave for every separate kind of work. And so, besides those who managed the purse, the cellar, the bed-rooms, and the kitchen, there were slaves to carry the litter, or to attend as their masters walked abroad. Some, of higher pretensions, secretaries, and readers. Then, for amusement, there were musicians, dancers, buffoons, and even idiots. But all may be ranked under two heads, bought slaves, and born slaves. There was a slave-market, in which the common sort were sold like cattle; but the more beautiful or valuable were disposed of by private bargain in the taverns. Prices ranged from £4 to £800.

The most remarkable garment of the Romans was the toga, made of pure white wool, and in shape resembling a segment of a circle; but in later days it was draped in broad, flowing folds round the breast and left arm, leaving the right nearly bare. Though its use in the streets was in later times exchanged for a mantle of warm, colored cloth, called pallium, or lacerna, yet it continued to be the Roman full dress; and in the theater, when the emperor was present, all were expected to wear it. The later emperors wore braccæ, or loose trousers tied about the ankle—a fashion borrowed from the barbarians. These were commonly crimson; but Alexander Severus wore white. The Romans always kept the head uncovered, except on a journey, or when they wished to escape notice. Then they wore a dark-colored hood, which was fastened to the lacerna. In the house solææ were strapped to the bare feet; but abroad the calceus, nearly resembling our shoe, was commonly worn. On the gold finger, the fourth of the left hand, every Roman of rank had a massive signet-ring. There were fops who loaded every finger with jewels; and we are told of one poor fellow who was so far gone for foppery, as to have a set of lighter rings for summer wear, when his delicate frame could not bear the weight of his winter jewels.

The dress of Roman ladies consisted of three parts—an inner tunic, the stola, and the palla. The stola, which was the distinctive dress of Roman matrons, was a tunic with short sleeves, girt round the waist, and ending in a deep flounce, which swept the instep. The palla, a gay-colored mantle, was worn out of doors. It was sky-blue, sprinkled with golden stars. The brightest colors were chosen; so that an assembly of Roman belles, in full dress, was a brilliant scene, sparkling with scarlet and yellow, purple and pale green. The hair, encircled with a garland of roses, was fastened with a gold pin. Pearls and gold adorned the neck and arms. A favorite bracelet was a golden serpent with ruby eyes, such as may be seen on many a white arm in our own drawing-rooms.

To many, in the degenerate ages of Rome, the great ends of life were to eat the most delicious food, and to eat of it as much as possible. Gluttony had grown upon the people from their intercourse with Asia. Roman meals were three—jantaculum, prandium, and cæna. Jantaculum, taken soon after rising, consisted of bread, dried grapes or olives, cheese, and perhaps milk and eggs. At prandium, the mid-day meal, they partook of fish, eggs, and dishes cold or warmed up from night’s supper. Then, too, some wine was drunk. But cæna was the principal meal, taken about the ninth hour, and on the whole corresponding to our dinner. It began with eggs, fish, and light vegetables, such as radishes and lettuces, served up with tasty sauces, all being intended merely to whet the appetite for the more substantial dishes to follow. Then came the courses (fercula), of which, in all their wonderful variety, no just idea can be given here. Among fish, turbot, sturgeon, and mullet were greatly prized; among birds, the peacock, pheasant, woodcock, thrush, and fig-pecker. The favorite flesh-meat was young pork; but venison was also in great demand. The courses were followed by a dessert of pastry and fruit.

While eating, the Romans reclined upon low couches, which were arranged in the form triclinium, making three sides of a square. The open space was left for the slaves to place or remove the dishes. The place of honor was on the middle bench. In later times round tables became common, and then semi-

tables became common, and then semi-