

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, June 15th, 1879.—The Need of God's Spirit.—Zechariah iv. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 4-7.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—Zechariah iv. 6.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Zechariah i. Tuesday, Zechariah ii. Wednesday, Zechariah iii. Thursday, Zechariah iv. Friday, Zechariah xii. Saturday, Zech. xiii. Sunday, Zech. xiv.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The visions. Vs. 1-3. II Its interpretation. Vs. 4-9. III. An omniscient Providence. Vs. 10. IV. Supply of abundant grace. Vs. 11-14.

QUESTIONS.—When did the Jews begin to re-build the temple? Who hindered them?

I. Vs. 1-3.—What vision did Zechariah behold?

II. Vs. 4-9.—What was the primary source of oil in this vision? What do these trees symbolize? By what was the oil borne from the trees? What one verse in the lesson is in frequent use by God's people? What truth does it contain? What were Paul's convictions on this point? 2 Cor. xii. 9.

III. vs. 10.—Why could not the work on the temple be hindered? Can any other work of God be successfully resisted?

IV. Vs. 11-14.—To what chief source of supply does the lesson again bring us?

In the preparation of this lesson, we need to recall our studies upon the re-building of the temple by the Jews, under Zerubbabel; the demoralization of the people because of the opposition of the Samaritans, and of the greatness of the undertaking, when compared with the ability of the returned captives; to hear once more the stirring appeals of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, in arousing the people to the resumption and the completion of the work they had, fifteen years before, begun to do. This will prepare us for the better understanding of the fifth vision of Zechariah, and for the assurance of success it gave to Zerubbabel. This vision was of a golden candlestick, like unto the seven-branched candlestick of the tabernacle (Ex. xxv. 31), but with variations purposely introduced to symbolize the fuller and more constant supply of the oil, itself the symbol of God's Holy Spirit, who—

"Enables, with perpetual light, The dulness of our blinded sight."

EXPOSITION.—I. The Vision. Verses 1-3.

Verse 1.—The angel that talked with me.—In i. 1, is stated the fact that God's word came to Zechariah, but not the manner. In i. 9, the angel is mentioned, and after that is repeatedly referred to. See i. 9, 19; ii. 3; v. 5, 10. The mission of the angel corresponds to that which is taught concerning angels throughout the Bible. See Heb. i. 14; Gal. iii. 19, etc. Came again and waked me. The visions are here represented as occurring while the prophet is awake, unless we take this act of the angel to be simply a part of the vision. See Acts x. 10-18; Luke ix. 28-36.

Verse 2.—And he said, etc.—This dramatic form of communication, by question and answer, gives life and power to this book. A candlestick, all of gold, etc. The chandelier of this vision corresponds, in part, to that described in Ex. xxv. 31-40, and kept in the Holy Place, originally, of the Tabernacle, and afterward of the Temple—but with some significant variations. Neither were for candles, but for oil-lamps, which consisted of open bowls, to be filled with oil, into which was placed a wick. The chandelier, or lamp-stand, of the Tabernacle, consisted of one upright main stem, from which branched off six stems, three on each side, while the main stem and each branch held a lamp, all the lamps being on the same level. It represented God's people, or church, in the character ascribed to them by Jesus, in Matt. v. 14. Compare and contrast Rev. i. 12, 20; ii. 1, etc. And seven pipes to the seven lamps. These pipes are feeding-tubes, through which flows the oil into the lamps, from the large oil-bowl above. The several lamps of the Tabernacle-chandelier were filled by hand, and had neither the large bowl above, nor these tubes.

Verse 3.—And two olive-trees by it, etc.—The oil was obtained from the olive-berries, by treading or pressing in the "oil fats." Joel ii. 24.

II. The General Interpretation. Verse 4-10.

Verses 4, 5.—What are these, etc.—Zechariah was, of course, familiar with the chandelier of the Holy Place, and probably knew something of its symbolical import; but the three new elements, viz., the bowl above, the feeding-tubes, and olive-trees, were added, for some purpose which he could not understand. By his words, "What are these?" he asks for the meaning of the whole. We admire the prophet's frank confession of ignorance.

Verse 6.—Zerubbabel.—The king, or civil head of the returned Jews, but, of course, under the Medo-Persian king. See Ezra iii. 2. There was very much, almost everything to discourage Zerubbabel in re-building the temple, as our previous studies have shown us; and hence, his need of just this special Divine encouragement. "Man's extremity was God's opportunity." Not by might, nor by power. This strikes, at once, the very root of Zerubbabel's discouragement, which was the utter feebleness of the Jews, as compared with their enemies' power. So is it in the work of the church. But by my Spirit. God's Spirit is God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, wherein he works, in and through human spirits, to inspire courage, to turn men as he will—both good and bad men—and so to effect, in the sphere of human life, the Divine purposes. The Lord [Jehovah] of hosts. God's name of sovereign power; and hence fitly used here to assure the weak against the strong of this world.

Verse 7.—Who [or what] art thou, O great mountain?—Any seemingly insuperable and immovable obstacle to a work, is fitly called a mountain—so high, as not to be crossed; so extensive, as not to be passed around; so fixed, as not to be moved. Before Zerubbabel . . . a plain. So is it in all duty—in every work to which we are really called of God. Often, often, has this been verified. And he shall bring forth, etc. The pronoun "he" may here refer to God, or to Zerubbabel; and the statement is equally true of both. The head-stone is the corner-stone, which was of great importance in binding together the corners, and so securing strength. Dr. Robinson found some of them in the ancient work of the Temple foundations, 17 to 19 feet long, and 7 1/2 feet thick. The word "head" often means principal or chief in the Hebrew, as in other languages; and hence may, in this passage, refer, not to the top-stone or coping, as noting completion, but to the foundation. The completion is predicted in vs. 9. The word for shoutings denotes the tumultuous sound of a multitude crying out. Grace, favor. Ruined by sin, rescued by God's grace.

Verse 9.—His hands shall also finish it.—"His," and not another's; "finish," and not fail—positive and full. And thou shalt know, etc. By the event—prediction verified by fulfillment, and proved Divine.

Verse 10.—For who hath despised etc.—God can make much out of little—feed multitudes from a few loaves, conquer the world by a dozen witnesses, and make the Nazarene who died on a cross, King of all earth's kings, and owned by all as King.

III. The Olive-Trees Explained. Verse 11-14.

Some find their answer in Zerubbabel, the civil, and in Joshua, the religious, leader of the people; others, in the law and the prophets; others, in the abundance and constancy of God's grace." Are not God's word, and God's people, the channels of God's grace to men—the witnesses for God, in the letter and in the life?

TOPICS.—The great things of the lesson are— (1.) The Golden Candlestick, with its lamps.—No question is there that the Church is meant; which is represented as "a city set on a hill, whose light cannot be hid." "Ye are the light of the world."

The number, seven, denotes perfection. Whether the Golden Candlestick is understood as symbolizing the church collectively, or the individual Christian, the seven lamps are intended to teach that the shining is to be on every side. (2.) The Golden Pipes.—The lamps are fed with oil, and the pipes convey the oil. The oil is the grace of God; and the pipes, therefore, are "the means of grace"—all those ordinances, institution, exercises, by which the soul is nourished in the Divine life. These include the Bible, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Prayer, Praise, Religious Conversation, Religious Exertion for the Salvation of Men—everything in fine, which ministers to our growth in grace. (3.) The Two Olive Trees.—A tree has life in itself, and hence the two olive-trees cannot mean the media through which, but the sources from which, all grace proceeds. Hence, the reference is, not to the Jewish Kingship and Priesthood, nor yet to the Law and the Gospel; for the fountains of grace are higher than these. —Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 22nd, 1879.—Consecration to God.—Malachi iii. 8-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Malachi iii. 17.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Question on the re-building of the Temple. Who was governor? Who was high-priest? What hindered the work? What two prophets did God send to encourage the people?

Tell how the angel showed Zechariah some very wonderful things which God meant to comfort him about the building of the temple. It was not by great armies, but by the help of God, that he was to finish the temple. Just as the oil from the two trees kept the lamps burning, so God's Spirit must strengthen Zerubbabel to finish the work that he had begun.

Zechariah's candlestick teaches us one thing that we must do. We must shine for Jesus. All who love Jesus, can be little lights for him.

The lamp will not burn without oil? What do we need to help us to do right? Tell the story of Christian's Visit to the Interpreter's House, and the fire which burned higher and hotter, though water was being poured on all the time. But when Christian was led to the other side of the wall, he saw a man pouring oil all the time on the flame. The man told him this was Christ who, with the oil of his grace, keeps up the work he has begun in our hearts.

Things that look like mountains to us, do not seem hard to do when we are filled with the Spirit. The Jews worked away with a will, when they knew God was with them.

Answer to Scripture Enigma No. 23. Birth-right.

Scripture Enigma. No. 24. A buried City.

- 1. A man who was much annoyed by the people of the city in which he dwelt. 2. A town where Christ performed one of his greatest miracles. 3. A river of Damascus mentioned in connection with a Syrian captain. 4. A woman whose son committed a grievous crime.

The last letters of the names referred to above, gave the name of the city.

Obedying our Guide.

I went up a great mountain yesterday, more than ten thousand feet high. On my way there was pointed out to me a place where a friend of mine met with a severe accident a few years ago. My guide had been also his. "How did it happen?" said I. The reply was: "He did not obey his guide. He would go by a way against which I warned him." Even so, thought I, we must obey our Heavenly Guide, if we would journey safely. Faith is implicit reliance, and this implies unquestioning obedience. We must go only where our Saviour leads us. We are sure to stumble if we leave his side.

"Ma," said a little girl, "if you'll let me buy some candy, I'll be good." "My child," solemnly responded the mother, "you should not be good for pay; you should be good for nothing."

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The New Church and Home.

April 10th.—Our people are having a fierce war among themselves, the chief of the heathen party striving to take the lands and possessions of the good Uajai. All this hinders and perplexes Dwight sorely, and fill our hearts with anxiety, as the enemy may make a descent on the mission premises at any time. It will not be long before we can meet our ills together, and then trials shall have a free go-by. From the citadel of his home Dwight will smile at what now wrings a groan. Last week was his birthday; and since he had to spend it twenty-five miles from home, I prepared and sent him a little feast by our faithful Nicholas.

May 2nd.—I was getting quite used to my lonely life and pastoral duties, when quite unexpectedly Mr. and Mrs. Hart returned from their itinerant field, bringing Dwight with them.

"We have been so happy all together once more, and in preparing for the arrival of the new mission vessel, the 'Morning Star,' of whose near vicinity we have been apprised. All hail to the children's vessel! Ah! could the children of America know one-half of the joys she will bring!

"Our house is not yet completed, but we expect that the vessel will carry us and our goods around to it, and then we shall finish as best we can.

May 12th.—After we had grown weary watching, and were quite off our guard, the 'Morning Star' came into our harbor. We were having our Wednesday prayer-meeting, when we read in the faces of the natives near the door that a vessel was in sight. The exercises were brought to a sudden close, and we were all on the brow of the hill to greet the white sails of our own loved and long-expected vessel. We laughed and shouted and cried as we looked at her; but soon the gentlemen were off in a canoe to greet such friends as might be on board. For you must know that the mission vessel has a tender, holy office to perform; not merely is she the bearer of comforts in the shape of supplies and precious mail-bags, but she gathers up one and another of our companions in missionary toil from scattered islands along the route, and brings them to one point where we may taste once more the joys of social intercourse. Oh what a meeting it is!

"Mrs. Hart and I had enough to do to get the house in readiness for the reception of so many; for I would defy the neatest housekeeper in this climate, and with native help, to be always clean and in order. What with flies the year round, spiders as large as my thumb, cockroaches, ants, lizards, and centipedes, damp, rainy weather, and frail and worn ourselves with perpetual heat, we cannot be very nice.

"The day was very warm, and the work of preparation quite exhausted me for that day. But presently the cry was raised, 'They are coming up the hill,' and I saw Mrs. Hart running to meet her darling daughter, a sweet girl of fourteen, whom she had only half dared to expect. Three years ago the mother sent her little girl to Honolulu, and now receives her back almost a woman and worthy of the love and pride bestowed on her. Can you imagine that meeting between parents and child? She is to stay with me in our new home some of the time, that she may avail herself of the music and instrument. She has such arch, winsome ways, so like dear Marion. Only she will never have such struggles as that poor child, having already settled the great problem of life.

"The company were all strange to me. Natives from all the different islands were with them, with their unintelligent dialects. Carrie and Freddie Earle came running to meet me first, but they were so grown that I did not recognize the little ones of our dear Ebon companions. Our captain's lovely wife greeted me with, 'We meet at last on this beautiful shore—we have so nearly met before, and just missed each other. She delivered my box of treasures from home with great satisfac-

tion. How her face glowed as she told me all about meeting my mother and dear ones at the Convention of the Board, and afterward on the avenue, and she had kissed my Fleda since I! Ah! can you imagine the hurried questionings and answerings, the love and joy between brothers and sisters so long isolated, with the history of lonely months of silence to be heard and given?

"But it was almost tea-time and an important hour with the housekeepers, as there was almost nothing to eat. Rice and a little bread was about the sum of our reception feast. They could not have chosen a worse time for 'good cheer,' but we knew that they did not come for this. The bread-fruit season is past, yams scarce, fruits gone, the chicken coop nearly empty; what could be done? But missionary brothers and sisters understand such things. Would ladies at home think they could make anything palatable without eggs, milk, and butter? Dear Mrs. Earle brought us a little fresh butter from Ebon, for they have a cow, and thoughtful friends from Honolulu sent some canned fruits and vegetables, which made our table more home like.

"We are having 'general meetings' to attend to the interests of the mission and delightful times generally, only, with the precious home letters and all, this proves too much for me, and I am laid away with a headache most of the time. We have about sixty letters ready to send back besides our journal. "Oh what joyous glad hours we have praising our Father for his mercies to us and to these benighted ones, singing and making melody in our hearts! The 'Morning Star' has been exploring in the south, and finds the people waiting and eager to receive the truth. Who will carry the glad tidings? One sad topic discussed was the necessity for our poor brother, Mr. Earle, to be left alone while his wife takes the long journey back to the States with her children. For their sakes the sacrifice must be made; the little ones cannot longer remain here; and although they are brave and cheerful, we fear it is too much for the lone husband and father, who must stay here for two or three years alone. I can hardly keep my eyes off his face, it has such a heavenly, Christ-like expression, especially when speaking of a Saviour's love. The Master has rare unfoldings and rich compensations for those who make such sacrifices in his service. We do wrong to call him 'poor.' Is he not rich?

"Two weeks later.—We had services on the Lord's Day in five different languages. The interest of such a scene, of worshipping with these redeemed ones in many tongues, but with one heart, cannot be told. I thank God for being permitted to witness a share in it.

"After the 'Star' had been with us a week we packed our goods and went on board the little vessel, to be carried around to the new home. Mingled hopes and fears, regrets and longings, surge over our hearts, but there is no time for thought; action is the word: The captain's wife is a charming hostess, and took great delight in showing us the tasteful and convenient arrangements of her floating home.

"Before coming into our harbor at Canaan our pilot, ignorant of his business, got us entangled among the rocks, and all was confusion on board. How it made us tremble to feel the shocks and hear the grating of the vessel's keel! The men were running from rope to rope and loudly shouting, and I was fain to help by running to my state-room and asking God to save the children's vessel. It seems a strong plea when we remind him of the thousands of little hearts that look to him for the safety of the ship; and he heard us, so that we were comparatively safe, although it was two or three days before the captain cast anchor, when he felt perfectly secure. By Thursday they were ready to commence boating off our goods. I went with Dwight to the open house to receive and dispose of the things as they were sent up from the shore.

"Come up the little hill from the landing, dear ones. It is but a five minutes' walk, and will not tire mother or Hattie nor Fleda in John's strong arms. See! the house looks odd enough covered with the brown thatch, but the long verandas give it a cool and graceful appearance. There is not much but the roof and floor as yet; some of the latter is but loose boards, so have a care for