

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, May 4th, 1879.—"The Suffering Saviour."—Isa. liii. 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."—1 Peter i. 24.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Isaiah liii. Tuesday, Isaiah liv. Wednesday, Rom. v. Thursday, Vs. 6; Luke xv. 1-7. Friday, Vs. 7; 1 Peter ii. 20-25. Saturday, Vs. 9; Matthew xxvii. 57-66. Sunday, Vs. 11; John xiii. 23-33.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Messiah's appearance. Vss. 1-3. II. Sufferings. Vss. 4-10. III. Reward. Vss. 10-12.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 1-3.—To whom does the Saviour appear to be without form or comeliness? To whom is he the "chief among ten thousand?"

II. Vss. 4-10.—How does Isaiah express his views of the Saviour's substitutionary work? What is meant by "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all?" Did Jesus suffer complainingly? Matt. xxvi. 63; xxvii. 12-14.

III. Vss. 10-12.—Did the Saviour's kingdom appear to Isaiah a failure or a success? What did the Saviour himself say about this? John xii. 32. If not saved by Christ, how can we be saved? Acts iv. 12.

The doctrine of the present lesson is the vicarious work of Christ in making atonement for sin. It is this side of Christ's work which the prophet sees and feelingly unfolds. The one side, however, which the Jews look for in their Messiah is that of royal robes and powers.

Read corresponding facts and statements in the New Testament.

Men are slow to believe, says the prophet (vs. 1), that one shall be highly exalted (lii. 12) who has first been so despised and suffering, as will now be described.

I. The Deliverer feeble and unprepossessing (vs. 2)—rejected and sorrowful (vs. 3).—Compare our Lord's rejection at Nazareth (Luke iv. 21-30; his wonder and grief at the people's unbelief (Mark vi. 6; ix. 19); his weeping over Jerusalem (Luke xix. 41, 42); his agony in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 36-44).

II. He was really suffering for us (vss. 4-6)—though we thought it was for his own doings (vs. 4, latter part). Compare Matt. viii. 17; 1 Peter ii. 24, 25.

III. He endureth oppression and cruel injustice—but submitted to it silently (vss. 7-10).—Compare Matt. xxvii. 12-14; Acts viii. 32-35; 1 Peter ii. 23. With vs. 9, compare Matt. xxvii. 57-60. Do not weary of hunting up these passages in the class, and questioning and explaining.

IV. All this suffering of his shall have blessed consequences for many—who shall be justified by the knowledge of him (vs. 10, latter part, and vs. 11). Compare John vi. 37-40; Isa. lv. 10-12. The invitations of chap. iv. (next lesson), are possible because of the sufferings described in chap. liii.

V. The once despised and rejected One shall be exalted—like a conqueror sharing rich spoil, because he suffered for others (vs. 12; lii. 12). Compare Phil. ii. 5-11; Heb. xii. 2.

EXPOSITION.—Messiah's Appearance, Verses 1-3. Verse 1.—Who hath believed? Expressing strongly at once the fact that very few—that next to none—did believe, and also indignant wonder at the sin and guilt thus shown. Our report. Our message. Compare John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16. In the plural "our," Isaiah speaks as the representative of all the witnesses of Christ's divine nature and work, and the quotations in the New Testament make him speak especially in the name of the apostles and their fellow preachers. And to whom, etc. "The arm" here stands for the conquering power.

Verse 2.—For he shall grow up, etc.—"a tender plant," literally, a suckling, that is, a sapling. The earthly surroundings of Christ's birth and early life, were to fleshly wisdom an offence and stumblingblock. No form nor comeliness. No comeliness of form—nothing in his person and history which drew the attention of the worldly, and gave the impression of heroism, of conquering greatness, and power. When we shall see him, etc. "We," the Jewish nation as a whole, with whom Isaiah here identifies himself,

as he did in vs. 1, with the preachers of the gospel.

Verse 3.—He is despised and rejected of men.—The wide world of sinful men represented by the Jews. A man of sorrows, etc. Consequent on the spirit of men who despised and rejected him. And we hid, etc. Or, rather, "as one hiding his face from us," thus describing his humiliation.

Christ's Sufferings. Verses 4-10.—These verses explain the reason for Christ's lowly appearance as described in vss. 1-3.

Verse 4.—Surely he hath borne our griefs, etc.—"Our" griefs, not his own. Sin and suffering are related as procuring cause and procured effect, but Christ had no sin of his own, and hence it was our sin, our suffering, that he bore. The word "surely" marks this fact as something undeniable, unmistakable. The meaning is not simply that he sympathized with our griefs, and thus bore them on his heart as we do the griefs of others, because the preceding verses present him as whelmed and overwhelmed in grief and woes—all his own. Yet we did esteem him, etc. So utterly blind in sin were we, that we thought his suffering proved God's displeasure with him, rather than with us—the exact contrary of the fact.

Verse 5.—But he was wounded, etc.—Literally, was pierced, reminding us of the final spear-thrust, as also of the nails and the thorns. "Bruised," indicates the utter crushing out of this life. The chastisement of our peace, etc. Our peace and our healing are that for which he was chastised, and scourged, the end in view. Thus were his sufferings, at once, the effect of our sin, and the cause of our release from sin. This is the very marrow of God's gospel to us lost men.

Verse 6.—All we like sheep, etc.—Two facts are here emphasized. (1) That there was need of rescue. (2) That the need was common to all. "All we." Compare Rom. iii. 9-20. Our misery, not our merit, brought Christ. The Lord [Jehovah] hath laid [caused to fall] on him the iniquity of us all. Two points here emphasized. (1) Jehovah subjects Jesus to his vicarious suffering. (2) Christ becomes Sin for us; that is, our iniquities themselves are treated in Christ's treatment, borne penally, the satisfaction of Divine justice.

Verse 7.—He was oppressed, etc.—Was harassed. Mark how the words of suffering and woe are crowded into verses, word piled upon word, and the very strongest and most woeful chosen, a great laboring, struggling, wailing woe of description to shadow only faintly, even then, that unutterable reality which drives out the bloody sweat, and the cries of anguish in Gethsemane, and clothes heaven and earth in pitying blackness, while he hangs on the cross. And "yet he opened not his mouth" in complaint, because of two things: (1) Jehovah laid all upon him. (2) His own love moved him to endure all for man's rescue. He is brought as a lamb, etc. A further most pathetic description of Christ's self-sacrifice—one sheep sacrificed for the flock.

Verse 8.—He was taken from prison [oppression] and from judgment—This taking was Christ's removal by crucifixion. Unjust treatment culminating in the mock trial or "judgment" preceded the crucifixion.

Verse 9.—And he made his grave, etc.—Buried as a malefactor, hence "with the wicked," and yet "with the rich," because Joseph gained the privilege of entombing him. Because, etc. The very reason why Christ became, and could become, and be a curse for us, was that he was sinless, and hence under no curse of his own.

Christ's Reward. Verses 10-12. Verse 10.—He shall see his seed, etc.—Jehovah had in view results, as did the suffering Saviour. Heb. xii. 2. The results are here described and predicted as sure. Christ's seed are believers. In these, as their Head, Christ lives, and so prolongs his days, though cut off early with no natural seed. Salvation is a "pleasure" to Jehovah and to Jesus.

Verse 11.—He shall see, etc.—"Travail" here means labor, sacrifice.—Note two things: (1) Many are justified. (2) Hence Christ is satisfied.

Verse 12.—Therefore I [Jehovah], etc. The description of conquest. The ground of it is here, as ever, THE ATONEMENT.

(1) Christ's Incarnation.—He should come, in great lowliness and meekness. (2) Christ's Rejection. His rejection

did not end with his crucifixion. Wherever the gospel goes, the question is again propounded, "What will ye do with Jesus, which is called the Christ?" Men before whom he is set forth, must do something with him.

(3.) Christ's Sufferings are set before us, in several instructive particulars. (a) The occasion of them—not for his own sake.

(b) The nature of them. There was the suffering of a Divine sympathy.

Physical suffering. "Stripes" were laid upon him.

And yet, this physical torture, of which we make so much, was the thing of which he made the least. It was not this from which he shrunk with such recoil of horror. In the garden, he does not pray to be spared the cross, but the cup. The punishment of sin is something more than corporeal. He made "his soul an offering for sin."

(4.) Christ's Triumph.—His life shall not be quenched in the grave. In spite of all the opposition of earth and hell, Christianity has pursued its conquering way through the world for more than eighteen centuries; and to-day is more strongly entrenched, and world's civilization, than ever before. And the day is coming when every knee shall bow, throughout the whole universe, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, May 11th.—The Saviour's call.—Isaiah lv. 1-11. b. c. 712.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."—John vii. 37.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

We have all been like sheep who would not go in the way the shepherd wanted, though he went before and pointed out the right way; but we have all wanted our own way, which is just the opposite of God's way.

Tell that Jesus said that he would bear the punishment due to us; that is why he left his home in glory. Ask if they think the Saviour is sorry now that he has suffered.

Answer to Scripture Enigma

- No. 17. "Unto us a child is born." 1. Unclean.....Lev. xiii. 45. 2. Nahum.....Nah. i. 1. 3. Table.....Luke xvi. 21. 4. Obed.....2 Chron. xxviii. 9. 5. Uria.....2 Sam. xii. 9. 6. Swine.....Matt. viii. 32. 7. A bel of beth-maacha. 2 Sam. xx. 12. 8. Cake.....1 Kings xix. 6. [22. 9. Hazar.....Josh. xi. 1, 13. 10. I ddo.....2 Chron. xiii. 22. 11. Lamp.....Ps. cxix. 105. 12. Dance.....2 Sam. vi. 16. 13. I mage.....1 Sam. xix. 16. 14. Sabbath.....Matt. xii. 2. 15. Basket.....Acts ix. 25. 16. Oven.....Matt. vi. 30. 17. Race.....1 Cor. ix. 24. 18. Nazarene.....Matt. ii. 23.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 18. In His temple suddenly Shall He be, And God's message unto men Brings He then. But His coming, who in pride May abide?

- 1. This was the title that the patriot bore Who built his ruined city's walls once more. 2. Dost thou God's chosen messenger defy, False prophet? thou this very year shalt die. 3. Ye chamberlains, heed not the tawdry crown Of her that was your queen, but hurl her down. 4. These laws were fixed, unalterably sure, Nor from their power were throned kings secure. 5. O, swarthy Eastern maid! what sympathy Attracted Israel's leader thus to thee? 6. This prince from Persia came (so Cyrus willed), The ruined temple of the Lord to build. 7. It touched the food, and lo! the sacred flame Burned high upon the rock from whence it came. 8. Cruel is wrath, by passion's tempest fanned; But who before this bitter foe can stand. 9. To God and country false, the prophetess

With lies the temple-builders would distress.

10. Here also seven corpses hang, a sight of fear, The solitary mourner crouches near.

11. Hilkiah's son, the household's lord, who came To meet the Assyrian in his Master's name,

12. The graven signet seals the king's decree, Which none henceforth may break, not even he.

12. God's kingdom cometh not with this, but still Grows like the flowers, flows like the silent rill.

14. Take us the little thieves that spoil the vine, So shall our vintage yield the choicest wine.

15. Sudden around the sleeper torches flare, And this with brazen discord rends the air.

16. Ungrudgingly to one another show Kind welcome both to friend and bitterest foe.

17. If the dead rise not, then we well might cry, "This let us do, to-morrow we may die."

18. It stood beside the altar; as they passed The people into it their offerings cast.

18. Prophetic, yet fantastic past belief! Such homage paid to that one centre sheaf!

20. This shall ye hear behind you; hear it say, "Walk ye in confidence, this is the way."

21. A fainting slave the robbers left to die. They knew not that the vengeful foe was nigh.

22. From morn until this hour, upon the hill The prophets cried; their God is silent still.

23. Thy charities should be of show bereft; Let not thy right hand know what doth thy left.

24. The fishers leave their boats with these, and go To follow with their Lord through toil and woe.

25. No sound of this was heard, as rose in air God's temple grandly silent, great and fair.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XVI.—A Tour around the Island.

Those letters! John's hands were the only ones steady enough to open Fleda's as the bereaved circle on the avenue gathered in the library on the evening of the day on which their precious dead had been consigned to dust. Too tender and sacred for the perusal of the world, therefore close the door softly and leave them with their dead and living. Marion, with a hushed and awestruck face, on which one reads through the ravages of storm and tempest the dawn of peace, lies on Fleda's couch, with Hattie at her side, reading for her her share in the year's epistles. A chance "whaler" had carried to the islands the news of Marion's blindness, and as we pass out from the sorrowing circle we catch one sentence from Alice's pen in response to this great affliction:

"Let us praise our Father that he does not permit us to take our own wilful way through this world. How much safer we are in the hands of infinite wisdom and love! Can you not say, Marion, 'Choose thou the path for me?' God has undertaken to purify you 'as gold tried in the fire.' Be assured, dear one, that he will not leave his work half finished, and my heart leaps with joy to know that the day will surely come when you will praise him for every pang. But why not begin the praise now? Would it not lighten half the burden? Oh how you can honor him now!"

Out into the hall, down the street, and through the busy throng we carry the wondrous thought; into the charmed circle of home, by the fireside, and as we press our weary pillow, over and over again we hear it: "Why not begin the praise now?" Surely! Why not? Ah! souls long buffeted, and well-nigh fainting under the mighty chiseler's hand, try it! "Begin the praise now."

Not many days later, Mrs. Hammond put into our hands a package of journal-sheets. "For the cause of missions," she explained; "they were not designed for the public, but we have our private letters besides, and we feel

that through these sheets Christians may be cheered and the skeptical enlightened as to the beautiful work in Micronesia."

Knowing not how to present a stronger plea for missions than is found in this simple journal-life from Alice's pen, we venture to transcribe at length:

"Saturday, October 4, 18—This busy week has come to a close. Days that are so filled as ours pass swiftly. No room for *ennui* and low spirits; action is the word.

"Our dear missionary sister and I have agreed to take turns in overseeing the housework; for although we have two servants, they are quite like children, and can do but little alone. This week I am to get breakfast—we take a lunch at noon—and Mrs. Hart attends to the supper. We rise at break of day here, although we do not breakfast till nine. This gives us abundance of time to do the baking for the day before prayers. When all is done, the bell rings, and the natives come in to 'worship,' which is always conducted in their language. There are always thirty or forty who come in to morning and evening devotions. We sing several hymns—music is a passion with them—read portions of the translated word, and Mr. Hart or Dwight talks familiarly and affectionately with them about their relations to God and their daily needs.

"Our days are divided between house-keeping cares, teaching the natives to sew, knit, and cut garments, besides regular school-duties and study and writing for ourselves. Our evenings are spent much on this wise; we have prayers in the long hall, where the natives sit much of the time. There is a large table at one end. On one side sits Mrs. Hart with her reading or writing, and her two little ones at her feet with books, puzzles, and drawings, Dwight opposite her, reading aloud to Mr. Hart, while I in one corner slowly translate the book of 'John' with the natives, who always come in for evening readings from the Bible, except Saturday night, on which we try to secure privacy enough for a family prayer-meeting and preparation for the Lord's Day. We do not forget that we came here to do good and not to live for ourselves, but the fact that we can never be alone, never rid of the chattering, noisy natives, is especially wearing, and calls for patience, patience.

"Our Sunday commences early, while you dear people at home are just laying your heads upon your pillows; by nine o'clock the first meeting convenes, then the Sunday-school, then the prayer-meeting for women, and afterwards one for the men. After a short recess, then afternoon sermon, and then our real rest begins. How we rejoice in the quiet, precious hours, reading, singing, amusing the children of our household, and resting! We have our services arranged in this way for the convenience of the natives, who must come a long distance.

"October 19.—I took the entire charge of house-keeping last week in order that Mrs. Hart might do more teaching and other missionary work, for which, of course, she is much better fitted, as the unfamiliar language yet stands in my way. She has been compiling a hymn-book and some school-books, and Dwight is busy with the hand-press all of his spare time. It is slow, laborious work, but will well repay the effort. This morning was spent with my washerman, trying to teach him how to make our clothes a little less yellow. We are also attempting to teach the native women to iron, as the constant, intense heat of this climate renders this work almost impossible for American women. This afternoon, after dismissing my 'primer' class, and sitting down to sew with two pretty, intelligent-looking native girls, everything looked so home-like about me it seemed difficult to realize that we were eight thousand miles from our native land. But faith and love annihilate distance, and we only wish our friends at home could know what a well-spring of happiness lies in this work.

"October 28.—Last week Mr. and Mrs. Hart made a short tour of the island, and next week we all propose going on such a journey in company. It is the only way of reaching many of the people. We go away, not knowing but we may return to find our home in ashes or broken open and robbed; but not unless our Father wills; we there-