

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, April 27th, 1879.—The Coming Saviour.—Isaiah xlii. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. iii. 17.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Matt. xii. 1-21. Tuesday, Isaiah lii. Wednesday, Matt. xi. Thursday, Isaiah xlix. Friday, Isaiah lxi. Saturday, Isaiah lxii. Sunday, Isaiah lxxv. Revelation v.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Christ as a Servant. Vs. 1. II. His meekness and firmness. Vss. 2, 4. III. A light of the Gentiles. Vss. 5, 7. IV. New things and a new song. Vss. 8-10.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vs. 1.—How is Christ spoken of? How does Paul describe him? Phil. ii. 7. What is here meant by judgment?

II. Vss. 2, 4.—How is the meekness of Christ described? What does our Saviour say of himself? Matt. xi. 29. What does Peter say? 1 Pet. ii. 23. What aim has the Saviour in view? What is meant by the isles?

III. Vss. 5, 7.—Why is Christ called a covenant of the people? How is he a light to the Gentiles? Luke i. 79; ii. 32.

IV. Where did Jehovah first declare his name? Ex. iii. 14, 15. What is meant by former things? Those prophecies which were at that time coming to pass? What are the new things? Chap. lxii. 63. What is the new song? Rev. v. 12, 13. Who will sing it? Vs. 10; Rev. vii. 9.

Isaiah was the son of Amoz, often mistaken for the prophet Amos. Further than this nothing is known of his parentage. His prophetic ministry, beginning B. C. 758, extended at least to the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, a period of nearly fifty years, B. C. 758-710. If the fifteen years referred to in Isaiah xxxviii. 5 are to be added to these figures, his public life would cover a period of sixty-five years. Tradition makes him the first victim of Manasseh's persecution, B. C. 698-680 (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4).

Isaiah's writings are an anticipated gospel. To him may be traced the first clear and distinct intimation of the important influence to be exercised by the Jews on the destiny of mankind through the coming of the Messiah. That portion of Isaiah's prophecy which begins with chapter xl. and continues to the end of the book constitutes the most elegant part of the sacred writings of the Old Testament. "No other prophet of the Old Testament so wrought himself into the New Testament." See Matt. iii. 1-3; iv. 14; viii. 17; xii. 17; xliii. 14; xv. 7; Mark i. 2; Luke iii. 4; iv. 17; John i. 23; xii. 38; Acts viii. 32; xxviii. 25; Rom. ix. 27; x. 16; xv. 12.

EXPOSITION.—The title of our Lesson is "The Coming Messiah," or in the language of the Scripture of the lesson, "The Servant of Jehovah." The Scripture of the lesson divides itself into four parts. In the first three, Jehovah speaks in his own person; in the fourth, the prophet Isaiah speaks by the Holy Spirit of inspiration concerning the three previous deliverances.

I. JEHOVAH'S PROCLAMATION CONCERNING MESSIAH.—Vss. 1-4.—(1) His office and endowment. Vs. 1. (2) His mode of executing his office. Vss. 2, 3. (3) His final success and the results. Vs. 4.

II. JEHOVAH'S PROCLAMATION TO MESSIAH.—Vss. 5-8.

III. JEHOVAH'S CONFIRMATION OF BOTH PROCLAMATIONS.—Vss. 9.

IV. THE PROPHET'S INSPIRED CALL FOR A NEW SONG.—Vss. 10.

I. Jehovah Concerning Messiah. Verses 1-4.

Verse 1.—Behold.—Is an exclamation, nearly like Lo. My servant. This title is used with some variety in Isaiah, yet with an underlying unity of meaning. It unquestionably here means our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus was the King of Israel, and Israel and its Head are often regarded as one, a single personality. Even Cyrus as uniting with Israel for its return to Palestine and restoration to separate existence, is a type of Christ, and is expressly called by the title, "my Shepherd." xlv. 28. Mine elect. Elect not merely as dear to Jehovah, but as set apart of God's own choice. Jesus was not taken to be our Saviour because he was found fit, but of God's sovereign purpose he was consti-

tuted and made fit. This efficient election made him such as to be God's de light, and was a part of his endowment for his work. The further endowment was the added and special gift of the Spirit. This reminds us of the scene at Christ's baptism when the dove descended upon him, as also of the assertion that he had "the Spirit without measure." Shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. "Judgment," here, is not retribution, but rather that which is adjudged as law, and here the law of grace; that is, the gospel.

Verse 2.—He shall not cry, etc.—This designates the inward and unobtrusive nature of Christ's work in distinction from the outward display of worldly power.

Verse 3.—A bruised reed, etc.—This verse emphasizes the absence of physical force and violence, or the peacefulness of Christ's work. The reed, though nearly broken by bruising, shall yet be safe, so free from violence are Christ's movements and dealings. The smoking flax, etc. Flax was used for lamp-wicks. The lamp flame feebly flickering and just ready to go out in darkness—there is no wind's bluster to hasten even this to death. He shall bring forth, etc. The work is nevertheless mighty, the most mighty, for in it Christ "brings forth," makes effective, or causes to be received and realized, "judgment"; that is, God's law of grace, the gospel (vs. 1.) "Unto truth"; or, literally, "in respect to truth," in the way of truth, as explained in John xvii. 37, or "by the truth."

Verse 4.—He shall not fail, etc.—As he will not crush others, so others will not crush him. Seemingly so weak, and really so peaceful, it would seem that he must be trampled down by the seemingly and really violent of earth. But this should not be, even though, as in the crucifixion, it seemed to be. Till he have set judgment, etc. Not till then, and of course not after then, hence never. The isles, etc. The Mediterranean was the western boundary of Palestine, and hence the isles and maritime regions in and along that sea, here represent the world to its remotest bounds. "The desire of all nations," in the sense of him who alone can satisfy the spiritual needs of mankind—conscience and his gospel.

II. Jehovah to Messiah. Verses 5-8. Verse 5.—This verse presents Jehovah in his absolute sovereignty, and thus shows the value of the following words of promise to Messiah.

Verses 6, 7.—I the Lord [Jehovah], etc.—"Called" again asserts sovereign election. "Righteousness" expresses the character of the Caller, of of the call, of the Called, and of the work to which he was called. Christ is "our righteousness," and "the righteousness of God," "A light," as being in person, work, and word, a revelation of God and his grace to man. To open blind eyes. Not merely by shining upon the blind, but by shining efficiently and creatively by the Spirit within them. "Prisoners" represent mankind as slaves of sin under condemnation. The words "sitting in darkness" conform at once to the figure of blindness in vs. 6, and the figure of imprisonment, because the darkness of the dungeon is meant.

Verse 8.—I am the Lord.—Literally, "I Jehovah," in effect an oath by his own name, "as he could swear by no greater." The final end of redemption itself is God's glory. See 1 John v. 20, 21.

III. The Confirmation. Verse 9. This appeals to prophecy fulfilled, to confirm faith in this new prophecy, in this clearer and fuller statement of an old prophecy.

IV. The Call to Praise. Verse 10. This is a call for a new song, and a song from the whole world for the glorious gospel which is for a world's rescue.

John the Baptist came like Elijah, with his voice lifted up as a trumpet; Jesus came like the gentler Elisha, to soothe and to save.

Very tenderly was he to deal with human weakness and want and woe. Christ sets up his throne, not so much over our heads, as in our hearts. His disciples might falter, and fail, and be discouraged; but not he. For he comes forth, "leading captivity captive."

Various vicissitudes have marked the history of Christ's kingdom in the world, and sometimes it has seemed on the

verge of extinction. His people have trembled with apprehension, like Eli in the gate; but he shall not "fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth."

Light and liberty—are the two great blessings that Jesus Christ came to give. Even taking the words in the sense of general knowledge and political liberty, all history bears testimony that the highest intelligence and the freest institutions are to be found alone in Christian countries. But the words have a far deeper meaning, as having reference to that soul-illumination and soul emancipation which only Jesus Christ can give.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

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

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

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

God used to tell some good men who loved him very much, things that would happen a great many years after they themselves were dead. There was a prophet name Isaiah, to whom God told things that were not to come to pass till seven hundred years after he was dead, he wrote them down for us, and they are just like pictures of the Saviour who was to come, our own dear Saviour. Isaiah told us five things about this Saviour who was to come so many years afterwards.

- 1. What he was called.—God called him, "my servant," &c.
2. What he would be like.—Describe him as gentle, mild, humble, pitiful, tender with the weak. Talk of a lamp with its wick burning so low, that it seemed only to smoke. What would you do with it; put it out because it gives no light! Most people would do that, but Jesus would trim the wick, and put some more oil in the lamp, and coax it up till it burned brightly.
3. What Jesus would do.—Read verse 7, and ask how Jesus opened blind eyes—Give literal instances.
4. Who gave Jesus power to do such things? verse 5 and 8.
5. How long shall he work?—We often use to say, "But Jesus will never be discouraged—never stop till all the earth loves and obeys him."

Answer to Scripture Enigma No. 16.

- 1. Keys of the kingdom of heaven. Matt. xvi. 19.
2. E benezer.....1 Sam. vii. 9-12.
3. E gypt.....Gen. xli. 57; xliiii. 1, 2.
4. P ihahiroth.....Exod. xiv. 2.
5. T ekoah.....2 Sam. xiv. 4-21.
6. H ebron.....Josh. xx. 1-7.
7. E lah, valley of 1 Sam. xvii. 2; xxi. 9.
8. S hinar, plain of Gen. xi. 2-8.
9. A bel.....Gen. iv. 8. Heb. xi. 4.
10. B abylonians.....2 Kings xxv. 21. Dan. xi. 37, 38.
11. B elshazzar.....Dan. v. 2, 22, 23, 30.
12. A bihu.....Lev. x. 1, 2.
13. T admor.....2 Chron. viii. 4.
14. H ananiah.....Dan. i. 7; iii. 25, 26.

Scripture Enigma. No. 17.

Ye heavens sing aloud; Give ear, O earth! This wondrous birth Great seers and bards—divinely taught—foretold In days of old. Hail, blessed infant! Thy so lowly head God-light doth shed; And nations, seeing it, shall run to thee, And bend the knee.

- 1. The leper's dreary lot and mournful cry, As shunned by all his kind he passes by.
2. Thou prophet bard—thy song sublime shall be The burden of the city Nineveh!
3. At this fair board the rich man dined in state, The fragments fed the beggar at his gate.
4. This prophet spake in mercy's cause—and lo! The people let their captive brethren go.
5. Brave man and true! thy death is guilt's own gain; First rob'd of love, and then by treachery slain.
6. Into the lake, adown the steep ravine, Urged on by demons, plunged the herd unclean.
7. To save themselves, the people of this town Flung out the head that schemed against the crown.

- 8. The Tishbite rose from sleep in glad surprise; This, heaven provided, met his famished eyes.
9. King Jabin's city, which in conflict dire, A Jewish warrior bold destroyed by fire.
10. A seer and author of the olden day; His name remains—his work has passed away.
11. To this God's word is likened, from its power To light our steps in trouble's darkest hour.
12. The joyful monarch bore in this his part; His wife looked down and scorned him in his heart.
13. To slay the sleeper came they; but instead It was but this they found within the bed.
14. God's day is meant for rest; yet Pharisees Would make it irksome by their stiff decrees.
15. By this escaped th' apostle and was gone While, at the city gate, his foes watched on.
16. Like man, the grateful warning grass must fall. Aud like the grave, must this receive it all.
17. All run in this, but one the crown can gain; But Christians all may run, and all obtain.
18. A name prophetic, once a shameful name, Drawn from a little town of evil fame.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XV.—Marion and the Dying Fleda.

If Fleda's words were a benediction to John, breathing quietness and peace over a part of the household, to two of its inmates at least the night brooded down a thing of pain and horror. Fleda was wrestling with the angel of death, her tender watches little dreaming him so near. Her gentle spirit had its fears and struggles to overcome, and, like many another victim, she fought her battle silently—silently, not alone, for on every hand were hosts of heaven's warriors pledged to bear her through warfare with the prince of darkness. Through the silent watches of that long, dark night, so very dark to her blind eyes, she walks her room, tears her hair, and groans aloud, now sinking upon her bed to throw herself from side to side and weep impatient tears, anon to murmur a prayer, wrung from despair an agony, as rebellious as the inward curses muttered against the Hand that smote those bright orbs and quenched her glad, free spirit in utter night. For this she called God's work. No which in dungeon cell ever beat more freely against the prison walls than did poor Marion. Time and again during that night she crept from her room along the corridor leading to Fleda's door, and knelt to listen for some sound. At her side she was always calmer, says nearer the light, she thought, beyond the patient sufferer too well to venture nearer than the door. To-night she knew that Fleda was restless and troubled too. She could hear her moan, sometimes sob and pray. The last time she caught the words of the grand "Profundis"; and although they told of Fleda's struggle Marion went back to her couch quieted enough to sleep.

"By anguish which made pale the sun, I hear Christ chaunt his saints, That none among creatures any where Blaspheme against with despair, However darkly dawn on."

"Take from my head thorn-wreath brown: No mortal grief deserves that crown; The sharp regalia are but crown; Whose days eternally be."

"For us, whatever's under Thou knowest, wiltest, woe, Grief may be joy misundone. Only the good discerns the truth: I'll trust these while my day."

"Mother," said Fleda the next morning, "I want to go out in the morning to-day. Will you tell John I am ready?" "Why my darling, you are not to go. We should be so happy if you; but think Fleda you have not out in five months, and you are feeble."

"I know it, mamma, but it is lovely to-day. I know it by the sweet breath that comes in at the window and the fall of the sunshine on the carpet. The air is full of spring. Oh mother, I am going soon where it is always spring. Are you not glad?" cried Fleda, with a sudden burst of tears.

"My darling! my darling!" was the only answer. After a pause Mrs. Hammond said: "I will call John and see if he thinks we can take you out safely."

John and Hattie, with the enthusiasm of health and youth felt that fresh air and sunshine were just what Fleda needed, and eagerly hastened preparations; but John's heart smote him as he lifted the dying girl in his arm. She was very much wasted, and eye and cheek were brilliant. The hurried breathing and quivering lips frightened him, and he whispered, "Fleda, I dare not take you. It is too much."

"Yes, brother, go on. It is only that I am so eager and glad. It seemed as if I must go out once more into God's beautiful world before—" She stopped suddenly, and glanced from one dear face to another with a look never to be forgotten. Her mother stooped and kissed her, finishing the sentence for her:

"—Before you go to your Father's house, daughter?"

"It shall be as you wish, little sister," said John starting down the steps.

Drinking deep every sight and sound and fragrance of the spring, Fleda's face was a study to her brother and sister. That she enjoyed all keenly was evident, as can only those who lie on beds of pain and breathe the heavy house air from month to month; yet it seemed like one who said "Adieu" to all. On her return, as they laid her down upon the little couch, so seldom empty, and hung about with affectionate cares, the mother asked no questions. Mothers sound the depths of their children's hearts—such mothers as Mrs. Hammond do. One glance between them, and they each knew the other's thought—that it was the last time. A little later in the day, when her pastor, ever a dear and welcome friend, called for his daily visit, she asked him to read her Rutherford's magnificent poem beginning

"The sands of time are sinking, The dawn of heaven breaks; The summer morn I've sighed for, The fair, sweet morn, awakes."

It was plain that Fleda's earthly day was waning that the glorious morn of heaven might awake for her. As night drew on she grew restless, feverish, and wandering, called for "Alice;" and then recollecting the distance between, would ask anxiously "if letters from her would come to-night." They had been long expected.

John will never forget the twilight of that spring day. Mrs. Hammond went to the door of the library, saying:

"Fleda is unlike herself to-night. I never saw her so anxious about Marion. She is very excited, and no one can quiet her as you can."

Mr. Saybrook followed his mother, and entered Fleda's room in time to hear her cry:

"Alas for him who never sees The stars shine through his cypress trees!"

"That's Marion, John," said the sick girl, tossing from side to side in a way strangely unlike her usual quiet ways. "She used to be our sunbeam, our perpetual song-bird; but now—Oh, John, why don't she come to Jesus with her trouble?"

"Darling child," said her brother, taking hold of the feverish hands and counting her pulse, "I fear you do not come to him with yours to-night. Perhaps this is the last test of love and faith that Jesus asks of you ere he takes you into rest."

"God's will, his way, his time is best, He won't deny thy last request Longer than needs must be."

Fleda quieted instantly, and with her hand in John's sank into a light slumber. Hattie, who stood bathing her sister's temples, whispered, "Marion ought to be here." John shook his head doubtfully, but finally went softly out, leading her in and placing her in an easy-chair by the bed. Marion started and shuddered violently as the dear sleeper moaned uneasily a broken prayer for the one who lay so heavy a burden upon her heart. She opened her eyes soon, and as they rested full upon Marion she started up wildly, saying: "Marion, you will break my heart."