

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, November 30th, 1879.—The Messages to the Churches.—Rev. iii. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”—Rev. iii. 11.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Rev. ii. Tuesday, Rev. iii. Wednesday, v. 1; Ephesians ii. 1-10. Thursday, v. 2; Hebrews xii. 1-4. Friday, v. 3; Thess. v. 1-11. Saturday, v. 5; Isaiah lxi. 10-11. Sunday, v. 8; John xiv. 16-24.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Introduction. Vs. 1-7. II. Blame and praise. Vs. 1-4, 8-11. III. Reward of overcoming faith. Vs. 5, 6, 12, 13.

QUESTIONS.—How many letters were sent to the churches in Asia? Were these churches all there were? What Christian woman came from Thyatira? Acts xvi. 14. For what was the church in Laodicea notorious? Of what two Epistles does our present lesson speak?

I. Vss. 1-7.—Of what district was Sardis the capital? On what river was it situated? Where was Philadelphia? What is meant in verse 1 by “the seven Spirits of God”? What in verse 7 by “the key of David”?

II. Vss. 1-4, 8-11.—For what is the church in Sardis blamed? What is it exhorted to do? What threatening is uttered against its impenitence? For what is this church somewhat praised? Is the church in Philadelphia blamed at all? What is meant by “Behold I come quickly”?

III. Vss. 5, 6, 12, 13.—What is the reward promised to overcoming faith in the church at Sardis? What to the church in Philadelphia? With what other teaching is this in harmony? Matt. xxiv. 13. What is meant by the “new Jerusalem”? See Rev. xxi. 2, 10; Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22. What by “cometh down out of heaven”? What by “my new name”?

It is not to be supposed that the seven churches of Asia, so called, included them all. The number is undoubtedly representative, not exhaustive. Polycarp was the first illustrious bishop and martyr of Smyrna. Pergamos was in Mysia, on the river Caicus. Thyatira was about thirty miles south of Pergamos, and famous for the dyeing of purple. Acts xvi. 14. Sardis was the capital of ancient Lydia, and situated on the small river Pactolus, the golden-sanded river of the ancient world, thirty-three miles from Thyatira and twenty-eight from Philadelphia. Laodicea was in the southwest of Phrygia, and not far from Colosse. It was celebrated for world prosperity and lukewarmness in spiritual things.

EXPOSITION.—To the Church at Sardis. Verses 1-6.—Verse 1.—The angel of the church.—Ideal representation of the membership of the church as sanctified and sent into the world to be God's witnesses. The seven Spirits of God. Ideal representation of God in the completeness of his power as dwelling in and ruling over the church and world. The seven stars. Seven angels of the churches, (i. 20), thus including “the angel of the church in Sardis.”

Verse 2.—The things which remain.—The remains of Christian faith and practice. The church was in a decline, almost to the point of apostasy.

Verse 3.—Remember, etc.—Reflection upon the past is necessary in order to right living in the future. I will come. Not “the second coming” of Christ and the end of the world, but a coming to this church in judgment, which coming shall manifest the principle of the final coming. As a thief. Unexpectedly, to the unprepared and negligent, and hence to their loss; not, however, with the thief's spirit and intent, but in righteousness.

Verse 4.—Defiled their garments.—See the same figure in Eph. v. 27, and often habits is the current word for character. Shall walk with me in white. Intimate companionship and communion, in purity.

Verse 5.—Will not blot out, etc.—On the phrase “book of life.” See Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8; xx. 12-15; xxi. 27; xxii. 19. It represents the whole list of God's children, as singly and collectively in God's eye and care. This passage represents the possibility of a final apostasy as something to be conceived of, feared, and shunned. Whether this possibility ever did or will

become also a fact is not here the question. See Heb. vi. 9, and compare with vs. 1-8.

Verse 6.—He that hath an ear, etc.—Compare Matt. xi. 15. The Spirit. One, the Holy Spirit, not the same thought as in the phrase “the seven spirits” (vs. 1).

To the Church in Philadelphia. Verses 7-13.—Verse 7.—He that is true, etc.—Compare this description with what is said of the church, and what is promised to it, and note the fitness. Carry this comparison through the other letters and note the same fitness, and mark the variations of description in the different letters. The key of David. The key is the symbol of mastership and authority. “The key of David” here implies that Christ is that promised King of whom David, as king, was type, even Messiah, and that Christ is now on the throne of David.

Verse 8.—An open door.—Opportunity for Christian work. This corresponds to “the power of the key” as described in vs. 7. Christ reigns as Lord in providence.

Verse 9.—The synagogue of Satan.—False Judaism was of the Devil and was the religion of the ruling part of Israel in Christ's and the apostles' time as exemplified in the crucifixion and in persecutions. Who say they are Jews? Such Jews as the promises contemplated; children of Abraham, as to spirit and conduct. I will make them to come and worship, etc. Christ in his control of this world will make it manifest to all that not that false Judaism, that no false religion, but Christian faith, is of God. The worship is the recognition of the supremacy of Christianity and the overthrow of a hostile Judaism, of all false religions.

Verse 10.—Because thou hast kept, etc.—“The hour of temptation” means the time of trial by persecution.

Verse 11.—Behold, I come quickly.—The Lord is very near his saints; a very present help, if they are faithful, speedy in chastisement and judgment if they are not. Compare vs. 3.

Verse 12.—A pillar.—Utility, ornament, permanence, prominence. New Jerusalem. The place prepared for God's people, typified by the old Jerusalem. New name. Does this mean the name of Christ as designating him in the completion of his saving work?

Verse 13.—The solemn emphasis of this repeated call to heed God's word cannot be mistaken.

TOPICS.—(1.) A dead church.—Such was the church at Sardis. Doubtless the very “first people” of the city were enrolled among its communicants, and its contributions showed a large degree of liberality. Nor did any cloud of suspicion rest upon its orthodoxy; and yet spiritually, it was “dead”; God said it, and God knew.

There were “a few names even in Sardis” that had “not defiled their garments,” and these might serve as kindling coals.

(2.) A live church.—The church at Philadelphia was probably numerically small, and poor in worldly goods, and so was what would be called “one of our weak churches,” but they had kept Christ's word, and he gives them the largest promises. He will make even “those of the synagogue of Satan,” who had bitterly opposed them, pay homage to their moral power, and acknowledge that God was with them of a truth.

For the Teachers of the Primary Class.

Jesus says he will give a crown “to him that overcometh.” See if any can tell who the robbers are. Satan is the chief one, and he makes the others do his work. Try to draw out some more names, such as, bad company, bad words, anger, pride, thinking more of play, or dress, or anything else than of Jesus, etc. The children should be able to tell you how to set to work to overcome these sins.

The first is, “Be watchful.” Jesus said, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Take one or two special temptations, such as anger; teach them to watch for the cross, bad words; we don't know when Jesus will come, and we must be always ready.

Remember what we have received. Draw out some blessings, some signs of God's favor they have received, and show that these ought to make them

more earnest in overcoming. Remember also what thou hast heard. What good will this lesson do, if you forget all about it? Think of the many lessons and Bible words they have heard!

Repent. If we are truly sorry for our sins, we will be so anxious to leave them off, that we will never give up trying to overcome, and Jesus himself keeps all such.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 46.

- 1. Sela h.....Psalm xxi. 2, &c.
2. Ann a.....Luke ii. 36.
3. Megiddo n.....Zech. xii. 11.
4. U pharsin n.....Daniel v. 25.
5. Elish a.....2 Kings xiii. 21.
6. Libna h.....Jer. lii. 1.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- No. 9. Benaiah. 2 Samuel xxiii. 20.
10. Hezekiah broke it in pieces because the children of Israel worshipped it. He called it a piece of brass. 2 Kings xviii. 4.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 47.

SCRIPTURAL ACROSTIC.

- 1. What heavenly messenger was sent to tell Emmanuel (“God with us”) on earth should dwell?
2. Who hid a hundred prophets in a cave from the fierce wrath of Jezebel to save?
3. Who ruled in Israel in the Judges' days, and left on record her glad song of praise?
4. Who was on altar bound by God's command, for sacrifice, by a fond father's hand?
5. Who at the midnight hour did pray and sing, and made his prison walls with praises ring?
6. What bleeding sacrifice, performed of old, of earth's Redeemer and redemption told?
7. By what Greek letter, as in all the past, His presence pledges long as time shall last?
8. By what meek emblem does the Saviour show His union with His people here below?
9. Now by what name our earth again we'll call, When Jesus reigns triumphant over all?
One glorious attribute of God here see, In which all others blend in harmony.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 11. Which of the kings of Judah set up an image in Solomon's temple, but afterwards repented of so doing and removed it?
12. Who was the first murderer?

Youth's Department.

Rev. John Brown's Diary.

We have in the pages of the London Baptist the remainder of the voyage of Rev. John Brown. We have wished to make some reference to it but as it was to lengthily we have delayed doing so, seeing that such voyages are now not at all uncommon. On looking it over again however we find a few extracts which we think will probably be read with interest by many of his friends, and therefore we insert them:

On this bright sunny day everybody seems to be cheery and blithesome. Children, of whom there are a fair number on board, are skipping around, some enjoying themselves in a swing, altogether giving the deck the appearance of “A home on the rolling deep.”

Paid a visit to the engine-room. The massive engine of 400-horse power is a magnificent display of the power of mind over matter. The number of revolutions made per hour is upwards of 3,000.

Next is a descent to the stoke-hole; landing at the end of a kind of small tunnel about forty feet long, looking through which, amid smoke and glare of glowing furnaces, a number of forms like men move to and fro very actively. The first thought that comes to the mind is too suggestive to be mentioned. On passing through the tunnel they are found (as expected) to be of the human family. There are sixteen furnaces, attended by twenty-four men, who relieve each other in batches. The intense heat, the noise, the clatter, and

bang, bang, clatter, and noise of the constant opening and shutting of furnace doors, with that of the engine, the dust from the breaking and shovelling of coal to feed these sixteen insatiable mouths (consuming about two tons of coal per hour) altogether make it a not very desirable place to remain long in, and yet it goes on day after day, night after night, hour after hour. An ascent to the realms of the sweet sea breeze and genial sunshine is sought and duly appreciated. Since leaving St. John to noon-to-day sailed 166 miles.

We shall see the sun set to-night. Tea over, we watch and wait. There! what can be grander than that? See the king of day as he descends in his robes of glittering gold into the sea. See! His edge is now (as if) touching the water. Gradually he sinks lower and lower; now he is half sunk, the small clouds around are tinged as with purple and gold; now he is well-nigh sunk, and now he has gone clean out of sight. He will shine an hour and a-half or two hours yet on friends in Nova Scotia. May he shine very propitiously!

“I'm thinking of home and mother.” Their singing sounds sweet, and touches some tender chords.

The wind, though not strong, has been against us the last three or four days. On remarking to one of the crew that we wished it would turn westward, he replied, “Oh, it's all right; all the better for them that's going the other way.” Wise sailor! Perhaps our prayers are sometimes unanswered, and we meet with strong head winds, because it might be “all the better for them that's going the other way.” What would be to our advantage might be greatly to the disadvantage of others. Those two splendid sail-ships would not have been going on their way so grandly if we had had a fair wind. Wise sailor!

What are those young fellows doing near that gangway? On drawing near, it transpires that they are trying to persuade two old men to race. One is eighty-three years of age, and the other seventy-five. The older of the two is an “old soldier,” who served twenty-five years in the army, and has been a pensioner thirty-five years. He seems to think “discretion is the better part of valour,” and declines on the ground that he fears he should shame his opponent by going so much faster. “Weights” are suggested, but to no purpose; he doesn't like to shame the other.

Saturday night—Pacing the deck. The night is cloudy, and only one star is visible. The deck, which to-day was alive with the fun and frolic and laughter of children, and passengers walking and talking at every turn, is now well-nigh deserted and quiet. From midships, where “I take my walks abroad,” I can see one other lone mortal moving to and fro astern, and ahead is the man on the look-out. How lonely it now seems at this dim, quiet, lonely hour far out upon the wide waste of waters!

Going forward and leaning over the rail, what a splendid sight greets the eyes! The phosphorescence of the water as the good ship Hibernian ploughs her way along is a lovely sight. At times the water has the appearance of a seething mass of sparkling liquid fire. If one could only obtain a bottleful of it, and it would remain just as it now appears, what a treasure it would be!

Gradually, however, the light and beauty fade away, and the waves of sparkling light are broken and scattered, and the water, as it appears to go past, is as if strewn with innumerable brightly-flashing white stars of various sizes, becoming more scattered and lost the further they go from the ship's prow. “O Lord, how wonderful are Thy works in all the earth,” and no less in the sea!

Sunday 10.30, a. m.—The bell is now ringing for church, or rather kirk, as a Scotch Presbyterian minister (Rev. Mr. Thompson) is to preach.

The first hymn is “Holy, holy, holy,” etc., to the tune Trinity, a young lady playing the organ. Then follow reading the Scriptures, and the reading of prayers by the captain (Archer by name). Then “Jesus, lover of my soul” is sung; afterwards more prayers are read, and the hymn sung beginning:—Fierce raged the tempest o'er the deep. Then came the sermon. Text, John

xxxix. 40, “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.”

The divisions were—1. Unless we have come to Christ we are not in possession of true life. 2. Jesus Christ is possessed of this life; not only in possession to enjoy, but also to give. 3. Men by nature lack life, but get it by coming to Christ. Among many good points well worked out were, “Whatever you have, apart from Christ, it is not worth the name. In the midst of all the temptations that surrounded Christ, He walked in the Father's fellowship. There is only one way of obtaining life, and men fail to obtain it because they will not come to Christ.

The preachers' idea of the state of the world was widely different from those who represent it as bad, and getting worse and worse. “Never,” said he, “were there so many believers as now;” continuing, “Notwithstanding this, there are hundreds and thousands who do not seem to care whether Jesus Christ is a lie or not. Not only in the world, but even in our churches, Christ might go up and down and say to many there, ‘Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.’ Yes, even to some in the company of His own people He might say the same.

The sermon, which occupied half-an-hour, was solid, sound, and good. It had skeleton, sinews, nerves, blood, life, force—just such as might be expected from a Scotch Presbyterian.

After singing “Jerusalem the Golden,” and prayer, we all went home!

Afternoon.—Had some conversation with a Roman Catholic on penance and other matters, also with an Episcopalian on perfectionism. He declared that there are many who are born, live, and die without sin. He did not admit that he had ever met with one, at the same time frankly confessing himself to be a sinner.

The Presbyterian and Methodist brethren are most enjoyable and agreeable fellow-voyagers. One of the Methodist brethren has been labouring in Newfoundland, his field extending a distance of two hundred miles on the coast, going from place to place by boat, and in winter by sleigh drawn by ten or a dozen dogs, and he talks about going back, too. As to creeds, we have on board Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, and Baptist, all sailing in the same ship, and, I suppose, to the same port; and so is it with all who believe in Christ and depend on His atonement for acceptance and pardon; whatever they may be called by themselves or others, they are on board the same Gospel ship and bound for the same port, although some may be cabin, others intermediate, and others steerage passengers.

3 o'clock.—A large school of porpoises surround us, and follow for a considerable distance, leaping up out of the water quite sportively. It must be holiday time.

9.30 p. m.—On deck alone. Dark sky above, dark sea around. For some distance on every hand here and there the bright phosphorus is flashing light; astern there appear to come to the surface numbers of large balls of white light, which seem gradually to melt away and burn themselves out. Others again are small, but exceeding bright. “O Lord, how wonderful are Thy works . . . in wisdom hast Thou made them all.”

September 10.—Got up this morning at three o'clock, by Nova Scotia time, about 7.15 ship's time. A wet, dreary morning. Full compensation is made, however, by our being in sight of the Irish coast. Thank the Lord for sight of land, although what we see is rough, rugged, barren, and bare.

Noon.—While we sit down to dinner (twelve o'clock) friends in Nova Scotia are probably (some of them) sitting down to breakfast, as my watch, unaltered as yet, points to half-past eight; so that according to our time they are taking breakfast very late, or according to theirs, we are taking dinner very early.

September 12.—Up early. “Great expectations.” Hasten on deck to see what news, when there greets our long eyes the coast of our dear old native Wales, although somewhat misty. All hail, my country, I see thee once again! Hail! hail! How dear the sight of one's native land after a long separation, both of time and distance, experience only can teach. As we go up the