

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, March 23rd, 1879.—The All-seeing God.—Psalm cxxxix. 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thou God seest me."—Gen. xvi. 13.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Ps. cxxxix. Tuesday, Job xxxviii. Wednesday, Job xxxix. Thursday, Job xl. Friday, Job xli. Saturday, Jonah i. Sunday, Jonah ii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Omniscience. Vs. 1-6. II. Omnipresence. Vs. 7-12.

QUESTIONS.—What is said to be the rank of the Psalm of this lesson? What is its character and style? What attributes of God are unfolded in the two sections we shall study?

I. Vss. 1-6.—Are the hearts of kings known to their subjects? Prov. xxv. 3. Is the same ignorance true of God? Of what particulars of God's omniscience does the Psalmist speak. Of what saying of Paul does verse 5 remind us? Acts xvii. 28. Of what saying is verse 6 suggestive? Romans xi. 33. What passage in Job expresses a similar thought? Job xi. 7-10.

II. Vss. 7-12.—Whither can a man flee from God's presence? What words of Moses should we all remember? Numbers xxxii. 23. What height does God fill? What depth? What breadth? What darkness is darkness to him?

This Psalm is majestic. Aben Ezra pronounced it 'the crown of all the Psalms.' In the Hebrew the Psalm is anonymous, but in the Septuagint it is ascribed to David. In style it is eloquent. Nowhere in all the Scriptures are the great attributes of God—his omniscience, his omnipresence, his omnipotence—set forth so strongly as here. Nowhere is there a more overwhelming sense of the fact that man is beset and compassed about by God, pervaded by his Spirit, unable to take a step without his control; yet nowhere is there a more emphatic assertion of the personality of man as distinct from, not absorbed in the Deity.

Here are two kindred thoughts, of great practical importance.

I. God knows us thoroughly (Vs. 1-6).

1. The general statement. Vs. 1. How little we know of each other, or even of ourselves! But God knows us.

2. He knows all my actions.

3. He knows all the words I speak.

Vs. 4.

4. And my very thoughts, even at a distance. Vs. 2.

5. We cannot understand how God knows everything—can only wonder at it. Vs. 6. But many things must be carefully regarded in practice that we do not understand.

II. God sees us everywhere (Vs. 7-12).

—(This connects with vs. 5)

1. We cannot escape from God's presence. Vs. 7.

2. In every place.

3. Even at night.

Work, when alone, "as ever in the Great Taskmaster's eye." If tempted to secret crime, "be sure your sin will find you out." People say to themselves, "Nobody will know it." But you will know it; and "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."

EXPOSITION.—The contemplation is not more of God's attributes than of the Psalmist as affected by those attributes.

I. OMNISCIENCE.—Vss. 1-6.—God perfectly knows the Psalmist. (1) In his whole being; (2) when at home; (3) when abroad; (4) in his speech; (5) in his sins; (6) consequent amazement.

II. OMNIPRESENCE.—Vss. 7-12.—No escape from God's presence. (1) None anywhere; (2) none above or below; (3) none on the earth's face; (4) none by means of darkness.

Verses 1-6.—O Lord, Jehovah. The word rendered searched means originally bored, and hence a thorough internal investigation. The result of this search is knowledge. "Searched me and known me." It is not that God requires the process for the result, but the language emphasizes the thoroughness and completeness of his knowledge of what is inmost in us. He knows us a thousand fold better than we know ourselves. My sitting and my rising may express business activity in our usual vocations. This, and this in its inward

principles, in the thought of the heart as the heart plans for the hand to execute, is known, and known so easily that no careful investigation of books of account, no sifting and weighing of evidence is needful. Known from afar.

And when from the fixed seat of his business one goes abroad, hither, thither, amid strangers, no eye of human friend or foe to watch and note, even when journeying in the desert or in the thronged ways, even then in the places of rest for a night, under the arching sky or in the crowded hotel, God compasseth our roving and our resting, literally winnoweth, that is tests, as the wind tests grain and chaff, by its separating power, and having tested knows all our ways, result after a process—a figure, as in verse 2, drawn from man's mode of getting and having knowledge.

And as of deeds so of words, words which like works, express the life and are the outcome of purpose and principle. So perfect is God's knowledge of our words that not one—not a word—escapes his notice, not one which is not known even while it is on the tongue and so before it passes the lips into the air; not one which is not thus early known altogether, its intent, its import, whether true or false, honest or dishonest, known altogether by the all-knowing, as it is not or cannot be by the man himself.

And so God takes the sinner in his sin, besets him, behind and before, neither retreat nor advance, escape cut off, hemmed in. The word for "beset" implies a forcible restraint, and hence the besetment of an unacceptable antagonist's power. The same is further implied in the words laid thine hand upon me. The consciousness of sin and guilt with the consciousness of God as the Searcher of hearts is a consciousness of besetment and capture.

No wonder that there follows the cry of wonder. We stand in amazement before some prodigy of human knowledge but all the knowledge of all mankind, what is it to omniscience? What is it to us compared with the knowledge of the God who is judge of us?

Verses 7-12.—In these verses there still seems to speak a consciousness of sin, which ever as in Adam and Eve in the Garden has as its first impulse to flee from God's presence, not lovingly to seek it, which is the impulse of filial loyalty. And yet the emphasis is upon the omnipresence, rather than upon this form of consciousness which shapes the language, and hence in verse 10 we have a transition to a sense of God's loving and fatherly guidance, which is the privilege and bliss of the child. See verse 14. It is not unnatural that a man who, though a sinner, is yet a forgiven sinner, who, though the son of God, is yet a son in sinful flesh, should present thus together both aspects of the consciousness of God's omniscience, and thus more richly and impressively set forth the omnipresence itself.

In verse 7 the questions whither &c., are strong forms of asserting that there are no places to which to fly. The specifications in the remaining verses only amplify this thought. Heaven is the region above; hell or the underworld, the region below—ascend, descend—the two directions which are complemented in the next verse by motion from east to west, and indeed from the extreme east, the very region of morning dawn, wings of the morning, to the utmost west, the sea being the Mediteranean, which to the people of Palestine had no known limits westward. Hence as ever the form of the language is determined by the state of knowledge existing at the time, but is none the less fit to carry the truth committed to it in every stage of knowledge.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 30th, 1879.—Review.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

There was once a man who tried to believe that there was no God. He had printed over his fire-place these words, "GOD IS NO WHERE." (Print them on the black board.) A little child came in and spelled them out, but she made them read this way: (Change the w so that it will read God is now here). The man was so startled that it made him think, and at last to believe in God.

There are many Bible-stories with which to illustrate the omniscience and

omnipresence of God. Such as Jonah, the man who tried to get away from God. Achan and Gehazi, the men whom God saw. Annanias and Sapphira, the man and woman whom God heard. But these must be briefly told, most children have some knowledge of them.

The smallest sin I well may fear, Since God Almighty is so near.

Ask, do you ever think that no one notices how hard you try to be a better child? That no one sees when you have done right.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- No. 11. 1. H a m.....Gen. ix. 25. 2. A h i o.....2 Sam. vi. 3. 3. D aughte r.....Matt. ix. 22. 4. A shdo d.....1 Sam. v. 1-9. 5. S alom e.....Mark xv. 40. 6. S yria c.....Dan. ii. 4. 7. A quil a.....Acts xviii. 2. 8. H ephn i.....1 Sam. iv. 11.

Scripture Enigma.

- No. 12. 1. A prophecy made at the Saviour's birth, And now His seat who dwelt with man on earth. 2. It was with this she wiped her Master's feet, After anointing with the ointment sweet. 3. Here they constrained their Saviour to abide, And hold sweet converse at the eventide. 4. He saw them lying where no man could tread, And knew his Lord had risen from the dead. 5. This loving hands prepared in sorrow's hour, To embalm His clay o'er whom death had no power. 6. A doctrine dear to every Christian still, Yet scorned by those who heard it on Mars' hill. 7. "This," said the Saviour, "Ye can never be, Who leave not all on earth to follow Me." 8. From Christ's tomb women brought the wondrous word, And yet like these it seemed to those who heard. 9. A place where men the Saviour's body bore, For none in death had rested there before. 10. "Mary," He said to her, in accents sweet; And with this name she worshipped at His feet. 11. It was the last and sadly bitter cry, When all forsook, and only foes stood nigh. 12. They brought them ready at the early dawn, To anoint His body on the first day's morn. 13. For him they said Christ called ere life had fled, Who for long years had numbered with the dead. 14. Thomas believed not until he could see These marks by which Christ suffered on the tree. A glorious truth the initials will unfold; Search for it, reader, "as for hidden gold."

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XI.—The Saybrook family.

"Don't trouble yourselves about me, dear, good people," she would sometimes say; "I am happier than anybody—only when I think of Louis," she would add, with a quiver of the rosebud mouth. "But it does not help him to think about him or anything else disagreeable," with a dash of the tears and a rippling laugh, and then she would dance away trilling, "Let us be happy while we may."

John saw all this and hid it in his heart with a puzzled pain. She was the child of as many prayers as Louis himself. "What did it all mean?" he queried. Ah, John! a tenderer, wiser heart than yours knows what is the meaning, and just the process by which this child will find the path to heaven. To Louis, however, Marion was a fair, sweet sorceress, for whom he pined so bitterly that she was often sent for to beguile his loneliness. But the sick boy always wearied at last, and leaned the heavier against his brother for heart's ease.

One day John's writing kept him occupied till a later hour than usual, yet busy brain and fingers did not overreach the thoughtful heart. But for the trea-

sure lying so still in the recess of the deep bay-window, he would have been through long ago; so by extra efforts he was earning means to take his darling over the sea that he might test the skill of European doctors. He had saved almost enough for the undertaking, and the glad thought quickens his pulse as he glanced toward the couch where Louis lay watching the clouds which had gathered to see the dying of the sun. John laid down his pen with a start as he noticed how fixed was the gaze of the sad brown eyes. They were too large to-night, and the pinched look about the usually full, sweet mouth troubled him. Moving quickly toward the couch and raising the limp little figure in his arms, John said, "Dear Louis, I have left you too long; you are very tired." The sigh of relief which attended the change of position told better than words how tired.

Very sweet was the converse between the brothers, rocking in the soft early twilight; they had sat thus daily for many months, but looking back, John wonders that he did not realize it to be the last time. The landlady, stepping in and out, serving tea and spreading the little round table for two, saw it all when later in the evening she called him one side to say, "The poor young gentleman is mighty bad to-night; had we not better send a messenger for his sister?"

John started, saying: "Do you think him worse? He is very tired; I have neglected him too long, but next week we will be off on the sea, and he will revive." So blinded often is the loving heart that it cannot see its idol passing through the open door. Thus he walked the room with his light burden, and sang and talked, painting bright pictures of foreign lands and health restored.

"You do not feel like talking, Louis? Well, don't, my boy. You shall rest and sleep soon," for Louis had scarcely spoken for hours, nor moved, except to stroke his brother's cheek and bury his head deeper against the broad breast.

"I saw mother last night," he said, suddenly.

"Why, Louis!" cried John, with a start.

"Yes, I did, and she was very beautiful. I wish she would come again."

"How did you know it was mother? You cannot remember her."

"No, but I knew it—I cannot tell how; and she held out her arms and said, 'Louis, my dear boy, come home.' But I couldn't quite reach up to her, John. Do you not think she will come again to-night?—Oh, I hope so! Please lay me down now, that I may sleep and dream."

John watched by the sleeping brother till a late hour before retiring. Being very weary, he slept heavily, roused near morning by an eager, almost joyful cry from Louis: "John dear, she's here, right there; don't you see? I'm going now. Good-bye. Kiss me before mother lifts me. And here is one for Marion. Tell her Jesus has found me, and it's sweet to die."

The raptured face glowed and beamed like our dreams of angel faces, till the hush of death left in marble lines the heavenly beauty. The strong, brave soul that had borne so long with quiet patience had triumphed over the dwarfed and stunted body, and was free now to roam and soar and strive after its highest aspirations.

Could John grieve? Ah! what a question! John did grieve, and for the time being he was stunned. "Why should he work any longer? He would soon be alone in the world. After all, he guessed he wasn't much needed anywhere." Thus said the tempter: "Could not my one ewe lamb have been spared?" But when Marion came, and with passionate outbursts of grief knelt beside her dead, crying, "Why is it? What had he done that he must suffer and die?" John's better angel gained the victory, and with his hand on Marion's bowed head he could say: "We will not struggle nor impugn; God never does, nor suffers to be done. But that which you would do, could you but see The end of all events as well as he." "He has but housed our brother from the storm," Marion.

there was light on the dark shore for him, and there is light and joy and unspeakable happiness for you—for us, if we will have it. "Search for your stream of human love In the unfathomable sea above."

But the soul of Marion Saybrook rebelled at God's dealings, and sought relief for an aching spirit from every source besides the true fountain. Sympathizing friends flocked about her on returning to school-duties; but as she soon seemed the gayest of the gay, and was foremost in every "madcap" adventure, it was easy to chide and say, "How strange and unfeeling Marion has grown!" There was one, however, who knew this restless and undisciplined girl better, who had heard at night the sigh and smothered groan, and had seen the silent tear covered hastily with the brightest of smiles. Hattie Hammond was an inmate of the same school, and for the last year had been Marion's room mate. Between them had sprung up a tender attachment, founded on extremely opposite traits of character and habits of mind. Such, however, sometimes produce the choicest friendships. Hattie had not watched this little "heart's-ease" of hers, as she loved to name her, without knowing that God was at the work at sealed heart, and praying that her hand might help to unlock the door. Marion would listen to her, and was true enough to herself to sometimes weep upon her shoulder the real bitterness and discontent of her soul.

John was free now to study or labor at will, but who shall blame him if his arms as well as heart sometimes ached for their dear burden? While at college there was no more any home to which to go, "neither needed nor welcomed," which would be a hard thing to say of a nature less strong and true. But Marion was at hand, and during the last year a new love and hope had crept into John's heart, in itself sufficient to keep him from growing gloomy and misanthropical. The old, old story, ever new, and born into each soul a miracle of joy, was being enacted in John and Hattie's lives. Not that he had forgotten his buried loves. Not he! But to the hungry heart, half weary of bearing a yoke away, and longing not merely for domestic life, but for some one to share his aspirations, Hattie seemed the embodiment of all earthly loves in one, and John was blest.

It did not trouble Hattie Hammond in the least that she was to be a poor minister's wife. To her there seemed nothing incongruous or strange that she should change her home of luxury and ease for one of labor and sacrifice in the far West, for John loved her and she loved him. They two were strong to face the world, she thought, dear soul! and then, too, Hattie was no dreamer, but intensely practical, and enjoyed rather than otherwise the idea of putting her shoulder to the wheel of life, instead of being borne on its top. Her mother had often rallied her about her love of labor, saying that she never assimilated to the luxurious life about her with any abandonment of ease, but was always doing. "You might just as well be poor as not, daughter."

"Yes, mother dear, if God sees that I can serve the ends of life as well."

So, when Providence showed them that she could, Mrs. Hammond had small fear for her future, and, moreover, was too true a mother, too true a woman, to forget her own "love's young dream" or place any serious obstacles in their path. Besides, who ever yet resisted John Saybrook? Marion had spent the last two summer vacations in Mrs. Hammond's family; and now that Alice had left them, she seemed to be quite adopted in the affections and cares of the family. Hattie had been the original attraction, but Marion had come to love the mother with all the fervor of a deeply orphaned heart, and Fleeta with an almost idolatrous affection, such as is sometimes felt by one in the glow of health for a beautiful invalid. To Marion, Fleeta was a martyr seven times crowned, a heavenly being with clipped wings, an angelic soul hid in a Parian vase, chained by some unjust decree to endless pain. In fact, Marion, with her ungoverned soul, worshipped the gentle Fleeta, and never ceased to wonder why the exquisite vase was not more marred by the clanking fetters of cruel pain. It would have seemed that the lessons of past years might have indeed taught