

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, February 23rd, 1879.—The King in Zion.—Psalm ii. 1-12. Date unknown.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."—Acts ii. 36.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Psalm ii. Tuesday, Psalm lxxii. Wednesday, Ps. cx. Thursday, Isaiah liii. Friday, Isa. lxiii. Saturday, Act. iv. 19-31. Sunday, Acts xiii. 26-37.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Rebels in conspiracy. Vss. 1-3. II. Their conspiracy vain. Vss. 4-6. III. The Messiah's authority. Vss. 7-9. IV. Rebels exhorted to yield. Vss. 10-12.

QUESTIONS.—I. Vss. 1-3.—Of what conspiracy have we here an account? Why is it surprising? From what does it spring? Rom. i. 28. Against who are wicked men particularly hostile? Who have already fulfilled these words? Acts iv. 27.

II. Vss. 4-6.—Is God on his throne alarmed by his enemies? At what does he laugh? Against whom are his words terrible? Isa. xi. 4. How was he set upon Zion? Isa. ii. 3; Mic. iv. 2.

III. Vss. 7-9.—On what decree is the Messiah's kingdom founded? When was Christ declared to be the Son of God with power? Rom. i. 4. Who are meant by "heathen" in vss. 1 and 3? How complete is the triumph of Christianity yet to be? I. Cor. xv. 23; Psalm cx. 5, 6; Rev. vii. 9, 10.

IV. Vss. 10-12.—With what exhortation does the Psalm close? What reasons enforce this exhortation? What peril follows the rejection of Christ? John iii. 36.

The hope of the Messiah is interwoven with the warp and woof of Old Testament history, and is the stay and strength of all. In the Psalms especially this hope is great. The Saviour and his apostles quote from them oftener than from all other sources, showing that a deep Messianic import underlies them. In their Messianic character, however, we shall study the Psalms in this lesson only. If we wish to extend this study, we can look at the 16th, 22nd, 72nd and 110th. Some of the Psalms relating to Christ bring out the side of his suffering and humiliation. This was the side in Christ which the Jews failed to see.

EXPOSITION.—This psalm refers, probably to Christ. It is frequently so quoted in the New Testament; for example, Acts iv. 25-28; xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5; Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5. The Psalm divides itself into four equal sections, each of three verses; each section distinct in subject, but altogether constituting a symmetrical and organic whole. Its dramatic character is obvious, and has been often remarked and admired. It is full of life, energy, power, majesty. The first section presents the nations revolting; the second, the effect upon Jehovah; the third, Christ enthroned; the fourth, the psalmist exhorting all to reconciliation.

Verse 1.—Why do the heathen rage? etc.—The word translated "heathen," signifies nations. The word translated "people," is also plural, "peoples," and designates the very same as the word "heathen." The question "Why?" implies what the words "a vain thing;" that is, a fruitless act; express, that such conduct is as foolish in its hopelessness as it is wicked in its spirit. The word "imagine" is in Psalm i. 2 used in a good sense, and translated "meditate";

Verse 2.—The kings of the earth, etc.—"Rulers." All who are leaders in opposition to the gospel of Christ and to the Christ of the gospel. To "set themselves," is to come out openly, and take the position of leaders against Christ. "His anointed," or his Messiah, designates the one whom God has invested with kingly authority, as the act of anointing with oil was employed thus to set apart men for the kingly office, and symbolized a divine communication of the spirit qualifying for the office. So the Spirit is said to have descended and rested upon Christ at his baptism.

Verse 3.—Let us break, etc.—The result of their counsel. Two points in it are, (1) To escape Christ's, and so God's authority. (2) To do this by violence, by breaking down the established government. The "bands" and "cords" are the divine laws of Christ's government, regarded as a restraint, constraint,

and bondage, because contrary to the prompting of a corrupt and wicked disposition. It is only as one comes through the new birth to have the new heart, and so "the same mind that was [and is] in Christ," that submission to him is seen, and felt, and found to be the highest and sweetest freedom. If he only reign over us, but not in us, his reign is felt as enslavement, and cannot submit. Comp. Acts iv. 25-27; Matt. xxi. 33-46.

Verse 4.—He that sitteth, etc.—The God and Father of Jesus Christ against whom is aimed every purpose, plan and deed, which is aimed against Jesus Christ, even though men may not be conscious of this. This was the constant assertion of Christ, and that not alone on the ground that he was sent of the Father as his Representative, but because he and the Father were one, as in character, aim, and authority, so also in nature and consequent intrinsic dignity. So here, vs. 7, "my Son." "The heavens," by their apparent exaltation, infinity, serenity, purity, immutability, omnipresence, are fitly regarded and represented as the home, or dwelling place of God. Laughing, and derision are by a bold figure attributed to God, to express the extreme and utter folly and futility, as well as wickedness, which, in his view, must and do belong to every attempt to break down his authority.

Verse 5.—Then will he speak, etc.—He views the wicked futile folly not with contempt only, but with a holy wrath which must burst out in holy retribution. To "vex" is here to confound, to whelm in utter confusion.

Verse 6.—Yet have I set, etc.—The "set," is here best understood not as "anointed" (the marginal reading), but as inaugurated, or invested with office. Called "my king," as administering God's government, having and exercising God's authority. Zion was the hill in Jerusalem, just opposite to and west of the temple hill, but it is also used of the whole city Jerusalem.

Verse 7.—I will declare, etc.—The Messiah here speaks. Instead of "decree" we may read "concerning the decree." Christ then proceeded to assert his authority against the rebels. He grounds it, as in his ministry he always did, upon his relation to the Father, or upon the Father as related to him. See John i. 1-14. "This day," in Acts xiii. 33, as the day of the resurrection, because then was Christ manifested, and in a very true sense fully constituted King. This does not exclude the idea that he is also Eternally Son, or the Eternal Son.

Verse 8.—Ask of me, etc.—This verse refers to Christ's actual dominion over the whole world, including the rebellions of vss. 1-3, and not especially to his success in redeeming all.

Verse 9.—Thou shalt break, etc.—Shiver them. The "rod" is the kingly sceptre, of "iron" in token of retribution to be visited upon the rebels. This verse is terrible, and presents a terrible aspect of Christ's reign. See Luke xix. 27; Rev. ii. 27; xii. 5.

Verses 10-12.—See the same thought and the same connection in 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, 18-20. So Christ warned men to flee from coming wrath, to put away the cause of wrath.

Here, at the close of the Psalm, is a final alternative submitted unto all men. "Kiss the Son." What a wonder, that the King of Glory should allow and encourage such nearness of approach—such familiarity of affection! "Kiss the Son!"—thus signifying that the only way of salvation for a sinner, is to come, in loyal love, to Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is not enough to adore the Father. We must kiss the Son, lest we perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Even a little wrath of his would be an awful thing to bear.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, March 2nd, 1879.—The Prayer of the Penitent.—Pa. li. 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."—Acts ii. 36.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Tell a story of a king, great and powerful, but so good, loving his people planning for their welfare, and doing them good; going about in their homes, and helping them every day in many ways. Make the children feel that

every one should love and obey such a good king; then suddenly tell that many of his people rebelled, opposed their king in all his plans, set themselves against him in everything, met together and talked angrily, laid in wait for the king's servants, and ill treated them, even killed some, laughed at the king's orders and would not obey them, did all they could to break up his government. How would such deserve to be treated?

Next, picture the king on his throne in his might and glory, with soldiers and servants in many countries ready to do his bidding. Which would be strongest, he, or those wicked men who opposed him? His patience does not make them do better, and now he has borne long enough with them, and they feel the king's anger, which is terrible.

King Jesus was anointed, chosen to be king by God himself. His coming was proclaimed by the songs of angels, and also at three different times by the voice of God, which proclaimed him as "My beloved Son." Jesus has hosts of angels. Kings rule over large countries, Jesus has the whole earth given to him. Kings wear crowns, Jesus is crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords.

When they hung Jesus on the cross they really killed the King. Could they undo all that his life had done? Could they make people forget all that he had taught? Were their plans to break up his government a success? Tell how there were then only one hundred and twenty Christians, and now there are more than we can count.

Show in tender loving words how even such little children as these do oppose Jesus every day.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 7.

- 1. M a o n.....1 Sam xxv. 2, 3.
2. O n o.....Neh. vi. 2.
3. S h a n g a r.....Judg. iii. 31.
4. E l i s h a a.....2 Kings v. 9.
5. S y r i a.....2 Kings v. 1.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 8.

- 1. A grandson of Adam.
2. The queen of Persia.
3. The source of the Nile.
The initials and finals read down name a person, and the thing she was first to commit.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Micronesian Isles.

ALL THROUGH the morning that followed and the early wedding-breakfast, Mrs. Hammond moved about as one in a dream, giving no sign of the pain in her heart save by her unnatural composure. But she watched her child during those solemn moments when taking upon her those vows which sever her from home and country, a light shines in that mother's eye more eloquent than tears. Ah! does she not in this her second life—her child's life—give herself again to that work which quickens the ministry of angels?

Wake, fond mother! smile, for the isles rejoice, and Jesus holds the amaranthine wreath wherewith to crown that fair young brow! Was it not such a thought as this that prompted Mrs. Hammond's words as she took Alice in her arms for a last embrace? "Child of my soul, my God be praised for giving you to me, and for giving you a heart to leave me on such an errand."

We will not attempt to follow Mr. Elmore and his wife through the parting scenes and trying experiences that followed in quick succession for the next days, but leave them in the hands of the good Pilot, while we go before and take a few glimpses at the islands of the South Pacific to which they are bound.

Micronesia embraces the islands lying between 8 degrees south and 20 degrees north latitude, and between 130 degrees and 178 east longitude. Within this boundary are perhaps more than two thousand islands grouped together, known by different grouping names, as Carolines, Malgraves, Ladrones, etc., each of which group bears a name of its own. These islands lie at a distance of from one to three thousand miles from the Sandwich Isles, which have borne such an abundant fruitage as the result

of the missionary's husbandry. One of the practical workings of missionary effort there is observable in the willingness and desire of native Christians to carry the "joyful tidings" to the isles beyond, and many educated, earnest native men and women have been sent from thence to assist our own missionaries in the great work. Some among them have received persecution and death, yet they "count it all joy" to dispense of that which has been so freely given them.

These Pacific isles are mostly of coral formation; some very small and low, mere reefs with a lagoon or lake in the centre; others are beautifully varied with mountains, wood, and stream. It is a curious fact that they are each provided with fresh water, either by a central lake, or intersected with rivers, sometimes both. Some of them nature has left very barren, but most are crowned with luxuriant tropical verdure.

The island of Ascension, or Ponape, which became the permanent home of Mr. and Mrs. Elmore, consists of a high central isle of basaltic formation, sixty miles in circumference, surrounded by ten smaller ones and several of coral formation, enclosed within a reef of seventy miles in circumference. The highest point is 1858 feet above the ocean.

This island is called the paradise of Micronesia. Its natural features are beautiful indeed. Groves of the wonderful mangrove tree line the shores and from the water's edge to the mountain-tops nature has prepared a succession of terraces, all crowned with verdure. Bread-fruit, yams, cocoa-nuts, and oranges are the principal productions. The bread-fruit grows on tall trees, and is as large as a child's head. When roasted and the skin taken off, it makes a nice white loaf of bread. The cocoa-nut palm is a majestic tree—one of God's richest works of beauty. The young nuts are used for daily food, and from the crushed meat is formed a milk used for cooking purposes and in weaning young children. The wood is used for building purposes, thatching, matted, tapers, bowls, and dippers. Balsams and oils are largely made from the nut and exported.

The population of Ponape is about ten thousand. The natives seem to be descendants of the Malay race—bright, intelligent, and not unkindly disposed to the white man, although much at war among themselves. They are divided into tribes, governed by chiefs; there is also a king and a king's party. These different tribes, factions, and parties are a great hindrance to reasonable law and missionary labor. Many of the habits, customs, and laws of these people are such as are found nowhere but in darkest heathendom. The tattooing process, which consists in pricking the skin and staining the spots with ink, so as to make indelible figures, often causes death, and is always very painful. This, however, is borne with great fortitude, being considered a work of beauty, with which they can ill dispense. Some tribes tattoo the entire body, others only the face. Figures of birds, fishes, and snakes imprinted upon the face and body are greatly admired. The dress consists of a mat of grass worn about the loins, though many go quite naked, as preferable for comfort and convenience. On some islands the chiefs wear a skirt extending to the knees, and lilies on their heads. Since the advent of the missionary a full flowing robe has superseded this. Many of the women are very neat, combing neatly their rich black hair and wearing a prettily-embroidered skirt of matting. They have a passionate love for music, holding as a part of their native religion that all who sing will go to a bright land at death, while those who do not will sink into a deep muddy pit.

One of the greatest hindrances to the prosperity of missions in the Pacific Isles has been the tabu system, which consists in prohibiting to some what is allowable to others. Any man may make a tabu law, and the penalty for the violation of these laws is very severe. The loss of an eye, sometimes death, is the result.

When a man marries, he builds two houses; one for himself is tabued to his wife. He must eat in his and she in hers. They may never eat together; the son with his father, but not with the mother—a daughter with neither. Sometimes a piece of ground is tabued.

It may not be walked on. Perhaps a tree. No person may eat of its fruit, lean against it, or hang anything upon its branches. Some kinds of food are tabued also.

This system becomes the source of much inconvenience, suffering and cruelty, especially to women; but the sunlight of a pure religion is dispelling many heathenish customs, and bringing light and joy and peace, with happy homes and many of the comforts of civilized life, to our dark-browed sisters of the Pacific Isles. Looking on this picture of degraded life, we can better understand what lies before the self-denying missionary, and appreciate the good accomplished.

Fate of the Apostles.

All the apostles were assaulted by the enemies of the Master. It is said they were all called to seal their doctrines with their blood. The following are said to have been the modes by which they and the evangelists severally departed this life:

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with the sword at a distant city of Ethiopia.

Mark expired at Alexandria, after having been cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.

Luke was hung upon an olive tree, in the classic land of Greece.

John was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterwards banished to Patmos.

Peter was crucified at Rome, with his head downward.

James the greater was beheaded at Jerusalem.

James the less was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then he was beaten to death with a fuller's club.

Philip was hanged up against a pillar at Hierapolis, in Phrygia.

Bartholomew was flayed alive.

Andrew was bound to the cross, whence he preached to his persecutors until he died.

Thomas was run through the body with a lance, in the East Indies.

Jude was shot to death with arrows. Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded.

Barnabas of the Gentiles, was stoned to death by the Jews at Salonicia.

Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

No!

The great thing is for a boy to meet a temptation boldly, frankly, and at once, with a "No" which has a meaning in it. Some boys will say "No" but it in such half-hearted way that the tempter knows that it means a half "Yes." This simply gives an invitation for a repetition of the solicitation, and makes almost certain, too, the yielding. But a "No," that is enforced by tone and look that tells that the word has its own true meaning settles largely the matter; or if it does not settle it, makes it certain that if the temptation comes again, it will be weaker and he will be stronger. The first "No!" is a great thing.—Christian Weekly.

A minister once had a deacon of the name of Ephraim. He one Sunday morning preached from the well-known text (Hosea vi. 4), "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" The weak-minded, though otherwise good, brother thought his pastor was personal, and complained bitterly. The reverend gentleman was not one to be taken to task for nought, so the next Sunday morning he announced, very emphatically, the text (Hos. vii. 8), "Ephraim is a cake." During the week the deacon called on several of the people declaring that the minister's personalities in preaching were unendurable, and on the following Sunday he got his reply in the text (Hos. xi. 12), "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies." He looked rather foolish at this, and still more when at the week-night service he heard announced (Hos. vii. 11), "Ephraim is a silly dove." The deacon was at his wits' end, he complained bitterly. The matter was getting serious, and an unusually large gathering the next Sunday heard the text announced (Jer. xxxi. 18), "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Though hast chastised me, and I was chastized, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." This was too much. The deacon was humbled, sought his minister, and made it all right. So the series concluded with a discourse on the passage (Jer. xxxi. 20), "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I speak against him I do earnestly remember him still."