

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, January 12th, 1879.—The Dedication.—Ezra vi. 14-22.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 19-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”—Hag. ii. 9.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Temple completed. Vs. 14, 15. II. Temple dedicated. Vs. 16, 17. III. Priestly appointments. Vs. 18. IV. Observance of passover. Vs. 19.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Ezra iv. Tuesday, Ezra v. Wednesday, Ezra vi. Thursday, 2 Chron. v. Friday, 2 Chron. vi. Saturday, Hag. i. Sunday, Hag. ii.

QUESTIONS.—Who were the Samaritans? What service did they offer? Why was it refused? What course did the Samaritans then take? When did the work cease? When was it resumed? How did the second temple compare with the first?

I. Vs. 14, 15.—Who encouraged the people to proceed with the temple? When was the temple begun? When finished?

II. Vs. 16, 17.—With what sacrifices was the temple dedicated? Whose sacrifices surpassed these? 1 Kings viii. 63, 64.

III. Vs. 18.—With what tribe were the official appointments made? Num. iii. 6; viii. 9. Were there not twelve tribes of Israel? Why were twelve recognized in the sacrifices? What is meant in verse 21 by “the children of Israel”? Gen. xxxii. 28.

IV. Vs. 19-21.—What feast did the Jews now keep? Why? Ex. xii. 6, 14. Had this feast, since the return, been totally neglected? Why do we not read at the dedication of tears being shed, as when the foundations were laid?

Points to Talk About.—Political enemies at last made friends. v. 14; Ezra vi. 7-12, compared with Ezra vi. 23. The world not to be depended upon as a help to Christian work. 2 Cor. vi. 15. Benevolence accepted according to what a man has. v. 17. All priests in the Church of Christ. v. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 5. Purity of character a requisite for holy ministries. v. 20. The temples of the Holy Spirit the best temples on earth. 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

I. Events in Progress of Building.—The temple was begun B. C. 535, but was soon hindered by the Samaritans, “the people of the land” (ch. iv. 4), the descendants of the heathen colonists who were introduced into the chief places of the ten tribes at the time of their Assyrian captivity (B. C. 721). They took their name from Israel's chief city. Subsequently, being in trouble, a priest of Levi was sent from Assyria, who taught them to fear the Lord. 2 Kings xvii. 24-41. They were therefore a mixed race at the time of Judah's return, for which reason their proffered aid was refused, and an inveterate enmity sprang up which became from that time proverbial. John iv. 9. The Samaritans misrepresented the Jews to the king of Persia; by this means he was imposed upon, and gave orders for the work to cease. This was about B. C. 521, or fourteen years after the work was begun. But in a year or two it was resumed, for another letter had been sent to Darius, who searched the records and found the decree of Cyrus that the temple should be built; which decree he repeated, with maledictions on all who offered resistance.

II. The First and Second Temple Compared.—The dimensions of the second temple were in excess of the temple of Solomon nearly a third, though in some respects less. Ezra vi. 3; 2 Chron. iii. 4. It was the lavish display of precious metals, the carved ornaments, the textile fabrics, that made the first temple costly and beautiful. In these respects the glory of the latter house was less than that of the former, but in respect to the difficulty of its erection, of its enlargement by Herod and of its use by Christ, the glory of the second was greater than that of the first. Hag. ii. 9.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 14.—The elders of the Jews.—Literally, the old men, etc. In a patriarchal system, especially, the old men, or fathers, are to a great extent the rulers. They “built,” because the work was done under their authority and direction. Prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo

[strictly, grandson. Zechariah i. 1.] These prophets have left specimens of their messages; and the teacher may with profit read them both through in connection with this lesson. The prophet's office, it will be seen, was not alone to foretell, but also to advise, encourage, warn, instruct, in short, to convey any message which God gave them to convey; that is, to speak with authority in God's name. The commandment of the God of Israel. This may include the whole revelation of the divine will as to the work, whether found in the previous sacred writings, or in the prophecies of Haggai or Zechariah, or in other communications not mentioned. The commandment [or decree] of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes, etc. Not that there was one single decree to which they all put their names; but, as above, the different manifestations of the will of these different kings are called a “commandment” (singular), because they related to one general subject. For the decree of Cyrus, see i. 2-4; for that of Darius, see vi. 1-12. The Artaxerxes, here mentioned, is not the one mentioned in iv. 7, 11, 23; for that one's decree was adverse to the building, iv. 23, 24; and the name is here placed after that of Darius. The Temple stood before his mind and eyes as due alike and jointly to the favor and decree of all the three.

Verse 15.—Finished on the third day of the month Adar.—The twelfth month, corresponding to our March [or February-March]. The definiteness of times suggests the importance attributed to the event. In the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. Between Cyrus and Darius, two kings of Persia had reigned, Cambyses, son of Cyrus, called Ahasuerus in iv. 6 (B. C. 529-522), “who was too much occupied with his own great enterprise against Egypt to take any notice of the letter of accusation against the Jews which the adversaries sent to him at the beginning of his reign;” (iv. 6) and Gomertus, a usurper, who gained the throne by pretending to be the younger brother of Cambyses, and son of Cyrus; but was slain on the disclosure and proof of the fraud after a reign of seven months. He is the Artaxerxes of chapter iv; and his hostility to the religion of the Jews is explained by the fact that he was a Magian. The Darius of this chapter will not, of course, be confounded with Darius the Median (Daniel v. 31; vi. 1; ix. 1), who died seventeen years before this Darius began to reign.

Verse 16.—At the completion of the Temple they had a grand national religious service and festival appropriate to the first, or Solomon's Temple. 1 Kings viii. The children of Israel. The whole nation, so far as it was then represented in Palestine. The priests and the Levites and the rest. Classification of the whole; and the first two classes named because the service was religious, and they had to conduct it. The children of the captivity. Not those who had been born in captivity, but had been captives. With joy. Of course, for there was cause.

Verse 17.—A hundred bullocks, etc.—Compare and contrast with the amount offered at the first dedication. 1 Kings viii. 63. There as here, and here as there, these offerings were not in the main “burnt offerings,” that is, were not wholly burned; but “peace offerings,” that is, offered to God, and then eaten in the festival, as God's children at his table; a family feast. 1 Kings viii. 64, 65. The difference in the wealth and numbers of those celebrating the feast, explains the difference in the amount of the sacrifice. Twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. On the peculiar significance of the goat offering as making national (here tribe by tribe) atonement, see Leviticus xvi. 1-28. The mention of the twelve tribes, shows that if representatives of all did not return, henceforth there was to be no more division, or recognition of division. The nation was to be one, and accounted as a whole, with all its twelve constituent parts. See Acts xxvi. 7. Not improbable, some from all the tribes did come back. See ii. 1, 59; Nehemiah vii. 7; 1 Chron. ix. 3.

Verse 18.—On the divisions of the priests see 1 Chron. xxiv. 1, and context. Compare 2 Kings xi. 9. On the twenty-four courses of the Levites, see 1 Chron. xxv. The purpose was to emphasize the idea of the restored integrity of the nation. As it is written in the Book of Moses. Numbers iii. 3; viii. 9.

Verse 19.—Kept the Passover.—Which began on the 14th of Nisan, the month after Adar, on which the Temple was dedicated.

Verse 20.—All of them.—Of the Levites. Compare 2 Chron. xxix. 34; xxx. 3. Killed the passover. The paschal lamb for each family, or circle of participants; therefore, here acting severally as heads of the families, at least in this respect, because of their purity. 2 Chron. xxx. 17.

Verse 21.—All such as had separated themselves.—More probably, not proselytes, but resident Israelites who had fallen in with the corrupt practices of the country. ix. 1, 10; x. 2, 10, 11; Neh. ix. 2; x. 29.

Verse 22.—Seven days with joy.—Ex. xii. 15-17. The king of Assyria. The dominant Eastern power was, for a long time, the Assyrian; and hence, after the downfall of Assyria, the name was occasionally used, as here and in 2 Kings xxiii. 29, of whatever kingdom was dominant in the East, as successor to the Assyrian.

SUNDAY, January 19th, 1879.—The Mission of Nehemiah.—Neh. ii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build.”—Neh. ii. 20.

The Lesson Story.

The work of building the temple had been so often hindered that it was twenty years after the Jews returned to their own land before it was finished. Even after they began in good earnest it took them four years to build it, for it was very large and beautiful. But while they were at work the Lord often sent them words of encouragement and comfort by his two prophets Haggai and Zechariah, such as, “Be strong;” “Fear not;” “I am with you.” At last it was all done just as God had commanded and Cyrus had charged and Darius allowed. The temple was dedicated or set apart for the worship of God in March, in the sixth year of Darius, king of Persia. All the people came, just as they did when the foundation was laid; there was great joy, and many sacrifices were offered. The priests and the Levites were all given their proper work in the service of God in the new temple, just as it was written in the law of Moses. As they had kept the feast of the tabernacles before, so now, after the dedication, they kept the feast of the Passover for seven days. Even some of the heathen cast away their idols and joined them. The Lord made them very joyful, for he had turned the heart of King Darius to be kind to them, and even their enemies, who had tried to hinder the work helped it on instead, for they were obliged to give many of the animals for the sacrifices, and wheat, wine, and oil for the feast.

MAKING HIMSELF USEFUL.—The Ottawa Free Press of the 14th, says: Col. McNeil gave the following interesting version of how His Excellency the Marquis of Lorne put on the wheel of Mr. Slinn's vehicle:—

His Excellency, Her Royal Highness, Lady Sophia MacNamara and Col. McNeil had been out walking and had reached the Rideau Bridge, when Mr. Slinn came by. The lynch pin dropped out and the wheel along with a load of flour on his vehicle, dropped off. Mr. Slinn was in great distress, and seeing two men come along, asked them “to give him a hand.” Col. McNeil remarked to His Excellency “Let's do it for a joke,” and entering into the sport of the thing, His Excellency consented, and all hands were at it might and main. Nor was it a very light matter to lift a vehicle laden with flour. While His Excellency and Col. McNeil thus exerted themselves, the ladies stood by and laughed heartily at their efforts. After they had finished, Mr. Slinn said, I cannot give you anything else, but I thank you.” “You ought to give a good deal for that,” replied Col. McNeil “it was the Governor-General who put on your wheel.” Mr. Slinn was thunderstruck, and tried to mutter out something, but Colonel McNeil helped him out of the difficulty by introducing him to His Excellency, when the party walked off. This is an incident which will not soon be forgotten.

Mrs. Clara S. Foltz, of San Jose, is the first lady admitted to the bar of California. She cared for a family of five children while studying, and yet made more progress than most male students.

Scripture Enigma.

- No. 2. 1. 'Tis sown for those who choose the better part Who love God's law, and upright are in heart, 2. He served a wicked and ungodly one, Whose days were shortened ere his race was run. 3. One of the titles paid by the Pharisees, Who thought by works their consciences to ease. 4. A city spoken of as having done Good when contrasted with the wicked one. 5. They reached it walking with a heavenly form Whose voice could still the waves and hush the storm.

When God shall mark his own on that dread day, These on the left those on the right shall stay. Through grace alone we reach that better land— Oh may we numbered be on Christ's right hand.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

- No. 1. 1. Rachel....Matt. ii. 18. 2. Esau.....Heb. xii. 16; Gen. xxv. 34. 3. Daniel....Dan. vi. 10. 4. Elijah....2 Kings ii. 11. 5. E ve.....Gen. iii. 6. 6. Moses....Ex. 20. 7. Isaiah....Isa. liii. 6; xcii. 6. 8. Noah....Heb. xi. 7. 9. Galilean.Luke xxiii. 5, 6; John i. 46. 10. Timothy.2 Tim. iii. 15. 11. H e th u s a l a h . Gen. v. 27. 12. E den....Gen. iii. 1. 13. T e k e l . . . Dan. v. 27. 14. I s a a c . . . Gen. xv. 5. 15. E t e r n i t y . Isa. lvii. 15.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER II.—A Momentous Question.

Will you look, reader, into the kitchen of a well-to-do farmer of forty years ago? It is also dining and sitting-room, but it is large and commodious enough for both. Its wide-mouthed fire-place, with its back-log and fore-stick, is making the room ruddy with flame, and casting fantastic shadows upon the wall, and now and then gilding the paper which Mr. Stevens is reading in comfortable satisfaction, without the aid of gas-light or chandeliers. The kettle upon the crane is singing its cheerful song, and the room is spicy with “good cheer,” hid behind the door of the huge brick oven. Comfortable “settles” and chintz-covered rocking-chairs invite those who need them to repose; but the mistress of this home would not have you think that she ever needs them—not she.

“Father looks so happy and contented,” said Mary to herself as she was busy with the cups and saucers preparatory to making tea; “how can I disturb him with this great sorrow?”

“If Edward is coming to night, you had better put on the best china, Mary,” said Mrs. Stevens to her daughter, “and bring some of that quince marmalade and those best peach preserves from the store-closet; and while you are there just fetch that box of your sister's wedding cake; it is wellnigh on to a year since it was made, and just as good as the day on which it was baked—a trifle better, I ween, for that matter. I hope we shall have as good luck with yours next week. The biscuits are just done, and the crullers and pies have been warming this half hour. It's time Edward was here this minute; but I don't see what in the world I'm to do without you, child, when you go out West!”

There was the mother and house-wife in a breath; you need only to look at her, with her full motherly figure, neat dress and cap, quick step and energetic move, and an eye with such a mingled light of fire and love, to see it all. As she stoops to take a pan of baked beans and rye and Indian bread from the oven, she wipes her eyes, which have been filled at thoughts of giving up her cherished daughter for an untried love and new experiences.

“It's a good thing that we dried so many cherries and apples last fall,” she continued, “for there are enough for two families, and we can pack up stores of goodies enough for one year at least. I don't believe another girl in the country has such an outfit of linen anywhere.”

“Daughter,” said Mr. Stevens, laying his hand on her, and drawing her down to his knee, in one of those passes from buttery to tea-table, “you'll never find any one to love you better than your old father and mother, and I am thinking you will miss the home nest sometimes.” “Oh, I know it, father,” replied Mary, affectionately, and the quick embrace between father and child set its own perfect seal to loving words.

If the reader will look closely at the portly old gentleman, he will discover that in his countenance which denotes firmness amounting to wilfulness. You will see, too, that where he loves is because the object is his own; and if you would not forfeit his good-will, nor dare run counter to his judgment. My Stevens knew and felt this, when tumbling under the weight of that question yet at issue, and experienced a new dread of any altercation between her father and lover.

After the bustle of Edward's rival had subsided, tea was announced, during the process of which Mr. Hammond inquired,

“Have you read the last Missionary Herald, Mr. Stevens?”

“A part of it,” was the reply “Did you read the thrilling appeal from India, written by one of I. Johnson's associates, and also the plea for missions by Jonas King?”

“Mary, read them aloud to mother and me. They are well written, and not without force, but I do not see that the present plan for evangelizing the world is a feasible one. It is asking too much of a people reared in this climate to sacrifice life, health, and civilization to enlighten a people who, at best, will not thank you, and quite likely pay murder you instead. It appears to me that the only reasonable plan is to bring the young to this country to educate and humanize, that they may return and do the work among their own people.”

“But it is not likely that many would come, and there is an immense field of labor, calling for laborers besides, you know, sir, that we are commanded to ‘go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’ That does not give us license to wait for the nations to come to us, does it, sir? Surely no sacrifice can be too great for him who gave his life for us, and he who calls his people to this work gives us his seal that he will be a rear-guard against the ‘sun that smites by day’ and the ‘pestilence that walketh in darkness.’”

“Edward,” said Mrs. Stevens, “let me give you another cup of tea; you look pale and tired. I think you will have as many heathen as you can manage out West, don't you, ‘father’? I don't like the idea of your burying your talents out there.”

“I could not call them ‘buried,’ if they were used wherever the Lord might call me, whether among the Hottentots or Fijis. There will be, however, no lack of enterprising laborers for the West, for it is destined to be the grand centre of civilization; surely,” added Mr. Hammond, with a smile, “you would not object to our being honored instruments towards such a result? But,” added he, more gravely, “to labor among the benighted of India is to work for a kingdom which is not of this world, and our pay is endorsed on a bank which never fails.”

After supper, while Mary and her mother were busied in the milk and cook room, Mr. Hammond unfolded his plans to the astonished father.

“You are late in coming to such a conclusion as this,” said Mr. Stevens. “Yes, sir, because obstacles have been in my path, but not because I have not wished it, for it has been a cherished hope for years.”

“Sir,” said the excited father, “we have given you our daughter, but not for this. Youth and inexperience are sometimes hasty. I conjure you to reflect; for if you go, you must go alone.” Rising hastily, he opened the door and called to his wife, who was startled into nearly dropping a pan of milk by the words:

“Wife, Edward wants to go on a mission; what say you?”

“What!” said she, appearing at the door, a picture of consternation.

“I want,” said Mr. Hammond, rising and moving towards her—“I want to go to the perishing in India. Is this a crime?” he added a little bitterly. “There are so few who are able to go; we are strong, and have warm and wild