

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, November 9th, 1879.—The Perfect Saviour.—1 John i. 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 5-9.

"GOLDEN TEXT.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John i. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 John i. Tuesday, 1 John ii. Wednesday, 1 John iii. Thursday, 1 John iv. Friday, 1 John v. Saturday, 2 John. Sunday, 3 John.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The basis of fellowship. Vss. 1-4. II. By whom possessed. Vss. 5-7. III. Its limitations. Vss. 8-10.

QUESTIONS.—Who was John? Matt. x. 2. Where do we first see him in the New Testament? Matt. iv. 21; Mark i. 19. What do we know of his natural temperament? Mark iii. 17; Luke ix. 51.

I. Vss. 1-4.—By what three natural senses did John have evidence of Christ's Divinity? On what three things does Christian fellowship rest? Why is this fellowship joyous? Why is it most lasting?

II. Vss. 5-7.—What does John call God? In what sense is there no darkness in him? In what sense is there none in his people? So far as they do sin in weakness, in what consists their salvation?

III. Vss. 8-10.—Is any Christian absolutely sinless? Can he be in this life? If he claimed to be, what would he make God? In whom only is his salvation complete?

When the Apostle John died, where, and by what means is unknown. Till his work was done no weapon could prosper against him, no enemy destroy him. It was thus with Peter in prison and underground, who was yet delivered by the efficacy of a loving company gathered for prayer. The object of John's Epistles does not seem to be the object of Paul's. Judaistic controversies were past. The controversies in John's old age were largely soteriological, or such as bore on the person and mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. John emphatically dwells on the love of God as manifest in the gift of his Son, and with this urges Christians to the exercise of the highest love, not only to God, but to one another. The great subject of John's three Epistles is fellowship of Christians with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

EXPOSITION.—Verses 1-4.—Compare the first verses of John's Gospel, and notice the points of agreement and difference in respect to thought, terms, and style.

Verse 1.—That which was from the beginning. Notice how verse 2 comes in as a parenthesis, and then the first words of verse 3 take up and briefly repeat the thought of verse 1, which is the object of "declare" in the third verse—the description of the apostolic message. Notice also the neuter instead of the masculine, "that which" instead of him who, because John here is thinking of Christ not, as in John i. 1, as a revealer of the gospel, but as the object of the revelation, as constituting the gospel. The words "from the beginning" imply Christ's eternal pre-existence, "with God" and also himself "God," but with the added thought that from the beginning of human history, before not less than since the incarnation, salvation was by him, and by him only, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—one purpose of salvation, one principle, one Author, no trial and failure, and then a new trial of a new method. All dispensations are fulfilled in Christ, so that Abraham's faith and our faith are not two, but one and the same. Which we have seen [saw], etc. Saw, heard, etc., during Christ's life. The historic truth of the incarnation is here insisted upon in opposition to a false and growing heresy which made the incarnation merely apparent, like the appearances of angels, and of "the angel of the Lord" [Jehovah] in Old Testament. The Word of life. Christ is "the Word" both because he declared the gospel, and because he was the gospel. His words were testimony concerning himself, as all other Scripture testifies of him. "In him," not in his words, nor in any other, "was life."

Verse 2.—For [and] the life was manifested. This life in the persons of a

Saviour had been promised again and again from the time of the Fall, and his coming or "manifestation" was the great object of Jewish hope, as it was also, consciously or unconsciously, "the desire of all nations." The same word "manifested" is used to contrast the second, final coming of Christ with his present concealment or absence from the world. Compare iii. 2. And bear witness, and shew [report] unto you. The first, and perhaps chief, work even of apostles was to state correctly and to verify the facts of our Lord's life. The eternal life, which was with the Father. Christ's own life as the Son of God was eternal strictly, as at once without beginning and without end. Was manifested unto us. "Unto us" the apostles who were chosen to be attendants upon Christ's ministry with reference to this very business of witnessing. See Acts i. 21, 22.

Verse 3.—That which we have seen and heard. Repetition of verse 1. See above, on that verse. Declare we unto you. Not simply "I am now in this letter declaring," but we apostles make, and have in all the years since the ascension made it our great business to declare it. That you also may have fellowship with us. Distinction in offices, gifts, accidental relations, but not in the life. That is one and common to all. The apostle does not make the chief distinction between "phases of Christian life" but between life and death. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The idea of God as Father is of God as pure, absolute, ultimate Deity, from whom comes the holy law of our being and between whom and us Christ is the Mediator.

Verse 4.—That your joy might be full.—In this fellowship is peace, in the consciousness of it as being ours there is joy. John xv. 10.

Verses 5-10.—Verse 5.—This then [and this] is the message, etc.—The Gospel message as a whole takes character from its message as to the nature of God, and so in some sense is summed up in this message. The character of every religion is determined by its doctrine of God. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Compare John i. 45. Light is the emblem of truth. Man craves a supreme good. Christ is good indeed, true good and not delusive, and in God as revealed in Jesus Christ this craving is satisfied. This seems to be the thought of John, a very practical thought. "No darkness at all;" that is, no delusion, no cheating and mocking of human desire and hope.

Verse 6.—If we have fellowship, etc.—A man takes on the character of his intimate associates, and the more intimate and inward the associations the closer the likeness of character. By our fellowship with God we become like him, though this fellowship brings no tarnish to his purity.

Verse 7.—If we walk in the light.—The walking in the light is nearly the same as doing the truth. Fellowship one with another. Likeness of character secures fellowship of life, and so for men to be like Christ is to be like each other in that likeness and hence to be at one, or in fellowship. And the blood of Jesus Christ, etc. Our likeness to Christ is only partial, in consequence of our sin. Christ will clear it all away in respect to both its pollution and guilt.

Verse 8.—If we, etc.—"We" even including apostles. "Have," not had or have had. Deceive ourselves. On this point "ourselves" more than others.

Verse 9.—If we confess our sins.—To him. "Our sins," our own. Faithful. Standing to his promise. Just to forgive. It would be unjust to Christ not to forgive.

Verse 10.—If we say, etc.—Salvation presupposes sin. Christ cannot save one who has not sinned.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

When we receive a letter, we look to see who wrote it. Who wrote this letter? What John was it? Spend a few minutes in interesting the child in the writer, by telling of some of the times when he was with Jesus.

Speak of its being a message; from whom the message came, how John heard it; how we ought to receive it. The first part of the message is, that

"God is light." Talk about what light does; how pure it is, and how it purifies; makes things grow; gives health and gladness; how birds, flowers, and trees all love it, and nothing could live without it. Then try to show how God is all this, and much more.

Try to show that though there is no darkness with God, yet sin fills our hearts with darkness; how are we to get the darkness out.

So if we want the darkness driven out of our hearts, it cannot be done by any strength of our own, but by letting in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, just letting God shine into our hearts. But when we have our room all full of sunlight, cannot we close the shutters again, and shut so much light in that we need not open them again for a month? Neither can we, by just letting God shine in our hearts to-day, fill it with light enough to last; we must keep on looking to him for light.

When we let the light into a room the dirt hidden before is seen. When the light of God begins to shine in our hearts, we see what we did not notice before, how dark and stained with sin they are. Light and darkness can't stay together.

The part of our message that is in the Golden Text tells us what to do. Explain this text; dwell on the fact that He is a perfect Saviour, cleanses from all sin, does all the work. But look at the message again; there is something for us to do first. Confess our sins. Tell what this means. Very little children may early be taught the necessity for such confession.

A word to Parents and Teachers.

In accordance with a suggestion from several intelligent teachers amongst our readers, we purpose giving the Scripture Lessons and Bible Readings, one full week more in advance than heretofore so that Teachers may have the full time to study the Lesson beforehand, and by that means become more thoroughly acquainted with the subject before meeting their pupils on the Lord's Day. To enable us to do this we give two lessons this week, the first will be for Lord's Day, Nov. 9th, and the following one for Nov. 16th, and the Readings for the whole week preceding, and so we purpose continuing. This we believe will be found a great advantage as the other matters in the MESSENGER will have been read, and the family will have received the succeeding number for use, so that the MESSENGER having the lesson may be appropriated for study by the Teachers and scholars in the family.

Having the CHRISTIAN MESSENGER then no other Lesson paper will be required in the Sabbath School or family.

We shall be glad to hear from any teachers or parents in reference to this matter. A postal card may be made to convey a good sized message. Whatever will enable us the better to serve the Churches and Sabbath Schools is always welcome.—Ed. C. M.

SUNDAY, November 16th, 1879.—The Love of the Father.—1 John iv. 7-16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 7-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"We love him, because he first loved us."—1 John iv. 19.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 John iv. Tuesday, John iii. 16-21. Wednesday, Ephesians ii. Thursday, John xv. 9-17. Friday, Rom. v. 6-10. Saturday, 1 Cor. xiii. Sunday, Ephesians cxxx.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Brotherly love. Vss. 7, 8. II. God's love manifested. Vss. 9-12. III. Witness of the Spirit. Vss. 13-15. IV. Efficacy of love. Vss. 16, 17.

QUESTIONS.—Who, of all the sacred writers, talks the most of love? Who, as we have learned, gave the best description of it? 1 Cor. xiii.

I. Vss. 7, 8.—What does John advise his beloved to do? Why? What does he mean by saying, "God is love"?

II. Vss. 9-12.—What is the one great proof of God's love to man? Is there any true life apart from Jesus? John iii. 18. Where, then, is love original—in us, or in God? Why should Christians love each other?

III. Vss. 13-15.—What inward evidence may man have of his love to God? What external evidence should he also give? Compare Matt. x. 32, 33.

IV. Vss. 16, 17.—How is love the measure of Christian perfection? Where will it give boldness, or confidence? Why?

Of all the sacred writers, the evangelist John has most to say of divine and human love. It is said that when age and weakness grew upon him at Ephesus, so that he was no longer able to preach to the people, he used at every public meeting to be carried to the church, and there would say no more than "Little children, love one another." When asked why he always said the same thing, he answered, "Because it was the Command of our Lord; and if they did nothing else, this was enough."

(1.) True Christian love shows that one is born of God (vs. 7; comp. carefully iii. 14; v. 2, 3.)

(2.) The lack of it shows that one is not of God, for God is love (vs. 8.)

(3.) The Apostle tells how God has shown his love to us (vss. 9, 10.) Dwell on this, which contains the heart of the Gospel.

(4.) Love to the brethren, whom we see, is a test of our love to the unseen God (vs. 12. Comp. vs. 20), and perfects that love.

(5.) If we are true Christians, we have God's Spirit (vs. 13), and bear witness to God's Son (vss. 14, 15).

(6.) We must cultivate love to the loving God and to all his children; and that we must show love to God by keeping his commandments (vs. 2), and love to the brethren by doing them good (iii. 16-18).

EXPOSITION.—Verse 7, 8.—Verse 7.—Beloved.—See iii. 2-21; iv. 1-11. Loved with the complacent love of living fellowship, and hearty communion. Let us love one another. Love is a duty, enjoined by command, and to be discharged of our own free purpose. John says "let us love," not "do you love." For love is of God. Or from God. This clause does not state in what sense love is from God, whether as mere command, or as an effect of his agency, or as the principle of his own life and action, or as all three of these combined. Take either of the three senses the reason would be good! take all the three, abundantly good! And every one that loveth is born of God. This shows that love is of God as his command, his product, and his own nature. There is clearly here no reference to mere natural affection, since this exists in those not born of God, as it does also even in brutes, often in a very high degree, and in a very beautiful form. What it is to be "born of God" our Saviour has told us in John iii. 3-8. And knoweth God. To know God is more than to know of God. The former implies communion, the latter may exist even with the haters of God. So God knows his own in the same way of communion.

Verse 8.—He that loveth not, etc.—The lack of the spirit of sonship is evidence of the lack of the sonship itself. For God is love. The most central and blessed truth of revelation; equally precious to man and angel, to the child and the philosopher. All rational beings long for a perfect and eternal love of a perfect, eternal, infinite Sovereign God and Father, and having that love they have life.

Verse 9, 12.—Verse 9.—In this was manifested the love, etc.—The incarnation of the Son who was God was the incarnation of Love which is God, and this was not aimless love, but love toward us. Christ is the only incarnation of God and his love that ever has been or ever will be in this world. Whose relations within the Godhead are best expressed by the term Son. He was sent into the world not to become a Son by coming, but already being a Son before coming, and by this very fact fitted to come.

Verse 10.—Herein is love, not that we, etc.—"Herein;" that is, in this fact; namely, that which the rest of the verse states. "Not that we loved God," he might have written "that we did not love but hated God," for this is implied in his words and elsewhere explicitly taught. See Rom. v. 10. But that he loved us, notwithstanding our want of previous love, and even notwithstanding the existence in us of a positive sinful enmity, is love at its purest and highest is Christian love. To deny that Christ made atonement in the way of a real propitiation of God is to deny that which the Scriptures teach explicitly as the very heart and life of the gospel.

Verse 11.—Beloved, if God so loved us, etc.—Using the love of God to us as an argument to enforce the exhortation of verse 7.

Verse 12.—No man hath seen, etc.—Save in the way explained in Jno. xiv. 9, 21-23. If we love one another, God dwelleth [abideth] in us. This love is a result, a condition, and an evidence of the indwelling.

Verse 13-15.—Verse 13.—Hereby know we, etc.—God's Spirit may secure to us rational confidence of our acceptance with God either by a direct witness in us to that effect, or by developing an experience and consequent consciousness in accord with the gospel.

Verses 14-15.—This is the usual way in which the Spirit's witness is given. We are thus guarded against a tendency to injurious enthusiasm.

Verse 16 (Compare vs 17).—We have known, etc.—The historic facts of the gospel are meant. Genuine faith in them carries faith in all that is here asserted.

There prevails a very wide impression that the Father's feeling towards us is very different from Christ's; that while he is gentle and sympathetic, the Father is stern and inexorable. This impression is fostered by such illustrations as are sometimes employed to set forth Christ's propitiatory work.

Our love to God. There is now no impediment on God's part, seeing he hath found a ransom and so he can now be just, and yet justify the believing sinner. The beginning of the breaking down of our rebellion is when we reach the point where we adoringly exclaim: "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Then the sinner begins to know God, "and this is life eternal—that the might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

The motto of Christianity is: Love your enemies; do good unto them that spitefully use you.

For the Teachers of the Primary Class.

Draw out by questions and illustrations these three points—that God made keeps, saves us, by love.

God not only loved us first, but he loved us while we were yet sinners. Do not let your class suppose that God loves only good children. Teach that he loves bad children too, and that is the more reason why we should love him. Speak tenderly of God's great love in sending his own only Son to die for us, that he might be able to keep his word and punish sin, and yet forgive us, and take us into his favor.

If God so loved us, we ought—What? To love him? Yes, but more than that, "We ought also to love one another." Try to show that love would not wait for others to love us first.

If God could give his only Son, if that Son could give up all the glories of heaven for so long, and give his own life, can't we give up our own little pleasures for the sake of pleasing others?

We cannot love truly unless we love God; but if we ask him, he will come and live in our hearts himself, and thus we will be filled with love.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 44.

ANSWER TO ALPHABET OF SCENES AND PLACES IN THE LIFE OF ST. PAUL.

A—Athens. Acts xvii. 15-23.

B—Berea. Acts xvii. 10, 11.

C—Corinth. Acts xviii. 1-3.

D—Damascus. Acts ix. 8, 9.

E—Ephesus. Acts xix. 23-41.

F—Fair Havens. Acts xxvii. 8-13.

G—Galatia. Gal. i. 6-8; iv. 15.

H—Herodion. Rom. xvi. 11.

I—Iconium. Acts xiv. 1-6.

J—Jerusalem. Acts vii. 58-60.

K—Kinsmen. Rom. ix. 2, 3.

L—Lycaonia. Acts xiv. 6-19.

M—Melita. Acts xxviii. 1-8.

N—Neapolis. Acts xvi. 11.

O—Onesimus. Philemon 10-19.

P—Philippi. Acts xvi. 23-26.

Q—Quartus. Romans 16, 23.

R—Rome. Acts xxvii. 30.

S—Sidon. Acts xxvii. 3.

T—Tyre. Acts xxi. 3-5.

U—Urbane. Romans xvi. 9.

V—Viper. Acts xxviii. 3.

W—Wall. Acts ix. 23-25.

X—The Cross.

Y—Youthful. 1 Tim. iv. 12.

Z—Zeal. Philippians i. 20-23.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

5. Exodus xxviii. 30; xxxv. 35; Judges v. 30; Psalm xiv. 14; Eccl. vi. 10. 6. Epistle of John.