

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, May 25th, 1879.—"The Holy Spirit promised."—Joel ii. 28-32. b. c. 800.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 28, 32.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."—Acts i. 8.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Joel i. Tuesday, Joel ii. Wednesday, Joel iii. Thursday, John vii. 37-52. Friday, Acts i. 4-14. Saturday, Acts ii. 1-21. Sunday, 1 Cor. xii. 1-13.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Outpouring of the Spirit. Vss. 28, 29. II. Overthrow of the ungodly. Vss. 30, 31. III. Call of salvation. Vs. 32.

QUESTIONS.—Who were the four "greater prophets"? How many "minor prophets" were there?

I. Vss. 28, 29.—What Person of the Trinity presides over the Christian dispensation? What were some of his special gifts to the Apostolic age? Why are they comparatively needless now? What work does the Holy Spirit now perform? John xiv. 26; xvi. 8; Rom. viii. 26.

II. Vss. 30, 31.—What change is now noticeable in Joel's prophecy? What would God be if loving only, and not just? What if just only, and not loving? Psalm ci. 1; Romans xi. 22?

III. Vs. 32.—Who, does the prophet say, may be saved? How, does he say, they may be saved? What is it to call upon the Lord? Of what are men in danger? Acts vii. 51. Why cannot the Holy Spirit be spared in any Christian work.

THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS.—The prophets from Hosea to Malachi, twelve in number, are called minor or lesser prophets, in distinction from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, who are called the greater prophets. "The division is founded on the comparative extent of the writings of the two classes. The twelve minor prophets were regarded by the Jews as forming one collection, and are cited in this manner. Acts vii. 42. Hence the quotation of any one of these prophets by Christ and his Apostles, extends the sanction of their authority to the authenticity of the entire twelve."—Hackett.

The prophet Joel writes nothing of himself save that he was the son of Pethuel, otherwise unknown. He gives no notice of the time of his ministry, but it is probable that he flourished about b. c. 800, in the reign of Uzziah, contemporaneously with Amos. See Amos i. 1. In the style of Joel, there is a blending of energy and softness, making it for all time winning and touching. His predictions have a far-reaching character, being adopted and enforced, as few others, by the Apostles.

EXPOSITION.—See Acts ii. 17-21.

II. Outpouring of the Spirit. Verses 28, 29.

Verses 28.—And it shall come to pass afterward.—There is no doubt that the time here intended is that of the Messiah; and so, in general, the same as that designated in our last lesson as "the last days." Some make the word "afterward" refer back to vs. 23; and in that verse, instead of "the former rain moderately," read, "the Teacher of Righteousness." Peter, in Acts ii. 17, translates it, "in the last days." The incarnation of Christ was the introduction of a new era in human history.

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.—These are Jehovah's words, speaking as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke xxiv. 49. The Spirit here promised is the Holy Spirit—so often spoken of and made so prominent in the New Testament. The words of Peter's discourse on the Day of Pentecost make this sure, even if there were not sufficient other evidence. The expression "will pour out" indicates, (1) that the Spirit is a gift from the Father; and (2) the fullness, or great measure of this gift. The first point is also made very prominent in the New Testament. Nor example—the Spirit is given to those who ask (Matt. vii. 11); the Father gives the Spirit at Christ's request (John xiv. 16, 17); and both the Father and Christ "send" the Spirit (John xiv. 26; xvi. 7). The second point, that is, the great measure of this gift, is seen from the events of the Day of Pentecost; from the abundance of

spiritual power, and the variety of spiritual gifts which the New Testament shows to have been enjoyed by the Christians—both teachers and disciples generally—in the Apostolic churches. The Holy Spirit is, in the New Testament, almost uniformly presented as a person. The words "pour out" refer to the influence, or work of of this Divine Agent, as diffused through many hearts, through the church—the extent of his influence, as covering one—"immersed in the Spirit." "All flesh" here means mankind generally, without respect to nationality. See Acts ii. 5-11.

And your sons and your daughters, etc.—These words show both that the Spirit was to be given to all classes making up a nation, and what it was to effect in those to whom it was given. To prophesy was to make known, with authority, a Divine revelation communicated or suggested to one by the immediate inward agency of the Spirit. See Acts xxi. 9, which illustrates and fulfils this promise, especially as to the "daughters." Dreams and visions were modes of God's communication of truth to men, employed from the beginning. See Acts ix. 10-12; x. 1-18; xi. 5; xvi. 9; xviii. 9; xxvi. 19; 2 Cor. xii. 1.

Verses 29.—And also upon the servants, etc.—Even upon these—to indicate that not even the lowest class were to be left out. The word translated "servants," designates slaves, "whether born in the house, or bought with money." The "servants" and the "handmaids" were respectively the male and the female slaves. While the special work of revelation, and the special gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament, and connected with the introduction of Christianity, are specially indicated in these verses, the language must be understood to intend also the general work of the Spirit in originating and developing the Divine life in all Christians.

III. The overthrow of the ungodly. Verses 30, 31.

Verses 30, 31.—I will show wonders, etc.—See the language of these verses closely imitated by our Lord. Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24; Luke xxi. 25. He doubtless had this passage in mind, and applies it, first of all, to the impending destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A. D. 70. Compare the context of the passages cited, especially in Luke. That both Joel and Christ make further reference to judgments foretold in the Book of Revelation, is doubtless true. "The heavens and the earth mean the political world, with its civil and religious establishments; the sun and moon, the higher and superior ruling powers; while the other images are employed to denote the disastrous changes that were to happen in relation to both." Compare, on the use of these symbols, Ex. vii. 17; ix. 24; xix. 18; xx. 21, and context; Isa. xiii. 10; xxxiv. 4; and many other passages. The judgments, whatever their form, and by whatsoever agencies inflicted, are yet Jehovah's judgments—ordained and sent by Jehovah as judgments—penal inflictions, and not merely "natural results."

III. Call of Salvation. Verse 32.

Verses 32.—And it shall come to pass, etc.—Those who "call on the name of Jehovah," are those who make him, as revealed in Christ, their Lord, and Saviour, and Hope. Christians are, in the New Testament, frequently designated as "those who called on the name of the Lord"—that is, of Christ—worshipping and serving him. Acts ix. 14; Rom. x. 13. The deliverance here promised is from the judgments foretold in vs. 30, 31. For in Mount Zion, etc. Mount Zion is here another name for Jerusalem. Instead of "deliverance," many would read "those delivered"—not making the deliverance to take place in Jerusalem, but taking this to be a promise that Christ's people in Jerusalem shall be saved from the destruction of the city by a timely flight, according to Divine direction. See Luke xxi. 20-24. This is said to have been literally fulfilled, as the Christians went in due time to Pella, beyond the Jordan. Of course, this promise, like all the prophecy, has a far wider reference than simply to Jerusalem's destruction. Its principles have their application to us, and to the whole Church of Christ in all times, and are the ones on which we can have safety and rest, even when the vials of wrath are poured out on all around us. It is true that, in the true Jerusalem, in its

true Temple, that is, in Christ, we have deliverance. And in the remnant, etc. The "remnant" here are those who remain, or are preserved in the midst of the wrath. They not only called on the Lord, but he called them. He takes to himself those who take him to themselves.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 1st, 1879.—Prophecy Against Tyre.—Ezek. xxvi. 7-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—Matt. xxiv. 35.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Explain that it is only the Holy Spirit that can put the love of God into our hearts. Tell in simple words what the Holy Spirit has power to do.

The Holy Spirit will show us our sins, convert, guide, comfort, help, pray for us. Illustrate each point.

Teach the Golden Text, and how Jesus, that last mournful evening before he was crucified, promised to send the Holy Spirit to take the place of his presence; but the promise of this text was given just before he went back to heaven. Picture the disciples praying and waiting for ten days; then the wonderful scene when the Day of Pentecost was fully come. Read from Acts ii. 16, in Peter's own words, what he thought of this.

Our lesson has not only a promise, it tells of a terrible day. (Read vs. 30, 31.)

Set before the class in solemn but tender words, the great day when all must stand before the Lord. What shall we do? Our lesson shows us also a way of escape. We can be saved in that day, for all that God wants us to do, is to call upon him now, to pray to him, to ask him, and he will answer and save.

Answer to Scripture Enigma

No. 20. War fare.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 21.

- 1. Pure substance, in thy breaking thou didst shed. On Him who lived, anointing for the dead.
2. Against her brother's rights she spake, and lo! The leprosy came on her white as snow.
3. O eastern King! who may thy word gainsay? Thou dost thy queen depose, thy courtiers slay.
4. A man whose name lives only by his son Who for his race their promised country won.
5. Upon his shoulder once the high priest wore This gem which Israel's names engraven bore.
6. With this He thoroughly shall purge his floor, Then gather in the wheat for evermore.
7. Sad garb of woe, thy sombre drapery Revealed the mourner's grief to public eye.
8. Thy fruit is riches, and thy branch is peace, Thy self the emblem of a land's increase.
9. What went ye forth to see, and what to find, O curious crowd? This shaken by the wind?
10. A youthful monarch, who, too haughty grown, Withholding small concessions, lost a throne.
11. Man's patient servant, by his Maker's care Whene'er he treads the corn, may have his share.
12. The rushing storm swept through the desert air, Most awful—yet God's presence was not there.
13. Weak weapon, but it did its work full well; And the great, vaunting giant reeled and fell.

A renowned clergyman once preached rather a long sermon from the text, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." After the congregation had listened about an hour, some began to get weary and went out; others soon followed, greatly to the annoyance of the minister. Another person started, whereupon the parson stopped his sermon and said, "That's right, gentlemen. As fast as you are weighed, pass out."

One reason why the devil's service is popular is, perhaps, that he never cuts down the wages of those who work for him.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XVII.—Working and Waiting.

"This morning we had a call from the chief of this tribe, the Nanakin, and his wife, the Nanakina. You can hardly imagine what a besotted wretch he is, most of the time either stupid with drink or turned by it into a fiend in human shape. He is the terror and detestation of all that know him. He it was that put the torch to the church-building which cost the lone missionary months of toil and effort; and it is not a year since he stabbed one of his wives. He is bitterly opposed to the true religion, and does all that he can to prevent his people from joining us. So, while the chiefs and many of the people from every part of the island are with us, this tribe among whom we live are our bitter enemies.

"When this evil man stops at our door, we treat him with kindness, hoping to win him to a better life. The Nanakina is a sweet-looking woman, and as much an object of pity as he is of dread. She was the wife of 'Solomon,' this chief's predecessor, and with him joined the Christian party, and was baptized. On the death of her husband, in accordance with the customs of the island, his successor took her, although she was greatly opposed to it, and thus she became the property of this wretch. Now she is living a miserable existence, shut away from all religious teachings, and mocked and opposed by her husband. Will you not pray for her that her faith endure, and for the wicked chief that God will give him a new heart?

"Last week Mr. and Mrs. Hart left us to go to the other side of the island, intending to be away some days; but the day after, a large chiefish party arrived from Metalaia, and they, hearing of it, returned at once to assist in teaching and entertaining them. The good Uajai wishes to assist us in building the church here, and meanwhile have as many as possible of his people in school a while. He has just sent for another troop.

"This chief brought his wife with him for the first time, which is a great era in the affairs of Ponape. She has never before been beyond the boundaries of their tribe, as it is entirely opposed to all the customs of the island for the chiefish ladies to be seen abroad. Now she sits in the school-house with her husband and his brother, the latter of whom could not so much as look at her formerly, under pain of death. Such are the proofs of the power of the gospel to break down the superstitions of ages.

"December 21st.—To-day is the anniversary of our coming to Ponape. So swiftly has the year fled away I can scarce believe it gone. If the twenty years that I laughingly predicted as my stay here before a visit home all fly as rapidly, I shall be with you before we know it. Ah! how truly is our life but a fleeting breath! Oh for strength to accomplish more and faster for Christ!

"These days are very hot; it is difficult to realize that it is mid-winter. Just now we are having unusual noise and confusion, and find it very wearing, as there is no way to escape from the crowding natives. These evenings we give up the main part of the house, which will hold about a hundred, and I wish that some of you could look in upon the busy scene. Imagine from fifty to a hundred of these dark-browed people sitting together upon the floor, each with his book, and all reading out aloud, and this is our Babel. Every few minutes they break out into singing, and a loud chorus it is. They have learned to their great delight many of the tunes that the dear home children sing.

"One of the last glimpses at night, as I sink utterly wearied into bed, is Dwight with his Bible and the dark eager faces pressing around him. Last night they called earnestly for the genealogy of Christ from Adam. The native mind has a curious taste for such knowledge, and they ply us with questions continually. After he had finished the list, they drew a long breath, commanded each other to remember it, and asked him to read it again, which he

promised to do in the morning. The natives have good memories, and store an astonishing amount of Scripture history, when as yet they have so little of the Bible in their own language.

"Let me tell you of an incident that quite touched my heart yesterday. A young girl came from a neighboring tribe to tell us that her mother was dead, and to ask if she had 'gone to heaven.' The poor orphan seemed to have implicit faith that we could tell whether she was safe; and how glad we were, from what we knew of her life of prayer and seeking, although she had never openly declared herself to be of the Christian party, to encourage the devoted child-heart to hope and believe in the safety of her mother! For does not Jesus hear and accept the feeblest prayers? These natives have strong and ardent attachments, and it is often urged against the missionaries' entreaties that their friends are lost, and they choose to be lost with them rather than go to heaven without them.

"December 25th.—Christmas day! I can hardly believe it, while Dwight wipes the perspiration from his brow, and we all are using fans. We had our little 'tree' in the study for the dear children last night, hung with treasures we have hid away since leaving home, and if supplies had come should have had one in the church for the eager natives. A little waif of a vessel has been lying about for a month past, three or four times looming up in different directions; and yesterday, when she came in full view, we joyfully prepared for some news and provisions. While getting the captain's dinner ready, Dwight and Mr. Hart went down to 'hail' her, but soon came back with the sorrowful word that she had 'headed off.'

April 4th.—These four months of silence in my journal have been more trying to our patience than any before; we all say that we have given up looking for a home vessel, but longing eyes daily turned seaward give denial to the word. This life of confusion and irregularity, in itself so wearing, is perhaps also a blessing by giving us little time for anxious thought. Yet very tender home memories are surging over our hearts these days, for yesterday was the second anniversary of our wedding-day, and I am living over again those last days with mother, Hattie, and Fleda, and I know you are thinking of us; but there is no time to be sad, only the tears will gush unbidden occasionally. We have so many mercies to record, and feel such a settled and growing peace with the conviction that we are just where our Father wills; how can we be else than happy?

"Last Lord's Day was such a precious one. We sat down at the table of our Lord with more than fifty of these redeemed ones, which is about one-fourth of the entire number of converts on the island. Many among these are fitting for teachers and preachers to the isles beyond. Thus does the great Holy Spirit scatter the good seed.

"We celebrated our wedding-day with a little feast drawn from our narrow stores and afterward with a canoe-ride, but in the rain, as usual, for this is our rainy season—heavy and long-continued rains such as you at home have little idea of. While out a shower came up, and Dwight took off his hat and placed it under cover, it being his last one. I bewailed while the rain beat on his poor head, but we are so used to exposure here that we were not prepared for the terrible cold which has proved the consequence.

"Swimming has become a very necessary and delightful exercise to us, but one day last week we had an adventure which came near proving serious. It was at high tide, and the current very strong by recent heavy rains. Dwight and I started for a race, but I had not calculated for the rapid current; and as I could make but little headway against it, my strength was gone before I reached the landing, and so I swept past into deep water again. Dwight caught me just in time, and by a desperate effort pulled me into shallow water. We were both thoroughly frightened.

"That night we had another alarm. At midnight I was startled out of sleep by a fearful noise to find Dwight gone and a flash of light in the outer room. Again that startling noise, and with it some one leaps from the—from somewhere—and runs away. These were my first impressions, but presently Dwight's