

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

SUNDAY, December 21st, 1879.—The Last Words.—Rev. xxii. 10-21.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 16-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."—Rev. xxii. 21.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Rev. xxii. Tuesday, vs. 11; Galatians vi. 1-10. Wednesday, vs. 12; Romans ii. 1-11. Thursday, vs. 12; Matt. xxv. 31-46. Friday, vs. 14; Matt. vii. 21-39. Saturday, vs. 16; Isaiah xi. Sunday, v. 17; John vi. 35-40.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Permanence of moral condition. Vss. 10, 11. II. Equity of rewards. Vss. 12, 13. III. The contrasts. Vss. 14, 15. IV. The different heralds. Vss. 16, 17. V. Completeness of inspiration. Vss. 18, 19. VI. Promise and prayer. Vss. 20, 21.

QUESTIONS.—Of what city did our last lesson speak? What was said about it that you remember?

I. Vss. 10, 11.—Why does the angel say "seal not"? What time is said to be "at hand"? With what saying of Paul is this in harmony? Gal. vi. 7.

II. Vss. 12, 13.—How are the final rewards to be made? How can salvation for all this be wholly of grace? Comp. Eph. ii. 8.

III. Vss. 14, 15.—What is the blessing of Christian obedience? Of what is the "tree of life" symbolic? Who are symbolized by "dogs"? What is meant by making a lie?

IV. Vss. 16, 17.—How is Jesus the root and offspring of David? Isa. xi. 1. How a morning star? Num. xxiv. 17; 2 Peter i. 19. Who may say to sinners "Come"? Why need no one despair of salvation?

V. Vss. 18, 19.—What is the teaching of these verses on inspiration? How should the Bible be treated?

VI. Vss. 20, 21.—What is the last promise of the Bible? What is the last prayer of the Bible?

A seven years' course of International Lessons ends with the present one. The form of evangelical doctrine because of this study is doubtless more rigidly adhered to, and it is hoped the life of thousands upon thousand has been improved. Light, in spite of much darkness, grows daily in the world; and truth toils onward.

A solemn period of the year, and a solemn lesson. The closing words of the glorified Jesus, till he comes.

I. Words of Warning (vss. 10-13.)

1. To read and keep "the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (i. 3; xxii. 7.) Hence they are unsealed, open—that we may study them.

2. To remember that our time is short. "The time is at hand."

3. Our characters are forming for eternity. (Vs. 11). Our moral condition, at Christ's coming, fixed and unchangeable—"filthy still"! "holy still."

4. The Rewarder will soon be here. (Vs. 12). Now, wheat and tares grow together.

5. He is omnipotent. (Vs. 13). No appeal from his decision, who is "first and last."

II. Words of Blessing (vss. 14-16)

1. Who are blessed? The doers of the word.

2. The blessing. A "right to the tree of life"—a right forfeited by Adam on account of sin (Gen. iii. 22).

III. Words of Invitation (vss. 17-19). How full, how earnest.

1. Who invite? The Holy Spirit, the Church, and all who hear; every Christian.

2. The invitation. "Come."

3. The invited. Those "athirst," and "whosoever will."

4. To what invited. "Freely, to the water of life."

IV. Words of Hope. (vs. 20).—The last promise, which is the great hope of the Church—Christ's speedy coming. The last prayer, which is, that Christ may come.

V. A closing Benediction (vs. 21).—The Bible ends with words of grace and blessing from a crucified and risen Saviour, manifested in redemption.

EXPOSITION.—Our lesson treats first of the impending judgment (vss. 10-15), and second of present opportunity (vss. 16-21.)

Impending Judgment. Verses 10-15.

Verse 10.—And he saith unto me, etc.—From verse 9 it appears that before this a created angel had been speaking

to John in vision (See xxi. 9), but now, though the change has not been noted, Jesus himself speaks, (vs. 16). The solemnity of this final message made this charge specially fit and is itself made specially impressive by the change. Seal not the words, etc. The sealing of a communication, given by one in authority to a subordinate, was done only when the instructions were not of present utility, but for future use. See Dan. xii. 4, 9. But the church in John's day was already in "the last times," and the revealed course of events was that in which he and his readers were actors, and in which we also are actors. For the time is at hand, [near.] The time of the final issue of events, as the verses following seem to make clear in God's way of reckoning, that last day also was itself then "at hand," and the whole succession of centuries and millennia were as but a day.

Verse 11.—He that is unjust, etc.—Injustice or unrighteousness, when distinguished from unholiness [filthiness], is sin in its manifestation toward our fellow-men as distinguished from its God-ward relation. The doctrine here is that we are now forming characters; and that the issue is to be changeless fixity. The words carry us to the issue of probation, in eternal sin as eternal judgment. Comp. Matt. xxv. 44.

Verse 12.—And behold I come quickly. A vindication of his saints and judgment upon sin. My reward. It is Christ's to execute judgment—he is King. To give every man, etc. Mark here the universality, the separate individuality, the personal responsibility, and the unerring equity. Saints stand, not all on a level of equal reward, though all are saved.

Verse 13.—I am Alpha, etc.—Behold Christ's solemn, formal claim and self-assertion as to his possession of the incommunicable attributes of Deity. If the claim be true, he can be our final Judge. If the claim be not true, Christ is a blasphemer. Jesus in the history talks exactly like Jesus in the vision.

And, be sure, in both it is Jesus, not the disciple.

Verse 14.—They that do his commandments. Another reading of very high authority gives they that wash their robes, viz.: in Christ's blood they only who are thus washed "do his commandments. Have right to the tree of life. God gives the tree of life to his saints.

Verse 15.—For without, etc.—Dogs were the scavengers of eastern cities, going about to eat up the wretched filth.

Present Opportunities. Verses 16-21.

Verse 16.—I Jesus.—Reminding us of his promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Mine angel. Claiming authority over angels as his ministers. Heb. i. In the churches. His churches are thus still in his loving care. I am the root, etc. The reference is to Christ's kingly character, and so fits the connection. The bright and morning star. Bringing in eternal day.

Verse 17.—The Spirit and the Bride.—The Bible is Christ's disciples, as the church of the present, destined to become a Bride at the Lord's coming. The Spirit dwells in the Bride, and speaks through her. Come. Addressed to the world, and is an invitation to repent, believe on Christ, and so become true members of the true church, incorporate in the Bride herself.

Verses 18, 19.—For I testify, etc.—These two verses show Christ's estimate of his revelation, and how he wishes us to value and treat it. "The words of the prophecy of this book," refers, doubtless, immediately to this book of Revelation.

Verse 20.—Surely I come quickly.—A word of faith, to counterbalance the probabilities as gathered sight. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The "amen" put into another and fuller form.

TOPICS.—(1.) The fixedness of the future state.—There will presently be an end of all human probation. God waits, with great long-suffering; but there is a limit, and when once it is passed, man's doom is sealed. "Given over," and given up, the "last hope" is quenched in an eternal night.

This is God's sentence, and it is irreversible—even as we are taught in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus that between the two worlds in eternity there is "a great gulf fixed"—that is forevermore impassable.

In our Common Version, the word

"everlasting" qualifies the "punishment," and the word "eternal" the "life"—but in the original, the very same word is used in both cases, and the very same thing is manifestly meant.

(2.) The distribution of rewards at Christ's coming.—He promises to "give to every man according as his work shall be." Some shall have an abundant entrance, and others that escape by the skin of their teeth—"saved so as by fire."

(3.) The closing invitation.—God, at divers times, and in divers ways, had spoken to the fathers by the prophets.

(4.) The closing malediction.—"Search the Scriptures," says our Saviour, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

These are God's words. Devoutly let us ponder them, obediently let us follow them, faithfully let us teach them.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Review the things which are seen within the heavenly city. Then print the words WITHIN, WITHOUT, and write in two columns those who are found in these two places.

WITHIN. Jesus, Saints, Angels, Holy, Righteous, They that do his Commandments. WITHOUT. Unjust, Filthy, Dogs (or impure), Murderers, Idolators, Liars, All evil-doers.

None are shut out of heaven but those who are unfit to enter. Urge them to change while there is time; for they do not know how soon Jesus will come, and then it will be too late; for every one will remain just as he finds them.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Answer to Enigma.

No. 49.

The letter D.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- No. 15. One cat would kill one rat in 3 minutes, 33½ in a hundred minutes. A hundred cats would therefore kill 3333 rats, in one hundred minutes.
- 16. When Elisha caused the axe-head to swim. 2 Kings vi. 6.

Enigma.

No. 50.

- 1. Where stayed St. Paul until his vow was paid?
- 2. Who fell into the snare for others laid?
- 3. Whose counsel wise did Absalom disdain?
- 4. Who watched the bodies of her sons when slain?
- 5. Who aided David to regain his wife?
- 6. What woman much beloved was raised to life?
- 7. What was by Saul for Jabesh-gilead sent?
- 8. Where were the youthful days of Jesus spent?
- 9. Who for her country's sake adventured all?
- 10. And who scorned to obey her husband's call?
- 11. Whose worthless children perished by the sword?
- 12. And who gave heed unto their father's word?
- 13. With whom did Felix leave the apostles bound?
- 14. Who buried stolen garments in the ground?
- 15. Who meditated in the eventide?
- 16. Who in his travels did with Paul abide?
- 17. What king of Moab did Judge Ehud kill?
- 18. And to what sea did Christ say, "Peace, be still"?
- 19. Where was the rock whence living waters flowed, To cheer desponding Israel on their road?

In the initials from the lines above, A heavenly virtue is displayed, Which, as its source is in the God of love, Will last when other graces all do fade.

—Selected.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- No. 17. What king appointed singers unto the Lord to march before his army.
- 18. Where in the Bible are boys and girls at play made a sign of prosperity.

A curious sign has been adopted by a native baker in India, proud of his knowledge of "English." "European loaf" is printed in large letters over his door, and the baker is evidently quite unaware of the colloquial complimentary meaning of the word.

The Orphans.

"Are you asleep, Susie?" whispered a half sobbing voice, coming from a sorrowful looking boy, as he bent over his sister's bed.

"No, Benny; what's the matter; does it hurt you yet where he whipped you?"

"Yes, awfully; and I'm so hungry. He wouldn't give me any supper. I'll tell you I won't stand it; I'm going to run away."

"And leave me, Benny? I should die in this old poor-house alone;" and Sue raised herself in the bed, and looked mournfully out of the large window.

"Let's run away together! Wouldn't it be nice if it was Summer? Then we could go away off in the woods, where nobody could find us, and pick berries and nuts to eat, and have a splendid time."

"Hush, Benny; talk low, or you will wake up some of the others. You know it isn't Summer, and we would freeze and starve to death if we left here now!"

"I'd rather freeze to death than to be treated as I am; and I am about starved now," replied Benny, half crying.

"I'll tell you, Benny. My teacher told us last Sunday 'that everything belonged to God;' and she told us once, if we prayed real earnest he would answer our prayers."

"Don't you think, Susie," interrupted Benny, looking wistfully out at the clear blue sky, lighted by myriads of bright stars, "that that big dipper up there is where God keeps all his good things, like nice cakes, and pies, and honey?"

"Oh, no! of course he don't; but I think he keeps his money in it; and perhaps if we pray to him very hard he will just drop us down some. Then we could do just as we wanted to, and have everything we pleased. I should have lots of dolls, and little carriages, and dishes, and you a dog, and some tools, and a sled, and—O Benny, let's kneel right down and pray this minute!"

Down went four little knees, clasped were four little hands, closed were four little eyes, and earnestly moved four little lips. God listened to their petition, and answered it in his own wise way.

After their prayer was said they crept softly to the window and looked anxiously up at the great dipper in the sky. Suddenly they clasped each other's hands, and Susie whispered joyfully, "He did hear us! He did hear us! He did hear us!! I saw something bright fall right on that big stone house over there."

"I guess he didn't drop it 'zactly straight, or else the wind blew it away a little," said Benny. "How shall we ever get it?"

"We'll have to wait till morning, and sly off some way and just tell the folks that live there all about it, and ask them to let us go up and get it. We must go to bed now, though, so we can get up real early; and I'll tell you, Benny, may be we won't ever sleep in this old poor-house again," said Susie, as she kissed him good-night.

Mr. Herman Rock, the owner of the "big stone house," was a sored, desolate old man. Once he had been different, when his sweet wife and child were alive, but since their death he had grown crusty and miserly. So people were rather afraid of him, and left him mostly to himself and his maiden sister, who kept house for him and was his only friend and companion. On the morning following the beginning of this story, as Mr. Rock and his sister Celia were taking their morning meal in their great clean kitchen, there came a timid knock at the door, and on opening it who should appear before them but little Susie and Benny from the poorhouse!

The children both seemed very much frightened at first, but soon Susie summoned up courage and related her story, about their lonely condition—how they were abused, their prayer, and the bright thing they saw fall on the house, and then asked permission to take a ladder and climb up to get their treasure. She told her story so simply and innocently that the two listeners' faces first wore an amused expression, which soon softened into one of pity, and the icy fetters that had long bound Celia Rock's heart soon melted away in a flood of tears, as she took the little ones in her arms and lavished on them many kind words and fond caresses.

"Give them some breakfast; then come into the sitting room," commanded Mr. Rock, in a hoarse voice, as he left the room.

Celia Rock knew by the changed look and excited appearance of her brother that something uncommon was about to occur, but she was not prepared for what happened when she came before him.

"Celia Rock," said he, walking hurriedly across the room, "you and I have shut out the sunlight from our lives long enough; we have looked up our talents long enough; we have hid away our gold long enough. Let us now undo the shutters and let in the sunlight; unfasten the rusty bolts that bar in our talents, and improve them; dig up our gold and make use of it, that we may be as dippers, full of good things, in God's hand to drop blessings and comforts to his little children."

So Susie and Benny did find the gift God sent them—not in a bundle of gold on the top of Mr. Rock's house, as they had expected, but in a pleasant home inside. And when in after years they prayed for blessings, which seemed so bright, they added trustingly—remembering the past—"Answer, Father, in thine own way."—Northern Advocate.

The Right Company.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

I have read of one who dreamed when in great distress of mind about his religious state. He thought he stood in the outer court of heaven, and saw a glorious host marching up, singing sweet hymns, and bearing the banners of victory; they passed by him through the gate, and when they vanished, he heard in the distance sweet strains of music. "Who are they?" he asked.

"They are the goodly fellowship of the prophets, who have gone to be with God."

And he heaved a deep sigh as he said, "Alas! I am not one of them, and never shall be, and I cannot enter there."

By-and-by, there came another band, equally lovely in appearance, and equally triumphant, and robed in white. They passed within the portals, and again were heard shouts of welcome within.

"Who are they?"

"They are the goodly fellowship of the apostles."

"Alas!" he said, "I belong not to that fellowship, and I cannot enter there."

He still waited and lingered, in the hope that he might yet go in; but the next multitude did not encourage him, for they were the noble army of martyrs. He could not go with them, nor wave their palm-branches. He waited still, and saw that the next was a company of godly ministers and officers of Christian churches; but he could not go with them. At last, as he walked, he saw a larger host than all the rest put together, marching and singing most melodiously, and in front walked the woman that was a sinner; and the thief that died upon the cross hard by the Saviour; and he looked long, and saw there such as Manasseh and the like; and when they entered he could see who they were, and he thought: "There will be no shouting about them."

But, to his astonishment, it seemed as if all heaven was rent with sevenfold shouts as they passed in. And the angels said to him: "These are they that are mighty sinners, saved by mighty grace." And then he said: "Blessed be God, I can go in with them."

And so he awoke.

This year Christmas Day falls on a Thursday. The old rhyme says:—

If Xmas day on Thursday be,
A windy winter ye shall see;
Windy weather in each week,
And hard tempests strong and thick,
The summer shall be good and dry,
Corn and beasts shall multiply;
That year is good for lands to till,
Kings and princes shall die by skill;
If a child born that day shall be,
It shall happen right well for he;
Of deeds he shall be good and stable,
Wise of speech and reasonable.
Whoso that day go thieving about,
He shall be punished without doubt;
And if sickness that day betide,
It shall quickly from thee glide.

There is no mean work save that which is sordidly selfish; while in every sphere of life the post of honor is the post of duty.