

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1879.

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

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 7, 13, 14.

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

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, Ezekiel xxvi. Tuesday, Ezekiel xxvii. Wednesday, Ezekiel xxviii. Thursday, Isaiah xxiii. Friday, Ezekiel i. Saturday, Ezekiel ii. Sunday, Ezekiel iii.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Agencies. Vs. 7. II. Assaults. Vss. 8, 9. III. Desolations. Vss. 10-14.

QUESTIONS.—With whom was Ezekiel contemporary? Why was he greatly esteemed? Where was Tyre situated? When founded? What gave it commercial importance? Over what capture did it exult? Why? How soon after was its own doom uttered?

I. Vs. 7.—Who inflicted a blow upon Tyre? What ambition moved him? How was he attended?

II. Vss. 8, 9.—Describe the methods employed in capturing Tyre? When will nations learn war no more?

III. Vss. 10-14.—Wherein is Ezekiel's prediction, in these verses, vivid? Who laid the Tyrian stones, timber, and dust literally in the water? When? How is this prophecy an actual fact to-day?

EZEKIEL (signifying "God will strengthen") the contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel, was carried by Nebuchadnezzar into captivity eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, or B. C. 599. Ezekiel was at the time possibly about twenty-five. He probably did not long survive the twenty-seventh year of his exile. Ezek. xxix. 17; B. C. 572. He belonged to a community of exiles who settled on the banks of the river Chebar, possibly a branch of the Euphrates. Here God's message first reached him, in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, B. C. 595. He was married and had a house (Ezek. viii. 1) in his place of exile, but lost his wife by a sudden and unforeseen calamity. Ezek. xxiv. 15-18. He was greatly esteemed by his countrymen for a firm and inflexible energy of character, and for an intense patriotic loyalty to the Jewish nationality, whose overthrow he both predicted and survived. His splendid visions are stamped with the eminence and gigantic character of the region and empire of Babylon, and the symbolic and composite animals that fill them, as they do the visions of Daniel, have their confirmation in similar representations found to-day in the earliest monuments of Persian antiquity. Among the most splendid passages of his book is the prophecy against Tyre, part of which we study to-day. Of his death, nothing is known. Tradition says, he died as a martyr. In the Middle Ages, a building, near Bagdad, was shown as his tomb.

TYRE, a city about 122 English miles from Jerusalem, was situated in Phœnicia, on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea. According to Josephus, it was founded about B. C. 1241. Herodotus makes it much earlier, but without warrant. It was built on the main-land, and also on an island "in the midst of the seas." Ezek. xxvii. 25, 26. It was favorably situated for great commercial prosperity and wealth. Solomon had extensive dealings with it, but Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 13, 14), heaped insults on its gods and high places, for which Tyre, on the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, retaliated with exultation. It was because of this that Ezekiel pronounced against it its terrible doom. This was more than a thousand years before its complete destruction; but how precise has been the fulfilment! "I will scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." Vs. 4. This is the sight now beheld by travelers, where once stood the emporium of the world.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 7.—For thus saith the Lord [Jehovah].—The ruin of Troy, as predicted, and the certainty of the event confirmed; but here, as there, and as always in prophecy, the certainty is not from wise foresight and political sagacity, but simply from God's word. I will bring upon Tyrus, etc. Josephus quotes from the records of Tyre as follows: "Nabuchodonosor besieged Tyre

for thirteen years in the days of Ithobal their king." He also says, "in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar he began to besiege Tyre." The termination of the siege was B. C. 585; that is, three years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after this prophecy by Ezekiel. Comp. vs. 1, with i. 2, and both with 2 Kings xxiv. 12. Hence the siege of Tyre began ten years before Ezekiel wrote, immediately after Nebuchadnezzar's first expedition against Jerusalem. 2 Kings xxiv. 1, 2. A king of kings: He was king over subject and tributary kingdoms which retained each its own king. Christ is "the King of kings." 1 Tim. vi. 15. From the north. The route of march from Babylon was by way of Damascus, and hence the entrance into Palestine was from the north-east, though Babylon itself was due east from Tyre. With horses, etc. A vivid and accurate description of the method of warfare, and the extent of force.

Verse 8.—He shall stay, etc.—See vs. 6. A fort. "A watch tower," raised higher than the walls to throw in missiles. Cast a mound. Erect an enclosing mound from which to assail the walls more securely and effectually. Lift up the buckler. It was customary in ancient warfare to construct a kind of shield roof over the head of assaulting parties, in order to protect them from the weapons from above.

Verse 9.—He shall set engines of war against thy walls.—A better translation is, "he shall apply the stroke of the battering-ram against thy wall." A heavy piece of machinery for hurling with great force heavy rocks or boulders against a wall. And with his axes, etc. Rough work was war then, as now, and now as then. "In the sculptures of Nineveh, representations are found of walled towns of which one is thought to represent Tyre, and all illustrate the mode of fortification adopted both by the Assyrians and their enemies." The Assyrians under Salmanezer had unsuccessfully besieged Tyre about B. C. 721, more than a century before Nebuchadnezzar's time.

Verse 10.—By reason of the abundance, etc.—The operations of the army were conducted against that part of the city on the main-land, called old Tyre. The other part of the city was inaccessible, save to ships, though Alexander, two hundred and fifty-three years after this, in a siege of seven months by the aid of the vessels and seamen of Sidon and the other Phœnician cities which had all submitted to him, succeeded in constructing an enormous mole from the main-land to the island, nearly half a mile, and so carried forward one stage, the work of destruction which Nebuchadnezzar had begun. Evidently the prophet's prediction, while it mentions only the first agent, contemplates the work which followed, of which the first was pledge and earnest.

Verse 11.—Thy strong garrisons, etc.—Or "thy pillars of strength," by some thought to be the statues, or, rather, pillars erected in honor of Baal, whose fall thus put contempt on the gods of the city.

Verse 12.—And they shall make, etc.—We should expect the Tyrians to have removed their treasures from the part of the city on the main-land, to the part on the inaccessible island. Evidently they did, for in xxix. 18 we find it said that Nebuchadnezzar's army for its "great service against Tyrus" has "no wages." In this verse, therefore, it is Alexander, not Nebuchadnezzar, that the prediction intends. When Alexander took the island, all the wealth of this most wealthy city was in his hand. They shall break down, etc. "The immediate results of the capture by Alexander were most disastrous to it [the city], as its brave defenders were put to death, and, in accordance with the barbarous policy of ancient times, 30,000 of its inhabitants were sold as slaves."

Verse 13.—Thy song, thy harps.—The Phœnicians were not only a very wealthy, but a very cultivated people. They gave to the western world its alphabet and much of its culture in arts and literature. Recent excavations in Cyprus have brought to light many remains of its artistic productions.

Verse 14.—Only the spirit of Divine inspiration could have sketched the destiny of this, and so many other cities and nations, with such microscopic exactness, when all human probabilities were against the predictions. The one

only explanation that is credible, or tolerable, is that ample and sure one of this verse: "I Jehovah have spoken it, saith Jehovah God."—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, June 8th, 1879.—The Valley of Dry Bones.—Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."—John vi. 63.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Picture the splendid city of Tyre, part on the main land, part on a rocky island half a mile from the shore, with its high walls washed by the waves of the sea, its beautiful buildings, ships riding at anchor in the harbor, and sailing in or out from nearly all parts of the world.

Once the king of Tyre, and the king of Jerusalem, were such great friends, that the ships of Tyre, brought to a place as near Jerusalem as they could come, beautiful wood of cedar and fir; also brass and copper, and workmen who knew how to carve wonderful things out of these, and the ships took corn and oil from Judah back to Tyre. Tell the names of these two kings, and what the wood, etc., were for?

A long time after this, soldiers came to Jerusalem and burned the beautiful temple, which the king of Tyre had helped Solomon to build, and burnt many houses, broke down the walls, and carried off the very vessels of brass, and gold and silver, which the workmen of Tyre had helped to make, and worse still, took away almost all the people. Where were the people taken? Why did God allow it, etc?

Did the people of Tyre help Jerusalem in her time of trouble? Describe them now in their pride, and crying, "Aha!" glad of the troubles of their old neighbors, because they might make some money by it.

So God had to punish his people, but he would not allow his enemies to act in that way. Besides, they did still worse, they bought some of the captives that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Judah, thinking they could make money in that way. Tell now of the prophecy, questioning it back.

You remember how Nehemiah locked out of the city fish sellers from Tyre, who wanted to sell fish on the Sabbath. How different from the proud merchants who used to live there.

In contrast with the beautiful city of which you told in the opening, picture now the dirty, forlorn, fishing huts, with the nets spread out to dry on the rocks, which forms the village of to-day.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Explain the difference between the destruction of Tyre, and the way in which lost souls perish. There is only one way to be saved; Jesus tells us what it is: "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish." (Print these two passages, one under the other.)

Answer to Scripture Enigma

No. 21.

- "A Man of Sorrows."—Isa. liii. 3. 1. A labaster.....Matt. xxvi. 7-12. 2. M iriam.....Num. xii. 10. 3. A hasuerus.....Esther i. 19; vii. 10. 4. N un.....Num. xi. 28; Josh. [xi. 23. 5. O nyx.....Exodus xxxix. 13. 6. F an.....Matt. iii. 12. [Jonah iii. 5, 6. 7. S ackcloth.....Gen. xxxvii. 34; 8. O live.....Hab. iii. 17; Gen. viii. 11. 9. R eed.....Matt. xi. 7. 10. R ehoboam.....1 Kings xii. 14-19. 11. O x.....Deut. xxv. 4. 12. W ind.....1 Kings xix. 11. 13. S ling.....1 Sam. xvii. 49.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 22.

The lurid cloud its bolts of ire hath spent, And drops of grace are falling gently down; The warlike weapon now is heavenward bent, Broke is the string, the arrow upward flown. In emerald hues the sun beams from above, And girdles earth and heaven in covenanted love.

Falsehood is a child of the night; truth is the child of the day. Falsehood may last for a while, but truth shall last for ever.

Select Serial.

Ponape; or, Light on a Dark Shore.

BY MRS. HELEN S. THOMPSON.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The New Church and Home.

"September 5th."

"Since writing in my journal several stray vessels have touched at our shores, replenishing us with supplies of food and clothing and bringing us news from the great world. An occasional letter, too, has been entrusted to them, but none from the charmed circle of home. By one of these vessels we learn, however, the cause of the long delay. The dear mission ship has been wrecked, and the children of America are building us a new one, which may reach us before another spring. We have sent away by every hopeful chance our long-prepared letters, knowing the anxiety of loving hearts at home about us.

"I find myself wondering at the changes that may have come to you—if Hattie has also gone forth to make the centre of another fireside—and, as I sit and write to Fleda, whether it may not be to an angel sister. You, dear ones, have just passed through the beautiful autumn, and now winter with its many delights is upon you. Oh, have you ever thought what beauty and joy there is in the changing seasons? What would I not give for a taste of winter once more! and shall I ever watch another budding spring?"

"Dwight has been away from home very much of late, superintending the building of our new home and church on the other side of the island. With native help he has gotten out the large logs, and is sawing lumber with a pit-saw. When he and Mr. Hart first left us, they were very anxious, but it seemed imperative. We were left in charge of native Christians as police; and although we often have seen very suspicious characters about, slept with bells under our pillows, and often awakened with our heart in the mouth, yet the Lord has been our 'Protector,' and our native police very faithful. We discovered a plot of the heathen party to break into the house, tie up Mrs. Hart and me, and carry off the goods; but our vigilant Christians became aware of it and averted this great evil; and our hearts praise the Keeper of Israel.

"December 27th.—Christmas day was appointed for the dedication of our new church. Dwight came after me, and with our servants and stores we started for the scene of action. Let me introduce to you our good Nicholas, his pretty little wife Miriam, and wee Willie, for they belong to the family, and are a very essential part. Nicholas is something of a traveled gentleman, having taken one trip in the 'Star,' seen the wonders of the Sandwich Islands, and can talk some English. Withal he has the kindest heart, and is always looking out for our comfort. He it is that always carries me in his strong arms across all the impassable places, unraveling the knots of domestic confusion, and with 'Good-day' makes each day good. Baby Willie is the special pet, and rides under cover with me.

"Arrived at the shore, here is another group whom you must know by name: 'Narcis,' a converted bushcomber, who is an American, and has lived here twenty years, doing all that he could to ruin the natives and injure the missionary; his wife, 'Mary Magdalene,' one of the best and dearest of our native Christians, who chose her own name after hearing of that Mary of old. Oh how she clings to the Saviour! She is a faithful teacher among her people, and we doubt not that a bright crown awaits her. Her oldest child is our smartest pupil. Here also is 'Rachel,' who has been the means of turning many to the Lord. It does my heart good to look into her gentle face. Then there are old 'Simeon' and 'Deborah,' 'Zacharias' and 'Elizabeth,' and young 'David' and 'Sarah.' Oh, there are many of these redeemed ones who are the joy and rejoicing of our hearts.

"A Ponapé rain set in upon us as we landed, and that, with the growing darkness, warned us to seek shelter without delay. This proved to be a

feast-house, or 'pilgrim house,' and here, around a blazing fire, made in a hole in the floor, our natives were soon drying and warming themselves, while Dwight and I hugged our water-proofs. After worship we were glad to stretch ourselves on a mat in one corner.

"The next day we went on to our new parish—Canaan, it is called. Was it strange that we rejoiced when we stood in our church surrounded by our people in the field that the Lord had given us? But the church had not been swept, and we had no broom. What would minister and people at home have done in such a dilemma? We all fell to picking up the chips and scatterings, and soon the reed floor looked greatly improved. The day was rainy, and oh how wet and tired we were before all the last preparations for the morrow were made! Then, too, we confessed to some forebodings in regard to the morrow. Could we keep the people from rushing in with their noise and feasting, and thus desecrating God's house? For they are a wild, untutored people. But the Lord showed us that he was able to secure the honor of his own glorious name. The day dawned without a cloud, and a more orderly and respectful gathering could not have been found in any land. The exercises passed off delightfully, and our hearts were glad. The people were many; fleet after fleet of canoes came up the river. There must have been over a thousand in and about the church, but the feasting was all done in an empty building at some distance. The house is entirely in native style, covered with thatch, but high and airy, and will accommodate over six hundred persons.

"Toward night Dwight and I went out to prospect about our new home. The chief gave us the land, about half a dozen acres. Then, as all Ponapé land-holders have titles, he proceeded to give us ours. Know, then, that Dwight is 'Jolik en Canaan,' and I am 'Katalik en Canaan.'

"The next day we crossed over to Metalain. We always have a home feeling come over us when we go to this good Ujai's house. Do you remember all that I have told you about him? He is the most Christian chief that we have, and is exerting untold influences for good; he is lame and has to be carried on the back of one of his subjects wherever he goes; his features are deformed too, from the effects of a dreadful disease, so that perhaps the first feeling on seeing him would be that of disgust, but he looks lovely to us who know; he is the idol of his people, whose champion he is in the battles of the Lord, and yet a most humble follower in the steps of his Master, never weary in his service.

"His Christian name is 'Hezekiah,' and his good wife has taken the name of 'Hezekinah,' after Ponapé custom. His beautiful daughter, who is developing into a true Christian lady, is called 'Obadiniah,' her husband being 'Obadinah.' This seems odd to you, but sounds very pretty to our accustomed ears. In Hezekiah's house we find the very highest style of civilization yet attained by Ponapéans. It is large, having many compartments, good doors, windows, and floors, contains odd little bedsteads and mattresses secured from some vessel; so we have a homelike place to sleep when we visit them. At meal-time they wheel out a table and spread it well with pig, fowls, yams, bread-fruit, and oranges, taking unbounded pains in all to please us, and surely how can we help being pleased?"

"After we were rested many strange, eager faces crowded about us. Within a few weeks a neighboring chief and three hundred followers have come over to the Christian party, and are begging to be taught. Hezekiah and dear Obadiniah are self-constituted missionaries to them, scarcely resting from the work of teaching them the principles and duties of their new religion.

"These changes take place on this wise: We first hear that a people are praying; next, asking for a teacher; then, have thrown away their native liquors, are wishing to be lawfully married, and before we are aware they are with us indeed, counting themselves followers of the Lord Jesus. They have a curious fancy from the first to learn figures, also the last new song, and we found this sweet Christian household busy and holding the crowd about them with slates and multiplication-table,