

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson IV.—APRIL 25.

CONFESSION AND CROSS-BEARING.

Matt. xvi. 13-28.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 24-26.

After the series of parables, Matthew relates various incidents, including the death of John the Baptist...

GOLDEN TEXT.—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. xvi. 24.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Confession and Cross-bearing, Matt. xvi. 13-28. T. Parallel from Mark, Mark viii. 27-38. W. Parallel from Luke, Luke ix. 18-27. T. The Son of Man, Heb. ii. 1-18. F. The Son of God, John xx. 18-31. S. Jesus the Christ, 1 John v. 1-21. S. Building the Church, Eph. ii. 1-22.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 13: Mark viii. 27; Luke ix. 18. With vs. 14: Matt. xiv. 2. With vs. 16: Psa. ii. 2, 7; Matt. xiv. 33; John i. 49; Acts ix. 20; Heb. i. 25; Deut. v. 26. With vs. 17: 1 Cor. ii. 10; Gal. i. 16; Eph. ii. 8; 1 John iv. 15; 1 John v. 20. With vs. 18: John i. 42; Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14; Job xxxviii. 17; Psa. ix. 13, 14; Isa. xxxviii. 10; Isa. liv. 17. With vs. 19: Isa. xxii. 22; Matt. xviii. 18. With vs. 20: John xx. 31. With vs. 21: Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. With vs. 23: 2 Sam. xix. 22; Rom. xiv. 13. With vs. 24: Matt. x. 38, 39; Acts xiv. 22. With vs. 25: John xii. 25; Esth. iv. 14; Phil. iii. 10. With vs. 26: Job ii. 4; Luke xii. 20; Luke xvi. 25. With vs. 27: Zech. xiv. 5; Jude 14; Rev. xxii. 12.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KING.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Jesus the Christ, Vss. 13-20. II. Jesus a Sufferer, Vss. 21-23. III. Jesus a Sovereign, Vss. 24-28.

QUESTIONS.—Where did the events of this lesson occur? (Vs. 13.) In what act of devotion had Jesus engaged at this time? (Luke ix. 18.) What is the topic of this lesson?

I. Vss. 13-20.—What inquiry about himself does Jesus here make? What answer did he get? What further inquiry does he make? Who answered? What did he mean by "the Christ"? What by "the Son of the living God"? What is meant by "church"? On what rock does Jesus build his church? How does he assure us of its permanence? What are "the gates of hell"? What are "the keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Who holds these keys? What power does this imply? (Matt. xviii. 18, 19.)

II. Vss. 21-23.—What did Jesus now begin to show unto his disciples? At whose hands was he to suffer? Why? What was he to suffer? What great event was to follow his death? How did Peter receive this message? Why? What was the answer of Jesus? What lesson may we learn from this answer?

III. Vss. 24-28.—What law does Jesus lay down concerning our lives? (Luke ix. 23.) What two strange questions does Jesus ask? To what coming does he refer in vs. 28? Which of his disciples lived to see that event? What is meant by "the Christ"? What promises concerning his church has Jesus left? What did Jesus suffer? In what does Jesus show his sovereignty?

TEACH THE LESSON.

I. The Confession of Christ (vss. 13-17.) The question of Jesus to his disciples; designed to bring out their faith, and prove it. Men's opinions. Or common fame. See Matt. xiv. 2. Peter's knowledge. He boldly confessed. The Messiahship, Deity and Divinity of Jesus—"the Son of God." The source of this knowledge. Not what men say, but believe what God says.

II. The Rock and the Keys (vs. 18-20.) They do not build, but simply open. The

kingdom of heaven is not heaven, nor the church—but the new, or gospel dispensation. Peter, preaching to Jew and Gentile, opened it. Binding and loosing—that is, forbidding and permitting. Spoken to the other disciples also, (xviii. 18), in connection with church discipline, not in connection with the eternal judgment.

III. A prophecy of suffering (vs. 21-23.) Peter could not understand why he should suffer. Christ's rebuke of Peter was sharp in form, but full of love.

IV. Conditions of Discipleship (vs. 24-28.) Christ must suffer, and they that would be his, must follow in his steps. Three conditions. "Deny self," "take cross," "follow me." Self-seeking is self-losing. The reward will be, not according to professions, but to the faith which is shown by works.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 13.—Coasts. "Parts," "regions." Caesarea Philippi. A town near the head of the Jordan, named by the tetrarch Philip in compliment to the Emperor Caesar. Whom. "Who." "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" is the question. The Lord, however, meant himself by the designation, "the Son of man."

Verse 14.—John the Baptist had been beheaded, but some believed that he had risen from the dead. Elias; that is, Elijah (Mal. iv. 5) was to forerun the Messiah.

Verse 15.—The foregoing question and answer had been, perhaps, to prepare for the inquiry of this verse. Whom. "Who."

Verse 16.—Simon did not here report his own opinion. He spoke truth, not conviction merely. It was not, "I believe." It was, "Thou art." It was the Spirit of God speaking with the voice of man. In proof of this, we have the Lord's own distinct affirmation. The Christ. "The anointed." Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. "The Son." This discriminates Jesus from all others who might in a sense be called sons of God.

Verse 17.—Barjona. "Son of Jonas." Jesus distinctly says that Peter did not make his confession of himself, or through any human communication; but by revelation from God, called here "my Father." The Father reveals the Son, as the Son reveals (ch. xi. 27) the Father. Otherwise, neither Father nor Son is known. Compare Gal. i. 15, 16.

Verse 18.—Peter. "Petros," Greek for "stone." This rock. Here a different word, nearly resembling "Petra," is used. The latter word means "rock," as distinguished from "stone." Romanists very unwarrantably draw from this the doctrine of a primacy, not only for Peter himself, but for Peter's successors, by which latter term they mean the Popes. Peter was to be a living foundation-stone of the Church of Christ. Gates of hell. "Gates of Hades, or the underworld." A figure for the power to hold or restrain exerted by death—Hades being conceived of as a region entered, or left, through gates. The gates of Hades should not have strength to resist the return to life of Christ, the Head of the Church. (See Rom. i. 4.) If Jesus had not risen, the gates of Hades would have prevailed against his church. Compare Rev. i. 18.

Verse 19.—Peter should have the privilege of opening the kingdom of heaven, which, as to the Jews, came to pass on the Day of Pentecost; and as to the Gentiles in the case of Cornelius; Acts x. The binding and the loosing power, whatever this may be, here conferred upon Peter, is, Matt. xviii. 18, conferred upon the disciples generally, and even apparently on any two or three assembled in the Lord's name. Peter so far from pretending to any primacy, calls himself a fellow-presbyter, (who am also an elder, 1 Pet. v. 1, an equal with the others.

Verse 20.—It was not time for the public disclosure of his Messianic claims.

Verse 21.—Jesus now began to make his sufferings and death as Redeemer a prominent topic of conversation with disciples

Verse 22.—Peter, shocked by these disclosures, is bold enough to rebuke his Lord.

Verse 23.—The gesture of "turning," with which Jesus made his reply, must have been very significant to deserve this note. It no doubt emphasized the severity of the words. Satan, as if to

say, "I recognize Satanic temptation in thy suggestion." An offence. "A thing abhorrent, revolting;" that is, in a moral sense. Savorest. The meaning is, "Thou art not of the mind of God;" "Hast not the views of God."

Verse 24.—What Jesus here says implies perfect fixeness of self-sacrificing purpose on Christ's part. Deny himself. "Refuse to consider himself." Take up his cross. An expression often very inadequately construed to mean "do disagreeable duties." It means the spirit of self sacrifice even to death by crucifixion.

Verse 25.—Two more of those pregnant and precious paradoxes in which the Saviour's teachings abound. Whosoever will. In the first instance, "Whosoever is bent;" in the second instance, "Whosoever may."

Verse 26.—For. This introduces the reason, assigned in the form of a question, for the first part of vs. 25. Is profited should be, "Will be profited." Lose. "Forfeit," as a penalty for wrongdoing. His loss will be beyond repair, for he will not be able to redeem himself. Compare Luke ix. 25.

Verse 27.—For. There will be a judgment. Jesus as Judge is the "Son of man," but glorious like God, and attended by his angels. Shall come. He will adjudge to each individual his award, according as each shall be bent on saving his life, or shall be willing for Christ's sake to forego it. This will be "according to his works," in the sense in which Jesus uses the phrase, as is evident from the connection.

Verse 28.—Christ foretells a kind of specimen or foretaste of that final coming. The reference, perhaps, is to what is related in the next chapter concerning his Transfiguration.

Be ready, like Peter, to confess Christ with your mouth.

Remember that self-seeking is suicide, and that self-sacrifice for Christ's sake is life eternal.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Draw out, by questions, the shame, sorrow, and suffering which Jesus bore for our sakes.

You think you would be ready to do anything for him? Peter thought so, too, when he answered, "Thou art the Christ;" yet, right afterwards, when Jesus told him how he must suffer, Peter said, "This shall not be;" as if he knew better than Jesus what ought to be. Satan tempted him to say that; and when the sorrow and suffering came, just as Jesus had said it would, the Peter who owned Jesus now, was ashamed of him then, and said, "I don't know him;" not willing to bear even that for Jesus' sake. (Tell the story of the denial; but add also the repentance and sorrow for that sin, and the willingness afterwards to suffer for Jesus.)

Explain that every time they bear cheerfully any pain, disappointment, suffering, or do any work for Jesus' sake—especially that which is disagreeable in itself, but done from love to him—that is taking up the cross and following him." Illustrate by practical stories.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Booth's Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 68.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Name of a patient, much afflicted one; Mother of him whom Paul called his own son; What weary ones desire in heaven to gain; Whom Joab caused to be at Rabbah slain; Father of one who oft with David met; One of twelve stones in the priest's breastplate set; Daughter of Laban and a patriarch's wife; Mother of him who first took human life; Brother of one of whom 'twas said that he

Servant of servants from thenceforth should be. The initials and initials form two names Of famous cities which Judea claims. — Watchman.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 42.

Find in the second book of Kings a description of an affecting scene in which three kings come in the position of humble suppliants with an earnest request before a poor man absorbed in playing a minstrel. Who were the kings, who was the man having the minstrel? and what was their request?

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 67.

- 1. A hija H 2. N umidi A 3. T uba L 4. I sil I 5. O F 6. C an A 7. H alifa X

ANTIOCH. HALIFAX.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

No. 41.

They intended to shew that the person so insulted was not fit to live. In 2 Samuel xvi. 13. Shimei cursed David and cast dust at him. In Acts xxii. 22, 23. The Jews cried out respecting Paul. It is not fit that he should live . . . and threw dust in the air.

Select Serial.

Florence Walton,

OR,

A Question of Duty.

BY MAY F. MCKEAN.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE.

"Then you do think I did wrong in going?"

"If one's conscience tells one it is sinful to do a certain thing, then it is wrong for that person to do it, though such a one may not presume to dictate to others. Freedom of thought is one of our glorious liberties, you know," answered the doctor gravely.

"I know," said Florence absently; and then they rode for a few moments in silence.

"But you have not told me you forgive me; am I to understand you cannot?" There was a pleading, yearning tenderness in his voice and eyes as he leaned toward her.

Florence glanced up quickly, then down again before that earnest gaze:

"No, no, I have nothing to forgive—that is in any one but myself; and I'm not quite sure I can do that," she added.

"Then you have forgiven me? Thank you," answered Dr. Ronselle; and, having done his duty in that direction, his conscience was once more at ease.

"Miss Florence, your aunt and cousin and Miss Glanning are all members of the church?" said the doctor after a few moments.

"Yes."

"And they see no wrong in attending the theatre?"

Florence could not help smiling, in spite of her own wretchedness, at the doubt thrown upon the others in question:

"Dr. Ronselle, are you not tempting me to do just what a moment ago you said I had no right to do—to dictate to the conscience of another?"

The doctor bit his lips and frowned, though he was not altogether displeased. In fact, when he reviewed the conversation afterwards at his leisure, he particularly admired the spirit which prompted that very answer.

"You are right, Miss Florence; but I was looking at the matter from another point of view," he said; and then, after another little pause, "I suppose you read the Bible?"

Florence looked at him in the greatest surprise: "I most certainly do."

"Then in all probability you have come across a verse which says, 'Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them?'"

"Yes; it is in Christ's Sermon on the Mount; and in the very same chapter, before we come to that verse, I read another. It is, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

Again the doctor bit his lip. He had not expected to be met on his own ground so fairly.

"But you will admit, Miss Florence, it is perfectly natural for us who make no profession of goodness to look for an example to those who do—to those who profess to have found joy in which we have no participation—are governed by a love of which we know nothing. Now when we find them so like ourselves that if it were not that they or some of their friends kindly inform us that their names are on the church-book, we should never have guessed it, what conclusions are we to draw?"

"None whatever, because, the premises being fallacious, the conclusion would be also."

"Will you please tell me wherein my premises are false?" he asked.

"I perfectly agree with you that the

conduct of Christians should be such that it would bear the strictest scrutiny of the world. They should be a peculiar people, zealous of good works. They should bear about with them the spirit of Christ, that all men might take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. But because they do not, are we to blame the Master? No, no, Dr. Ronselle. He remains ever the same; it is because we are so weak—because we do not get near enough to him that we may have strength to withstand temptations."

Florence paused as she thought of the temptation which she had not been able to withstand came back to her mind afresh.

"Perhaps you are right Miss Florence, and yet when I buy a pound of sugar at Deacon Johnson's store which does not weigh a pound on any other scales; when I remember that Judge Painter's grand piano was once the only support of a poor widow upon whom rested the care of two small children, and that it was taken from her to satisfy a debt contracted by her husband before his death, when, had she been allowed a little time, she would have paid every honest penny from her income as teacher of music; when I remember hearing that game judge, not satisfied with the act alone, exult over his good fortune in getting a seven-hundred-dollar piano for a three-hundred-dollar debt; when I recall the expression which perhaps you observed upon Mr. Banks's face when he brought his family into church last Sunday morning and found one corner of his pew occupied by 'a common sewing-girl,' and think of how Mrs. Banks held her silken skirts aside that they might not be contaminated by touching her; when I see one half the church in the eager pursuit of wealth, fame, honor, or pleasure, and, with a very few exceptions, the other half running after them, I can't help saying, 'If this is religion, I will live without it.'"

"It is truly a sad array," said Florence, to whom its sadness came all the more keenly because not one of the statements but was true. "And if we were called upon to follow church-members, you would do well to consider long ere you embraced such a religion. But that is not the command. 'Come, follow me,' are the words of Christ." We have but one Leader—one Example set for us to follow—and that One is Christ, the Lamb without spot or blemish. Oh, Dr. Ronselle, if you could only see this as I do!"

"Perhaps I shall some time, but not now. For the present I shall content myself with living fairly and squarely with my fellow-men; then, if there is a God who is just as well as merciful, I think I shall stand as good a chance as some of the church members."

For one moment Florence was fairly speechless. How could he ever speak in such a manner? Then she repeated very slowly,

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."

"Ah, yes, I think I understand now," quickly rejoined the doctor. "That accounts for that which I always thought doubtful in church-members. This is the way of it: faith is the only essential if one has faith it makes not the slightest consequence. Am I not right?"

"No, Dr. Ronselle, you are not right. You know better than that," cried Florence. "I did not mean to depreciate works, only that they are of no avail without the accompaniment of faith. We must work, not to save ourselves, but because we are saved, and because we love him who saved us. Is it not James who says, 'If a brother or sister be naked or destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.'"

They were nearing the house now, and neither spoke again until he had checked the horse and sprang out upon the ground.

"Please promise me one thing," she said as she stood up among the robes.

"A dozen if you wish," returned the doctor.

"Only one at present, and that is that you will not blame the Master for the wrong doing of his servant last night."

"Indeed I will not; I promise you that," he returned warmly; then he helped her out and conducted her up to the porch.