

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson II.—APRIL 11.

THE INVITATION OF CHRIST.

Matt. xi. 20-30.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 27-30.

The words of this lesson stand in close chronological connection with the Sermon on the Mount. Having healed the centurion's servant at Capernaum (Matt. viii. 5-13), and raised the widow's son at Nain (Luke vii. 11-17), Jesus received the embassy from John the Baptist which led to the utterances of this lesson. These words are introduced out of chronological order to illustrate, with other items, the relations of Jesus to various persons. No parallel.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Invitation of Christ, Matt. xi. 20-30.
T. Woes upon Tyre, Ezek. xxvi. 1-21.
W. Destruction of Sodom, Gen. xix. 15-28.
T. Truth Revealed, 2 Cor. iv. 1-18.
F. Folly of Worldly Wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 17-31.
S. Entering into Rest, Heb. iv. 1-16.
S. The Rejected Lord, Isa. liii. 1-12.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 20: Isa. i. 2-5.
With vs. 21: Matt. xii. 41, 42; Ezek. iii. 6, 7; John iii. 7, 8.
With vs. 22: Matt. x. 15; Luke xii. 47, 48; Heb. x. 26, 27.
With vs. 23: Matt. iv. 13; Isa. xiv. 12-15; Lam. ii. 1; Amos ix. 2; Luke xiv. 11.
With vs. 24: Matt. x. 15.
With vs. 25: Luke x. 21, 22; Ps. viii. 2; John i. 18; 1 Cor. i. 27.
With vs. 27: Matt. xxviii. 18; Luke x. 22; John iii. 35; John xvii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 27.
With vs. 28: Isa. xlv. 22; Isa. lv. 1-3; John vii. 37; Rev. xxii. 17; Matt. xxiii. 4; Ps. xxxviii. 4; Luke xviii. 13; Ps. xxxiv. 6.
With vs. 29: Luke x. 39; Eph. iv. 20, 21; 1 Pet. ii. 21; 1 John ii. 6; Matt. xii. 19, 20; Jer. vi. 16.
With vs. 30: 1 John v. 3; Phil. iv. 13.

THE KING REJECTED AND RECEIVED.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Rejected, Vss. 20-24. II. Received, Vss. 25-30.

QUESTIONS.—What was the topic of the last lesson? What three views of Jesus' power were there given? What is to-day's topic?

I. Vss. 20-24.—What three cities does Jesus upbraid? What advantages had these cities possessed? What is meant by "his mighty works"? Name some of his mighty works. What had these cities not done? In not repenting, what did they really do to Jesus? What would Tyre and Sidon have done with equal opportunity? What advantage will Tyre and Sidon have in the judgment? How had Capernaum been exalted? What would Sodom have done in similar circumstances? What fate shall come upon Capernaum? What advantage over Capernaum shall Sodom have in the judgment? Where were these six cities located? What is their present condition? What warnings may we gather from these words of Jesus?—(Read Luke xii. 47, 48.)

II. Vss. 25-30.—For what does Jesus here thank his Father? What are "these things" of which he speaks? Who are the "wise and prudent"? Who the "babes"? Why should the hiding of truth from any be a cause for thankfulness? Why should the revelation of truth to babes be such a cause? To whom has this plan seemed good? To whom else should it seem good? Who then may expect to see the truth? By what four statements in vs. 27 does Jesus show his own greatness? How does this statement answer the question of John's disciples in vs. 3? To whom does Jesus call in vs. 28-30? What does he demand of them? What does he promise? Who then may receive Jesus as a King? How must they receive him? What is the topic of this lesson? What cities would with equal chance have done better? Point out these cities on the map. State something of their present condition. What are the penalties of rejecting Jesus? To whom may truth be revealed? Who are invited to Jesus? What blessings do they get who receive Jesus? How may one receive Jesus? Must one either receive or reject Jesus? (Matt. xii. 30). Which have you done?

In this lesson, we have judgment toward the unrepenting, in contrast with the tender invitation to the weak, burdened, sorrowing, and repenting one.

I. Woes pronounced (vs. 20-24). A hint of Christ's abundant labors is given in John ix. 4; xxi. 25.

II. Welcomes given (vs. 25-30.) Jesus is not ashamed of the weak and the humble.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 20.—Then began he. He "began" now to do what he afterwards did on, perhaps, more occasions than one. See Luke x. 13. Most. It appears from this word that the recorded miracles of Jesus are few in comparison with those unrecorded; for of two of the places here mentioned as chief scenes of his wonder-working, one, Chorazin, is not so much as named elsewhere in the gospels, (except in the parallel passage of Luke) while the other, Bethsaida, though spoken of, is not spoken of in connection with any miracle done there. Mighty works, "deeds of power."

Verse 21.—Woe. A cry wrung out of the heart of compassion. Chorazin. A place near Capernaum. Bethsaida. "House of fishing." The birth-place of Simon Peter, Andrew, and Philip. It was on the west side of the lake of Genesaret, in the neighborhood of Capernaum. Tyre and Sidon. Ancient and opulent cities, subjects of divine judgment in former ages, but still existing in the Saviour's time. Would have repented. The object, then, of the Lord's miracle-working, or, at least, a result toward which it tended, was to bring about reformation of character and life. Tyre and Sidon then deserved miracles more than did Chorazin and Bethsaida. God's gifts accordingly are not proportioned to desert—his judgments are, but not his gifts. God gives what he pleases, to whom he pleases. Sackcloth and ashes. A coarse cloth, woven of hair, was worn by mourners, on the naked body, in a loose, bag-like garment, with holes in it, through which the arms were thrust. This, together with ashes sprinkled on the head, betokened dejection and grief.

Verse 22.—This verse teaches that there will be degrees of punishment in the day of final account. Higher privilege exposes, in case of neglect, to heavier doom. The former inhabitants of the cities, not simply the cities themselves, had incurred a penalty yet to be endured.

Verse 23.—Which art exalted unto heaven. The most approved text makes a question of this: "And thou, Capernaum! Shalt thou be exalted to heaven?" That is, as a consequence of the extraordinary privileges enjoyed by Capernaum in being the residence of the Saviour, and in witnessing his miracles, shall that city have a future of prosperity and glory? Nay! she shall be brought down [or, "shall go down"]—there is a difference of readings here again] to destruction. Hell. Not the place of torment, but Hades, or the "underworld," the home of the dead. See Isaiah xiv. 15.

Verse 24.—The day of judgment will restore the balance; for guilty Sodom will suffer less than guiltier Capernaum. The very remains of the three cities—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—have utterly disappeared. The sites of Sodom and Gomorrah are still pointed out.

Verse 25.—At the time Jesus answered. Recognizing the wisdom and justice of God in the discriminations just spoken of, Jesus spoke in answer to them, and thanked his Father that he had so decreed. These things. The matter of Christ's teachings, always so intimately present to his thought that he could most naturally call it "these things." The wise and the prudent. The self-sufficient, represented in the proud inhabitants of the cities that rejected him. Babes. The simple-hearted and humble, represented in his disciples.

Verse 26.—For. "I thank thee that thou hast made my teachings dark to the proud, and light to the lowly; yes, Father, because it so seemed good to thee!"

Verse 27.—The converse of what precedes. The two contrasted tones seem perfectly harmonious in the case of Jesus, is proof at once that he was man, and that he was more than man, the Divine Man.

Verse 28.—Come unto me. The emphasis is on "come," all are invited.

Verse 29.—A paradox. Those already staggering under weights that make them bend, are bidden to take a new yoke in order to find rest. My yoke is easy. A paradox here again appears.

Verse 30.—Rest does not come by exemption from a yoke, but by submission to a yoke that is easily borne.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

THE KING REJECTED.—The people, instead of being thankful, would not own their king, and told him to go away from their homes? What ought the king to do to these cities?

The people of Sodom never heard Jesus preach, never saw him heal the sick, lame, and blind, and do other wonders; these cities had, and that made their sin so much the greater. There are some children in far-off lands who have been taught to worship idols; some have never heard of Jesus; others know very little of him, and are treated harshly if they try to serve him. There are other children, some in this room, who have heard of Jesus all their lives, who know how good and kind he is, yet they do not love him? Whose sin is the greatest.

THE KING RECEIVED.—But all did not refuse the king, some made him glad? Jesus thanked his Father for them. Jesus thanked his Father for making the way to heaven so plain that people as weak and ignorant as babes could understand it and be saved.

THE KING'S INVITATION.—"Come to me," How do you come? Jesus is in heaven; how can you come to him? Where else is he? In this room. But how can you come to him even then, if you don't see him? What would you do if you could see him? Tell him what we want. You can do that now; and that is what coming to Jesus means. To earnestly want him; to feel as if he were here; to beg him to bless you.

Ask Jesus to carry your sins, then let go of them so he can take them; and you will find sweet rest.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 66.

Here find a delightful path strewn with heavenly blessings.

- 1. An ancient covering of the earth.
2. A son of Omri.
3. A son of Shem.
4. One of the dukes of Edom.
5. The son who barely escaped being killed by his father.
6. The Israelite indeed.
7. The Nephew of Abraham.
8. A giant king.
9. The Queen of Abasuerus.
10. The Son of Shem.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 40.

What small animal is by the wisest of men pronounced exceeding wise? And why is her wisdom worthy of imitation?

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 65.—DOUBLE.

- 1. T estament T (Matt. xxvi. 28).
2. E pha H (Exodus xvi. 36).
3. N azaren E (Matt. ii. 23).
4. L ea F (Ps. i. 3).
5. E nged I (1 Sam. xxiv. 1).
6. P ele G (Gen. x. 25).
7. E gyp T (2 Kings xxiv. 7).
8. R efine R (Isa. xlvi. 10).
9. S epulchr E (Deut. xxxiv. 6).
10. C onfidence E (Eph. iii. 12).
11. L am B (Ex. xii. 3).
12. E scho L (Num. xii. 24).
13. A mas A (2 Sam. xvii. 25).
14. N icodemu S (John vii. 50).
15. S ecre T (Deut. xxix. 29).
16. E v E (Gen. iii. 6).
17. D avi D (1 Samuel xvii. 14).

TEN LEPCRS CLEANSSED. THE FIG-TREE BLASTED.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

No. 39.

A. E. I. O. U. Facetious. Abstemious.

"Aunty, vat makes de little baby cry so—do it want iz mudder?" "Yes, dear and its fodder, too."—Syracuse Sunday Times.

A typographical error in an Indiana religious paper made the caption of an article read—"Where to look for original Gin."

The Detroit Free Press speaks of some wood-cut portraits in the Toronto Globe as having been hatched out in the back woods by some one "not very handy with the hatchet."

Select Serial.

Florence Walton,

OR,

A Question of Duty.

BY MAY F. MCKEAN.

CHAPTER VII.—FLORENCE FALTERS.

"Come now, Cousin Florence, please for once in your life don't be prudish," cried Ethel impatiently.

Auntie Grace looked toward her with a slight elevation of the eyebrows; impatience was not prudent just now.

"My dear, I should probably think you would hold such strict views, when even Dr. Lyman, whom we all love and respect so much, can see no harm in going to places of amusement. He spoke of that very thing the other evening; you have a wonderful memory, dear; perhaps you can quote for us." Miss Markwell's smile was full of confidence.

Florence turned her expressive eyes full of wonderment upon her aunt for one moment as she replied.

"Yes, auntie, I remember perfectly; I think I can quote almost word for word. He said: 'Sometimes persons have said to me, 'Well, now, sir, if I join the church, I suppose I can't do so-and-so or go to such-and-such a place? I must give up this or that pleasure, and must be governed by a code of rules in which I personally have not the slightest sympathy or interest?'"

"Why, my friend, it is no such thing. Christians have as much right to be happy as anybody else in this wide world. Only get your hearts full of the love of Christ, let his mercies be your theme by day, and his praises your song by night; then do not ask me or any one else where you shall or shall not go or what you may or may not do. Go anywhere, do anything that your heart tells you to."

"There!" broke in Aunt Grace, starting forward, "doesn't he say you may go anywhere you please? And if you please to go to the theatre, where is the harm? 'To the pure all things are pure.'"

"You did not let me finish, auntie," said Florence, not heeding the question. "Oh, very well; proceed." Miss Grace spoke rather coldly as she settled back comfortably again in her easy-chair.

"But he said," continued Florence with emphasis, "'If your hearts are burning with love to Christ, I am confident they will lead you into nothing that is questionable; you will not have to go back to the world for enjoyment, for you will have it within your own breast.'"

There was a moment's pause when Florence finished speaking. Miss Grace looked entirely disgusted with the turn affairs had taken, as indeed she really was, and for a moment even almost despaired of carrying her point; but then she saw the tired look creep into the young face as Florence pressed her hand for a moment over her temples,

"My poor child," she said kindly, "you must at least take a sleigh-ride with the girls."

"You never visited the theatre?" inquired Ethel.

"No," was answered absently.

"Then how can you judge of that about which you know nothing?" Ethel asked again.

But before her cousin had time to reply, Dr. Ronselle said, "Miss Florence, now let us make a fair bargain; you say you have never visited a theatre to judge for yourself, but have taken the opinion of others. Will you not go just this once—just tonight—that you may see and know for yourself? Then, if you class this among the questionable enjoyments, we will not ask you to go again. Won't you please go with us to-night?"

Dr. Ronselle looked very handsome as he stood there leaning against the marble mantel, his deep gray eyes bent full upon Florence's troubled face. She raised her gaze for one moment to his, then dropped it again as she gave a little sigh of indecision.

"Do you really wish it?" she asked almost involuntarily, at which Miss Grace and Ethel exchanged significant glances.

"I really do," said the doctor. "Why, Miss Florence, it is only reasonable; you are no longer a child, incapable of

exercising judgment in such matters. If you but take the opinions of others, you will be doing just what Dr. Lyman said of the class of whom he spoke—will be governed by a code of rules in which you have no interest, only because you have been taught to regard them as right."

Once more she raised her eyes to his. How reasonable his argument sounded! She had never thought of it in that light before. He was looking so pleadingly at her now; could there be any great harm, after all, in going just, just this once?

"Yes; I will go—only this one evening," she added doubtfully, as if to satisfy her own conscience. Then she went up to her room to dress.

At that moment the sound of merry bells paused at the door, and a little after Lottie announced Mr. Davidson and Miss Gleaming, while presently Clifford Walraven came in in his own unceremonious way.

"Have you induced her to go with us?" asked Maud after the first greetings had been exchanged.

"Yes, she has just gone up to dress," answered Ethel with a gleeful little laugh.

"I was quite sure you could," remarked Clifford complacently. "I don't believe in such over-religiousness, if I may be allowed to coin a word."

"I wasn't aware that you were over fond of religiousness in any degree," remarked Mr. Davidson dryly.

"What a sweet little creature your cousin would be if she only were not so ridiculously puritanic!" remarked Maud to Ethel.

"Yes, rather," answered the latter.

"Yes," said Auntie Grace with a sigh, "it is a great pity she is so odd in some of her views; but then she was brought up under such strict discipline we can't expect her to adopt our ways of thinking all at once. I hope in a little time to see an improvement in that direction."

"How long has she been here already?" asked Dr. Ronselle, turning sharp around to Miss Markwell. His tone more than his words spoke the thought which prompted it.

Miss Markwell answered the thought, not the expressed question: "But, you must remember, her sorrow was still so fresh in her mind."

In the mean time Florence had gone slowly up to her room to dress. It did not take long to complete her simple toilet—the plain black cashmere, finished at the throat and wrists with the daintiest of white ruffles, in which she always looked so well.

It had always been her custom before going to church, or, in fact, almost any place, to kneel one moment and ask her Father's blessing upon her, and now, almost involuntarily, she sank upon her knees by the bedside. But could she ask God's blessing upon this visit to the theatre? Dare she ask Jesus to go with her there? Dare she ask him anything now? She started up with a groan in her heart, and commenced pacing nervously up and down the apartment. She almost decided not to go—to plead indisposition, which would actually be true. She even went so far as to throw off her fur and unfasten her hat.

Then a voice sounded up the staircase; it was the doctor's:

"Miss Florence, are you not ready? We are waiting."

She hesitated, and then with a gesture almost of despair she caught up the fur, replaced it carefully before the mirror, and readjusted her hat. She felt something as one in a dream fighting against an inevitable fate.

"Yes," she answered, with all the composure she could command, "I shall be there in a moment."

Then she crossed the hall to her mother's room. Mrs. Walton lay peacefully quiet. Florence thought her sleeping until she stooped to kiss the dear face. Then she opened her eyes:

"Going to the meeting, dear? Good-night, and God bless you, my child!"

The words went like an arrow to the poor, unhappy girl's heart. She hastened abruptly from the room. The doctor was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs, smiling perhaps more serenely than usual.

"Are you sure you are perfectly protected from the cold? Why, how pale you look, Miss Florence! What is the matter?"

"Nothing the matter, thank you.