

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson V.—JANUARY 30.

SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS. Luke ii. 25-35.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 28-32.

The circumcision and naming of Jesus are mentioned next by Luke (chap. ii. 21). Then follow his presentation in the temple at Jerusalem, and the offering for his redemption, as required in Lev. xii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—Luke ii. 30.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Simeon and the Child Jesus, Luke ii. 25-35. T. Anna and the Child Jesus, Luke ii. 36-39. W. The Desire of all Nations, Hag. ii. 1-9. T. Jesus the Christ, Matt. xvi. 13-20. F. Christ the Touchstone, Matt. xxv. 31-46. S. For Jew and Gentile, Luke xxiv. 36-48. S. Jesus the true Messiah, Luke ii. 25-35.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 25: Mark xv. 43; Isa. xl. 1. With vs. 26: Psa. lxxxix. 48; Heb. xi. 5. With vs. 27: Acts viii. 29; Acts x. 19; Rev. i. 10. With vs. 29: Gen. xli. 30; Phil. i. 23. With vs. 30: Gen. xlix. 18; Isa. lii. 10; Acts iv. 10. With vs. 32: Isa. ix. 2; Acts xiii. 47. With vs. 34: Isa. viii. 14; Rom. ix. 32; Acts xxviii. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 12. With vs. 35: Psa. xlii. 10; John xix. 25; 1 Cor. xi. 19.

JESUS THE TRUE MESSIAH OF GOD.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Messiah Expected, Vss. 25, 26. II. The Messiah Recognized, Vss. 27-31. III. The Messiah's Mission, Vss. 32-35.

QUESTIONS.—How many days intervened between Jesus' birth and the events of the present lesson? What rites were observed in this interval? What journey was made with the infant Jesus?

I. Vss. 25, 26.—What is meant by the word "Messiah"? What familiar name of Jesus has the same meaning? What title is given the Messiah in vs. 25? What in vs. 26? What man was waiting specially for the Christ? Why was he in such special waiting? What was this man's character? Did any other persons share Simeon's expectation?

II. Vss. 27-31.—What four persons came to the temple about the same time? (Vs. 27). What led Simeon to come? Why did the others come? What was this custom? What occurred when Simeon saw Jesus? (Vs. 28-31).

III. Vss. 32-35.—What title of the Messiah is given in vs. 25? What in vs. 26? What in vs. 30? What two titles in vs. 32? What is the meaning of these titles? What two facts concerning the child are stated in vs. 34? How are thoughts of many hearts revealed by the Messiah?

Special Topics.—Jerusalem and its temple; redemption of the first-born; Simeon's assurance—how imparted to him? Variety in the operations of the Holy Ghost; the import of the anointing; titles of Jesus; Israel and the Gentiles; Jesus spoken against; the sword in Mary's soul—what? Thoughts revealed by the mission of Jesus; Jesus the touchstone of human hearts.

In Gal. iv. 5, it is said of Christ that he was "made of a woman, made under the law." The last lesson proves the first clause; this lesson illustrates the second. As born under the Jewish dispensation, he was subject to its rites and ceremonies. Hence his circumcision when eight days old (Gen. xvii. 12). There is no mention of the gathering of "neighbors and cousins" upon this event, as at the circumcision of John (i. 58-61), a hint of the poverty and friendliness of these strangers away from their home. Two rites required the presence of Jesus and his parents at the Temple of Jerusalem: the ransom of this first born child (Ex. xiii. 2; Num. xviii. 15, 16), and a sacrifice for the purification of the mother (Lev. xii. 6-8). Another intimation of

poverty is given in the substitution of two young pigeons for a lamb as the sacrifice,—permitted when the mother was not "able" to offer a lamb. But did she not bring there "the Lamb of God"? The event of the lesson occurs in the Temple.

NOTES.—I. The Messiah Expected (vs. 25, 26).

Simeon. According to Godet, Simeon and Anna represented a spontaneous priesthood, in a time of spiritual degeneracy, when the official priesthood cultivated only the forms of religion. Just. The same word characterizes Joseph, in Matt. i. 19. Devout. With the careful observance of the Ceremonial Law, and the practice of good works, he combined deep spirituality—forming the perfect character of Micah iv. 8. Waiting, etc. Not as the multitude, with vague hopes and views but living daily in the light, and with the immediate expectation of his advent. Consolation of Israel. A common and expressive title of the Messiah, drawn from Is. xl. 1. Jesus endorses it, applying it to himself, as well as to the Holy Spirit (John xiv. 16). Holy Ghost, etc. A premonition of Pentecost. Revealed. In answer to prayer. The word (translated warned in Matt. ii. 12); implies a special communication. The Lord's Christ. The Anointed One, whom Jehovah sends. The Hope of Israel (Jer. xiv. 8). The Messiah of Promise.

II. The Messiah Recognized (vs. 27-32).

Came by the Spirit. Directed and urged by him who had made the revelation. Led, as Jesus was into the wilderness (Matt. iv. 1). To do for him. "To present him to the Lord" (vs. 22) publicly, and to pay redemptive tax (Num. xviii. 15, 16). At such a time the priest received the babe; but here Simeon, not a priest except as anointed for the occasion by the Holy Spirit, took the child in his arms. Moment of unspeakable joy! Then burst forth from his lips the psalm of praise and prophecy. Lord. Not the usual word for Lord, but one denoting the relation of master and servant. As one commanded to be upon the watch-tower, looking out for the Messiah, Simeon had obeyed the Master's word. Now. After long waiting. Lettest thou. Thou dost set free thy servant, discharging him from the duty put upon him, and from life's burdens. Have seen. Wonderful fact! What Jacob (Gen. xlix. 18), and many prophets and kings desired to see (Luke x. 24). Thy salvation. Not yet Saviour, though so called by anticipation, by the angel (ii. 11), but the procurer of salvation—the means of deliverance. Prepared. By his incarnation. Before the face, etc. In view of Jews, in this public presentation in the Temple; in view of the Gentiles, afterward represented by the Magi. Of all people. Or, rather, people. No more Jewish exclusiveness. The gospel is for the world. A light, etc. See Isa. xlix. 6; xxv. 7; Matt. iv. 16. Not Moses, or David, or Solomon, but Jesus is the Glory of Israel.

III. The Messiah's Mission (vs. 33-35).

Marveled. Why, when they already knew about the child? 1. Because of the confirmation of their knowledge by a stranger. 2. Because of an advanced revelation in Simeon's song. Mary must learn that Christ's exaltation must come through humiliation. The Messiah of prophecy must suffer many things. Behold.—Prefaces unexpected truth. Is set, etc. See Isa. viii. 14, 15. See, also, Luke xx. 18. Christ—a stone, upon which some fall and are bruised. Others build upon it heavenly habitations. Sign, etc. Exciting opposition, developing men's hatred. Reviled. See John viii. 48. A sword, etc. A great sorrow, like the great barbaric Thracian sword, shall pierce thy heart. A prophecy of the mater dolorosa, who stood by the cross (John xix. 26). The thoughts, etc. The evil thoughts and hearts of men. Their hypocrisy, their selfishness. Hence, as showing men themselves, he should be hated, persecuted, slain.

- 1. The house of God is the place to learn about Jesus. 2. The Holy Spirit will lead us to Jesus, if we will yield to him. He will also come and dwell with, and guide us, as he did Simeon. 3. Death was, to Simeon, a departure "in peace."

4. Christ appears to such as look for him.

5. Jesus was born into a pious household, and was dedicated, in infancy, to God. While we properly repudiate Infant Baptism, we may follow Mary's example, in consecrating our children to the Lord.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Take a Bible which has a blank page between the Testaments. Attract attention by showing this page to the children. Lead them to notice how much of the Bible comes before the blank leaf. How little after it. Ask for the names of the two parts. Impress upon the children that the Old Testament was all written before Jesus was born. The New Testament was written after Jesus was born. Ask which part tells about Jesus. The children will probably answer, "The New." Explain that both do. God told his prophets many things to write in the Old Testament about Jesus. Many of the people, as they read the Old Testament, wondered when Jesus would come. Some thought he would come very soon.

There was a dear old man, named Simeon, who had been waiting and watching a great many years for Jesus. Simeon was very old, but God promised he should not die until he had seen Jesus. One day, when Simeon was in the temple at Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary came in with Jesus. Explain the custom of bringing children, at that age, to the temple. Vs. 28-30.

Simeon was ready to die since he had seen Jesus. Memorize vs. 30. Simeon knew that Jesus had come to be the Saviour of the world.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Youth's Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 108.

- 1. What woman once, of virtuous fame, When dead heard Peter call her name? 2. Where is God's throne? at Salem? no: Read Stephen's words and you shall know. 3. Good John! What sort of man were he And Peter, once perceived to be? 4. What does Christ call him who relieves The man that fell among the thieves? 4. "Great is—our goddess!" Tell her name, While all th' Ephesians shout her fame. 6. What solemn words did Jesus cry, When lifted on the Cross to die? 7. What idol star—as Stephen said— Did Israel worship in God's stead? "Give us a King!" So Israel cried, Nor was their wayward wish denied; To Gilgal soon their gifts they bring, And Samuel said, "Behold your King!" Then he God's ancient mercies told, And bade them THESE GREAT SIGNS behold:—"Is it not harvest? Stand and view What I will ask, and God will do."

The prophet prayed, th' Almighty heard, And sent THESE SIGNS at Samuel's words; And Israel trembled when they saw— So let us learn to stand in awe.

The initials and finals give the signs. —Selected.

CURIOSUS QUESTIONS.

- 155. Make a Triangle of Words: 1. A level space. 2. part of the back. 3. help. 4. covered. 5. a negative consonant. 156. A Metaplasm. 1 2 3 6 7 8. 4 5. Make 1678 into a part of the body. 2678 a musical company. 3678 the earth's surface. 4678 fine particles of stone. 5678 a staff. 157. Form a Diamond of words: 1. The head of a church. 2. a useful animal. 3. an ornamented stone. 4. a number of friends together. 5. twisting together. 6. a unit. 7. one quarter of yard. 158. BEMEAN. To shine and leave to hearken. Nothing and leave anything. A chest and leave to propose.

Interlaced and leave a place for cooking. To choose and leave to relate. One of the six mechanical powers and leave an assemblage. Direction and leave to split. Answers next week.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 107.

SCRIPTURAL ACROSTIC.

Repent, Example, Pardon, Endure to the end, Night, Tree of life, Angels, Now, Comfort, Everlasting life.

REPENTANCE.

ANSWERS TO CURIOSUS QUESTIONS.

153. The letter G.

154. SQUARE OF WORDS.

ISSUE SCENT SEETH UNTIE ETHER

Select Serial.

A Thorny Path.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER III.

A LONG NIGHT.

When Hagar gained the main road, and was lost in the stream of busy traffic she went on her way mechanically, with swift steps, seeing none of the many faces she met, and hearing nothing of all the stir and noise about her. She had sunk into so profound a depth of wretchedness that she was conscious of nothing but her own misery. She had tasted no food since the night before, but she did not know she was hungry and faint. The slush of the muddy pavement was oozing through her worn-out boots, and the drizzle of the November evening penetrated through the thin dirty shawl she had crossed tightly over the baby, who was sleeping on her bosom. But Hagar did not say to herself that she was wet through, and cold. There was no shelter for her from the coming night, but she did not think of that. A blank despair, heavy and thick as the leaden clouds that hid the sky, hemmed her in on every side; and she felt only a vague unbroken sense of desolation. A faint, half-sleeping sob from the baby she was carrying was the first sound that brought her back to her present misery. She pressed it a little closer to her bosom, and her other hand fell down by her side, as if to catch hold of Dot's, while, almost against her will, she turned her head to see if she was anywhere near. She knew the child could not be pattering beside her, for she had not forgotten what she had just done. The image of her old father, blind and helpless, standing still under the trees, and of Dot running away to play at her own bidding, remained in her brain, and she could not get rid of it. By this time she had wandered a good way from Kensington Gardens, and had lost herself in a knot of streets; but quite clearly she seemed to see the tall bare trees, scattering heavy drops of rain from their wet branches, and the old man and little child forsaken and wretched among them.

Hagar ventured to sit down to rest now and then in the quiet streets, and on the steps of some empty house, where she could remain undisturbed. Once she fell asleep. How long she slept she could not tell; but the baby's cries awoke her—those shrill cries of suffering which pierce a mother's heart. It was almost impossible to soothe the little creature; and by the time it was slumbering again she was herself wide awake, and more keenly sensitive to her black despair. Yet she knew she must not sit there all night; so she bestirred herself, stretched her aching and stiffened limbs, and set out again on her aimless wanderings with creeping footsteps; moving simply to keep life in her veins, for she had no home to go to, and knew of no shelter to seek.

If her father and Dot had been with her, she would have gone to the work-house for their sakes; but for her own she did not care to go, nor for the baby's, who would perish with her, if she perished. It would not be a bad thing to die, she thought, if she could die peacefully in a bed, with quiet, gentle people about her, as her husband

had died six months ago. But to freeze to death on some doorstep, or be carried away at the last moment to some hospital, amid strangers, that was hard! It would be dying like a dog, as her father so often said.

At length she found herself again in the high road, and close by Hyde Park, where it joins Kensington Gardens. There were lamps everywhere in the Park; but the Gardens were unlighted and locked up. She crept slowly along the broad drive, looking over to the black masses of the trees beyond the sunk fence. It was possible that her father and Dot were still in there, crouching asleep under some of these trees, or stumbling to and fro amid those black shadows. They might not have been seen by the policemen, in the quiet, unfrequented path where she had left them. She made her way over the wet grass, and called softly across the sunk fence. There were but few carriages, and still fewer foot-passengers, along the broad drive; and no policeman was in sight. Hagar dragged herself along by the edge of the Gardens, searching the thick darkness with her eyes, and straining her ears for some answer to her low, frightened call. Ah, if she could but hear their voices calling back to her!

But her dread grew stronger every moment. Coming upon a place in the wall where the boys had pulled out some of the bricks in order to climb over it, she placed her feet in the lowest hole, and laid the baby safely on the green turf above it. It was easy then to make her way into the empty and silent glades of the Gardens.

There was something very wild and mournful about this solitude in the heart of the din and tumult of London: Here were no familiar lamplights sending streams of brightness down in the deep shadows which surrounded her. Her weary feet caught against the roots of the trees. Not a footstep beside her own broke the stillness, which seemed more still, because of the distant roll of wheels and the busy sounds of city life, which came as it were from afar to her ears. She felt as if she was in some other world; darker, colder, sadder even than the one she had left. The trees shut out the sky, and were blacker than it could ever be. She could not hurry on her search, for her limbs felt stiff; and the baby lay like a dead weight on her bosom. But yet she crawled along, shivering and heavy-hearted, to the spot where she had left her father and her little girl.

There was nothing to be seen when she reached the narrow by-path. But through the trees the water in the Round Pond, where children float their little boats by day, gleamed with a pale and ghostly light. In the dead hush of the place she could hear the tiny waves lapping against the stone-work which inclosed them. Was it impossible that the blind old man and the little child she had forsaken might have strayed this way and fallen into the sullen water. She recollected hearing of an aged workman having lost his way in a fog, whose corpse had been found there. She paced round and round the great pond, feeling half-asleep and half-dead, yet compelled to pore now and then over some speck floating on the surface, too far off to be distinguished clearly. Was that Dot's white little face showing just above the water, where the pale light seemed to lie? Or could it be her father's gray head? Or was it merely the reflection of some break in the clouds, which she could not see where she was standing.

Then with a moan she turned away to seek those she had lost among the trees; and fancying she could catch some sign of them, as she searched behind one black thick trunk after another. It did not seem long since she had played at hide-and-seek with Dot round the same trees—only that was in the summer sunshine, and while her husband looked on at the game. Was this search a terrible dream? Once or twice she came upon a heap of leaves gathered about the roots of a tree, which looked almost like the figure of a pre-terate man stretched upon the damp ground. If she could find her father and Dot lying dead somewhere, all she felt was a dull desire to lie down beside them, and die too.

But her search was in vain. Sometimes she sat down to rest on the seats, and seemed to sleep a little while, but