

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson XI.—SEPTEMBER 11.

IDOLATRY PUNISHED.

Exodus xxxii. 26-35.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 29, 30.

From the close of the last lesson up to ch. 23: 33, laws and promises of God are given. Then another call into the mountain was made upon Moses, in which visit directions were given for the tabernacle and other matters of ceremonial worship. This visit continued forty days, during which time the golden calf was made, as is narrated in ch. 32: 1-25, so leading to the lesson.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."—1 John v. 21.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Idolatry Punished, Exodus xxxii. 26-35.
T. Rebellion Reviewed, Deut. ix. 7-21.
W. Rebellion Reviewed, Psalm cvi. 1-27.
T. Intercession for the Rebellious, 1 Sam. xii. 7-25.
F. Concern for Kindred, Esther viii. 1-14.
S. Concern for Kindred, Rom. ix. 1-5; x. 1-5.
S. Idolatry in the Redeemed Nation, Exodus xxxii. 26-35.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 27: Deut. xxxiii. 9.
With vs. 29: Num. xxv. 11; Deut. xiii. 6; Prov. xxi. 3; Zech. xiii. 3.
With vs. 30: 1 Sam. xii. 20; xvi. 12; Amos v. 15.
With vs. 32: Deut. ix. 14; Psa. lix. 28; Rom. ix. 3; Psa. lvi. 8; cxxxix. 16; Dan. xii. 1; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5; xx. 12, 15; xxii. 19.
With vs. 33: Lev. xxiii. 30; Ezek. xviii. 4; Rom. ii. 5, 6.
With vs. 35: 2 Sam. xii. 9.

IDOLATRY IN THE REDEEMED NATION.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Punishment, Vs. 26-29. II. Intercession, Vs. 30-35.

QUESTIONS.—Which commandment of God is broken by idolatry?

I. Vs. 26-29.—What call did Moses make in the gate of the camp? Who responded to his call? What special duties had the sons of Levi? What work did the Lord now demand of them? What was the sin punished so severely? Why should it be so punished?

II. Vs. 30-35.—How many of the people were slain by the Levites? (vs. 28.) How many of them had joined in the idolatry? (vs. 1-6.) Why were not all slain? What did Moses say to the survivors on the next day? Was Moses' prayer a proper one? What benefits came from this intercession of Moses? What calamities befell the people because of their sin? Who is our intercessor? Wherein is he better than Moses? What excellent qualities of Jesus as an intercessor are named in Rom. viii. 34; 1 John ii. 1; Heb. vii. 25? Does Jesus intercede for all? (John xvii. 9).

Special Topics.—The camp of the Israelites; Levites and their work; idolatry and its terrific punishment here; why were some of these idolaters spared? Atonement for sin; intercessory prayer; God's book; Moses' willingness to be blotted out of the book; God's Angel; plagued of the Lord; the calf—why this form?

NOTES.—Verse 26.—Moses . . . gate: the place of common assembly. Sons of Levi: who were the guards and general helpers of the temple.

Verse 27.—Slay: not slay those who shrink from sight into their tents, but those met in the camp.

Verse 29.—Consecrate: set apart. Upon his son: offering son or brother as a consecration sacrifice. A blessing: such a purging of such an iniquity would show something of a proper spirit and secure a blessing.

Verse 30.—Peradventure: possibly; perhaps. An atonement: a satisfactory appeal to God, securing his favor.

Verse 32.—Yet now, etc.: an imperfect sentence; Moses' intense interest for the people breaking it in its midst with his self-sacrificing offer. Blot me: erase my name from life's book; let me die with my people. Thy book: the symbol of God's unfailing remembrance and unerring accuracy.

Verse 33.—Him will I blot: true to Ezek. xviii. 20.

Verse 34.—Lead the people: carry out thy commission. Mine Angel: the messenger who reveals me; the Word of John i. 1-14. Before thee: as in former times. I will visit: judgment is not wholly suspended. (See Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

Verse 35.—Plagued: probably referred to subsequent afflictions. The calf: in imitation of the bull gods of Egypt. They made: Aaron did the work, but they were the active power.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

When Moses was nearly down the mountain, he could see the calf and the people dancing around as if they were drunken. He was angry at the sight, and threw down the stone book on which God had written the law and broke it to pieces: it was too sacred for men who had broken those laws. He took the calf and threw it again into the fire; then he ground it into powder, which he threw into the water, and made the Israelites drink it. Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and cried out, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me." Only his own relations the Levites came. Moses, by God's command, ordered them to take their swords and pass through the camp, slaying all those who had taken the most active part, not sparing even their brothers or friends. Three thousand were slain. Then Moses called on the people to give themselves anew to the service of the Lord that he might even yet give them a blessing.

The next day he said to them all, "Ye have sinned a great sin; now I will go up to the Lord, and perhaps I can beg him to forgive you." He did not try to excuse their great sin to the Lord, but prayed, "If thou wilt forgive their sin;" then, as if he could not bear the idea of Israel remaining unforgiven, stopped, not able to finish, then after a pause, went on: "And if not, blot me out of the book thou hast written." He had rather die with them than to live if they were not forgiven. God told Moses to go on leading the people, and his presence should still guide them; nevertheless, they must be punished.

Boys' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 136.

- 1. The island where Paul was first regarded as a murderer, then as a god.
2. The town where he was met by Christians from Rome.
3. The second island passed by the apostle after leaving Ephesus for Jerusalem.
4. The Berean who accompanied him into Asia.
5. The latter of two persons of whom Paul said they had made shipwreck concerning faith.
6. The latter boundary-line which the apostle drew when speaking of the extent to which he had "fully preached the gospel of Christ."
7. The city where he was first regarded as a god, but afterwards stoned and left for dead.
8. The Roman province in which the above city was situated.

The initials give the place whence Paul addressed the "men of Athens."

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

235. Behead a seat, and leave an animal's covering; behead the top of a hill, and leave a disturbance; behead a foot covering, and leave a garden implement; behead a trembling motion, and leave a fish; behead a surgical instrument, and leave a dress; behead heavy striking, and leave a small insect.

A CHARADE.

Make a vessel of the following: A flying insect. A curvilinear figure. The centre of horses' food. A beverage.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 135.

- 1. C urtain s. 2 Sam. vii. 2.
2. H ira m. 1 Kings v. 2-6.
3. E l i. 1 Sam. iv. 18.
4. R ama h. 1 Sam. vii. 17.
5. U p. 1 Sam. ix. 26; x. 8.
6. B aash a. 1 Kings xv. 17.
7. I asacha r. 1 Chron. xxvi. 5.
8. M antl e. 1 Kings xix. 19.
9. S acrifice s. Heb. xiii. 16.

CHERUBIMS. Gen. iii. 24. SERAPHIMS. Isa. vi. 2, 6.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- 233. H A R D P A N
L A R K S
H A T
A M Y
B R A I N
W A L N U T S
234. Broad—road.
Bowl—owl.
Truth—Ruth.
Fox—ox.
Ox—x.

The Years pass on.

"When I'm a woman, you'll see what I'll do! I'll be great and good, and noble and true; I'll visit the sick and relieve the poor—No one shall ever be turned from my door; But I'm only a little girl now," And so the years pass on.

"When I'm older I'll have more time To think of heaven and things sublime; My time is now full of studies and play, But I really mean to begin some day; I am only a little girl now." And so the years pass on.

"When I'm a woman," a gay maiden said, "I'll try to do right and not be afraid; I'll be a Christian, and give up the joys Of the world with all its dazzling toys; But I'm only a young girl now." And so the years pass on.

"Ah, me!" sighed a woman, gray with years, Her heart full of cares and doubts and fears, "I've kept putting off the time to be good, Instead of beginning to do as I should; But I'm an old woman now." And so the years pass on.

Now is the time to begin to do right; To day, whether skies be dark or bright; Make others happy by good deeds of love, Looking to Jesus for help from above; And then you'll be happy now, And as the years pass on.

Two Pictures.

THE BEGINNING.

A schoolboy, ten years old, one lovely June day—with the roses in full bloom over the porch, and the laborers in the wheat fields—had been sent by his Uncle John to pay a bill at the country store, and there were seventy-five cents left, and Uncle John did not ask him for it. At noon, this boy had stood under the beautiful blue sky, and a great temptation came. He said to himself, "Shall I give it back, or shall I wait until he asks for it? If he never asks, that is his lookout. If he does, why, I can get it again together." He never gave back the money.

THE ENDING.

Ten years went by; he was a clerk in a bank. A package of bills lay in the drawer, and had not been put in the safe. He saw them, and wrapped them up in his coat, and carried them home. He is now in a prison-cell, but he set his feet that way when a boy years before, when he sold his honesty for twenty-five cents. That night he sat disgraced and an open criminal. Uncle John was long ago dead. The old home was desolate, his mother broken-hearted. The prisoner knew what brought him there.—School Journal.

Helpless hands.

"I would like to have a new dress, but it is hard to get a good dressmaker," sighed Priscilla the other day. Why not be your own dressmaker? "We have to eat baker's cake," said Marianne. "Mamma says she has no time to make it for such a family." Why not make the cake yourself? Mother's daughter should relieve her of such cares. O girls, whatever else you do, don't go through life with helpless hands. Hands should be instruments to serve our needs, not useless ornaments to hang rings upon.

The Princesses Louise, Victoria, and Maud of Wales were recently returning from their customary afternoon drive in Hyde Park when the two horses in their carriage bolted down Constitution-hill and through St. James's park. When within about fifty yards of Marlborough House the equipage came into collision with a lamppost, the animals were brought up, and the Princesses were rescued from their perilous situation.

For Conscience' sake.

"There is a matter that lies heavy on my conscience, dear wife," said John Evershed, as they sat at tea after the duties of the day were done. "I have pondered it long and anxiously, and thought to speak to you about it, but have hesitated through fear of causing you anxiety, but am driven to the point at last."

John Evershed was an engineer, and ran an express passenger train upon an important trunk line road. Steady and reliable as the sun; always at his post, with his hand upon the throttle and his eyes upon the track; with the steam at a higher or lower pressure, as the road wound up or down a grade; the shriek of the steam-whistle ringing out for down brakes never a moment too late and never a moment too soon;—he had gone out with his train daily for the past ten years. Those who knew him best relied the most implicitly upon his prudence and sagacity, and committed their property and lives the more readily to his care and foresight. He had run upon the same engine all the time he had been in the company's employ, and regarded it almost with the affection he would have done if it had been a sentient being. Often when the day's run was over, he would drop into the engine-house to look after the grooming of his iron steed, and see that it had—no good oats and hay, but good oil for its supple joints and iron sinews, and clean boxes and tubes for its water and fire.

And now this bearded and stalwart man, grim and grizzled when upon his engine, but clean and well kempt at the tea-table with his own family, "had a matter lying heavy on his conscience."

"What is it, my dear?" rejoined the wife; "perhaps, if you confide in me, the matter can be more readily disposed of than if you carried it alone."

"It is this matter of running a Sunday train. While you and the children are at the church and Sabbath-school, I am driving over the road with a shriek and a roar that breaks in upon the quiet of the day, and banishes from the mind all devotional thoughts. Since we stood up together in the broad aisle of the dear old church, and together consecrated ourselves to God, this thought has troubled me more and more. Suppose, dear wife, from some Sunday catastrophe I should be brought home dead. Would not the thought that it occurred on such a day render the calamity all the more bitter for you to bear?"

"God spare us!" exclaimed the wife. "Amen!" responded the husband; "but such a thing might be."

"Ask our pastor what he thinks about it."

"I have done that already, and laid the case fully before him; but after a long conference he answered: 'I must refer it back to you; solve the problem for yourself, with prayer to God for light and guidance in accordance with his holy will. He will give you no supernatural revelation, but in the light of reason and conscience it will be impressed upon your own mind what is the right course for you to pursue. Somebody,' he added, 'must run the Sunday trains; is there any man upon the road more steady and reliable than you, and would the lives of travellers be safer in any other hands than yours?'"

"I did not say no to that, for it might look like boasting; but I did say there were safe and reliable men who did not make my professions of Christianity, and did not have my scruples, who would be glad to have my place; but then, ought I to lead these men into temptation to deliver myself from evil? And besides, dear wife, if I throw up my place, what will you and our children do for bread? I am at home on my engine, and no man can be more so; but I am a mere child in any other place. I am a locomotive engine driver, and nothing else!"

"Yes, you are," responded the wife emphatically. "You are a Christian man that would become a martyr for conscience' sake, and you are a tender and considerate husband and father. Do in this matter what you think is right; and any sacrifices you may be called upon to make we will share cheerfully together."

Evershed did not rest that night upon a downy couch, for he was troubled with anxious thoughts. His comfortable but modest home was still encumbered for half its value, and he relied upon what he could save out of his sal-

ary to meet the instalments as they fell due. If his house was only paid for, he thought how speedily would he settle this vexed question; but in that case would there be any sacrifice for conscience' sake? He settled in his mind at last to see the superintendent, and ask to be relieved from running a Sunday train, "for," he added, "be the consequences what they may, I cannot and will not run another on that day." And in accordance with that determination he called at the superintendent's office. That officer was a splendid business man, quick of perception, ready in execution, and not over-scrupulous nor choice in his language or expression. But he knew his men thoroughly, and all the workings of the road he managed.

"I have a request to make of the company," said the engineer respectfully.

"Well what is it? Is your salary too small, or your work too hard, or your engine not good enough?"

"No, nothing of the kind. I am satisfied with everything but one, and that is the running of a Sunday train."

"A mighty tender conscience you must have," responded the official.

"Must the road stop running or break its connections because some tender-footed sheep or a fanatical shepherd refuses to leap the bar of conscience? Can a train lay over for prayers when the United States mail and an express car and three hundred passengers must be true on time? Railroad employes with your scruples would ruin my corporation in a year, and I am quite sure you have mistaken your calling in becoming an engineer."

"I have served this company faithfully for ten years," responded the other indignantly; "and no man before ever told me I had mistaken my calling. I have stood at my post through storm and peril, and at any time of collision with my engine, I would go down with the wreck; but as to running a Sunday train, I am resolved to stop it here and now. I am willing to work for lower wages and take a lower grade in the company's service; and I do most earnestly hope, since you cannot fail to see it is at a sacrifice on my own behalf, that you will favorably consider my request."

"I can say no more at present; come next Saturday in the afternoon and get your orders."

The time dragged heavily through the week, and on Saturday the engineer called at the office on time. The superintendent was busy at his desk, but soon looked up and said, "Ah! you have called for a solution of the Sunday question. I have solved your problem by a short formula. You may turn over your engine to the train dispatcher forthwith. Another engineer will take out the train to-morrow, and you can go to church with your wife and children."

The poor man was completely overcome, and in spite of all his efforts to restrain his feelings, burst into tears; but rallying in a moment, he said, "I have tried to do my duty, and had hoped for better things, and that I might live and die in the company's service. I trust the dear old engine will fall into good hands, for I have loved and petted it, have almost felt sometimes as if it had a soul, and knew as I did the responsibility imposed on it and me; but we must part company now, and I am not ashamed to say it wrings my heart and takes the bread out of my children's mouths."

The superintendent wheeled around on his pivot-chair and responded sharply: "Who said you were to leave the company's service? I have inquired into your antecedents, and know you to be one of most reliable men. We cannot afford to part with such, even if they have consciences too tender for some necessary portions of our service. You will, therefore report with your own old fireman at seven o'clock Monday morning at the station, to take out the special express with a new first-class engine that never ran on the road before, and your salary is increased twenty-five per cent. from the old rate for the increased responsibility of the fastest train upon the line. Although I do not take much stock in your scruples of conscience, yet I do not think either the property of the company or the lives of passengers are in any greater peril under the care of a man who acts on his convictions of duty, even at the risk, as he thinks, of losing his head. And mind you," added the official as he hastened to suppress the engineer's expressions of gratitude, and waived him to the door, "the special express is not a Sunday train."—New York Evangelist.