

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson X.—DECEMBER 4.

BALAAH.

Num. xxiv. 10-19.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 17-19.

Having been relieved from the plague of the fiery serpents, the people journeyed onward, overcoming Sihon and Og, who were noted foes. Balak, King of Moab, another conspicuous enemy, sought help against them in Balaam, of whom our present lesson treats. See intervening narrative, Chaps. xxi. 10 to xxiv. 9. The scene of these events was the borders of Moab and Edom, which location the Israelites had reached in their journey northward to Canaan and east to the Dead Sea.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."—James i. 8.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Balaam, Num. xxiv. 10-19.
T. Balaam's History, Num. xxii. 2-21.
W. Balaam's History, Num. xxii. 21-41.
T. Balaam's History, Num. xxiii. 1-30.
F. Enemies Overcome, Psa. xxvii. 1-14.
S. Triumph in God, Psa. xli. 1-11.
S. Blessings, not Curses, for the Redeemed, Num. xxiv. 1-25.

BLESSINGS, NOT CURSES, FOR THE REDEEMED.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Enemies Disappointed, Vss. 10, 11. II. Traitors Controlled, Vss. 12-14. III. Blessings Disclosed, Vss. 15-19.

QUESTIONS.—Why is the Golden Text joined with a lesson on Balaam? Vss. 10, 11.—Who was Balak? Why had he sought Balaam? How many times had he disappointed Balak? What had Balak proposed for Balaam? How did he dismiss Balaam? To whom did he attribute Balaam's failure to please him?

Vss. 12-14.—Whom was Balaam supposed to serve? Whom was he willing to betray? What evidence of this willingness appears in the lesson? What evidence of it appears in Deut. xxiii. 4; Josh. xxiv. 9, 10; 2 Pet. ii. 15; Jude 11; Rev. ii. 14?

Vss. 15-19.—By what seven sentences does Balaam describe himself? What does he here say concerning a coming One? (Vss. 17, 19). Who is this coming One? What does he say about troubles and conquests? Why may these disclosures be termed blessings?

Having gone around the land of Edom, the Israelites pursued their way northward, pushing on towards the promised land. They were opposed by two mighty kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, whom they defeated. At this, Balak, king of Moab, became alarmed, and doubting his ability to contend with the victorious host, and sharing the superstition of that day, that, if a curse should be laid upon his enemy by one competent to utter it, he would have the enemy at a disadvantage in the conflict, he looked about him for a powerful diviner, or sooth-sayer, to utter the curse. The fame of Balaam, who lived far away in Mesopotamia, in the city of Pethor (Deut. xxiii. 4), had reached him, and he sent a deputation with "rewards of divination" (xxii. 7) to induce him to come and curse Israel. Of the result of this mission, we have a full account in chapter xxiv.

NOTES.—I. The Covetous Prophet, (Vss. 10-14.)

Verses 10.—Balak's anger was kindled. Quite naturally so from his point of view, for he had sent for Balaam to curse and not to bless Israel, and yet, as he says, "Thou hast altogether blessed them these three times." His smiting his hands together was an expression of his anger. See Job xxvii. 23; Lam. ii. 15. It was a bitter disappointment to Balak. Balaam is spoken of (xxii. 7) as one who used "divination;" in Josh. xiii. 22, as a "sooth-sayer," but he was also a warrior chief, ranking with the five kings of Midian (xxi. 8), and a prophet. He had some knowledge of the true God, and was at times moved by the Spirit of God in uttering prophecies. His four parables, or visions, concerning Israel take high rank for grandeur of thought, fulness of imagery, dignity of language, elevation of style, vividness of coloring, and prophetic foresight as

to Israel's destiny, and even as to the coming of the Messiah. That he was a man of powerful intellect, and even of genius, is also evident from the same brilliant utterances. He was selfish and wicked, and failing to harm Israel in his prophecies, because Jehovah restrained him from cursing and filled his mouth with blessing, he endeavored to seduce them by counselling lascivious temptations (xxii. 16, Rev. ii. 14), and was slain while fighting against the people of the Lord, (xxxi. 8)

Verses 11.—Flee to thy place. The indignant Balak seems here to threaten Balaam with violence. The Lord hath kept thee back from honor. Spoken in irony and with a sneer, implying that it was Balaam's own obstinacy.

Verses 12, 13.—Spake I not, etc. See xxii. 18. His house full of silver and gold. The standard of all good to a covetous man like Balaam. I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, etc. Balaam had greatly desired to go "beyond the commandment of the Lord."

Verses 14.—I go unto my people. Such may have been his purpose, but he did not go home. He was killed in battle by the Israelites, (Josh. xiii. 22.) Advertise thee. Advise or instruct thee. In the latter days. The Messianic era, and that not merely at its commencement, but in its entire development until the return of our Lord to judgment." See Isa. ii. 2.

II. The Grand Prophecy, (Vss. 15-19.)

Verses 15.—Took up his parable. A phrase which introduces each of his prophecies, (xxiii. 7, 18. xxiv. 3, 20, 21, 23. Balaam's utterings which are sententious and oracular. He was not addressing a congregation as were the other prophets, but only ejaculated in brief, compressed sentences what he saw, without reference to the effect upon any who heard it. Whose eyes are open. Some scholars interpret the word rendered open as closed.

Verses 16.—Heard...knew...saw the vision. In his ecstatic condition. The Spirit of God met a responsive spirit within them, and could work with them in their normal condition. But with men like Balaam there must be an abnormal condition; something after the manner of the beast he rode, when she spoke with the human voice. The words, into a trance, are supplied by the translators, and, although, the falling spoken of was, doubtless, a physical falling to the ground, like that of King Saul (1 Sam. xix. 24) when the spirit of prophecy was upon him; yet it is most likely that Balaam's prophetic condition was after the manner of a trance, and in this trance he was buried to the ground by the Spirit of God, and as he fell had his (spirit's) eyes opened, and "heard," and "knew," and "saw" the things which he declares.

Verses 17.—I shall see him, etc. A Star appears out of Jacob, and a Sceptre rises out of Israel, and dashes Moab in pieces on both sides, and destroys all the sons of confusion." The birth and accession of great kings was announced by the appearance of stars." The corners of Moab are, literally, as in the above translation by Keil, "on both sides." Moab should be smitten through and through.

Verses 18.—Edom and Seir refer to the same kingdom, lying south of Moab, and inhabited by the descendants of Esau. The time should come when Israel, doing valiantly, i. e., acquiring power, should overcome them.

Verses 19.—Destroy him that remaineth in the city. "This phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives till he has cut off all of every place." Edom revolted under Solomon (1 Kings xi. 14); and again under Jeram (2 Kings viii. 20); invaded Judah in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 17); and though, according to Josephus, eventually conquered by John Hyrcanus, B. C. 129, and incorporated in the Jewish state, they again held dominion over the Jews in the persons of the Herods. The Messiah shall make thorough work with his foes. He shall have universal dominion, and put down all enemies under his feet.

Balaam furnishes an example of the perversion of splendid abilities; the prostitution to base ends of exalted privileges; and the casting away of great opportunities for securing a magni-

ficent fame, a useful life, and eternal salvation.

We see the worthlessness of mere sentimentalism in religion. Balaam was pious in words. He could picture the glories of Israel, but was not of Israel. He exclaimed: "Let me die the death of the righteous," but waxed worse and worse, and died as the fool dieth.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Our lesson to day is about a man who was unstable.

What made Balaam unstable? He was double-minded. He wanted to please God, and yet he wanted to please himself. He said he was God's prophet; he spoke the words God told him to speak; but still he did not do as God told him to do. When the children of Israel were near Canaan, a king sent for Balaam to come and curse them. What is it to curse? The king promised to give Balaam a great deal of money if he would come and curse the children of Israel. God told Balaam not to go. Read Num. xxii. 12. Then Balak, the king, sent and promised to give Balaam greater presents.

Balaam really wanted to go though God had told him not to go. At last, God told Balaam, if he was not willing to obey, to go. Narrate the incident of Balaam in Chap. ii. 22-35. Balaam did not curse the children of Israel. He blessed them three times. How do you think Balak the king, felt? Read vs. 10, 11. What does God say about those that honor him? See 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Before Balaam started to go home, he told Balak that some day a great king would be born among the children of Israel. He said: "A Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Who was the king of whom Balaam spoke? Jesus. Balaam talked very well, but he did not want to obey God. I hope we will all try to have one mind to please God in all our ways.—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Boys' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 146.

In the initials of the following described places find the name of a garden spoken of in the New Testament:

- 1. A city to which the angel of the Lord directed Philip when on his way to Jerusalem, where he baptized the Ethiopian eunuch.
2. A town on the west side of the Jordan where John baptized.
3. The birthplace of the apostle Paul.
4. A celebrated mountain on the border of Idumea where Aaron was buried.
5. A mountain in Arabia where Moses was in communion with God forty days and forty nights, "and did neither eat bread nor drink water."
6. A village in Palestine where our Lord on the eve of His resurrection made Himself known to two of His disciples in the breaking of bread.
7. A mountain on which Solomon built the temple, and on which Abraham was directed to offer up his son for a burnt-offering.
8. A mountain on which the ark containing Noah and his family rested after the flood.
9. One of the summits of the mountains of Abarim which overlooked the whole length and breadth of the promised land, and where Moses died.
10. A mountain where Joshua built an altar unto the Lord, and "wrote upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses in the presence of the children of Israel."

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 265. Imperfect Poetry. Supply the last word to each line making rhyming triplets:
So should we live, that every —
May die as dies the natural —
A self-resolving thing of —
That every thought and every —
May hold within itself the —
Of future good and future —

266. Form a word square of the following:
1. An ecclesiastical crown.
2. A woman's name.
3. Watches.
4. To invest with.
5. To plant again.

267. Where in the Bible is the greyhound mentioned?

268. Which is the oldest city mentioned in the Bible?

269. When David pursued the Amalekites how many men stayed behind?

270. What large building affected the whole human race, and is mentioned but once in the Bible?

271. Addition. To one thousand add fifty, Yourself put between, Add a point of the compass, A brute will be seen.

272. Who am I? My first is my last; my second is my third. I am not one year old, yet I re present centuries. Some predicted that I would not live out my term, but I have no fears. My advent was hailed with joyous greetings; my departure may cause some sadness. My initial is my terminal. With one exception I am exactly like my predecessor.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 145.

- 1. E sau.....Gen. xxv. 29.
2. Ly dia.....Acts xvi. 14, 15.
3. I saac.....Gen. xxiv. 63.
4. J ob i. 1, 12; ii. 7, 10.
5. A ron.....Ex. iv. 14.
6. H annah.....1 Sam. i. 9-18.
ELIJAH.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 262. Miriam, Moses' sister.
263. C S A C S A B L E C A B B A G E C L A N G E G G E
264. R O S E O M I T S I F T E T T A

Look out for Rocks.

A lady was taking his first trip by water, and as most boys do, rambled up and down the vessel, watching all about him with eager curiosity. By-and-by he stood beside the helmsman. Here and there over the water were scattered floating sticks of painted timber, and now he noticed that the vessel turned aside here and there to avoid them.

"Why do you turn aside for those little sticks?" said the boy. "I should ride right over them."

The gruff old helmsman gave him a glance from under his shaggy brows, and one word which seemed wrenched from the depth of his chest—one word, but it spoke a volume: "Rocks!"

The boy could see no danger. The water looked as fair about the buoys as any other place. He thought in his childish wisdom, that the old man was over particular, so he answered again: "I wouldn't turn out; I would go straight ahead." The old man did not reply, only with a glance such as the boy has not forgotten even in his manhood. It seemed to say "Poor foolish child, how little you know of rocks!"

That boy has long been a faithful pastor, and he often tells the lambs of his flock about the hidden rocks in their course, rocks that have wrecked a great many bright hopes and precious souls.

The theatre is one of these rocks. It may look very innocent and pleasant; but there are fatal rocks there that may sink your soul in everlasting despair. Don't sip a little wine. Don't go into the society of boys who sometimes utter an oath. You had better turn out when you come to such rocks. There are buoys enough to warn you, good counsellors to tell you of your danger. Do not neglect their caution. When an old helmsman says to you, "Rocks," be sure there is danger.

Your Bible is your only sure chart. Here you will find the buoys and light-houses all marked down, telling you where the rocks are hid.

"Enter not into the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Prov. iv. 14, 15.—Watch Tower.

Our Mission.

The last summer in which Letta Wilton spent her vacation in our village, we established a Home Mission, in the progress of which we took such satisfaction that I am going to tell you about it; and hope some poor, aching, overburdened heart will be the better for the simple story.

Letta was a city girl, and just the kind to wake up a sleepy-hollow like ours. There were not so many lively

people fitting in and out of our village then as now, so that her visits were of importance to us.

In the first place, she brought the summer fashions to our out-of-the-way place; that was something to our one dressmaker, and to our economical mothers, and would have been of more consideration to us, only that we loved Letta for her own sake, and lost sight of last year's gowns and bonnets in our joy at seeing her.

Letta was a little later that season than usual; but the week before our minister's summer vacation was to commence, we received word that we might be at the depot to welcome her on Saturday afternoon.

We were there in full force, and caught sight of the white handkerchief fluttering from the car-window as the engine came slowly in. Letta was in our arms directly, and we had indulged in a good deal of promiscuous hugging and kissing, and preparing to do it all over again, when a stranger approached with a carpet bag in his hand, and asked to be directed to the house of the clergyman.

"What'll yer bet," whispered Peter, "that isn't the new minister that's to preach while 'Oother one's gone?"

We all shrank back except Letta, who gave the necessary directions, and sent Pendenis along with the stranger, who lifted his hat to us at parting. He was a young man; but his grave and refined manners removed us at a greater distance from him than years could have done.

"He has been on the train from Boston," said Letta, as we looked after him with a good deal of interest. "I noticed the white neck-tie. I hope Peter is right, and that he is to preach in the pastor's absence. He looks sensible and intelligent."

"I hope he won't give a sermon two hours long, as our minister did last Sunday," growled Peter. We were not much surprised at finding the stranger in the pulpit on the following Sabbath; but we were not quite prepared for his fresh and attractive presentation of gospel truths.

Dea. Blank, who depended as much upon his Sunday nap as he did upon his chicken dinner, covered his bald head three different times with his pocket-handkerchief, preparatory to his accustomed doze. At last, he gave it up in despair and listened with the rest of us.

We used to have three full sermons in those times, the people being determined to get the worth of their money, perhaps.

The third discourse, upon this occasion, was to the young people; and we were, therefore, pleasantly invited, to occupy the front pews. The kindly advice and Christian counsel were certainly worthy of being engraved in letters of gold. We trust they were engraven upon many of our hearts, and that some of us have been better men and women for the faithful words then spoken.

But the point around which our story centres was foreshadowed in this:

"The young are always generous. Let there be system in your charities. It is not benevolence to give your pennies to any beggar who asks alms of you; but you should rather select from among your own towns people, persons who are unfortunate and poor, and then be of service to them by your thoughtful kindness. In this way, you will establish a Home Mission of your own, and become missionaries in earnest.

"Perhaps, while I speak these words, some among you may be thinking of a neighbor who requires just this kind of home aid and sympathy. If so, I'm going ask you to raise your hands. Do not be afraid. It will be no discredit to you."

Pendenis promptly gave the signal designated. The young preacher recognized his former escort, and was evidently gratified at the response. Said he, "If this lad has an object in view, you may be sure it is a worthy one, for I happen to know that his heart and judgment are to be respected. If you will all agree to act in concert, I will promise to be one of your number, and see what comes of the effort."

The moment church was over, we huddled around Pendenis to learn whom he had in his thoughts when he held up his hand.

"I was thinking of Ruth Kemp," said he.

"Why, her father is the awfulest drunkard out," scoffed Peter.

"And her mother is a perfect sloven." "And Ruth has the hip disease, and never cad be anybody, any way."

"There are more children than you can shake a stick at!" "Do let us have an object that will be interesting," lisped Olive Gay. "I hate to go among filthy, rude people!" "Now, look here!" put in Pendenis. "I know these Kemps are a pretty hard