

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1881.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson X.—MARCH 6.

WITNESS OF JESUS TO JOHN. Luke vii. 19-28.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 26-28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He was a burning and a shining light."—John v. 35.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Witness of Jesus to John, Luke vii. 19-28. T. Parallel from Matthew, Matt. xi. 2-19. W. Witness of John to Jesus, John i. 29-42. T. Works Witnessing for Jesus, Luke vii. 1-17. F. Words Witnessing for Jesus, John vii. 37-53. S. Confessions Concerning Jesus, Matt. xvi. 13-20. S. Jesus Proven to be the Christ, Luke vii. 19-28.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

With the lesson: Matt. xi. 2-19. With vs. 19: Ezek. xxi. 27; Dan. ix. 25; Mal. iii. 1. With vs. 22: Matt. xi. 5; Isa. xxix. 19; xxxv. 5; James ii. 5. With vs. 27: Mal. iii. 1; lv. 5; Isa. xl. 3; John i. 23.

JESUS PROVEN TO BE THE CHRIST.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Great Inquirer, Vss. 19, 24-28. II. The Momentous Question, Vss. 19, 20. III. The Conclusive Reply, Vss. 21-23.

QUESTIONS.—Where was John at the time of this lesson? Where was Jesus at this time? Point it out. On what charge was John cast into prison? (Matt. xiv. 3, 4; Luke iii. 19, 20). What is the topic of the lesson?

Vss. 19, 24-28.—How does Jesus show John's greatness? (Vss. 24-28.) What does he say of John in the Golden Text?

Vss. 19, 20.—To ask what question did John send his disciples? What did they ask when they were come to Jesus? What led to the asking of this question? (Luke vii. 16-18). Was John personally in doubt about Jesus?

Vss. 21-23.—What did Jesus do in answer to their inquiry? Why was this better than any answer in mere words? Having done these things, what message did Jesus give? To whom did he send it? Why to John?

John the Baptist was in prison (Matt. xi. 2) in the Castle of Machærus, east of the Dead Sea; the strongest fortress of the Jews, next to Jerusalem. For description of it, see "Josephus' Wars of the Jews," Book VII., chap. 6, § 1. For account of John's imprisonment by Herod, see Matt. xiv. 3. He seems not to have been closely confined, but to have been treated with respect; for Herod feared, and the people revered him. (Matt. xiv. 5.) See account of his execution in Matt. xiv. 10. John had heralded Christ; had baptized him; and had pointed his disciples to him as the "Lamb of God," (John i. 29); and in his prison he had heard of "the works of Christ." (Matt. xi. 2.) But, notwithstanding the power which Jesus thus manifested, John was left in prison; and there was no deliverance either for him or for Israel. Disappointed and perplexed, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus for information as to whether he was really the Messiah.

NOTES.—I. The Inquiry, (vss. 19, 20.) Two of his disciples. John was in prison; but his disciples had access to him, and, apparently, came and went freely. Art thou he that should come? Literally, the Coming One. See Mal. iii. 1. John's own question, and for the confirmation of his own faith; the question of hope deferred, which makes the heart sick. Contrast his bold expressions of confidence, in John i. 33-36. Jesus was not filling out John's idea of the mission of the Messiah. He had not come with axe and fan (iii. 9-17), but with grace and healing (iv. 18). He came, not to condemn, but to save. (John iii. 17.) John shared in the common view, that Christ must establish a temporal kingdom; and he saw no signs that it was "at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) He had languished in prison for a year; and, though Christ was exercising Divine power, no blow was struck for his deliverance, nor for the release of Israel from their yoke. Could this be the Messiah? His thought

seems to be like that in Jeremiah xx. 7. Or look we for another? A different one. Some thought there were to be two Messiahs. Perhaps, in his perplexity, John, for the time, harbored this question. Or, might not Jesus be simply "that prophet" spoken of in John i. 21, 26; Luke ix. 19; whom some distinguished from the Christ. When the men were come. From Machærus, where John was imprisoned, to Capernaum, where Jesus now was (vii. 1), a distance of about fifty miles.

II. The Answer, (vss. 21-23.) In that same hour They came upon Jesus in the midst of his miracles of healing. Cured many. Jesus never lacked subjects to illustrate his mercy and power. Evil spirits. Meyer remarks that Luke, as a physician, distinguishes the demoniacs from the naturally sick persons. He gave sight. "Made them a present of sight." A gracious gift, better than gold. Jesus answering. A double answer, by deeds and by words. Go . . . tell John. To establish his faith. Seen and heard. Things "heard" attest Christ's Divinity, as well as things "seen"; doctrines, as well as miracles. "Never man spake like this man." Things seen (miracles) pass from sight; but things heard (the words of our Lord) endure for ever. The blind see. Dr. Brown remarks: "As the article is wanting in each of these classes, the sense would be better perceived by the English reader, thus: 'Blind persons are seeing, lame people are walking, leprosy persons are getting cleansed,'" etc. But John knew all this before he sent his embassy, (vii. 18). Jesus intimates that John needed not new facts, but a new view of facts known. To the poor, the gospel is preached. The climax of signs and wonders; the great feature of the Messianic work. Philosophers and religionists overlooked the poor. None cared for them till Christ came. Spiritual poverty is, doubtless, included. Shall not be offended in me. Shall not be hurt by stumbling at me. Shall not, by false views concerning me and my mission, distrust me. To one who expected that Christ would come as a temporal Messiah, his whole course was an obstacle to stumble over. It was prophesied that Christ should be "a stone of stumbling." (Isa. viii. 14.) He was such to the Jews (Rom. ix. 33; 1 Cor. i. 23), because of his lowly mission, his unworldly character, and his ignominious death. He is such to many now, because of what seems his slow movement in the redemption of the world. Blessed. An exalted tribute to simple, unquestioning faith.

III. Christ's Tribute to John, (vss. 24-28.) When the messengers . . . were departed. John had borne testimony to Jesus, (John iii. 23-36). Jesus here gives public testimony to John, to correct any imperfect judgment concerning him. But not as a flatterer, to have his words reported to John. Our Lord fully appreciates and acknowledges the fidelity of those who serve him. Wilderness. See Matt. iii. 1. Bordering on the Jordan, where John preached and baptized. To see. Literally, to gaze upon, as upon a spectacle; referring to the crowds who were to John's baptism, and, by their interest, acknowledged him to be an extraordinary person. What, then, was this great spectacle? A reed, etc. Symbol of a man of hesitating and unstable character. He was not a reed, but a rock. But what, etc. Implying a negative answer to the question just asked. Clothed in soft raiment. If not a waverer, was he a voluptuary? Was he one that shunned hardship, and sought ease; and is he one to be in fear of his life? Notice his real garb, in Matt. iii. 4. They which are gorgeously, etc. Pliant, politic courtiers frequent, not the wilderness, but palaces, where the enemies of the Baptist were. If John's mission had been to please self, or of an earthly nature, he would have shunned the wilderness, and have been found in kings' houses. But what went ye out to see? The third question forcibly brings out John's true character. A prophet? Such he was, and so the people regarded him. (Matt. xxi. 26.) He was not a mere sensationalist, but one sent of God with a message. Much more than a prophet. 1. As the last of a long line of prophets, and nearest to Him who was the subject of all prophecy. 2. As preparing the Messiah's way; as seeing

him, and pointing him out; as the immediate forerunner of Christ. 3. As the subject of prophecy himself, as well as the Christ whom he came to announce. See Mal. iv. 5; Matt. i. 14. It is written. See Mal. xiii. 1. Behold I send, etc. Note the change from Malachi, from the first to the second person, in a part of this sentence. Malachi has it: "The way before me." Here it is, "Thy way before thee." Concerning this, Alford remarks: "This change, making that which is said by Jehovah of himself to be addressed to the Messiah, is, if such were needed, no mean indication of his own eternal and co-equal Godhead." My Messenger. In the old Testament, John is called both a "voice" (Isa. xl. 3), and a "messenger" (Mal. iii. 1). The Baptist, in his humility, applies the first title to himself, (Matt. iii. 3). But Jesus here gives him the larger one. Least in the kingdom. Literally, less in the kingdom. One who has, relatively, a less position in the kingdom which John announced, is greater than the greatest outside of that kingdom. John belonged to the Old Dispensation, and in it, was greatest of all; but the least child is greater than the highest servant. "The least of the greatest is greater than the greatest of the least." John was the friend of the Bridegroom; but the Church is his bride.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and his belt was made of leather. What did John tell the people to do to show that they were truly sorry for their sins?

There was a wicked king in the country where John preached. John spoke even to the king about his sins. Tell the result.

Some of John's friends came to see him in prison. Tell what they talked about.

One day John sent two of these friends to ask Jesus a question. He told them to ask Jesus whether he was really the Saviour that God had promised to send.

Hear just what John had read? Read Isa. xxxv. 4, last clause; v. 5; v. 6, first clause.

What question were the two men to ask? Jesus did not say "Yes" right away; he let the men see him do some wonderful works. Narrate in detail, then read vs. 22.

When the two men had gone back to the prison, Jesus talked to the people about John. Jesus told the people that John was the greatest prophet that had ever been born. See chap. i. 76.

Another time, when Jesus was talking to the people about John, he said: "He was a burning and a shining light."

Jesus meant that John was like a light, because he helped the people find the way to Jesus, and to heaven.

Can't you be a little light to help some one find the way to Jesus, and to heaven? How?

"When Jesus bids us shine for him The smallest light must not be dim."—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Youths' Department.

Scripture Enigma.

No. 113.

Here is an injunction from the Psalms, adapted to all ages and every condition in life. It comprises seven words, and twenty-three letters. Write down numbers from 1 to 23 in a line, and as you find out the words, place each letter under the proper number and find what it is and where it is found:

- No. 7, 15, 6, 16, are a city where Christ performed a miracle. No. 16, 21, 14, are a land to which a murderer fled. No. 11, 22, 5, was saved by an angel. No. 13, 19, 18, was miraculously transformed while in the hands of Moses. No. 9, 6, 20, 9, 4, 10, 15, 1, was chosen by the Pharisees. No. 12, 20, a king of Bashan. No. 17, 10, 15, 23, a sea spoken of in the Bible. No. 2, 3, 8, 9, was a gleaner.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- Make two squares of words: 170. 1. Flesh food. 2. A woman's name. 3. The usual close of a prayer. 4. A large place for water.

- 171. 1. A Roman poet. 2. An ornamental vessel. 3. A little island. 4. Live venison. 172. Which of the prophets was commanded to make bread of six different ingredients, and lie on his side and eat of it 890 days? 173. Complete the following stanza: "Straight is the path of —, Curved is the path of —; But follow one and thou shalt —, The other ever following —."

Answers next week.

Answer to Scripture Enigma.

No. 112. DOUBLE ACROSTIC. H u r r a h u d e d o f g o o d E v e r y o n e o f g o o d L i b e r a l E n q u i r e A s i a D e e d E n t r e T r u m p e t H i g h M e u s m E v e H E LEADETH ME.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- 168. Bachelor's Button, Candytuft, Cockscorn, Forget-me-not, Fox glove, Heart's ease, Honesty, Ice plant, Pink, Sun-flower, Sweet Pea, Wax plant. 169. How doth the little busy bee, Improve each shining hour; And gather honey all the day From every opening flower.

Select Serial.

A Thorny Path.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER VIII. THE CARES OF THIS LIFE.

On the evening of old Lister's funeral Mrs. Clack sat alone and idle at her fireside. She had no heart to set to work on the mending and refurbishing the cast-off clothes about her. It was a real grief of mind to her that the only man she had ever had to do with should have been buried in a pauper's grave; but she could not prudently afford to give him any other burial. Her hoard of savings was small, and her stock had been seriously damaged by the rough mode of disinfecting them which had been gone through as soon as the worn out body of the blind old man had been carried to the dead-house. Poor Don was down with the fever, and had been sent off immediately by the doctor to the fever hospital. No one but herself and Dot had been left to follow the old man's coffin; and little Dot had enjoyed the trip to the cemetery. She has gone to play with some neighbour's children now; and Mrs. Clack sat alone, tearful and down-hearted by her solitary fire.

What made it seem so solitary? For many a long year she had lived alone and no face had met her eyes when she looked around her little room, and no voice had fallen on her ear. She had chosen to live alone, priding herself upon keeping aloof from the fellow-creatures among whom her lot had been cast. She was one who kept herself to herself was her boast. What good came of gossiping and neighbouring? As long as she could take care of herself she would be beholden to nobody, and nobody had any claim upon her. So for many years she had lived alone; and people had died, and children born into the world and sorrow and sickness had befallen her neighbors living thickly around her, and joy and gladness had shone upon their homes for a brief season, and she had neither wept with them nor rejoiced with them. Why should she feel solitary and sad now?

It was Don that had done it. She could remember how the lonely, homeless boy, when he was a little lad of ten, had met her one day, bending and staggering under an unusually heavy load, and how he had insisted on heisting it on his own little shoulders, and tottering beneath it till he reached her door. From that day to this he had made himself so useful to her that it was but a small return to let him sleep at night on the old mattress in the room below.

He had seldom taken a piece of bread from her, but had picked up his own living she hardly knew how—only turning in for shelter each night, and serving her as if he could not do enough to repay her. What had she done for Don? What trouble had she taken for him? She, who had been well-taught, in her youth, who could read and write better than nineteen out of every twenty folks like them—what had she taught Don? For nearly four years he had attached himself to her, and he knew nothing yet of God, nothing of any life beyond this—nothing of Jesus Christ and his death upon the cross. He was as dark and ignorant as when she first knew him.

Suppose Don died in the fever hospital! He might as well have lived in a heathen land, for all he knew about death and what comes after death. The heathen knew more than he did, for they had Gods, and prayed to them, though they were false ones. But Don had no knowledge of any God. Why had she never taught him? The tears stole down Mrs. Clack's cheeks. She knew about God and his Son Jesus Christ; all the wondrous story of God's love to the world had been familiar to her in her girlhood; she could have answered any question about the life of Jesus Christ. Somewhere she had a Bible given to her as a reward for her Scripture knowledge. But she has lost all thought of such things; she had forgotten them altogether. The many cares of this world and the hard struggle for a livelihood had choked the good seed sown in her childhood. It was many a long year now since she had given a single thought to her Father in heaven, or to her Saviour who had lived on earth a life of toil and care like her own.

Then as she sat there, sad and lonely, she seemed in her own mind almost to see Jesus Christ, in all his goodness and holiness, passing his time, not in solitude like herself, selfishly holding himself aloof from the rough ignorant people about him, but dwelling like a neighbor in the midst of them; walking with them in the fields, sitting with them in the house; rowing out with them in their boats; feasting with them; going to their funerals; being so pressed by them that he could scarcely make his way along the streets and lanes. Did nobody run to tell him when a baby was born in the same street? or when two young folks were going to be married? And did he turn a deaf ear to all this common news, and pass by as if it had nothing to do with him?

Her own heart answered that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God must have led a very different life from hers, or he could never have been the Saviour of men. Why! she had saved no one, not even saved them a few minutes trouble. Jesus had borne their sins, sorrows, and sicknesses; but she had done nothing until Don had brought old Lister and Little Dot to her door; and her heart, thank God, had not been hard enough to turn them away to starve. But that was Don's doing; and, oh, she was glad that she had taken them in, and borne with them and learned to love them a little. She fell down on her knees, and hid her tearful face in her hands, praying to God to pardon her long forgetfulness of his love, and to help her to live no longer to herself. It was a long time before she rose from her knees. She was not praying so much as remembering what Jesus Christ had done for her; his love and sorrow that had been so sinfully neglected by her all these years. What he required of her to do was to go out among her fellow creatures, and follow in his steps. It would be a great trial, but she must do it.

When Don came back, she would teach him diligently all she knew. Poor old Lister had died in gloom and darkness, when she ought to have been ready with blessed light to shine upon his way to the grave. Dying like a dog. Yes, it would be dying like a dog, if there was no Father in heaven, and no home there to go to.

It would be worse than that, for a dog dies with no thought of any such a thing, with no longing wish to go home to God, and to feel his love. But to lie dying with that darkness all about one, and think there might have been hope and joy and a blessed entrance into another life, and dear friends' faces smiling a welcome, and Jesus Christ himself to receive the soul; to think all this might have been, yet was not, would make a

man's d... than a d... And th... wretched... poor folk... and stri... without... necessari... scarcely... in summ... almost b... a thousa... or a wom... little ch... and for... nothing... gone on... God, an... the love... He sent... a foolish... been all... She wa... hardly h... at the c... stair-cas... she open... down in... figure of... "Plea... voice," I... struck w... perhaps... lead us... blind fi... mother... bed, and... "I'll c... my dear... Here... direct f... would re... give His... always j... cast ey... lower a... but nev... quickly... It wa... taken... girl of... was the... own, w... Mrs. Cl... her o... nursed... passed... of dange... "You... Clack,"... day," b... I'd as li... worth... nothing... how it's... yard."... "Hus... "There... and to... a time... Her... said it... courage... turned... "I've... said... There's... letter on... I could... scholar... and tell... and per... for a b... I am al... try air."... "I wil... fully... openly... had pas... seemed... for her... and a s... few shi... fare to... to accom... yet so... go with... few day... "Littl... children... fond of... you wa... a rest... O, Mrs... to me;... And you... such fri... Sunday... never g... lad. M... there is... "But... Mrs. Cl...