

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson II.—APRIL 8, 1883.

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN. Acts viii. 26-40.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Va. 35-38.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he went on his way rejoicing."—Acts viii. 39.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- The Lesson, Acts viii. 26-40. The Suffering Christ, Isa. ch. liii. Strangers Welcomed, Isa. ch. lxxvi. An Ancient Ethiopian Eunuch, Jer. xxxviii 6-13; Prompt Obedience, [xxxix. 15-18. Psa. cxix. 17-32. Newness of Life, Rom. vi. 1-14. Joy of Believers, Rom. v. 1-11.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ENLIGHTENS THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Reading, Vss. 26-33. II. Instructed, Vss. 34, 35. III. Baptized, Vss. 36-40.

QUESTIONS.—What facts in the Lesson show the eunuch's rank, religion, and character?

Vss. 26-33.—How did Philip and the eunuch come to meet? Where? What do we need besides the Bible? What invitation given to Philip?

Vss. 34, 35.—Did the eunuch understand what he read? What is it to preach Jesus?

Vss. 36-40.—Did the eunuch receive the gospel? To what did they come? What was the act of baptism, as learned from the word "baptize"? From the description here? How strong is the evidence for immersion? Who alone ought to be baptized? Is it right or safe for them to neglect baptism? Is it right or safe to receive pouring or sprinkling, instead of baptism?

Scripture Searchings.—Can you find one precept or example in the New Testament for "infant baptism," or for pouring or sprinkling as baptism?

NOTES.—I. The Anxious Inquirer, (Vss. 26-34).

Vss. 26, 27.—The angel. An angel, as in New Version. Go toward the south, i. e., from Samaria. This angel gives Philip explicit directions where he is to go. It is to the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza: and as there was more than one road, it is the desert, or uninhabited way. Gaza was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines. It was the key to Palestine from Egypt—50 miles southwest of Jerusalem, and 3 miles from the Mediterranean. He arose and went. Obedient to what might have seemed a strange command—one which sent him away from a throng of hearers to a desert, nor gave him the reason for so doing. But to this servant of simple and strong faith, the Lord soon reveals the purpose of the sending. Ethiopia, a kingdom of Africa, lying south of Egypt. An eunuch of great authority. Prime minister, or first lord of the treasury in his own country, having the same position that Joseph had under Pharaoh. Most likely, the word eunuch is to be taken with its usual sense; and as such an one was, by the law of Moses, excluded from the congregation of the Lord, it was fitting that, at this time, it should be shown that the gospel breaks down every wall and includes all classes in the blessings of salvation. Candace. This name, like Caesar in Rome, indicated a dynasty rather than a particular person. From secular history, it is known that there were several queens of that country who bore this title. Had come to Jerusalem to worship. Most likely he was a proselyte to Judaism, and was, evidently, a devout, earnest inquirer after the truth.

Vss. 28-31.—Read Isaiah the prophet. Still seeking light, he went to the source of light, the Word, and was reading it aloud on his way home. The Spirit said to Philip. Not now the angel, but a greater than an angel; for the matter is not of the place to go, but of a spiritual work to do. Join thyself to this chariot. Philip was not merely to accompany him and drop a word of truth, but to stick to him till the man was brought into the kingdom. Ran thither. Witness his joyful alacrity. Understandest thou? The form of the question implies a negative answer. Though the words seem abrupt, the Ethiopian saw the genuine interest for him in Philip's face and tones, and withal was himself bewildered in mind and anxious to be directed aright. How can I? etc. Notice the absence of that self-sufficient spirit and conceit which are the foes of true knowledge. The man is willing to be taught. The invitation to Philip to come up and sit with him, reveals his deep interest and humility.

Vss. 32-34.—The Ethiopian was reading that portion of the Old Testament—the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—which presents, most vividly of all, the picture of a suffering Messiah—a prophecy written 750 years before Christ's day, and yet almost a detailed account of his rejection and death. This man could scarcely have failed to hear in Jerusalem the story of so recent an event as the Crucifixion; but, affected by the popular sentiment, he had not an idea of the connection of this with the prophecy before him. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. A confessedly difficult passage to interpret. Hackett understands it thus: "In his humiliation, i. e., in the contempt, outrage and violence which he suffered, the judgment due him, i. e., the rights of justice and humanity were withheld from him." The fair, judicial trial, which was his due, was taken from him by violence and fraud. Who shall declare his generation? may mean, Who will care to bestow a thought on a career so prematurely closed? Or, better, Who shall be able to declare the number of his spiritual descendants? referring the rather to the triumphant results of his death. Of whom speaketh the prophet this? The earlier Jewish writers understood this, to refer to the coming Messiah; but the later Jews denied it, because it was seen to be fulfilled so completely in Christ.

II. Instruction and Baptism, (Vss. 35-40). Vss. 35-37.—Preached unto him Jesus. The text was supplied in the Scripture which the Ethiopian was reading, and the evangelist showed how all the predictions met in Jesus. A certain water. A body of water—a pool or stream met on their way. See, here is water, or, as in New Version, Behold water. The new convert is eager to obey all of Christ's commands. What doth hinder? Nothing should hinder the full confession of Christ by the believer, and in Christ's own appointed way; the early preachers knew nothing of the art of strengthening a convert's faith by counselling delay in obedience. Vss. 38-40.—Into the water. "The original unquestionably implies a going not to, but into the water."—Abbott. "No sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down into the water, but for the sake of an immersion of the new convert."—Ripley. He baptized him. It is distinctly asserted that they went into the water, and the one Greek word which invariably means to dip is used to describe the baptism; and yet there are commentators who say that "nothing is said about the mode of baptism." If the Scripture writer had desired to intimate mode, what other language could he have possibly used? Caught away Philip. A sudden, and, perhaps, supernatural disappearance. See 1 Kings xviii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 11; and Luke xxiv. 31. He went on his way rejoicing. Philip was no more needed by the convert; for he had Christ. Tradition makes him the first preacher of the gospel in Ethiopia. Found at Azotus. A city north of Gaza, near the Mediterranean. Preached in all the cities. He who obediently left crowds to preach to one man, was called back to cities and crowds again.

SUGGESTED LESSONS. This is a lesson on obedience. Both Philip and the Ethiopian heeded the movements of the Spirit, and hence the blessed results. It is not church-going that saves, but the receiving Christ into the heart. The eunuch had been up to the temple, but turned away from it as darkened in mind as he went. Philip and the apostles did not hesitate to preach baptism as well as faith. They knew nothing of that foolish sensitiveness which would make baptism a forbidden subject. Religion is not the gloomy thing that unbelievers call it. This convert, like all who receive and obey Jesus, "went on his way rejoicing."

THE STORY OF A CONVERSION. Sought Diligently. vs. 27. Searched the Scriptures. vs. 28. Asked for Instruction. vs. 31. Had Jesus Preached to him. vs. 35. Believed with all His Heart. vs. 37. Was Baptized. vs. 38. Went on his Way Rejoicing. vs. 39. SEEK and YE shall FIND. Matt. vii. 7. An honest inquirer.—The Eunuch was a man of great authority and wealth, but his unsatisfied soul was yearning for something nobler and better than earth could give. He was an inquirer, and so he had gone up to Jerusalem, "the world's great centre of religious light, and had waited upon the temple services, but had failed to find just what he wanted. He did not content himself with public services; but continuing his search, he was reading devoutly the Word of God. He seriously wanted to know what was truth and duty, and

such an inquirer is not apt to be left by the Lord in the dark. And so he sends Philip. The evangelist did not stand upon ceremony, or wait for an introduction because this was a great man; but introduced himself, and with the utmost directness proceeded to business. The great man answered, with beautiful humility and docility: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Here spoke out the honest inquirer that was groping after light and was willing to be led.

The question of baptism.—It is clear that Philip, in preaching Christ, preached baptism as a part of the gospel; he baptized him just as soon as he believed; and if we do not imitate his example, we are not in the line of "apostolic succession."

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class. LESSON THOUGHT.—Obedience and its results.

TRUTHS TO BE TAUGHT:—1. Right seeking. 2. Divine direction. 3. Willingness to receive. 4. Questioning obedience. 5. Joy in following.

We have given us a beautiful story of how one who felt his need was shown the way to Jesus, and in taking Jesus into his heart was made happy. (Tell the story somewhat in detail, impressing the fact that the man was an earnest seeker. His long journey to Jerusalem, and its object, proved this. Then picture Philip, whose preaching had accomplished so much; show that he too, was a seeker, though not like the other. Each was desirous to do the will of God.)

Read slowly vs. 36-38, and describe the ordinance plainly to the children. Show that until they believe on Jesus and are ready to obey him, they are not prepared for baptism. Show, too, that baptism is a proof of obedience. What made this man happy? Because he had learned of Jesus; because he had followed, or obeyed, Jesus.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher

Answers to Scripture Enigma. No. 216. Biblical Acrostic. 1. Kemuel. 7. Wave-offering. 2. Uziel. 8. Frontlets. 3. Girdle. 9. Tola. 4. Adlai. 10. Beersheba. 5. Adoni-besek. 11. Othniel. 6. Hophni. 12. Taralah. 13. Wormwood. Acts xv. 18.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS. No. 34. Examples. DL=550, noon=London. MDDI=2001 ar=Madrid, &c., &c. London. Venice. Dublin. Seville. Madrid. Moscow. Lisbon. Dover. Milan. Limerick. Cologne. Berlin.

No. 35. MOSES ORPAH SARAH ENOCH S I M O M

No. 36. C R A T E S C A T A N I A T E N O R S I B A

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