



# SUNDAY READING

## BIBLE QUESTION COMPETITION.

This competition is open to all the readers of *PROGRESS*, but is more especially intended to interest the young people—the boys and girls who are, or should be attending Sunday school. The following rules should be strictly observed:

### RULES FOR COMPETITORS.

1. A prize of one dollar will be awarded every week for the first correct answer to the *Progress* office. If there is no correct answer the person who sends the first best answer will receive the dollar. In case two correct answers reach the office at the same time the dating stamps of the post office at which they are mailed will be taken into consideration.
2. Competitors must write on one side of the paper only, giving name and address in full with each answer. These need not be published except in the case of prize-winners and successful competitors.
3. The winner of a prize will not be eligible to compete for another for four weeks.
4. All replies must be received on or before Saturday one week after publication of the questions, thus allowing competitors a clear week for their efforts.
5. No post-cards can be received. All replies should be addressed to the "SUNDAY READING," EDITOR *PROGRESS*, St. John, N. B.

I have much pleasure in congratulating Miss Katie Newnham, of St. Stephen, as the successful competitor for "Prize Bible Questions, No. 5." Questions were answered correctly by the following six: Miss Katie Newnham; Miss Jennie McRoberts, Richibucto; Miss Violet Kinnear, city; Miss Bessie J. Jones, Moncton; Master M. W. Knapp, city, and Master Archie B. Fraser, Chatham.

The first question was answered correctly by all, with the exception of a few, who gave Macedonia and the Isle of Paphos as the place where Paul first preached the gospel on the continent of Europe. Macedonia is a country lying north of Greece. Philippi is the chief city of Macedonia, so called from King Philip, who repaired and beautified it. It was made a Roman colony by Augustus (acts 16, 12). Here Paul first preached the gospel on the continent of Europe, A. D. 52; his first convert was Lydia, and the church which was established here was distinguished by this christian woman. During Paul's imprisonment at Rome, A. D. 62, he wrote an epistle to them, in which he gratefully acknowledges their kindness towards him (Philippians, 4, 10, 16, 17); also their christian walk and firmness under persecution (Philippians 1, 7, 27). My little friend who gave the Isle of Paphos as a place on the continent of Europe, must not forget her geography—an island could not be on a continent. Paphos is a town in the island of Cyprus.

With regard to the second question, Nebuchadnezzar, Gideon, and Samson, were all given as liberators of their country. Nebuchadnezzar was successful in retaking the city of Caschemist which had been wrested from the Chaldean empire by Necho, king of Egypt. Gideon and Samson were judges raised up by God, in answer to the prayers of his people while in affliction, for their deliverance. Samson was a Nazirite from childhood, and was trained to know the true God, when the angel brought the message to Gideon, to save his country, said, "The Lord is with thee," proves he had a known God long before. The other two questions were answered correctly by all. I am so glad to find so many competing for the prize which only one can obtain; but all gain what is much more valuable, a knowledge of the scriptures. "Be not weary in well doing." Let this be your motto.

NEANI.

### Answers to Prize Bible Questions, No. 5.

- 1st.—Where did Paul first preach the Gospel on the continent of Europe? and who was his 1st convert?  
Ans.—Paul first preached the gospel on the continent of Europe at Philippi—Acts xvi, 9-12. His first convert at Philippi was Lydia. Acts, xvi, 14-15.
- 2nd.—Show how a liberator of his country was led to acknowledge the true God?  
Ans.—Naaman the Syrian was the liberator of his country (see 2 Kings v, 1, and was led to acknowledge the true God through the cleansing of his leprosy. A little captive maid, taken from the land of Israel, had told his wife of the prophet in Samaria who would cure him of his leprosy. This he reported to the king, his master who sent him to the king of Israel. Elisha heard of his errand and sent a message to him (ver. 8). After he was cleansed by dipping seven times in the Jordan he acknowledged the true God, saying (ver. 15) "now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."
3. What famous building was burned down by a king's servant?  
The temple at Jerusalem was burned down by Nebuzaradan, servant of the king of Babylon—2 Kings 25: 8, 9.
4. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. Isaiah 65: 24.—Prove from the New Testament how this text was literally fulfilled?  
This promise was fulfilled at the baptism of our Lord. See Luke iii, vers. 21 and 22. Also when Jesus prayed.—St. John xii, 29 and 30. It was also fulfilled when the Christians prayed in Jerusalem after the deliverance of Peter and John—Acts iv, 31. Also when Peter was delivered from prison in answer to the prayer of the church for him—Acts xii, 5-12. It was literally fulfilled in the case of Cornelius. While he was praying an angel appeared to him unto an answer to his prayer.—Acts x, 1-7 and 30-33.

### PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS.—No. 7.

- 1.—What is the heritage of God's children given by one of the prophets?

2.—Which fast is most acceptable to God?

3.—Name a fellow laborer with Paul, who deserted him for the love of the world?

4.—Give the name and trade of one who was the subject of the following expression, "The Lord reward him according to his works?"

## AN EASTER SERMON.

### The Living Dead.

Preached by Rev. Alexander MacLaren, from St. Luke xxiv, 5, 6: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not, but is risen."

We can never understand the utter desolation that lay betwixt Christ's death and His resurrection. Our faith rests on centuries. We know that that grave was not even an interruption to the progress of His work, but was the straight road to His triumph and His glory. We know that it was the completion of the work which the raising of the widow's son and of Lazarus were but the beginnings. But these disciples did not know that. To them the inferior miracles by which he had redeemed others from the power of the grave, must have made His own captivity to it all the more stunning; and the thought which such miracles ending so must have left upon them, must have been something like "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." And therefore we can never think ourselves fully back to that burst of strange, sudden thankfulness with which these weeping Marys found those two calm angel forms sitting with folded wings, like the cherubim over the mercy seat, but overshadowing a better propitiation and heard the words of my text, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen." But yet, although the words before are, in the full depth and preciousness of their meaning, of course could only be once fulfilled, we may not only gather from them thoughts concerning that one death and resurrection, but we may likewise apply them, in a very permissible modification of meaning, to the present condition of all who have departed in His faith and fear; since for us, too, it is true that, whenever we go to an open grave sorrowing for those we love, or oppressed with the burden of mortality in any shape, if our eyes are anointed we can see there sitting the quiet angel forms; and if our ears be purged from the noise of earth, we can hear them saying to us, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" or "Why seek ye the living in these graves?" They are not here; they are risen, as He said. The thoughts are very old, brethren. God be thanked they are old. Perhaps to some of you they may come now with new power, because they come with new application to your own present condition. Perhaps to some of you they may sound very weak, and "words weaker than your grief will make grief more;" but such as they are, let us look at them for a moment or two together this morning.

The first thought, then, that these words of the angel messengers, and the scene in which we find them, suggest, is this: The dead and the living. Language which is more accustomed and adapted to express the appearances than the realities of things, leads us astray very much when we use the phrase "the dead," as if it expressed the continuance of the condition into which men pass in the art of dissolution. It misleads us no less, when we use it as if it expressed in itself the whole truth even as to that act of dissolution. "The dead" and "the living" are not names of two classes which exclude each other. Much rather, there are none who are dead. The dead are the living who have died. Whilst they were dying they lived, and after they were dead they lived more fully. All alive unto God. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Oh how solemnly sometimes that thought comes up before us, that all these past generations which have stormed across this earth of ours, and then fallen into still forgetfulness, live yet. Somewhere at this very instant, they now verily are: We say, they were, they have been. There are no more beens: life is life forever. To be is eternal being. Every man who has died is at this instant in the full possession of all his capacities, standing somewhere in God's great universe, ringed with the sense of God's presence, and feeling in every fibre of his being that life, which comes after death, is no less real, but more real, not less great, but more great, not less full, or intense, but more full and intense than the mingled life which lived here on earth, was a centre of life surrounded with a crust and circumference of mortality. The dead are the living. They lived whilst they died, and after they died, they live on forever. Such a conviction has as a matter of fact been firmly grasped as an unquestionable truth and a familiar operative belief within the sphere of the christian revelation. From the natural point of view the whole region of the dead is "a land of darkness, without any order, where the light is as darkness." The usual sources of human certainty fail us here. Reason is only able to stammer a peradventure. Experience and consciousness are silent. "The simple senses" can only say that it looks as if death were an end, the final Omega. Testimony there is none from any pale lips that have come back to unfold the secrets of the prison-house.

The history of Christ's death and resurrection, His dying words, "this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," the full identity of being with which He rose from the grave, the manhood changed and yet the same, the intercourse of the forty days before His ascension, which showed the continuance of all the old love, "stronger than death," and was in all essential points like his former intercourse with His disciples, though changed in form and introductory to the times when they should see Him no more in the flesh—these teach us, not as a peradventure, nor as a dim hope, nor as a strong foreboding which may be in its nature prophetic, but as a certainty based upon a historical fact, that death's

empire is partial in its range, and transitory in its duration. But, after we are once convinced of that, we can look again with new eyes, even on the external accompaniments of death, and see that sense is too hasty in its conclusion that death is the final end. There is no reason from what we see passing before our eyes than to believe, that is, with all its pitifulness and all its pain, has any power at all upon the soul. True, the spirit gathers itself into itself; and, poising itself for its flight, becomes oblivious of what is passing round about it. True, the tenant that is about to depart from the house in which he dwelt so long, closes the window before he goes. But what is there in the cessation of the power of communication with an outer world—what is there in the fact that you clasp the nerveless hand, and it returns no pressure; that you whisper gentle words that you think might kindle a soul under the dull, cold ribs of death itself, and get no answer—that you look with weeping eyes to catch the response of affection from out of the poor filmy, closing, tearless eyes there, and look in vain—what is there in all that to lead to the conviction that the spirit is participant of that impotence and silence? Is not the soul only self-centring itself, retiring from the outposts but not touched in the citadel? Is it not only that the long sleep begins to end, and the waking eye of the soul begins to open itself of realities, the sights and sounds of the dream begin to pass away? Is it not but that the man, in dying, begins to be what he fully is when he is dead, "dead unto sin," dead unto the world, that he may "live unto God," that he may live with God, that he may live really? And so we can look upon that ending of life, and say, "it is a very small thing; it only cuts off the fringes of my life, it does not touch me at all." It only plays round about the husk, and does not get at the core. It only strips off the circumferential mortality, but the soul rises up untouched by it, and shakes the bands of death from off its budding wings, and rises fuller of life because of death, and mightier in its vitality in the very act of submitting the body to the law, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Touching, then, a part of a being, and touching that, but for a moment, death is no state, it is an act. It is not a condition, it is a transition. Men speak of life as "a narrow neck of land" betwixt "two unbounded seas," that it has better speak about death as that. It is an isthmus, narrow and almost impalpable, on which, for one brief instant the soul poises itself, whilst behind it there lies the inward lake of past being, and before it the shoreless ocean of future life, all alighted with the glory of God, and making music as it breaks even upon these dark, rough rocks. Death is but a passage. It is not a house, it is only a vestibule. The grave has a door on its inner side.

We roll the stone to its mouth and come away, thinking that we have left them there till the resurrection. But when the outer access to earth is closed, the inner portal that opens on heaven is set wide and God says to His child, "Come, enter into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee." until the indignation be overpast." Death is a superficial thing, and a transitory thing—a darkness that is caused by the light, and a darkness that ends in the light—a trifle, if you measure it by depth. The death of the mortal is the emancipation and the life of the immortal. Then, brethren, we may go with the words of my text, and look upon every green hillock below in which any that are dear to us are lying, and say to ourselves, "Not here; God be thanked, no, not here; living and not dead, yonder with the Master." "Oh, we think far too much of the grave, and far too little of the throne and the glory." We are far too much the creatures of sense, and the accompaniments of dissolution and departure fill up our hearts and our eyes. Think them away, believe them all away, love them all away. Stand in the light of Christ's life and Christ's death and Christ's rising till you feel "Thou art a shadow, not a substance, no real thing at all." Yes, a shadow, and where a shadow falls there must be sunlight above to cast it. Look up then above the shadow, death, above the sin and separation from God, of which it is the shadow. Look up to the unsetting light of the eternal life on the throne of the universe, and see bathed in it the living dead in Christ.

God has taken them to Himself, and we ought not to think (if we would think as the Bible speaks) of death as being anything else than the transitory thing which breaks down the brazen walls and lets us into liberty. For, indeed, if you will examine the New Testament on this subject, I think you will be surprised to find how very seldom—scarcely ever—the word "death" is employed to express the mere fact of the dissolution of the connexion between soul and body. It is strange, but significant, that the Apostles and Christ himself, so rarely use the word to express that which we exclusively mean by it. They use all manner of other expressions, as if they felt, the fact remains, but all that made it death has gone away. In a real sense, and all the more real because the external fact continues, Christ "hath abolished death." Two men may go down to the grave together; of one this may be the epitaph, "He that believeth in Christ shall never die;" and of the other passing through precisely the same physical experience and appearances, the dissolution of soul and body, we may say—"There, that is death—death as God sent it, to be the punishment of man's sin." The outward fact remains the same, the whole inner character of it is altered. As to them that believe, though they have passed through the experience of painful separation—slow, languishing, departure, or suddenly being caught up in some chariot of fire; not only are they living now, but they never died at all. Have you understood death in the full, pregnant sense of the expression, which means not only that shadow, the separation of the body from the soul; but that reality, the separation of the soul from life, because of the separation of the soul from God?

Then, secondly, this text, indeed the whole incident, may set before us the other consideration, since they died, they live a better life than our life, or very particularly, into what seem to me to be the irrefragable scriptural grounds for holding the complete, uninterrupted, and intensified consciousness of the soul of man, in the interval between death and the resurrection.

"Absent from the body, present with the Lord." "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." These words, if there were none other, are surely enough; seeing that of that dark region we knew only what it pleased God to tell us in the Bible, and seeing that it does not please Him to give us more than hints and glimpses of any part of it. But putting aside all attempts to elaborate a full doctrine of the intermediate state from the few scripture expressions to that bear on it, I merely allege, in general terms, that the present life of departed saints is fuller and nobler than that which they possessed on earth. They are even now, whatever be the details of their condition "the spirits of just men made perfect." As yet the body is not glorified—but the spirits of the perfect righteous are now parts of that lofty society whose head is Christ, whose members are the angels of God, the saints on earth and the equally conscious redeemed who "sleep in Jesus."

In what particulars is their life now higher than it was? First they have close fellowship with Christ; then they are separated from this present body of weakness, of dishonor, of corruption; they are withdrawn from all the trouble, and toil, and care of this present life; and then, and not least, surely, they have death behind them, not having that awful figure standing on their horizon waiting for them to come up with it. These are some of the elements of the life of the sainted dead. What a wondrous advance on the life of earth they reveal if we think of them. They are closer to Christ; they are delivered from the body as a source of weakness, as a hinderer of knowledge, as a dragger-down of all the aspiring tendencies of the soul, as a source of sin, as a source of pain. They are delivered from all the necessity of labor which is agony, of labor which is disproportionate to strength, of labor which often ends in disappointments, of labor which often ends in mere keeping life in, of labor which at the best is a curse, though it be a merciful curse, too. They are delivered from that "fear of death" which, though it be stripped of its sting, is never extinguished in any soul of man that lives; and they can smile at the way in which that narrow and inevitable passage bulks so large before them all their days, and after all, when they came to it, was so slight and small. If these be parts of the life of them that "sleep in Jesus," if they are fuller of knowledge, fuller of wisdom, fuller of love, and capacity of love, and object of love; fuller of holiness, fuller of energy, and yet full of rest from head to foot. If all the hot tumult of earthly experience is stilled and quieted, all the fever-beating of this blood of ours forever at an end, all the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" done with for ever, and if the calm face which we looked last upon, and out of which the lines of sorrow, and pain, and sickness melted away, giving it a nobler nobleness than we had ever seen upon it in life, is only an image of the restful and more blessed being into which they have passed,—if the dead are thus, then "Blessed are the dead."

No wonder that one aspect of that blessedness, the sleeping in Jesus, has been the one that the weary have laid hold of at all times, but do not let us forget what lies even in that figure of sleep, or distort it as it meant to express a less vivid life than that here below. I think we sometimes misunderstand what the bible means when it speaks about death as a sleep, by taking it to express the idea that that intermediate state is one of a kind of depressed consciousness and of a less full vitality than the present. Not so. Sleep is rest, that is one reason for the scriptural application of the word to death. Sleep is the cessation of all connection with the external world, that is another reason. As we play with the names of those that are familiar to us, so a loving faith can venture to play, as it were, with the awful name of him who is King of Terrors, and to minimise it down to that shadow and reflection of itself which we find in the nightly act of going to rest. That may be another reason. But sleep is not consciousness, sleep does not touch the spirit. Sleep sets us free from relations to the outer world, but the soul works as hard, though in a different way, when we slumber as when we wake. People who know what it is to dream, ought never to fancy that when the bible talks about death as sleep, it means to say to us that death is unconsciousness. By no means. Strip the man of the disturbance that comes from a fevered body and he will have a calmer soul. Strip him of the hindrances that come from a body which is like an opaque tower around his spirit with only a narrow slit here and a narrow door there, five poor senses with which he can come into connection with an outer universe, and then surely, the spirits will have wider avenues out to God, and larger powers of reception, because it has lost the earthly tabernacle which, just in proportion as it brought the spirit into connection with the earth to which the tabernacle belongs, severed its connection with the heavens that are above. They who have died in Christ live a fuller and a nobler life by the very dropping away of the body, a fuller and a nobler life, by the very cessation of care, change, strife and struggle, and, above all, a fuller and nobler life, because they "sleep in Jesus," and are gathered into His bosom, and wake with Him yonder beneath the altar, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, "waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." For though death be a progress, a progress to the spiritual existence, though death be a birth to a higher and nobler state, though it be the gate of life, fuller and better than any which we possess, though the present state of the departed in Christ is a state of calm blessedness, a state of perfect communion, a state of rest and satisfaction, yet it is not the final and perfect state, either.

And, therefore, in the last place, the better life, which the dead in Christ are living now, leads on to a fuller life when they get back their glorified bodies. The perfection of man is body, soul and spirit. That is man as God made him. The spirit perfected, without the bodily life, is but part of the whole. For the future world, in all its glory, we have the firm basis laid that it, too, is to be in a real sense a material world, where men are once more to possess bodies as they did before, only bodies through which the spirit shall work conscious of no disproportion, bodies which shall be fit servants and adequate organs of the immortal souls within, bodies which shall never break down, bodies which shall never live in nor refuse to obey the spirits that dwell in them, but which

shall add to their power, and deepen their blessedness, and draw them closer to the God whom they serve and the Christ after the likeness of whose glorious body they are fashioned and conformed. "Body, soul and spirit," the old combination which was on earth is to be the perfect humanity of heaven. The spirits that are perfected, that are living in blessedness, that are dwelling in God, that are sleeping in Christ, at this moment are waiting, stretching out (I say, not longing, but) expectant hands of faith and hope, for that they would not be unclothed, but clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

We have nothing to say, now and here, about what that bodily condition may be; about the differences and the identities between it and our present earthly house of this tabernacle. Only this we know—reverse all the weakness of flesh and you get some faint notion of the glorious body. It is sown in corruption, glory and power. Nay, more, it is sown in a natural body, fit organ for the animal life or nature, which stands connected with this material universe; "it is raised a spiritual body," fit servant for the spirit that dwells in it, that works through it, that is perfected in its redemption.

"Why, then, seek the living among the dead?" "God giveth His beloved sleep," and in that peaceful sleep, realities, not dreams, come round their quiet rest and fill their conscious spirits and their happy hearts with blessedness and fellowship. And when thus lulled to sleep in the arms of Christ they have rested till it please Him to accomplish the number of His elect; then in His own time He will make the eternal morning to dawn, and the hand that kept them in their slumber shall touch them into waking, and shall clothe them when they arise according to the body of His own glory; and they, looking into His face and flashing back its love, its light, its beauty, shall each break forth into singing as the rising light of that unsetting day touches their transfigured and immortal heads, in the triumphant thanksgiving, "I am satisfied, for I awake in Thy likeness," "Therefore, comfort one another with

these words," and remember that we are of the day, not of the night; let us not, then, sleep as do others; but let us reckon that Christ hath died for us, that whether we wake on earth, or sleep in the grave or wake in heaven, we may live together with Him.

### EASTER PRAYER.

O Lord Most High, who art not the God of the dead but of the living: we would unite this day in thankful joy in remembrance of Christ's triumph over death. We bless Thee, that through Him Thou hast freed us from bondage to invisible terrors; and that out of this dust and out of these low mortal conditions Thou art striving to raise immortal souls into a divine fellowship, and to establish them forever in the heavenly places. Precious unto us is Thy redeeming love; precious is the light of this earthly life; precious Thy promises and our hopes touching a better life to come. Let the spirit of Christ dwell abundantly in us, that in us also, as in Thy blessed ones on the eternal shore may be fulfilled His great assurance, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Amen.

### HYMN.

#### The God of the Living.

God of the living, in whose eyes  
Unveiled the whole creation lies:  
All souls are thine: we must not say  
That those are dead who pass away:  
From this our world of sense set free  
Our dead are living unto Thee.

Not spilt like waters on the ground,  
Not wrapped in dreamless sleep profound,  
Not wandering in unknown despair,  
Beyond Thy voice, Thine arm, Thy care:  
In life, in joy, in peace they be:  
Not dead, but living unto Thee.

Thy word is true, Thy will is just:  
To Thee we leave them, Lord in trust:  
And thank Thee for the love which gave  
Thy son to fill a human grave,  
That naught might fear the world to see  
Where all are living unto Thee.

O Breather into man of breath,  
O Holder of the keys of death,  
O Giver of the life within,  
Save us from death, the death of sin:  
That body, soul, and spirit be  
For ever living unto Thee.

—J. Ellerton.

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