

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., JANUARY 3, 1872.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1872.

JESUS, AFTER HIS ASCENSION.
The Exalted Saviour.—Acts ii. 32-41.SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Psalm cx.
Matthew xxii. 41-45.

EXPOSITION.—This discourse of the Apostle Peter was evidently spoken in the presence of the five hundred brethren to whom the Apostle Paul says, the Lord appeared on one occasion. (1 Cor. xv. 4-7.) Of this fact there appears to have been no question. They admitted that they were the witnesses of our Lord's resurrection. The falsehood invented by the soldiers that, whilst they slept, some persons had come and taken away the body of Christ from the sepulchre, does not appear to have obtained any credit amongst the populace. The fact of the resurrection being admitted there were present a sufficient number of witnesses of his ascension to prevent evil on that fact.

The right hand, &c.—This clause is by some rendered, "Being exalted to the right hand of God," which is more in harmony with the text quoted from Psalm cx. 1, and applied here to Christ and his participation in the Divine government.

Having received &c.—An appeal had been made to the prophecy of Joel (vs. 16-21) which had foretold what was now being witnessed by the disciples. Jesus had declared that this manifestation of the Holy Spirit should not be till after his ascension. See John xiv. 26; xvi. 7, 13; Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 5. Having full confidence in the words of the Master. Matt. xxviii. 18, the disciples had remained at Jerusalem expecting the fulfilment of the promise of which now they had all become witnesses.

Shed forth.—The tongues of fire and the ability to speak in the various languages required to address the strangers present in the city of Jerusalem at that time, was here traced to Jesus in his exalted state, and recognized as a miraculous gift direct from Him.

The people of Jerusalem were prepared to listen to a quotation of Scripture, and could appreciate the force of the words of David now recited from the Psalms. They would not of course call in question the fact that the remains of David's body still existed amongst them. His language therefore must have reference to another.

David is not ascended, &c., had reference to his bodily and physical presence. We have not a full revelation of the present condition of David and all the departed, but we have enough to assure us that their happiness is not diminished by their removal from earth. It is well remarked by Ripley that "the intimations of the Bible on this subject are not so numerous, nor so minute, as our curiosity would desire; because full information in regard to it is not necessary for any of our duties on earth, nor for our advancement in righteousness. Still, from the brief views which the Scriptures present, there would seem to be a difference between the state of the righteous after the resurrection and the state in which they are during the period between their death and the resurrection. This may, perhaps, be illustrated by the case of our Saviour. While he was on the cross, he said to the penitent robber, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Luke 23: 43. The soul of Jesus, then, and that of the penitent robber, went immediately after death to Paradise—a holy and happy state. But after Jesus was risen from the dead, he said to Mary, "I am not yet ascended to my Father." John 20: 17. A distinction seems to be made between the state to which he went immediately after death, and the state to which he was going after his resurrection. This period between men's death and the resurrection of their bodies, is sometimes designated as the *separate state*, that is, the state in which the soul exists while separated from the body. It is also sometimes called the *intermediate state*, as intervening between death and the resurrection. This separate or intermediate state is, however, one of happiness to the righteous, and of misery to the wicked. It is to the righteous, far superior to the earthly state, as their holiness is rendered complete and abiding, the seal is put upon their acceptance with God, and they have a fuller and a special enjoyment of the Saviour's presence: for that in some way he grants the manifestation of his presence to the righteous when removed from this earthly state, so that they may be said to be with him, is evident from the apostle's language in 2 Cor. 5: 6, 8—"Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; "we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." This view is a fair inference, too, from our Lord's language in John 14: 2, 3—"I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The state, then, on which the righteous enter at death is eminently a blessed state, and associating with the spirits of just men made perfect, is far better than to be on earth (Phil. 1: 23); yet it is inferior to that consummation of bliss and glory which awaits the righteous at the resurrection of the body, and subsequently to the day of general judgment."

The Lord—Jehovah, "To my Lord," To my Master, evidently referring to the Messiah. See Matthew xxii. 41-45.

My right hand.—The place of honor and power. This affords some solution of the great humiliation which Jesus had voluntarily borne and gives a grand illustration of all his teachings, that exaltation and honor are the sequences of humility and abasement.

Until &c.—The work of subduing the nations was to be one in harmony with the divine government. This effusion of the Divine Spirit was the commencement of the Saviour's victories. Now that the Jewish rulers had done their worst to Jesus, their triumph had ended; and He would bring them into subjection far more effectually, by changing their hearts and making them bow before him—even to his footstool.

All the house of Israel.—A respectful form of address calculated to gratify them. See vs. 22 and yet how terrible must the fact here stated have cut them: "whom ye have crucified." The point given to this statement was the one that pierced their hearts, and called forth the exclamation "Men and brethren what shall we do?" All had not been actual participants in the murderous act, but all appear to have admitted their guilt and the need of forgiveness.

Repent.—The same direction is given now as at the opening of the gospel dispensation. Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17; Mark vi. 12. So Jesus also when about to depart said, Repentance should be preached to all nations. Luke xxiv. 47.

Be baptized every one of you.—Each individual must seek this baptism for himself, and so enter upon a life of discipleship, and thus pardon would be experienced. Baptism is a pointed as the token of submission to Christ. Walking in the footsteps of the Divine Master forgiveness is to be enjoyed by every repentant disciple.

Without attempting to decide the points of controversy whether sins can be remitted without baptism, we may understand that this is a duty every disciple owes to Christ; and to his own Master he must give account for disobedience and neglect of the order of service He has instituted. Doddridge remarks "As Christ had for wise reasons appointed this solemn rite as a token of their taking up the Christian profession in a public manner, there could have been no sufficient evidence of the truth of their repentance and faith, if this precept of Christ had not been obeyed."

The act of baptism is as the publicly signing of a compact or an oath of allegiance, and is of any virtue or avail only when it shows the hidden purpose of the heart to render service and bear true allegiance. It is often the precursor of an experience of new joy and blessedness; see Acts viii. 39.

The gift of the Holy Ghost.—The extraordinary gifts may be here partially intended, but it is evident that it is not so exclusively. The results of the gift were apparent in the change wrought in all the disciples, and their participation of joy and blessing. See vs. 41.

Verses 39 is a reiteration of what had been previously declared. A careful examination will show that it has no reference to the baptism of infants. "All that are afar off" are put in the same category as "you and your children." The promise is given without restriction to "as many as the Lord our God shall call." This is in harmony with the numerous declarations subsequently made that the gospel was to be henceforth free to Jews and Gentiles. See Ephesians ii. 17, and many other passages; also Joel v. 17. Even Peter did not yet fully apprehend this great fact, as his subsequent conduct proves. (Acts x.)

Untoward, perverse, wicked. That generation had shewn their perverseness to John the Baptist, to Christ, and continued to do so to His disciples. Matt. xi. 16-19; xiv. 8-10. It was necessary that Christ's disciples should separate themselves from them or they would participate in their sins and destruction. Romans xii. 2; 2 Cor. vi. 17.

His Word.—The word or doctrine of Peter. "Added" joined in fellowship and participated in their joy.

Three thousand souls.—A question of the possibility of so many being baptized in one day has been raised by some objectors against immersion; forgetting that about the same time would be required for sprinkling or pouring. It is recorded of Chrysostom in the year 404 that he in one day with the assistance of his presbyters baptized about three thousand persons.

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the baptism on the day of Pentecost was performed at one place; for there was no deficiency of water, or of conveniences for immersion, in the city of Jerusalem. It is well known that there were many and very copious reservoirs and pools of water for the use of the city; and private habitations were well supplied with water for all the occasions on which a Jewish family would constantly need it in abundance. The reports of travellers who have visited Jerusalem, and the remains of antiquity, abundantly confirm this.

Verses 42 gives the four particulars of discipleship; first, the apostles' doctrine or teaching. Adherence to the instructions given by them, and continuance in a hearty reception of such truths as they taught; second, fellowship, a Christian society, one in heart and life hold common views, and pursuing a habit of kind Christian acts towards the brethren; third "breaking of bread." "It is uncertain whether by this expression is here meant the partaking of the Lord's supper (as in xx. 7, and 1 Cor. x. 16), or the partaking with one another of common meals, as expressive of their mutual affection, and accompanied with prayers, as would seem to be the case in vs. 46. The connection in which the clause here stands, appears rather to favor the opinion that it was the religious breaking of bread, in commemoration of the Saviour's death, that was intended; since the other circumstances, here stated, pertain directly to religious feelings and actions. The expression to break bread came to be applied to the partaking of a meal, whether common or sacred, because it was customary among the Jews, at the commencement of their meals, for the head of the family to break up the bread; bread being in the form of thin cakes, and not of loaves.

Fourth, Prayers—public and private worship. Church relationship embraces these four particulars, and whatever is not in harmony with these is not of God but an invention of man.

Scripture Catechism, 363, 364.

Youths' Department.

THE NEW YEAR.

"GOOD-NIGHT, Old Year!" I said;
The Old Year said, "Good-night!"
He bowed his solemn, hoary head,
And vanished from my sight.

I slept, and woke again,
And lo! the Year was New.
"O fresh, brave Time," I queried then,
"What wilt thou be or do?"

The New Year smiled, and spake
With earnest, tender tone:
"I shall be what thyself may make,
And not myself alone.

"I bring thee love to keep,
And duty to be done;
And faith to guard, and fruit to reap,
Till sets my closing sun."

"O Time," I answered back,
Thou hast been like a dream;
Yet would I on thy future track
The passing hours redeem."

I took the hand he gave,
Now, like true friends, and bold,
We journey on for duty brave,
Till the New Year is Old.

—Morning Light.

QUESTIONS FOR CURIOUS CHILDREN.

Some alphabetical questions:

What letter is most inquisitive? Y (Why.)

Which has wings? B (Bee.)

Which do lazy folks like best? E's (Ease.)

Which grows in the garden? P (Pea.)

Which is often drunk? T (Tea.)

What belongs to a well made shoe? The other shoe.

What would happen to a black man if he should go through the Red Sea? He would get wet.

How deep is the sea? As deep as a stone will sink.

In what direction do the birds fly? The way their bills point.

I am the name of a plant, and I am the greatest money-maker in the world? Mint.

I am the smallest when I come and when I go; but the largest in the midst of my stay. The Moon.

THE WET GRIST.

"I have a story for your Guiding Hand page," said a long-known and beloved brother in the Christian ministry the other day. "Let us have it, then," was our reply. "I suppose," said he, "I owe my life to the providence of God; and I will write out the story for you." He did so, and it was as follows:

"My father was a man of prayer, and in our home the family altar was never permitted to fall down, nor its fires to expire or grow dim. Around that altar our dependence on God was constantly acknowledged, and the divine blessing continually invoked. Nor was that blessing sought in vain, but mercies new and fresh from day to day were granted in answer to a father's prayers.

"One bright morning in the spring of 1850, after commending us to the Divine protection, my father put two bushels of rye into his wagon, and started for the grist-mill at Rockland, R. I., a few miles distant from our home. When more than half way there he had to cross a bridge called 'The Wharf,' along the sides of which there were no railings, but only some logs laid upon the end of the planks.

"When on the middle of this bridge the horse stopped and began to back. My father leaped from the wagon, and the horse continued backing till the hind wheels went over the logs and off the edge of the bridge, and the wagon seat and grain-bag tumbled out and fell into the stream. At this moment the horse stopped, the forward wheels caught on the log, and the hinder part of the wagon hung over the edge of the bridge, being held by the horse and by the forward wheels.

"Four or five men soon came to the rescue, the wagon was lifted back, the grist-fish up from the water, and in half an hour my father was on his way back home to dry his grist and get it ready for grinding again.

"There was a mystery about this whole transaction. We could not imagine what had made the horse back when upon the bridge. He showed no signs of fright, and had never acted so before. My father was troubled. He had earnestly prayed that morning that the angel of the Lord might encamp around about us that day, and now to be subjected to such an accident and so much inconvenience, was something of a trial to his faith, though it did not shake his confidence in God.

"He returned home, and we went to work to dry our grain and prepare it for grinding; but when we spread out the rye upon a cloth in the sun to dry, we noticed, scattered all through it, fragments of a fine glittering substance, which on examination proved to be glass! Thousands and thousands of little fragments and splinters of broken glass were mingled with those two bushels of rye,—enough to have caused the death of all our family and a hundred others if the grain had been ground and baked and eaten.

"We were amazed at this revelation, and with what grateful hearts we knelt around the family altar and thanked God for His wonderful providence which had so strangely preserved our lives.

"But how came the glass thus mingled with our grain? It was all explained very soon. The rye had been kept in an open barrel, and over this barrel our neighbors had smoothed axe-handles, using pieces of glass to scrape and polish them. These pieces of glass were thus broken and splintered, and the fragments dropped unnoticed into the grain, and were measured up and placed in the bag to be carried to the mill.

"No one suspected the danger, and if that grist had been ground, no human power could have averted the calamity, or saved our family from the terrible influence of a poison so deadly as powdered glass. God in His providence interposed and preserved our lives; truly it is but right that they should be consecrated to His service."

NEWS FROM HERSCHEL'S PLANET.

Dr. HUGGINS, the distinguished astronomical spectroscopist, has been recently making observations on the planet Uranus with instruments of extraordinary power. The result indicates a remarkable state of affairs prevailing in this remote world, contrary to any that can exist or be conceived to be possible on the earth. Among the "strong lines" which were remarked is one corresponding in position with one of the lines of hydrogen. Being a much stronger line than can be accounted for by supposing it to be a solar hydro-

gen line reflected back it induces the conclusion, according to Mr. R. A. Proctor, that this gas must be present in the atmosphere of Uranus "in such enormous quantities as to be one of the chief constituents."

"If by the action of tremendous heat," continues Mr. Proctor, "all the oceans of our globe could be changed into their constituent elements, hydrogen and oxygen, it is probable that the signs by which an inhabitant of Venus or Mercury could recognize that such a change had taken place would be very much less marked than the signs by which Dr. Huggins has discovered that hydrogen exists in the atmosphere of Uranus." No signs have yet been found of the existence of nitrogen, carbonic acid gas, or the vapor of water in the atmosphere of the planet.

"Admitting," says Mr. Proctor, "that the line seen by Dr. Huggins is really due to hydrogen—a fact of which he himself has very little doubt—we certainly have a strange discovery to deal with. If it be remembered that oxygen, the main supporter of such life as we are familiar with, cannot be mixed without the certainty that the first spark will cause an explosion (in which the whole of one or other of the gases will combine with a due portion of the other to produce water,) it is difficult to resist the conclusion that oxygen must be absent from the atmosphere of Uranus. If hydrogen could be added in such quantities to our atmosphere as to be recognizable from a distant planet by spectroscopic analysis, then no terrestrial fires could be lighted, for a spark would produce a catastrophe in which all living things upon earth, if not the solid earth itself, would be destroyed. A single flash of lightning would be competent to leave the earth but a huge cinder, even if its whole frame were not rent into a million fragments by the explosion which would ensue."

SUNDAY IN THE STOMACH.

The hardest-worked member of the body is, in many cases, not the hand, nor the foot, nor the brain, but that one upon whose action all these depend for constant nourishment. We are apt, at all times, to gratify the palate at the expense of the digestion, and never more so than when the mind is relieved of its usual cares by the suspension of labor on the day of rest. But how great a mistake it is to rest every part of the body but one!

The reasons for partaking sparingly on the Sabbath of the delights of the table are obvious enough, but should be repeatedly stated, so long as worldly custom exists to draw Christians into temptation. The stomach needs rest, and can at no time take it at better advantage than on that day when the body undergoes least exertion and the mind is free from oppressive care. Those families that employ servants should consider that not only the master and mistress, but also those who wait upon them, have spiritual needs which cannot be supplied if the usual routine of service is insisted upon. Moreover, a partial fast for full-fed persons is not only salutary in a physical point of view, but promotes the spiritual faculties, and enables the soul to commune with God with more readiness and fervency. Therefore, we urge light meals on Sunday, that body and spirit may prosper together.—*Christian at Work.*

DARWINIAN RETROGRESSION.

A New Zealand correspondent of the San Francisco *Alte* is responsible for the following story: "However strange Mr. Darwin's theory,—that man is descended from a monkey,—may seem to be to many, the following particulars in the early history of one of the present members of Parliament for New Zealand are related in all sober earnestness in Southern papers. Mr. B's early life was spent in the wilds of South Africa. When a mere infant he was one day laid peacefully at rest at the door of his woodland home. His worthy parent, near the cabin, shot the young offspring of a large monkey, at which the feelings of the affectionate mamma were of course much wounded. She was, however, driven away by the approaching hunter, and in passing the cabin door noticed and stole the future New Zealand legislator. The loss was not discovered for nearly an hour afterward, and then all efforts to find the robber proved unavailing. Three months after this period a hunting party came across a family of monkeys in the wilderness, and there in the arms of the careful/although untortured wet-nurse was the long lost child, who chattered and jibbered in the most approved monkey fashion apparently fully equal to the exigencies of the situation. Could there be any more convincing evidence than this of the affinity between our race and those hairy denizens of the woods?"