

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., MARCH 19, 1873.

THE TEACHER.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1873.

SUNDAY, March 23rd, 1873.

Jacob at Bethel.—Gen. xxviii. 10-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you. Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." John i. 51.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—Verses 10-15.

SUMMARY.—The ladder down which angels descend from heaven to earth, and up which saints shall ascend from earth to heaven, and at which God's pilgrims meet him and hear his words of promise and comfort, is the person of our Mediator.

ANALYSIS.—I. The bed. vs. 10, 11. II. The dream. vs. 12-15. III. The memorial. vs. 16-19. IV. The vow. vs. 20-22.

EXPOSITION.—Transition.—God's purpose of election as for Jacob rather than Esau, not because of Jacob's goodness, but of the Divine pleasure alone, was in our last lesson plainly set forth. We heard it solemnly stated to both the sons,—to Jacob his blessing, to Esau his rejection. It was God's word, and could not but stand. Was it not most natural that the impulsive, injured Esau burned with a fierce and murderous wrath at his intriguing successful supplanter? Ch. xxvii. 41, 42. Most natural surely, but most wicked, none the less. It was with reason that Rebekah feared for Jacob's life, and hurried him off to a place of safety. Ch. xxvii. 43-45. Little need to urge Jacob to flee, for he, too, knew that murder was in Esau's heart. But Isaac,—we see him now accept the judgment of God with a composure in marked contrast with the first indignant agitation of his soul. He takes his wife's advice, vs. 1 (surely there was grace in his heart), and sends him off to his kindred in Padan-aram, a journey of more than two hundred miles to north-west, in order to find him a wife such as befitted the father of God's elect nation.

Verses 10.—*Beersheba*,—well of swearing. See Gen. xxi. 31; xvi. 33. The second passage refers to a renaming. The place was near the southern boundary of Palestine. Notably, "there are at present on the spot two principal wells and five smaller ones." "Haran," called also "the city of Nahor." Gen. xxiv. 10; xxvii. 43.

Verses 11.—*Lighted upon*, "to strike upon"; then "to fall in with." *Stones for pillows*,—literally "stones at (or under) his head." The distance travelled was not far from forty miles. He staid outside the village, which was near (vs. 19).

Verses 12.—Nothing is more striking than the way in which the natural and supernatural are linked together according to the Scriptures,—than the *naturalness* of the supernatural. The ladder was a beautiful type, or symbol, of the provision for intercourse between earth and heaven. That provision is our Mediator. John i. 51. He connects the two worlds as a ladder as in the vision Jacob's seemed to do.

Verses 13.—*The Lord stood above it*. The word translated "above" commonly means "upon." Doubtless the Lord appeared as above in heaven, yet, too, in connection with the ladder, as to show that it had been let down by him, and was his own provision for holding communion with men. *The Lord*,—or, rather, *Jehovah*; the "I am"—the name which indicated not only the reality, eternity, and independence of his being, but also his constant, helpful, covenanted presence with him. Most happily suited to Jacob's lonely, exiled, dubious condition was the assurance coming from God, who now speaks, not as before, through another, but face to face, that he was the God of Jacob's father. It was very common, for the Hebrews to use a more specific for a general term and say father for ancestor, and brother for cousin, nephew, etc. The possession of the land is promised as to Abraham because the circumstances seemed so against it. Gen. xiii. 14, 15. Here was room for faith.

Verses 14.—*As the dust of the earth*. So in ch. xiii. 16. Compare also ch. xxi. 17: *All the families*, etc. Note how steadily it is kept in view, and brought to view, the universality of God's gracious law and purpose.

Verses 15.—This part of the promise is peculiarly fitted to Jacob's condition as a lone pilgrim. It is personal, and not to be

found in the previous promises. It comes to him at the beginning of his exile,—on the first night. It was to be, and was kept in mind in all the days that followed. There are many who rest in the divine promises until God has done that which he had spoken to them of,—until the victory over the grave is completed. And, as with Jacob, the promise proves wholly true. So in every case does it with them.

Verses 16.—Thus far all has been vision, given to Jacob in sleep. Now he wakes, and his waking thoughts and feelings are determined by his vision, which is still vivid in mind, and is recognized as a genuine revelation from God. How the patriarchs and prophets distinguished between the merely natural dream and phantasy, and the supernatural revelation in dream and vision, we cannot tell. But they certainly did not regard all dreams as supernatural, and they show not the least doubt as to the genuineness of the genuine. Surely the Lord, etc. God's omnipresence Jacob of course knew; but his special presence, in the way of manifestation, he also knew to be confined to certain places. Thus there came to be "sacred places." The Lord thus best impressed it upon men that he did exist, and could meet men; prepared men to meet the one person, Jesus Christ, as the meeting place of all mankind and God, and educated his people to receive the doctrine of John iv. 23, 24. There is evidence that this place had been hallowed by a divine manifestation, as it was to be in the future. The words *And I knew it not*, seem to imply that this was a prominent meeting-place of God and men.

Verses 17.—*Was afraid*,—not simply with the fear known as reverence, or "holy fear," but also with fear for himself, as having unwittingly profaned the place by sleeping there, using it as common. To treat with disrespect any place, thing, or person consecrated to God, was to treat God himself with disrespect, according to Matt. v. 34, 35, and this was to incur a curse. "None other but," &c.,—words which are very simple and expressive. No wonder they are so often quoted. "House of God," as though dwelling there, and "gate of heaven," open to allow the heavenly beings to pass in and out from earth and heaven, and heaven to earth.

Verses 18.—*Rose up early*,—whether immediately on waking is not certain. The pillow was to be a monument and memorial of the blessed event. Josh. iv. 6, and the pouring of oil upon it was to consecrate it to God. Num. vii. 1. It was a happy thought with Jacob to take for the memorial the very stone on which his head lay when the vision was given him.

Verses 19.—*Bethel*—i. e., "house of God," vs. 17. The same name given by him afterwards, ch. xxxv. 13-15, and perhaps by Abraham before him, Gen. xii. 8, 9. Afterwards also a hallowed place of the Divine presence. Judges xv. 18; xxi. 2; Compare Josh. xvi. 2; xviii. 13. The city, or village, was near the place of vision.

Verses 20-22.—*Vowed a vow*,—made a solemn promise. The first part is a condition drawn from the last part of God's promise to him. The word "tithes" means tenth. Jacob was to give "tithes."

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 10. Where is Beersheba? Haran? Why did Jacob go? Ch. 27: 41-46. vs. 6, 7. What did Isaac say to him before leaving? vs. 1-4.

Vs. 11. Where was this place? vs. 19. Josh. xvi. 2; xviii. 13. Is it common in the east thus to camp out?

Vs. 12. What was there in Jacob's state to lead to such a dream? Was it any less from God because of this? Of what was this ladder the symbol? John i. 51.

Vs. 13. How had God given to Jacob his promise before this? Chap. xxvii. 20-29. vs. 1-4. Why were Abraham and Isaac mentioned? Was Abraham Jacob's father? Why called so here?

Vs. 14. How "like the dust"? 13, 16. How were all the families of the earth blessed in Jacob?

Vs. 15. Explain the phrase "I am with thee." Show how the words of this verse fitted Jacob's peculiar wants. Do God's servants now have promises suited each to his wants? Explain.

Vs. 16, 17. Did Jacob know that God is everywhere? What do his words in the 16th verse mean? What kind of fear had he? How ought we to regard things, persons, and places specially set apart for religious uses or service? Why did he say "gate of heaven"?

Vs. 18, 19. What did he do? Why? Meaning of Bethel?

Vs. 20-22. What is a vow? What was Jacob's? Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Scripture Catechism, 106.

SUNDAY, March 30th.—Review of the past three months.

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY.

[A Concert exercise for five little girls.]

All together. And now abideth faith, hope, charity: these three; but the greatest of these is charity.—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

First Girl. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—Heb. xi. 1.

Second. Without faith it is impossible to please God.—Heb. xi. 6.

Third. Faith worketh by love.—Gal. v. 6.

Fourth. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.—Rom. x. 17.

Fifth. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life.—1 Tim. vi. 12.

First. Abide in me, strong Faith, bright evidence.

Of things beyond the sphere of time and sense. Be thou the light to gleam our pathway o'er, Till faith is changed to sight, forever more. Abide in me, strong Faith.

First. What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing.—1 Thess. ii. 19.

Second. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.—Lam. iii. 26.

Third. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness.—Prov. x. 28.

Fourth. Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God.—Psalms cxlvi. 5.

Fifth. Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast.—Heb. vi. 19.

Second. Abide in me, calm Hope, on thee we lean,

While journeying onward to the shore unseen. Thou anchor to the soul that can not fail, Which entereth into that within the veil. Abide in me, calm Hope.

First. Above all these things put on charity, the bond of perfectness.—Col. iii. 14.

Second. Be thou an example of the believers in charity.—1 Tim. iv. 12.

Third. The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart.—1 Tim. i. 5.

Fourth. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.—1 Cor. xiii. 1.

Fifth. And now abideth faith, hope, and charity: these three; but the greatest of these is charity.—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Third. Abide in me, pure Charity, divine,

Within our hearts, and in our actions shine. 'Tis thine to soothe, to cheer, to help, to bless. Thou crowning grace, bright bond of perfectness. Abide in me, sweet Charity.

In Concert.

Faith, hope, and charity, bright gems divine, In us, as jewels, shine. Faith, hope, and charity, sweet heavenly flowers, Bloom in these hearts of ours.

Faith, hope, and charity, each lovely grace Within our souls have place. Faith, hope, and charity, Lord these shall be Our guide to Heaven and thee.

—School Festivals.

Youths' Department.

THE SUN AND THE ROSE.

BY THE LATE ALICE CART.

The sun, who smiles wherever he goes, Till the flowers all smile again, Fell in love one day with a bashful rose That had been a bud till then.

So he pushed back the folds of the soft, green hood That covered her modest grace, And kissed her as only a lover could, Till the crimson burned in her face.

But woe for the day when his golden hair Tangled her heart in a net, And woe for the night of dark despair, When her cheek with tears was wet!

For she loved him as only a maiden could, And he left her mild and meek, Striving in vain with his faded hood To cover her blushing cheek.

TOPPING A SHAFT.

A THRILLING SKETCH.

As I was leaving the yard, one evening, to trudge back to the bits of rooms we were obliged to put up with since I came to London, in order to get better wages, I was called into the office by the foreman. "What is your present job, Lindsay?" he asked, and I told him.

"Humph! That can stand over for a day or two, can't it? Stubbs has fallen ill again, and you must take his place."

I didn't care to be shifted before I'd finished what I was about, but a journeyman bricklayer, with a wife and children looking to him for bread, cannot afford to be particular, and so I held my tongue.

"You must go to Coot's brewery, to-morrow morning, and finish that chimney," the foreman told me. He gave me a few more directions besides, and then went his way, and I went mine, not very well pleased at the prospect before me.

I suppose I never ought to have followed the trade, for, though I had gained myself a good character as a steady workman, I had never been able to overcome a horror at being perched at any great height. In the country, where the buildings were low, I managed well enough, but in this great city, there were roofs on which I could not stand, without this dread oppressing me, nor look down, without feeling as though something below was tempting me to fling myself over, and end at once the miserable sensation which no effort of mine could possibly shake off.

This huge chimney the foreman had ordered me to finish, was reckoned one of the highest and best built shafts in London. We were all proud of the job, which had been carried on so far without a single mishap; but I had earnestly been hoping that I might not be sent to it, and it wasn't till the workmen had got almost to the top, that I began to breathe a bit more freely, and trust that it would be finished without any help of mine.

Once at home, with the youngsters' merry prattle sounding in my ears, I forgot my uneasy feeling about the morrow's job but the moment that I dozed off to sleep, it came back upon me in a hideous dream. I thought I was falling down, down, down! and just as the crash of my body striking the earth seemed inevitable, I woke up with a start, to find myself bathed in a cold perspiration, and trembling, in every limb.

No more settled sleep visited my pillow that night, and it was a relief, when the booming of the clocks dispelled my frightful visions, and warned me that it was now time to face a reality.

The morning was bitterly cold and boisterous; scarcely a soul was to be seen in the deserted streets, at that early hour, and the dull thud of my footsteps sounded mournfully in the stillness reigning around. At last, the great chimney loomed in sight, and, gazing up at its immense height, I shivered at the thought of being on top of it, and forced to look down in the sickening depth below.

It had not been for the shame of the thing, I should have gone back; but the thought of Bessie and the children, spurred me on; so, buttoning my jacket tightly around me, I began to ascend the staging. In my journey upward, I passed many costly curtained windows, and remember thinking, rather enviously, how nice it must be to be rich, and sheltered on such a morning, from the biting cold, in a warmly furnished bed-room.

Some fellow wouldn't mind the least bit if they were perched on the top of St. Paul's on the coldest of the mornings, provided you supplied them well with beer; but I wasn't over-strong limbed, and more than that I could pretend to be strong-minded; so what to them was nothing, to me was almost death itself.

The higher I went the more intense the cold appeared to be, and my fingers became quite numb by the hoar frost that was clinging to the sides and spokes of the ladders. After a while I stood on the few boards forming the stage on the summit of the shaft, and giving one glance downward, my blood turned colder than it was already, as I realized the immense depth to the yard below.

Giving myself a shake to get rid of the dizzy sensation that came over me, and unhooking from the pulley the tub of mortar which my mate, waiting below, had sent up, I at once began my solitary work.

I had been hard at it for more than an hour, and was getting a bit more reconciled to my position,—cheering myself as I whistled and worked, with the thought that each brick I laid was bringing me nearer to a finish, when all at once a fiercer and colder blast than before came shrieking and tearing around the chimney. I was nearly overthrown, and in the endeavor to recover myself I tilted the board of mortar from off the edge of the shaft on my frail standing-place.

In a second, to my intense horror, I felt the boards and all that were on them gliding away from me from the chimney, and in a few moments I should have been lying a mangled corpse below if I had not succeeded in flinging my arm over and into the hollow of the shaft, where, as the scaffolding and its load of bricks crashed downward, I was left hanging, with certain death awaiting me the moment I loosened my hold.

My first impulse was to throw my other hand over and draw my body up, so that I could lie partially across the top of the shaft. In this I was successful, and continued to balance myself, half in the chimney and half out.

There for some time I could only cling with frenzied desperation, praying earnestly to be saved from the horrible death threatening me; but at last I summoned courage to peer cautiously over the outside of the shaft.

Not a bit of scaffolding remained within many yards of me—and that but the poles, with a few boards dangling to them—and there was nothing to break my fall should I quit my hold.

Shudderingly I drew my head over the shaft, for there the darkness hid my danger, while to gaze on the scene without brought the old feeling of being dragged down came back to me in full force.

Then I began to think of the wife and little ones whom I had left snug in bed, and bitter tears came into my eyes as I wondered how they would live if I were taken from them. The thought brought me back to more self-honesty, and I kept asking myself, "Must I die? How long can I hold on with this fierce wind begetting me? Is there no hope? Will no one seeing how I am placed, strive to rescue me?"

Again I turned my eyes downward. In the court-yard of the brewery, and in the streets below, people were fast collecting; windows were being thrown open, and women and children, shrieking and sobbing, were gazing from them at me. The crowd below thickened, running hither. A large kite fluttered nearer and nearer. How I tried to steady myself with one hand, that I might grasp the cord with the other as soon as it was within reach, comes vividly before me now. But it never did come within my reach, a gust of the breeze either carrying it farther away or dashing it to the ground.

An hour passed, and though still clinging to the brickwork, it was almost unconsciously, for cold and fear had so worked upon me that I became quite dazed; and the chimneys, the people, the confused noise from the streets, and my own perilous position, seemed to be jumbled together in a tangle which I could not put straight. While in this half-sensible state I heard a voice shout my name. But it had to be repeated twice before I could rouse myself sufficiently to hear what was said.

"Bill! Bill Lindsay! cheer up mate! help is coming!" were the words which rumbled up the shaft.

After this there was pause for some minutes, and scarce able to control my excitement, I tried to think how this help would come. Then there was a warning shouted to me to keep my head back, followed by a whizzing, hissing noise and looking within the shaft, I saw a bright shower of golden sparks lighting up the well-like hole, and knew that a rocket had been fired.

But it struck the brickwork in its ascent and failed to reach me; so that once more I was left to wait and hope until the voice again shouted for me to keep clear. A moment after a fiery tail of sparks shot upwards far above me, and an earnest "Thank God!" came from my heart as I grasped a thin cord that fell by my side as the rocket descended.

By this communication a stouter and stronger rope was sent to me. But my danger was not over, for in my weakened and numbed state it was perilous to slide down it. At first I could scarcely brace my nerves up sufficiently to launch myself over the brick work, and my head turning dizzy, for a moment I thought myself gone, but conquering the feeling by a great effort I slowly descended until about half the distance was accomplished.

When the horrid fear seized upon me, "What if the rope should break, or not be securely fastened?" and dreading each second that my fears would be fulfilled, in feverish haste I slid on.

When within a few yards from the bottom, overtaken nature would bear the strain no longer, and, loosening my hold, I dropped into the arms of those who had been breathlessly watching my descent.

Other hands than mine finished the shaft in calmer weather, and on a more securely fastened scaffold; and I, well-cared for by the best of little wives, soon got over the shock of my accident; but, as I go to and fro to my work, and look up to the huge chimney, I often recall, with a shudder, the hour when I clung to its summit, counting the moments, each one of which seemed to bring me nearer to a dreadful death.

While the heathen have their gods of wisdom, gods of battle, gods of beauty, &c., they have no gods of holiness, nor are their sacred laws, holy laws. The nations worshipping idols have no word in their languages that means *holy*. The very idea comes to us through the Bible.