

The Christian Messenger.

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BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1874.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, July 20th, 1874.

The Publican called.—Mark ii. 13-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"For they have wholly followed the Lord." Num. xxii. 12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY : Verses 13, 14.

SUMMARY.—Christ's call of love Levi answered with the obedience of love, and as Christ welcomed him to his heart, he welcomed Christ to his home.

ANALYSIS.—I. The call. vs. 13, 14. II. The feast. vs. 15, 17.

EXPOSITION.—*The interval.*—The healing of the leper, of which our last lesson treated, took place while Christ was on his first preaching circuit in the "villages" of Galilee, on the western or northwestern side of "the Sea of Galilee." This tour lasted but a few days. Mark ii. 1. The synagogues were open for services on Mondays and Thursdays, as well as on Sabbaths or our Saturdays; so that he might well have preached in their synagogues, as Mark affirms that he did. i. 39. It is not certain, however, just what time was spent, as the expression, "after days," (verse 1) is quite indefinite. He then returned to Capernaum, and went into the house (ii. 1), evidently Peter's (i. 29). The fame of Christ's words and works drew together at Capernaum from Jerusalem and the chief towns of Judea and Galilee, the unfriendly and jealous "Pharisees and doctors of the law." Luke v. 17. These relentless men who hunted down and hunted out of the world our blessed Lord, were now on his track. Christ never tried to conciliate, but rather brought out, at every new collision, still more sharply and decisively the irreconcilable opposition of his claims and principles to their spirit and doctrine. Our lesson to-day is an instance of this.

Verse 13.—*And he went forth.* That is, from Peter's house and from Capernaum. Vs. 1; i. 29. *Again by the sea-side.* As he had done before his departure on the preaching tour, when he called Simon and the other three. i. 16-19. We must remember that so extensive was the business of fishing in the Sea of Galilee, that at this point the sea-side would be a busy place, where Christ would naturally meet a great many people at their occupations. The multitudes who here resorted to him were in large part these people. The narrative does not intend to give the impression that he withdrew into a solitary place for rest, and was followed thither by the throng. *And he taught them.* No doubt at their request as on a previous occasion. i. 21, 22.

Verse 14.—*Levi, the son of Alphaeus* Luke v. 27. Levi is the same as Matthew. Matt. ix. 9. It is thought that Levi was his original name, and that *Matthew* was the name given him when he became a Christian, as our Lord gave to Simon the name of *Peter*. Of Levi's history, we only know further that after this call he was formally appointed on apostle, lived until after our Lord's ascension, and wrote the first Gospel. There are conflicting traditions as to his life and death, which seem not worth repeating here. *Sitting at the receipt of custom.* By "the receipt of custom," is here meant the place or office where the taxes were collected. Levi was a "publican," or tax gatherer. Matt. x. 3. The Jews were at this time under the Roman government. Of its subject nations the Roman government collected tribute or taxes. Its method was to impose its taxes by law, and then contract with a person or company, usually a Roman knight, to pay to the government a certain sum as the revenue for a given province; and the contractor received power to collect the taxes of the provinces, and make whatever was possible by the operation. This contractor employed under him collectors, usually of the subject nation. The latter class are "the publicans" of the New Testament. This "detestable" system gave the contractors power of gross fraud and oppression, and to the actual collectors opportunity and temptation to exercise the most arbitrary and vexatious exactions. See Luke iii. 13, xix. 8. "The publicans of the New Testament were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, willing tools of the oppressors. They were classed with sinners (Matt. ix. 11; xi. 19), with harlots (Matt. xxi. 31, 32), with the heathen

(Matt. xviii. 17). *Follew me.* No act of Christ could have more shocked and offended the prejudices of the Scribes and Pharisees and their adherents, than to take to himself, as one of his twelve chosen intimates and apostles, a man of this class. *He arose and followed him.* Luke says (v. 28), "he left all" and followed—thus indicating that his business paid largely, and that he had already acquired some fortune; which is confirmed by the following account of the "great feast" given by him to his Lord. This makes his prompt obedience the more admirable, he may have been a disciple of John, and even formerly personally called to be a disciple of Jesus.

Verse 15.—*As Jesus sat at meat in his [Levi's] house.* On occasion of the "great feast," or reception. Luke v. 29. We need not suppose this to have been on the same day of the call. The visit of Jairus to the Saviour, according to Matt. ix. 18, seems to have been while this feast was in progress; but Mark (v. 21, 22), and Luke (viii. 4), place it some time after the call of Levi. We can hardly doubt that this feast was given by Levi out of love for Jesus, and from a desire to show him honor. Doubtless, also, he hoped thus, through Christ, to do good to his acquaintances who would be at the feast. Most commendable were both motives, and most natural to a renewed heart. The Greek word here translated "sat at meat," means reclined. *Many publicans and sinners.* Showing that it was a great reception. The sinners, these regarded as the vicious and outcast class, are here found with publicans. They felt free to enter Levi's house, and knew that Jesus and his disciples did not scorn them because of their "class." *There were many, and they followed him.* The choice of a publican to be one of the chosen intimates of the wondrous Teacher, evidently made a profound and most favorable impression on this class. Wise Christian labor has never "paid" better than when given for such men.

Verse 16.—*When the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat.* They either cannot or will not understand how Christ can associate with such persons. Hence they ask his disciples, no doubt derisively and contemptuously. *How is it that he eateth with publicans and sinners?* As much as to say, If he were a worthy teacher and leader, he would not be found in such company—he would not choose the vile and debased for his intimates.

Verse 17.—Here now we find the noble and complete vindication of the Leader and his followers, and the fit exposure and condemnation of the insinuated charge. *They that are whole, etc.* This was evidently a proverb. *I came not to call the righteous.* More literally, "to call righteous ones," that is, beings of a righteous character. For earth had no such characters. *But sinners to repentance.* It was, then, to make righteous ones out of the unrighteous. Hence if the tanners did not deem themselves sinners, but righteous, they put themselves out of his sympathies, and separated themselves from his company.

QUESTIONS.—Where did our last lesson leave Christ? i. 39. How long did that tour last? ii. 1. What does Mark say took place between his return and the call of Levi? ii. 1-12.

Vs. 13. From what place did Christ go forth? Vs. 1. Why is it said he went forth "again"? i. 16. Why should the multitudes thus gather about him? i. 21, 22.

Vs. 13. What other name had Levi? Matt. ix. 9. What was his occupation? Matt. x. 3. What do you know of his future history? What other apostle had a father of the same name? Matt. x. 3. What was "the receipt of custom"? How did he treat Christ's call? Luke v. 28.

Vs. 15. What does Luke say that Levi made? Luke v. 29. Why should there be so many publicans and sinners at Levi's feast? Who are here meant by "sinners"? Why classed with "publicans"?

Vs. 16. What did the Scribes and Pharisees say? In what spirit, think you? Why should they ask such a question?

Vs. 17. What did Christ say? Is the Saviour often likened to a physician? Why so? Whence did Christ come? How does he call sinners to repentance? Are there any on earth except sinners? How can we, too, go to Christ?

Abridged from the *Baptist Teacher*. Scripture Catechism, 200, 201.

SUNDAY, August 2nd, 1874.—Jesus and the Sabbath.—Mark ii. 23-28; iii. 1-5.

The generic difference between a wise man and a fool is, whether he governs his passions or his passions him. All that is right within us must be resolved into means of perpetual progress towards perfection by divine grace; and everything wrong must be repressed by sagacious moderation, thus controlled and impelled.

Youths' Department.

A CHEAP ACCOMPLISHMENT.

BY MRS. L. S. GOODWIN.

Miss Louisa is ready to die for the vain longing she has to take music and drawing lessons; while Master Henry thinks he had better never have been born than be kept as he is from dancing school, where those chums of his, and especially the black-eyed Susan who kisses his sister so rapturously whenever they meet, are acquiring such divine graces.

I say to them—"Young friends, I know an accomplishment as real as either of those you covet, which costs nothing, and which your excellent parents, so far from objecting to, would rejoice in exceedingly. Curious, they ask—"What is it?" On my answering that it is *READING ALoud*, Louisa and Henry respond—"Oh!" indicative of a great disappointment as can be felt where so little is expected.

But I go on to inquire how many of their familiar acquaintances could sit down in the family circle, or when a few visitors may be present, or as one of the guests at a simple evening entertainment, and read Bryant's *Thanatopsis* or Longfellow's *Psalms of Life*, or indeed a column article in the weekly paper, in a manner to entertain their listeners and do themselves credit. Brother and sister hesitate, look at each other, and are astonished to find that they can scarcely be sure of two or three among them all.

"Why, we can read," laughs Louisa, "but we seldom have read aloud out of school, you see; and for one I should be scared to pieces at the thought of entertaining cultivated people in the way you mention."

Precisely as nineteen out of twenty of these cultivated people would be at the idea of thus entertaining Louisa and Henry and the rest. Which tells how much rarer as well as cheaper an accomplishment is this I recommend than those for which our young friends are sighing. I well recollect how my sister Nell's college beau was taken down in my juvenile estimation, on his first visit to "our house," when reading a chance paragraph or so in a magazine, he pronounced foliage foil-age, and stumbled at the name of Melchisedek, and didn't half mind his scraps. Three-fourths of the novel devourers, if they could be required to read aloud, would give up their evil habit from pure inability to understand themselves.

All that you need is daily practice, with, if possible, some one by who is free to criticize your style and capable of correcting the more common faults. Your father, mother, grandmother or Uncle Timothy is eloquent enough for you at present. Don't get disgusted if they all chisel away at you at once. For lack of such assistance at any time, let your own ears be your attentive auditors and the judges of your performance.

You can always obtain an audience of little children, if you will but select a subject not too high for them,—and when you have tried it you will have found they can go much higher in the list of subjects than is usually imagined by those who are a few years older. If you interest them, you may safely account it a success. Their smiles are sincere at least, and their appreciation as correct, you will allow, as that of the wall flowers in a ball-room, or the gabbling geese who on all social occasions close in, *sans peur et sans merci*, upon the perspiring martyr of the music stool.

You have only by care and perseverance to become an acceptable reader of the literature of the day, in order to have your talent recognized and to receive *carte blanche* wherever people of principle and intelligence meet as the components of society.

Louisa and Henry awake in the dawn and the dew, rustle their plumage pleasantly, and chirp to me that they are going to give this thing a trial. I would a whole flock of Young Americans would think and act in concert with them.

THE BEST KNOWLEDGE.

A very learned man (Selden) when about to die, called his family around him, and said to them: "My dear children, I have spent my whole life in trying to learn everything that was worth knowing. Much of it has been of use, but much more was not even worth the getting; and now that I am about to leave the world; of all that I have learned, nothing gives me so much comfort as the little sentence, 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,' and I would rather be ignorant of everything else, than of this one short saying."

MR. SPURGEON ON THE TITLE "REV."

Mr. Spurgeon asks in the *Sword and Trowel* why so many brethren still retain the title of Reverend? We are willing, he says, to reverence the aged pastor, and we did not hesitate to give that title to our beloved friend George Rogers, just in the same way as we use the term "the venerable Bede," or "the judicious Hooker," but we are not prepared to reverence every stripling who ascends the pulpit; and moreover, if we thought it due to others to call them reverend, we should still want some reason for their *calling themselves so*. It seems rather odd to us that a man should print upon his visiting card the fact that he is a reverend person. Why does he not occasionally vary the term, and call himself estimable, amiable, talented, or beloved? Would this seem odd? Is there any valid objection to such a use of adjectives after the fashion—*is once set by*—employing the word *reverend*? If a man were to assume the title of reverend for the first time in history it would look ridiculous, if not presumptuous or profane.

Why does not the Sunday-school teacher call himself "the Respectable John Jones," or the City Missionary dub himself "the Hard-working William Evans"? Why do we not, like members of secret orders and others, go in for *Worthy Masterships* and *Past Grades*, and the like? I hope that we can reply that we do not care for such honours, and are content to leave them to men of the world, or to the use of those who think they can do some good thereby. It may be said that the title of reverend is only one of courtesy, but then so was the title of Rabbi among the Jews, yet the disciples were not to be called Rabbi. It is, at any rate, a suspicious circumstance that among mankind no class of persons should so commonly describe themselves by a pretentious title as the professed ministers of the lowly Jesus. Peter and Paul were right reverend men, but they would have been the last to have called themselves so. No sensible person does reverence to one just the more because we assume the title. It certainly is in some cases a flagrant misnomer, and its main use seems to be the pestilent one of keeping up the unscriptural distinction of clergy and laity. A lad fresh from college, who has just been placed in a pulpit, is the Reverend Mr. Smith, while his eminently godly grandfather, who has for fifty years walked with God, and is now ripe for heaven, has no such claim to reverence. A gentleman of ability, education, and eminent piety preaches in various places with much zeal and abundant success, but he is no reverend; while a man of meagre gifts, whose principal success seems to lie in scattering the flock, wears the priestly prefix, having a name to be reverend when he commands no esteem whatever.

DO YOU HEAR THAT?

A New Orleans paper tells us of a printer who, when his fellow-workmen went out to drink beer, put in the bank the exact amount he would have spent if he had gone out with them to drink.

He did this for five years.

He then looked at his bank account, and found that he had laid up five hundred and twenty-one dollars and eighty-six cents.

In five years he had not lost a day because of sickness. Three out of five of his fellow-workmen had, in the meantime, become drunkards.

The water-drinker then bought out the printing-office; and in twenty years from the time that he began to put by his money he had laid aside a good many thousands of dollars. This story teaches a lesson which every little boy should lay to heart.

—*Youth's Companion*.

A HINT ON QUESTIONING.

The *Sunday School World* says on the subject of questioning:—When a child wishes to get information, the questions he asks are generally very direct and simple. Teachers may learn much on the art of questioning by watching these characteristics, in the form and language of the questions put by children eager to gain some new truth or interesting fact. If the scholar's question is answered by another question from the teacher, the latter should be so framed as to lead the mind of the scholar to perceive the correct answer to his own enquiry, or be a clear and decided step toward the answer. A question in place of a reply should never be thrown back to the scholar, in a way to confuse or vex his mind. A question-book or a teacher that

includes the whole history of the Atonement in a question upon how God would treat the sinner refusing to repent, would show little common-sense. Yet questions of a similar character are frequently asked by the living teacher, and sometimes found in otherwise creditable question-books. Children love and are instructed by short, direct and clear questions, presenting one point or calling for a single fact only.

TO A RILL.

Tinkle, tinkle, tiny rill,
Murmuring down the grass-grown hill;
Running, running to the sea,
Emblem of eternity.

So we're ever moving on,
Hoping, fearing, till we're gone;
For the lesson, good or ill,
Thank you, thank you, tiny rill.

—*J. H. Fuller*.

The *Siam Weekly Advertiser* claims to have discovered Mr. Darwin's "missing link." A species of monkey has been found in the Philippine Islands and South America, which from all accounts is but an inferior sort of *Orilla*. It constructs no habitation, forms no families, sleeps in caves and trees, and feeds on vermin. It cannot be tamed or forced to labour. Notwithstanding, our contemporary concludes that "these wretched beings are men and women." Why? Because "their uncouth jabbering, sounds like articulate language," their features approximate to the human type, and the females "show instincts of modesty."

A well-known wealthy Parisian has had himself painted by an eminent artist, "As he was," "As he is," "As he will be." "As he was" represents him at the age of twenty-five, a poor wretch in ragged garments, with his toes peeping through the holes in his shoes, sinking half famished, by the side of a wall. "As he is" figures him fat and jolly as an alderman, well dressed, with gold chain decking his waistcoat, and diamond rings blazing on his fingers. And "As he will be," he is made a hideous corpse. Not the least singular fact of such a singular freak is the fact that he has the paintings hung in his drawing-room.

TATTOOING.—A genius has sent in a petition to the French National Assembly asking for the passage of a law providing that every new-born child shall have its name and the date of its birth tattooed on its arm. The object is to facilitate identification. The school teachers are to perform the operation, and parents neglecting to have their children thus tattooed are to be punished by a heavy fine.

To be discontented is to live a life of perpetual longing. "The highest point to which outward things can bring us," says Sir Philip Sidney, "is the contentment of the mind, with which no estate can be poor, without which all estates will be miserable." And a greater than Sir Philip Sidney, even St. Paul, tells us that "godliness with contentment is great gain."

Beauty, like the flowering blossoms, soon fades; but the divine excellence of the mind, like the medical virtues of the plant, remains in it, when all those charms are withered.

In a "Bible History" for the use of schools and families, the author, the Rev. Dr. O'Leary, a Roman Catholic priest, thus puts into rhyme the ten plagues that were sent upon the Egyptians; it is perhaps necessary to say that the author's intentions are not humorous:

The waters change to blood; next, frogs arise;
Next come the scorpions; next, dust turns to flies;
Lo! murrain strikes the beasts, but Gessen's free!
Lo! boils beset the men, save, Israel, thee!
Then fires the thundering hail; then locusts bite;
Then come three days of one unbroken night;
The first-born's midnight death, from cot to throne,
Winds up ten plagues that make Egyptians moan.

Patrick Henry left in his will the following important passage:—"I have now disposed of all my property to my family; there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that, and I had not given them one shilling they would be rich; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."

A new false prophet, claiming to be the Messiah, has made his appearance in Arabia.

The "Second Reformed Episcopal Church of Philadelphia" was organized last week.

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