

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1875.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY December 12th, 1875.—Jesus and Thomas.—John xx. 24—31.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established." 2 Chronicles xx. 20.

ANALYSIS.—I. Doubt expressed. Vs. 24, 25. II. Doubt kindly treated. Vs. 26, 27. III. Doubt removed. Vs. 28. IV. Faith better than sight. Vs. 29. V. "Other signs." Vs. 30, 31.

CONNECTION OF LESSON.—After meeting and greeting Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, Jesus, possibly, "was seen of Cephas" or Peter, as Paul states (1 Cor. xv. 5). In the afternoon of the same day of his resurrection he showed himself to two disciples on their way to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 13-32.) Reaching the city on their return early the same evening, Cleopas (Luke xxiv. 18, but not Alphaeus) and his companion (unknown) "found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luke xxiv. 33, 34.) But Thomas was not with the company, for what reason we are left to conjecture wholly. He did not see Jesus, therefore, when he came suddenly into the midst of his disciples, and showed them his hands and his feet, and ate with them (Luke xxiv. 36-48). Subsequently hearing of the Saviour's appearance to the ten, Thomas doubted their testimony, and demanded in proof the evidence of his own senses, vs. 25. Eight days pass, and our Lord meets the disciples again. It would seem as if he "designated reserved his second appearance till the recurrence of his resurrection day, that he might thus inaugurate the delightful sanctities of the Lord's Day." (Cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, Rev. i. 10.) At this second meeting Thomas was present. His doubts were removed, and he was among the first, if not the first, to worship Jesus as God, vs. 28.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 24.—But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus. "Thomas" meaning twin. In the list of the apostles, Thomas and Matthew are coupled together, except in Acts i. 13, where it is "Philip and Thomas." Was not with them when Jesus came. vs. 10; Mark xvi. 14. The reason is not stated, but it is very naturally taken to be his state of mind. His character appears to have been that of "a man slow to believe, seeing all the difficulties of a case, subject to despondency, viewing things on the darker side, yet full of ardent love to his Master." John xi. 16; xiv. 5. He was absent from the meeting, and so lost the blessing, the precious blessing of the Saviour's presence, benediction, reproof, and impartation of the Holy Spirit, vs. 19-23. This fact is properly used to enforce the duty and exemplify the privilege of "assembling ourselves together" in the name, and for the worship of Christ. Such assembling is a need of our spiritual nature, and has a special promise of blessing. Matt. xviii. 20.

Verse 25.—The other disciples. The rest of the eleven. Therefore. Because Thomas having been absent could only learn it from them. We have seen the Lord. This was additional to the circumstantial testimony of the women, of Mary Magdalene, of Peter, and of the two who went to Emmaus, as to Christ's appearance to them severally, additional to the known facts as to the opened sepulchre, and additional to all that he knew of Christ's remembered testimony concerning his resurrection. Notice, they now and henceforth call Christ "Lord," not as a mere title of respectful address, like our sir, but with its full divine significance. Christ through his resurrection had come to the mediatorial throne, and had shown himself Lord, Rom. i. 4. Except I shall see in his hands, etc., I will [shall] not believe. Mark says (xvi. 14) that Jesus upbraided the apostles at his first meeting with them because they had not believed the women who had seen him. But here is Thomas at the end of a whole week, with all his additional evidence, flatly declaring, not simply that he still doubts, that he is not persuaded, that he does not believe, but outright, "I shall not believe." He must have the evidence of sight and touch. It seems then to have been his emphatic, vivid, natural mode of saying that nothing could convince him. But when he says, "I will not," this comes of no perverse, wicked determination. It is no child of a rooted wish not. He would that the report of the resurrec-

tion might be true; but it is too good, too much, to be true.

Verse 26.—And after eight days. From Sunday to Sunday inclusive is eight days. Hence the expression "eight days" came to designate a week. So still in the German. On the eighth day from the day of the resurrection, that is on the first Sunday after the resurrection, and the day after the Passover festivals close. Again his disciples were within. Possibly met now in obedience to instructions given the week before, and in expectation of meeting Jesus. It seems that they observed this as the fit day for Christian worship, as the Christian Sabbath, otherwise they would have been on their way home from the feast with the rest of the people. Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2; Rev. i. 10. Christendom has been singularly unanimous in observing the first rather than the seventh day of the week as the day of worship, the "Lord's day." And Thomas with them. This shows, probably, that some favorable impression had been made on him by the rest, enough to bring him into the meeting. That was something, and so far hopeful. Then came [comes] Jesus, the doors being [having been] shut, and stood in the midst. Here, as elsewhere, the account seems to imply that after his resurrection Jesus was not under the bodily limitations belonging to him before his death. He seems not to have opened the door. He appears at will, and at will disappears. Peace be unto you. A loving, sovereign benediction, allaying fear, kindling love, and evoking worship.

Verse 27.—Then [afterward] saith he to Thomas. After he had saluted the whole company as a whole, then he turned to the individual. He selected just the one that had need of a special separate word. What a moment was that for Thomas. Reach hither thy finger, etc. The very test, the impossible test, imagined and named by Thomas, behold this is given him. But with it is still another, which helps to strike down and cast out his disbelief. The word of Jesus shows knowledge of the secrets of his heart. We cannot believe that he did, that after that word he could, really extend the fingers and the hand for the testing. Be not faithless but believing. He was in danger of "hardening" into settled unbelief, and to rejection.

Verse 28.—And Thomas answered. Most promptly. Most eagerly, joyfully. And said to him. To Christ, not to God the Father. My Lord and my God. A confession, enthusiastic indeed, but reverent and true. Recorded by John as the fit close of the gospel, which opens with the declaration of Christ's deity. Christ clearly accepts and approves the confession.

Verse 29.—Because thou hast seen me, etc. Thomas was blessed in the belief which came to him now. It was well. Blessed was Thomas, but not less blessed all who had, all who should believe, "not having seen." A loving rebuke to Thomas, and benediction to believers generally, with implied commendation. Christian faith is of God, however we come to it; but beware not to refuse to come by God's chosen way.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 23. What is the meaning of the name Thomas? What traits of character does this disciple show in his previous history?

Vs. 25. What does this vs. show Thomas to be? Is there any difference between an honest and an arrogant and haughty doubter? What do honest doubters often become? By what two senses did Thomas hold himself really to be convinced?

Vs. 26. Why did Jesus meet his disciples on the eighth day from his resurrection? Do you believe that Jesus sanctioned the religious observance of the first instead of the seventh day of the week? Is this change referred to in the New Testament? Is not the example of Jesus and of the apostles a sufficient authority?

Vs. 27. What does the address of the Master to Thomas show? How ought doubters to be dealt with?

Vs. 28. What does this confession indubitably prove? Cf. 1 John v. 20; Rom. ix. v.

Vs. 29. What evidence is of a higher quality than the evidence of sight? Cf. 1 Peter i. 8.

Vs. 30. If more of Christ's life had been written, would men have sooner believed in him? Ans. If men are lost, it will not be through the want of light. See 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, December 19th, 1875.—Jesus and Peter.—John xxi. 15-22.

A band of wind and stringed instruments has been introduced, in addition to the organ, at the church of All Saints, Margaret-street, London, the day being observed according to annual custom as the dedication festival. The band consisted of four violins, viola, two violoncellos, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon.

Youths' Department.

TWO SIDES TO A STORY.

"What's the matter?" said Growler to the black cat, as she sat mumping on the kitchen doorstep.

"Matter enough," said Grimalkin, turning her head another way. "Our cook is very fond of talking of hanging me. I wish heartily some one would hang her."

"Why, what is the matter?" repeated Growler.

"Hasn't she beaten me, and called me a thief, and threatened to be the death of me?"

"Dear, dear?" said Growler. "Pray, what brought it about?"

"Oh the merest trifle, absolutely nothing; it is her temper. All the servants complain of it. I wonder they haven't hanged her long ago."

"Well, you see," said Growler, "cooks are awkward things to hang; you and I might be managed much more easily."

"Not a drop of milk have I had this day, said Grimalkin, "and such a pain in my side!"

"But what," said Growler, "what was the immediate cause?"

"Haven't I told you?" said pussy, pettishly. "It's her temper—what I have to suffer from it! Everything she breaks she lays to me. Such injustice! It is unbearable!"

Growler was quite indignant; but being of a reflective turn, after the first gust of wrath had passed, he asked: "But was there no particular reason this morning?"

"She chose to be very angry because I offended her," said the cat.

"How, may I ask?" gently inquired Growler.

"Oh nothing worth telling—a mere mistake of mine," Growler looked at her with such a questioning expression, that she was compelled to say, "I took the wrong thing for my breakfast."

"Oh?" said Growler, much enlightened.

"Why the fact was," said Grimalkin, confidentially, "I was springing at a mouse and I knocked down a dish; and not knowing exactly what it was, I smelt it, and just tasted it, and it was rather nice, and—"

"You finished it?" suggested Growler.

"Well, I should, I believe, if that cook hadn't come in. As it was, I left the head."

"The head of what?" said Growler.

"How inquisitive you are," said the black cat.

"Nay, but I should like to know said Growler.

"Well, then, of some fish that was meant for dinner."

"Then," said Growler, "say what you please; but now I've heard both sides of the story, I wonder she didn't hang you."

And so, little reader, you may judge whether the cook or Grimalkin was at fault; and of one thing be certain, every story has two sides, and it is always best to hear both before making up your mind. —*Libertas.*

PINCHING THE ROOTS.

The children had been watching Dennis, as he potted the plants for the greenhouse. They enjoyed it very much—Carrie and Tom, and even little Bell, who toddled about with her small feet, and talked as fast as any of them.

The still autumn air was so pleasant, and the trees were so beautiful in their robes of red and yellow, that it was good to be out of doors. And so the children played and sang and whistled, and went around and around the flower-beds: and did not think of going in the house until it was time for dinner.

But the best thing of all was when mamma herself came out, and began to look on too, seeking out her pet plants, and encouraging Dennis with her cheerful words.

"Hallo! here's mamma," cried Tom, hugging her, and feeling proud that he was getting so tall. "Isn't it a jolly day? And see what lots Dennis has done already."

"Yes, the beds begin to look quite desolate."

Bell ran up, holding out her little hands full of flowers, and nearly fell into one of the big holes which Dennis had made.

We shall have plenty of bouquets to-day, mamma," Carrie said, who had her hands full too. "Dennis will cut them all off! He does such queer things," she added softly, as the old man bent over a plant on the opposite side of the walk.

Mamma smiled, and they all watched,

while Dennis dug carefully around the plant, and lifted it to put in the pot. It was a delicate, beautiful thing, and the gardener said "Ah!" and patted the earth around it, as if he were very proud of it. Then he slipped it into the pot, and began pushing the stray roots in their places, and covering them with more earth.

"Oh, Dennis!" cried Carrie, who had watched him treating several others in the same way, and could not bear it any longer, "what makes you pinch the roots so? I should think you'd hurt the poor thing."

The old man looked up at her, and then looked down again, and laughed in his queer little way.

"Hurt it?" he said; "hurt my beauty? Not a bit of it! Don't you fear, Miss! I know the flowers, and they know me."

Carrie looked a little indignant, while the others smiled at Dennis, who lifted the delicate sprays with his rough fingers, and talked to the plant as if it were a creature that could understand him.

"Hurt you, hey? Don't I know better? You'll come up all right, and be giving 'em fine flowers all winter."

Then, as if suddenly remembering his work, he began to fill up the pot, and press the earth down with the same rough fingers that had touched the leaves so tenderly. Mamma noticed the look on Carrie's face, and she said to the gardener, as he stood one plant in the shade, and began his work upon another, "Perhaps Dennis will tell you why it is that he treats the roots in that way. I am sure he has a reason for it."

Tom glanced slyly up in his mother's face, as if he thought she knew all about it herself, but was going to give Dennis a chance to talk.

And little Bell took occasion, while they were all talking, to see how far she could reach her hand into one of the holes from which a plant had been taken.

"Yes, ma'am, to be sure. Reason enough! Would I be letting the roots run about, any way they please, when I know the best way for 'em to go? So I just pack 'em close in their places, and pinch 'em, as Miss Carrie says, to keep them there, and then give them plenty of earth; and that's the way I get pretty plants. Why, you see, Miss, the poor roots don't know, and if I didn't keep 'em up some, the plants would all grow to root, and I shouldn't get any flowers! So I take a pot that's a little small, you think, and crowd the roots some, and teach 'em what they have to do; and pretty soon they begin to be content with their lot, and to send up strength into the plant, and that makes beautiful blossoms."

It was quite a long speech for the old man, and he had only potted one rose-bush in the meantime. Tom wondered if mother was going to stand there and let him talk on. She only smiled, with a thoughtful look on her face, and said to Carrie, "Do you understand?"

"Yes, ma'am, I think I do."

And she watched with a new interest, as Dennis plunged his trowel about the roots of the next plant. After a moment he stopped, touched his hat to mamma and said, "excuse me, ma'am, but I'm thinking that we're all of us unruly plants; and if the Good Gardener didn't pinch us and hinder us in our ways a bit, now and then, what useless things we should be not bearing any blossoms for His Glory."

The old man shook his gray head, as he bent it over a tall fuchsia. And Tom laughed a little, as if he thought things were getting funny.

"You are right, Dennis," mamma said.

"That is very true, and I am glad to have this lesson for the children from the plants. Do you see how it is," she added, turning toward Tom and Carrie, "that we are just like the plants, reaching out to go the ways that seem pleasant to us, and longing to do as our foolish hearts please? But God, who is the wise Gardener, holds us back sometimes, and hinders us and disappoints us, and does not let us do as we planned. And that is like Dennis pinching down the roots of his plants. It is to make us stronger and better; to give our lives a chance to blossom with cheerfulness and patience and content. These are the flowers which we can bear, to please the dear God who loves us, even when he will not let us go our own way."

What an easy lesson it was! And how the children understood it, right away, without asking any questions. And how the time had slipped away!

There was the dinner-bell, and the whole long, beautiful morning was over! But not the good lesson—that they could not forget.

And never you mind, dearies!" cried old Dennis, looking up to say the last word! "never you mind, if you are pinched down a bit, and kept from running your ways, now and then! Just be cherry, and do your little duties all the same, and there will be fine plants some day." —*JENNY HARRISON, in The Churchman.*

TIDE-MARKS.

It was low tide when we went to Bristol; and the great gray rocks stood up bare and grim above the water; but high up on all their sides was a black line that seemed hardly dry though it was far above the water.

"What makes that Black mark on the rocks?" I asked my friend.

"O! that is the tide-mark," she replied.

"Every day, when the tide comes in, the water rises until it reaches that line, and in a great many years it has worn the stone until the mark is cut into the rock."

"O!" thought I, "that is all, is it?"

Well, I have seen a great many people that carry tide-marks on their faces. Right in front of me was a pretty little girl, with delicate features and pleasant blue eyes. But she had some queer little marks on her forehead; and I wondered how they came to be there, until presently her mother said: "Draw down the blind, now, Carrie; the sun shines right in baby's face."

"I want to look out," said Carrie, in a very peevish voice.

But her mother insisted: and Carrie drew the blind, and turned her face away from the window. O, dear me! what a face it was! The blue eyes were full of frowns, instead of smiles; the pleasant lips were drawn up in an ugly pout, and the queer marks on her forehead had deepened into actual wrinkles.

"Poor little girl!" I thought. "How badly you will feel, when you grow up, to have your face marked all over with the tide-marks of passion! for these ever ill-tempered leave their marks just as surely as the ocean does; and I have seen many a face stamped so deeply with self-will and covetousness, that it must carry the marks to the grave."

Take care, little folks, and whenever you give way to bad temper, remember the "tide-marks." —*London, Chris. Friend.*

THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC.

A spider was in the habit of descending by its thread on to the piano of the French composer, Gretry, as soon as the latter began to play, until one day he was accidentally crushed. Horses are sometimes agreeably excited by the tone of trumpets, but dogs disagreeably. They usually prefer a simple melody. Cats are also frequently quite enraptured by a plaintive song.

A violinist noticed that a dog near him was especially affected by a certain tune; he howled fearfully, and seemed greatly distressed. The longer the tune was continued, the more did the dog suffer. At last he was seized with fearful convulsions and the music not ceasing, he finally breathed his last.

In Paris, a musical experiment was tried on two elephants, an orchestra performing above their cage. The female elephant was especially fascinated. They were visibly excited with dance music, so as to bite and grasp the bars of the cage, but were calmed down again with plaintive melodies.

Dr. Chomet, when sitting under the shade of a great tree near Naples, heard a rustling among the dry leaves that made him shudder. It proved to be caused by a number of the small, greenish gray lizards, so common in Italy, which were so fascinated by the tones of his voice that they even allowed the singer to touch them.

In Hall's expedition to the Polar Sea, one of the crew found that the porpoises and whales might be attracted by whistling, so as to come within reach of his harpoon. According to him, they could never resist the fascination of music.

It is said that persons who are deaf, or who stop up their ears, still feel the effect of music in a kind of fluttering at the pit of the stomach or a constriction of the throat—certain tones producing this result more than others. Gretry noticed that his pulse was quickened according to the time of the music he heard. The celebrated singer Malibran, on hearing for the first time one of Beethoven's symphonies, was thrown into convulsions, and had to be carried from the room.

A man named Chapman, who has just been an inmate of the Hull Union Workhouse for five years, has just been ascertained to be heir to £30,000.