

The Christian Messenger.

BIBLE LESSONS FOR 1876.

INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

SUNDAY, October 29th, 1876.—Philip and the Eunuch.—Acts viii. 26-40.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 36-38.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 1 Kings viii. 41-43. Tuesday, Isaiah lvi. 3-8. Wednesday, Isaiah liii. Thursday, Luke xxiv. 25-46. Friday, Matt. iii. 13-17. Saturday, Acts xvi. 25-34. Sunday, Galatians vi. 6-10.

ANALYSIS.—I. The travellers. Vss. 26-28. II. Their interview. Vss. 29-31. III. A prophecy explained. Vss. 32-35. IV. The baptism. Vss. 36-39.

EXPOSITION.—Philip and the Eunuch in three parts—their introduction, their interview, and the baptism.

I. The Introduction. Verse 26. The angel of the Lord. Rather, "an angel of the Lord. Gaza. A very ancient city—one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, and the last town in the south-east of Palestine, and on the frontier towards Egypt."

Verse 27.—Arose and went. Promptly obeyed, and apparently with no knowledge of the destination. "Ethiopia lay to the south of Egypt, and embraced . . . in its more definite sense the kingdom of Merse. The inhabitants were a Hamitic race (Gen. x. 6) . . . not unfrequently united with Egypt under the same sovereign. Shortly before the Saviour's birth a native dynasty of females, holding the official title of Candace (Pliny VI, 35) held sway in Ethiopia, and even resisted the advance of the Roman arms."—Smith's Dictionary. The word "eunuch," is here to be taken literally, as the word translated "of great authority," that is, "a state officer," designates his official position. Had come to Jerusalem to worship. The Gentile proselytes, not less than the foreign Jews, did this.

Verse 28.—Sitting in his chariot. This mode of travel befitted his station. Read. More exactly, "was reading," as the carriage proceeded, though for this the rate of motion was slow, enabling Philip, on foot, to overtake and attend the eunuch.

Verse 29.—The Spirit said. Not here, as in verse 26, "an angel," suggesting that then there was a vision, but that now there was only an inward impulse or impression. Go near, etc. Thus explaining still further the first message. This "joining the chariot," was of course simply to keep beside it in order to converse with its occupant.

II. The Interview. Verse 30.—Ran thither. A glad errand, and prompt obedience. Heard him read. Apparently reading aloud to himself. "It is still a custom among the Orientals when reading privately to read audibly, although they may have no particular intention of being heard by others." Understandest thou what thou readest? In the Greek the word meaning to read, is the word meaning to know, with a prefix.

Verse 31.—How can I, except some man should guide me? Philip's question did not affront and offend him. The answer is a felicitous confession at once of ignorance, and of a desire to learn. The spirit of a disciple, that is of a learner, breathes in it—the spirit of a child in the heart of this officer. He desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. Philip had thus far walked beside the chariot. Philip may possibly have first explained who he was, and how he came to be thus present. At any rate, in some way confidence in him had been inspired in the eunuch. The request, and Philip's compliance, show that it is contrary to God's word and will to speak lightly of human instrumentality in teaching and explaining divine truth. There are some who would exalt the Spirit by degrading such instrumentality, who denounce theological instruction, and assert that we are to be taught immediately by the Spirit, and need no other instructors or instruction.

Verses 32, 33.—From Isa. liii. 7, 8. The variations from our version are mostly verbal. He read from the Septuagint version. "In his humiliation," that is, "the contempt heaped upon him by the Sanhedrin," his "judgment," that is, that justice which con-

stitutes a true as opposed to a mock judgment like that passed upon him, "was taken away," and so he was put to death, though against all right. As the eunuch had been to Jerusalem, where doubtless he had heard much discussion as to the Christian "sect" and their mode of proving the Messiahship of Christ from the Old Testament, and especially from this chapter, it was quite natural that in his state of mind he should have turned to this very passage and pondered upon its most probable meaning. Who shall fully declare his generation? Two interpretations have been in favor, namely, "Who shall adequately describe the wickedness of his contemporaries in thus treating him," or, "Who can tell the number of his spiritual seed given him in consequence of this atoning death?" The latter thought, however, seems not to come in Isaiah until vs. 10-12. If his seed were referred to, it would best suit the connection to interpret: What posterity is left to him, having thus been cut off and taken from the land of the living?

Verse 34.—Of whom speaketh the prophet, etc. The Christian maintains that it was spoken of the Messiah, and most exactly fitted the facts of Jesus Christ's death; and that hence his crucifixion, so far from being an argument against his Messiahship, was a powerful argument in its favor. But "the great body of the Jewish nation" had also agreed in referring the prediction to Messiah. This question of the eunuch, raised by his visit to Jerusalem, was just the test question which was to decide, as it did, his acceptance or rejection of Jesus.

Verse 35.—Began at this Scripture. At this "passage" or "division" of Scripture, and then, as the word "began" implies, proceeded to show how the Old Testament, as a whole, foreshadowed the coming of Jesus, and in that coming was fulfilled. Preached unto him Jesus. As is often said, "Christ is Christianity." The source of all spiritual life, he is the centre at once of doctrine and of duty.

III. The Baptism. Verse 36.—As they went. "Were proceeding," leisurely, and in conference on the great theme. Came unto [upon] a certain water. Tradition fixes the place about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, near Hebron, where there is a perennial fountain; but this tradition is doubtless false. See on verse 40. What doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip would most naturally have explained the nature, origin, authority, and import of this ordinance. Such explanation was then, as it is now, a part of the manner in which "Jesus" is preached.

Verse 37.—Dr. Hackett says, "This verse is wanting in the best authorities." Its doctrine, however, is that elsewhere taught in Scripture. It is by no means certain that this verse is not genuine, and Dr. Hackett adds that "the interpolation, if it be such, is as old certainly as the time of Irenæus," thus dating back to the third century.

Verse 38.—Commanded the chariot. The driver was ordered to stop the chariot. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch. "Into the water" stands here opposed to "out of the water" in verse 39, and is to be taken literally. "Baptized" means immersed, and for this immersion they had need to go, not simply into the water, but in-to it, both of them. There is not a single reference to baptism in Scripture which on any fair construction implies anything adverse to the view that it was immersion, while there are but few references to it which do not assume it to have been immersion, and immersion only. All of us are much under the influence of early training and life-long association; yet there are very many influential scholars in the different Pedobaptist denominations who frankly admit, with Dean Stanley, that "There can be no question that the original form of baptism, the very meaning of the word, was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters."

Verse 39.—Caught away Philip. The language does not necessarily mean that he was miraculously borne through the air, or otherwise. It does imply that Philip was caused to part company with the eunuch suddenly, and to disappear from him wholly and finally. He went on his way rejoicing. He not only rejoiced in having found his Saviour and Lord, in his forgiveness and acceptance, but also in having obeyed his Saviour in

this act of public profession. How full of gratitude, too, must his heart have been at the evidence of God's favor given in the coming of Philip. Of the eunuch's future history there is no trustworthy account. It is known, however, that Christianity was early introduced into his country.

Verse 40.—Azotus. A Philistine city near the coast of the Mediterranean. Cesarea. Also on the same coast, in the northeast corner of Samaria. It became Philip's permanent home. xxi. 8.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 26. Where was Gaza? How far from Jerusalem?

Vs. 27. Did Philip know why he was sent in this direction? Compare Gen. xii. 1. Of what part of Ethiopia was Candace queen? This officer was of a class for whom Solomon prayed: what class was it? 1 Kings viii. 41-43.

Vs. 28. How was he reading? What was he reading? Why this portion?

Vs. 29. What does this verse teach us of the nature of the Holy Spirit? How did the Spirit speak to Philip? See John xiv. 17.

Vs. 32. Of whom did Isaiah here prophesy? How long was it before Christ? From what version was Philip reading? What was the Septuagint?

Vs. 35. Is it gospel preaching if Jesus is not preached? See 1 Cor. ii. 2; Gal. i. 8, 9.

Vs. 36. Why was this convert pleased at the sight of "a certain water"? Where was this spring?

Vs. 38. How was the convert baptized? We have seen the gospel driven from Jerusalem, welcomed in Samaria, borne to Ethiopia; what shall be its result in the earth? Isa. liii. 10, 11; Ps. ii. 8. What rule have we for Christian work? Gal. vi. 9, 10.

—Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, November 5th, 1876.—Saul's Conversion.—Acts ix. 1-18.

YOUTHS' DEPARTMENT.

How the Children got Breakfast.

BY STELLA STUART.

Mamma was so tired! An unusual number of household duties had made her day a very hard one, and now at night she leaned back in the big chair with such a weary look in her eyes that loving Nettie saw it and said:

"Mamma, have you had a hard day?"

"Yes, very, dear."

"Why can't we have a servant, like other folks?" broke in impetuous Robbie.

"We could, dear, if papa was alive;" and the sadness deepened.

"Well, when I'm a big man I'll work for you," said Robert, bravely.

Mamma gave him a grateful look.

All at once Robbie's bright eyes espied Nettie making mysterious signals behind mamma's armchair. The motion was evidently for him to leave the room, and with art worthy of an older head, he said, "Well, I guess I'll go and find my top," and walked out to the kitchen wondering what it all meant.

He had not long to wait. Nettie soon appeared with shining face, and then ensued such an animated whispering, that mamma, in the adjoining room, must have thought that some terrible plot was brewing.

For some unknown reason the children did not sleep very soundly that night, and as the early sun began to peep into their little room, wide-awake Robbie, from his little bed, called softly:

"Most time, Nettie?"

"Yes," said Nettie, briskly, "time to begin;" with which mysterious words she hastily began to dress. Shoes in hand, the children stole noiselessly down the stairs.

"Now Nettie, member you said I might make the fire."

"Yes; but Robbie, I wish you would let me. I know you can't do it."

"Can," said Robbie, stoutly, in no wise disposed to yield to his rights.

"Well, run down cellar and bring up the things I told you last night, while I set the table."

Robbie soon returned, puffing under his heavy load, and there was silence in the kitchen for some time.

Nettie dexterously set the table quite to her own satisfaction, despite the alarming clatter of the dishes. She broke only two plates and one cup during the operation, and congratulated herself upon having done so well.

Robbie's mysterious silence, and a strong smell of smoke, combined to draw Nettie to the kitchen, and she could not resist laughing at the boy's comical aspect.

He was kneeling before the stove,

blowing like an animated bellows, his cheeks distended and red as two rosy apples with his exertions. He looked up, as Nettie entered, with a distressed face and a black dab on the end of his funny little nose.

Nettie shrieked, and then clapped her hands over her mouth, as she thought of the sleeping mother above.

"Why, Robbie, what's the matter?"

"Matter 'nough," said Robbie, testily.

"Fire won't burn."

Nettie removed the stove-lids and peered into the smoky depths, soon exclaimed, "You've forgotten the charcoal," then, with a gasp, "why, Robbie Stacy, as sure as I'm alive the back draught is shut!"

Robbie stared shamefacedly at her.

"Here, you run down and get the charcoal, while I clean out this mess, and be quiet or mamma'll be down."

Robbie, glad of an excuse to get away, trotted off nimbly.

With their united efforts the fire was soon burning brightly, but the floor was strewn with coal, ashes, and bits of wood.

In fact I firmly believe that the children had put more fuel outside the stove than in it.

"Now, Robbie, you go and feed the chickens while I get breakfast," said Nettie, wisely thinking that Robbie's room was better than his company.

He came back in about fifteen minutes.

"My, Nettie, what's burning?" exclaimed he, sniffing the air.

"My toast," answered Nettie, with flushed face. "I forgot it," and she scraped vigorously at the hard, brown slice.

"There, does that look bad?"

"No," said Robbie, "only a kind of mussy."

"I must make some tea; mamma likes tea. Robbie, I wish your boots did not make so much noise," her temper growing irritable like many other housewife's under her manifold cares.

The tea-kettle was soon singing its cheerful song, and Nettie's depressed spirit rose under the enlivening effects of its music.

"I wish I could cook meat," she said presently.

"Pooh! I can," said confident Robbie. "Just pour some water in a pan; put the meat in it, and let it splutter till it's done. I'll do it."

"No," said prudent Nettie, somewhat doubtful of Robbie's recipe which he delivered so solemnly; "we'll wait till some other time for that."

"The tea is boiling," screamed Robbie, excitedly; "I see the smoke."

"That's steam; now, Robbie, we're all ready; you call mamma," and her little tired face beamed with satisfaction.

So Robbie's boots went creaking noisily up the stairs and entered the room where mamma lay with closed eyes, but a suspicious smile on her lips, to all appearances tranquilly sleeping.

"Mamma, wake up! Breakfast is ready," shouted Robbie, as like a very dirty, rosy cherub he bent over her. Mamma opened her eyes sleepily.

"What, Robbie?"

"Why it's a 'prise. Isn't you 'sprised, mamma?"

Mamma allowed that she was, and, getting up, began to dress nimbly, wondering if the dears supposed that she had slept all through their talk and clatter.

Robbie, impatient, hurried her, and as soon as she was ready, ran down stairs before her in great glee, calling to expectant Nettie, "We're coming."

Mamma followed after, and when she entered the room stooped to kiss the flushed face of Nettie, saying;

"Well, little woman, this is a surprise," in a tone which more than repaid the child for her morning's trouble.

They sat down to the table, and mamma firmly closed her eyes to the bits of broken crockery and other evidences of the "s'prise."

Bless their dear little hearts, not a word but of praise would she say.

"So my children wanted to help me," she observed, taking a piece of Nettie's unfortunate toast.

"Yes, mamma, we knew you were so tired last night."

"Did you see my jolly fire, mamma?" burst forth Robbie.

"No, dear, but I must see it the first thing after breakfast. What did you make Nettie, tea or coffee?"

"Tea," said Nettie, with dancing eyes

Mamma commenced to pour it out, but suddenly stopped and leaned back, striving in vain to check the laughter which would come. Nettie stared aghast. Was mamma crazy?

"Nettie," she said, as soon as she could recover her voice sufficiently to speak, "didn't you forget to put in the tea, my dear?"

Poor Nettie; she looked ready to burst into tears at Robbie's loud laugh, when mamma added kindly, "Never mind, dear; older people than you make worse mistakes."

Then in her cheery way she began to relate some funny stories of her own blunders when a young housekeeper, and Nettie forgot her own mortification in a hearty laugh.

So the breakfast ended merrily after all.—Christian Union.

Love descends.

Love descends, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibleness and depth of the spring from which it proceeds. A parent loves the child more than the child the parent, and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved his disciples infinitely more than his disciples loved him, because his heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on, ever hopes and expects better things, and is a trust springing from itself, and out of its own depths alone.—Rowland Hill.

Dyspepsia—its cause and cure.

Dr. Hall, in his *Journal of Health*, discourses on this subject in the following terse style:—The most universal cause of dyspepsia is eating too often, too fast, and too much. The general rules should be:—

1. Eat thrice a day.
2. Not an atom between meals.
3. Nothing after 2 o'clock but a piece of cold bread and butter and one cup of hot drink.
4. Spend half an hour at least in taking each meal.
5. Cut up all meats and hard food in pea-sized pieces.
6. Never eat enough to cause the slightest uncomfortable sensation afterward.
7. Never work or study hard within half an hour of eating.

The most universal and infallible indication that a person is becoming dyspeptic is some uncomfortable sensation coming on uniformly after each meal, whether that be in the stomach, throat, or anywhere else. The formation of wind in the stomach, indicated by eructation, belchings, or otherwise, demonstrates that dyspepsia is fixing itself in the system. Then there is only one course to pursue, and that is infallible; eat less and less at each meal, until no wind is generated and no other uncomfortable sensation is experienced in any part of the body. No medicine ever cured confirmed dyspepsia; eating plain food regularly, and living out of doors industriously, will cure most cases.

Horses and men.

Some good horse men do not dare to feed a valuable horse irregularly, and yet they eat when they please. Most have such horses curried and brushed daily, while they neglected their own surface. They dare not let such a horse drink cold water when very warm, and yet fully satisfy their own thirst under the same circumstances. They dare not give oats too freely, or any highly concentrated food, and yet seem reckless of themselves in this respect. They dare not let the horse "cool off" suddenly from a fear of closing the pores, or taking cold, and yet sit in a cold place till cool or cold, and why? Which is the more valuable? Not easily decided.

BONDAGE TO A CRAVING.—One dreadful result of tobacco habits is bondage to an intensely craving, morbid appetite. Like indulgence in strong drinks and opium, smoking or chewing, when it once becomes a habit, produces intolerable gnawing sensations of want, and so deadens the moral powers that its victims are held as in a vice. Most of those who have long indulged will at times acknowledge that tobacco injures them; that it is a wasteful expense, an unclean habit; that they often wish it had never been acquired. But they so deeply feel that reformation must be preceded by days and perhaps weeks, of suffering, that they have given themselves up to the slavery. Young men and children can yet be saved.