

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1878.

SUNDAY, January 20th, 1878.—The Covenant Renewed.—2 Chron. xv. 8-15.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vss. 10-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."—2 Chron. xv. 7.

DAILY READINGS.—Monday, 2 Chron. xv. Tuesday, vs. 8; 1 Peter i. Wednesday, vs. 9; Zechariah viii. Thursday, Nehemiah x. Friday, Proverbs xxi. Saturday, vs. 13; Deuteronomy xvii. 1-7. Sunday, Psalm xxv.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Idolatry destroyed. Vs. 8. II. Public meeting called. Vs. 9, 10. III. Spoil dedicated to God. Vs. 11. IV. Covenant with God. Vs. 12-15.

QUESTIONS.—Who met Asa on his return from battle? What did he urge him to do?

I. What is Asa now more bold in doing? Who built the altar he now repairs?

II. Whom does Asa call together? What motives led many to come to him? At what time was this meeting held?

III. What two reasons led the people to make sacrifices to God?

IV. From whom did the purpose to renew the covenant proceed? Why was this fitting? To what matters did the covenant extend? What was the popular effect of this national reformation? What blessing did God give?

Where do we find obedience in this lesson? Where do we see the people and king as one man in the worship of God?

With brave preachers and courageous hearers, God's cause is advanced. Vs. 8.—When religion is popular, it is easy to be religious; the test comes afterward. Vs. 9.—The desirableness of making covenants with God. Vs. 12.

HISTORICAL STATEMENT.—Asa having returned from battle, bringing with him the spoil of the enemy, was met by Azariah, the prophet, who instead of complimenting him on his military successes, counselled him to go on with the work of reformation. This inspired Asa with fresh courage, and he went about the work with renewed zeal. Whereupon, having offered sacrifices, he and his people entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord to serve him. Then the kingdom was at peace for a long time, and was full of indications of God's blessing.

EXPOSITION.—Verse 8.—These words. Those in verses 2-7. The reader of them will notice in all, save verse 6, the words in italics, and will see that if omitted the time is left undetermined. Oded—More exactly, Oded's son. Vs. 1. Abominable idols—Literally, abominations, including idols, and everything else belonging to forbidden worship. The licentiousness and cruelty of Baal worship rendered this especially an abomination. Cities . . . which he had taken—His father, Abijah, took them (xiii. 19), but Asa held the same office. Porch—An open vestibule, with supporting columns, hence called a colonnade, on the east end of the Temple, iii. 4; Acts v. 12.

Verse 9.—The strangers, etc.—Not Gentiles, but men of the other tribes mentioned. There had been a like immigration before Asa's reign, xi. 16. Simeon's territory was south, and so entirely separate from Israel; but from Amos v. 5, viii. 14, this tribe seems to have taken up at Beersheba the corrupt form of worship established by Jeroboam at Bethel.

Verse 10.—Fifteenth year.—The last clause of xiv. 1, intimates that the war began, or at least was threatened, in Asa's eleventh year; but from that time till the full close of military operations in the south (xiv. 14) three or four years may well have passed.

Verse 11.—The spoil.—Taken in the war. xiv. 14, 15.

Verse 15.—All Judah.—All the kingdom of Judah, including all of whatever tribe now belonged to that kingdom.

Analysis.—Our subject is "The Covenant Renewed." Our lesson presents the matter in three steps. 1. Readiness; 2. Renewal; 3. Results.

I. Readiness.—Verses 8-10.—(1.) The general fact that for such a service it was necessary to make ready is noticeable. The renewal of a public covenant was a formal, solemn, act of worship, a transaction of high import between Jehovah and the covenanters. The les-

son is very pertinent for those about to be baptized, or to partake of the Lord's Supper, or to enter upon a church office, or to lead in public worship. (2.) Motives for making ready are stated; God's express command both proved it right and timely, and urged its accomplishment. (3.) The spirit in which Asa obeyed was that of courage, and hence a determination to be thorough, no matter who or what opposed. Here was whole-heartedness, and an intimation that heretofore he had not ventured far enough. Vs. 17. Indeed, even now there was not an absolutely perfect obedience. (4.) The nature of the preparation had immediate and special reference to the intended business. A covenant was impossible unless God was pleased to enter into it. It was void unless mutual. Hence the care to rid the country of that which was abomination to God. This covenant was to be national. Hence all parts of the country must be cleared of such signs, and all the people of the nation assembled, so far as practicable. Due care was further taken to honor God by repairing the altar of sacrifice. It was old and needed repair, and Asa did not argue that the Lord must take care of his own property. In church expenses reverence avoids equally display and meanness. (5.) The heart of the nation responded to that of the king, as did his to God's. Happy this union in goodness. Without it common covenant and common blessing are impossible.

II. Renewal.—Verses 11-14.—(1.) It rested upon the appointed bloody sacrifice. There was no approach to God without the shedding of blood. The altar was before the Temple door. As then, so now, our approach to God is by way of sacrifice, by the blood, not of cattle, but of Christ. In him crucified God and man meet, reconciled. There is the foundation of covenant fellowship. (2.) The sacrifice was their own. They brought what was theirs, theirs, however, not by independent right, but by special divine gift, as the last lesson showed. Thus was the offering God's, yet also theirs. (3.) The sacrifice becomes a feast. It was so intended, and such was its nature and greatness as to make the feast both rich and ample. Thus was the type striking, forcible, true. Christ became to us a feast, as the Lord's Table, and the Lord's Spirit in man's heart, both testify, each in its own way and sphere. (4.) The covenant on their part was a promise "to seek the Lord." Not as though he was not already truly found, but not fully and finally found. (5.) The renewal, like the previous preparation, was whole-hearted and whole-souled. No bargaining, no if in the promise. (6.) The sworn pledge to give obedience had as its other side the sworn pledge to crush disobedience. Ours too is the duty to slay disobedience, first in our hearts, then next where we next meet it by the sword of God's truth. (7.) Mutual responsibility, each for all, is owed. We give account to God every one for himself, yet for himself as a member of society influencing others for weal or woe.

III. The result.—Verse 15.—They found God. They were full of joy at their act. They had peace from God as well as with him. This comes from such covenanting. This even here, and beyond, is the full and eternal result.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

SUNDAY, January 27th, 1878.—Jehoshaphat's Prosperity.—2 Chronicles xvii. 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."—2 Chron. xvii. 9.

The Story of the Lesson.

FOR THE PRIMARY CLASS.

As Asa's army was going back to Jerusalem from the victory which the Lord had given them, they were met by the prophet Azariah, the son of Oded, who had come to encourage them. He said to Asa and the soldiers, "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." These words made Asa take fresh courage; and he put away still more idols, not only from Judah, but out of the cities which he had taken in war. Many who still loved the Lord among the ten tribes of Israel came to Judah

to live, when they saw how the Lord was with Asa. The king gathered these together with his own people at Jerusalem, in the third month of the fifteenth year of his reign. They offered many sacrifices of the oxen and sheep which they had taken from the enemy, and solemnly promised, as David had done, to seek the Lord God, whom David and Moses and Abraham had loved with all their heart and with all their soul. They also promised to keep the law which God had already made, that all idolaters should be put to death. There was great joy, and shouting, and blowing of trumpets, and the Lord showed that he had heard them by giving them rest and peace for twenty years.

Youths' Department.

The Marble Block.

Once in a house at which I was staying there lived a little lame girl. Her name was Annie. Often did I pity her, as I saw her sitting by the window looking at the other children on the playground. Sometimes she was sick, too, and could not even be at the window. At last spring came, and the little girl seemed better. "Now," thought I, "would it not be well to try and comfort this child in some way?" So I brought a few oranges and candies, and read her a pretty book; but still the cloud did not leave her brow.

"Why are you sad, Annie?" said I one day.

"Oh, sir," she replied, "I can't see why God should afflict me, and yet give the other children so much happiness. If I could only know that God is not angry with me, I would not care so much."

That day was a very pleasant one; so I asked the little girl to take a walk to a sculptor's room near by. Here were a great many blocks of marble. So Annie and I watched him with great interest. At last I pointed to a piece of marble rather dark and rough. "Do you like the looks of that?" said I to her.

"Oh, no," replied the child. "Why did they bring such an ugly block here?"

"That piece," said the gentleman, "I take in hand to-morrow."

So the next day Annie and I came to see him. He spent the most of that day in cutting off the rough places. Day by day we watched him, and day by day the block became more attractive. His sharp chisel cut in here and there and everywhere. We both thought, "If that stone were only alive, how it would suffer!"

At last, one day we visited him upon his invitation. "I have something to show to Annie," said he. So speaking, the sculptor drew aside a thin, white veil and, behold! a lovely image of an angel had been made out of the rough stone. Annie almost cried with joy when she saw it.

"Now, my child," said I, "did the sculptor hate the poor, ugly piece of marble which we one day saw?"

"Oh, no," said she, "he loved it."

"So," said I, "my little girl, does God love us when he cuts us with sharp trouble and sickness. He is fitting us for glory. Let us only trust him. All will be well."

"Now," said Annie, "I see that God does not hate me, but that he has some good purpose in view."—S. S. Visitor.

The Rich Man's Son.

In the city of Glasgow once lived a worthy merchant, whose children I knew. As God had blessed him in his buying and selling, he became a rich man. And having a great love for country life, he took his riches and bought some fields on which he had played and gathered flowers when a child, and also the mansion in which the old laird of the place was wont to live. There was just one thing he forgot to do: he forgot to make his will, and say to whom the mansion and the fields should belong when he died. So, by-and-by, when he died, no will could be found. Now he left behind his wife, four daughters, and an only son. But as no will had been made, the mansion, and the fields, and a great part of all his riches, came to this only son. He was in London when the news came that his father had died, and that he was now a rich man. Just at that moment

money would have been very useful to him, for he was a young merchant beginning life, and no one would have blamed him if he had said "The money is welcome, and with it I shall push my new business on." But God had given him a gentle heart. He left London as soon after he got the news as he could get a train. And although it was late in the day when he arrived at his native city, the first thing he did was to go to the house of a friend who draws-out deeds. And at his request, made out a deed by which the mansion and the fields were made over to his mother all her days—and all the rest, both land and money which his father had left, was divided share-and-share alike between her, his sisters, and himself. And when that was all fixed, he went to his home and buried his father. Somebody said to him afterwards, "But why did you go that very night and have your deed made out?" He said, "I that night saw it was my duty to do it. If I had left it till next day, my duty might not have seemed so clear."—Sunday Magazine.

A Mile of Dancing Fire

One of the most remarkable conflagrations on record was that which, as noticed in a despatch in the *N. Y. World*, occurred in Paterson a short time since. During two hours in the early part of the night a line of fire a mile in length and twenty feet high cut the town in halves, bringing the people of Passaic out of their houses in alarm, and illuminating the country round about to the farthest hills of Preackness. And yet strangely enough, there was no loss of life, and the damage done to property was only trifling.

Between 7 and 8 o'clock an oil train eastward bound on the Erie track broke a coupling and lost four cars, including the "caboose," which always goes along in the rear of freight. The accident occurred about half a mile below the station, near the Eagle brewery. At this point the track, which runs along an embankment about ten feet high, begins to take an up grade. Accordingly when the coupling broke the detached cars rolled backward down the incline, the caboose, reversing its position suddenly taking the lead, with three cars supporting iron tanks full of petroleum oil, following. From a point a little further below, about where State-street crosses, the track stops its down-grade from the station and immediately begins another up-grade towards the west; so that about here is the lowest part of a hollow and naturally the very worst place for a collision to occur. It was precisely here that Monday night a collision did occur. As the oil cars, proceeded by the caboose, rolled down-ward with constantly accelerated motion on one side, a heavy freight locomotive, which had been following the oil train, came thundering along the other. The man who was in the caboose leaped for his life, and in another instant came the collision. The caboose was lifted clean over the top of the smoke-stack of the locomotive and left standing on end on top of the boiler, while the locomotive, still retained its momentum, dashed into the car following, over-turned it and

fipped an immense hole in the iron tank, through which the oil poured forth in streams. Immediately a sheet of flame leaped high in the air. How it was set is not known; probably it caught from a blazing journal. The engineer fortunately was able to back his locomotive away from the wreck and run the train of coal cars which he was drawing to a safe distance from the flames.

The track where the collision occurred was wrenched out of shape, and one or two rails were torn up. One of the tanks was thrown down the embankment on the side towards the town. A little house standing just under the track was deluged with the blazing oil, and broke into flames in an instant. The good wife was about stepping into bed, having just drawn up the shades on the windows to admit the moonlight. The house was wood, and the family had barely time to run out, and no time to save any of their household goods, so quick was its destruction. The tank continued to vomit forth oil, which ran down and collected in a blazing pool in a hollow right in front of the culvert running under the track at the point where the cars had toppled over. This hollow was a partially opened sewer, which led into a brook running under-

ground to the Passaic. The fire companies came running promptly, and people seemed to rise out of the ground, so rapidly did the crowd gather. Within a few minutes there were 5,000 people collected about the blazing tank. All at once there was a cry of wonder. From a point 50 feet away, across the road towards the town, a sudden flame leaped up as it seemed out of the bowels of the earth. It did not stop in one place, but ran on through the lots in the direction of the houses. As it approached the first house it took hold greedily, setting it ablaze in an instant, and then ran on in the direction of the River-street bridge. It passed straight through a number of back yards, wrapping itself around trees and outhouses, until there was a continuous line of fire, in some places, where it caught dry material, leaping a hundred feet into the air, one hundred yards away to River-street. There it suddenly ceased, seemingly thwarted in any further progress by an embankment along which the street was laid. But in a moment out it started again from the other side of River-street. It ran along through the bare lots lying between River-street and the river, catching a house and barn on its way until it met the Passaic about one hundred feet above the bridge. It did not stop there, but hugging the right bank of the river passed under the bridge and ran along the water, leaping high up to catch the trees and the long, dry grass which overhung the stream, in the direction of the gas-works.

Never was a stranger sight. At 8 o'clock a broad ribbon of the Passaic, which an hour before was flowing on properly in its shadows, was on fire for a mile along through the town. Night was changed into day. The fields along the sides of Dean's hill, on the other side of the railroad, were black with people. The windows of all houses were thrown wide open and the whole interiors were displayed. Above, where lay the thick of the town, the blaze shone back from the steeples and the high buildings as if these too were all on fire. Upon the hill were the soldiers' monument stands people could be seen plainly more than a mile away, and those who were there say they could read the finest print with ease by the light of the burning oil.

When it was discovered that the oil was running through the sewer into the brook and so on far down the bosom of the river, attempts were made to dam up the stream where it escaped under the first road.

It is fortunate probably that those attempts were not successful. If the oil had collected where it first escaped, or if it had spread out in the vicinity there must have been great damage. As it was, it took the most harmless course possible. The brook where it was open ran for the most part through large yards and fields and along the bank of the river, which, as far as the gas works, is lined with a high wall of stone, and there was little to burn. By the time the gas works were reached the flames were pretty nearly expended. The wooden docks there were scorched, and that was all.

At 8.30 came the climax of the fire. A second oil tank had lain exposed to the intense heat, and had some time previously given signs of exploding. According to an eye-witness who was standing near it, the thick iron composing the tank was so affected by the heat that it rose and fell in bubbles like the skin on the top of the baking pudding. The people, singularly enough, seemed to have no thought or fear of the consequences of an explosion, and were crowded about the spot where the tanks lay in startling proximity. At length it came with a detonation like that of near thunder. The tank vanished, and in its place appeared a vast ball of liquid fire, which to the imaginations of those who saw it appeared to pulsate for the part of an instant and then burst forth in sublime wrath. A globe of solid fire, ever increasing, rolled upwards to an incredible height, consuming the thick clouds of smoke and sending forth a fierce heat that blistered the paint on houses hundreds of yards away. Then came a rush. The whole mass of people blinded by the intense light, and feeling their lungs scorched with the air they breathed, broke into flight. There were many women in the crowd who fell and were trampled under foot. It is a marvel that none were killed. Their protection, undoubtedly, was the extent of the open space about the scene of the explosion, and which admitted of the quick separation of the crowd. As it was there were bruises and broken bones, but nothing worse.—*New York World*.