

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson I.—JANUARY 4.

THE INFANT MESSIAH.

Matt. ii. 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 7-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."—Is. ix. 6.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Infant Messiah. Matt. ii. 1-12.
 T. Welcoming the King. Luke ii. 7-20.
 W. The King Recognized. Luke ii. 25-38.
 T. The Prince of Peace. Isa. ix. 1-7.
 F. The King in Zion. Ps. ii. 1-12.
 S. The King Opposed. Acts xvii. 1-12.
 S. Serving the King. Acts iv. 13-33.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

With vs. 1: Matt. i. 21; John vii. 42;
 1 Kings iv. 30; Isa. xl. 10.
 With vs. 2: Ps. ii. 6; Isa. ix. 6, 7;
 Num. xxiv. 17; Isa. lx. 3; Rev. xxii. 16.
 With vs. 3: Matt. viii. 28; Acts xviii.
 6-8.
 With vs. 4: Matt. xx. 15, 23; John
 xi. 47, 48.
 With vs. 6: Mic. v. 2; Gen. xlix. 10;
 Eph. i. 22; Col. i. 18.
 With vs. 8: Cor. iii. 19, 20; Prov. xxvi.
 24, 25.
 With vs. 9: 2 Peter i. 19.
 With vs. 10: Ps. cv. 3.
 With vs. 11: Ps. ii. 12; Ps. lxxii. 10;
 Rev. xix. 10.
 With vs. 12: Acts iv. 19; v. 29.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Inquiry. Vs. 1, 2.
 II. Anxiety. Vs. 3-8. III. Adoration.
 Vs. 9-12.

QUESTIONS.—In what year was Jesus
 born? Who then ruled over Judea?
 What is the title of the lesson?

I. Vs. 1, 2.—With what inquiry did
 the wise men come to Jerusalem? What
 sight caused this inquiry? Where were
 they when they first saw the star? For
 what purpose did they seek the new-
 born King? Who were these wise
 men?

II. Vs. 3-8.—Who were troubled by
 these inquiries? Why should Herod be
 troubled? Why should Jerusalem share
 his trouble? Whom did he call to-
 gether? What did Herod inquire of
 the wise men? Why did he wish to
 know this? What did he command the
 wise men? What reason for this did he
 give? What was his real motive?

III. Vs. 9-12.—By what were the
 wise men led to Jesus? What emotion
 did this arouse? By what acts should
 we honor Jesus? What honors did the
 wise men bestow on Jesus? What
 titles does the lesson give him?

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Verses 1.—Bethlehem [house of bread].
 A very old town of Palestine, first called
 Ephrath or Ephratah, about six miles
 south from Jerusalem on the road to-
 ward Hebron. It was the birth-place of
 David, as well as of "David's greater
 Son;" it was the scene of the lovely
 idyll of Ruth; but it always remained
 an obscure and insignificant village,
 little noted in Bible history, down to
 the time here spoken of when Jesus was
 born there. Of Judaea, formed as it
 were part of the proper name of the
 place, Bethlehem-judah. There was an-
 other Bethlehem, Josh. xix. 15. Herod
 the King. Herod the Great was a cruel
 and bloody man. He had a long reign,
 thirty-seven years, during which he
 adorned Jerusalem, re building, though
 of course from no pious motive, the
 temple with great splendor. Wise men,
 Magi, astrologers perhaps. From the
 East, possibly Persia. Heathen writers
 testify that there was an impression
 prevailing in the East that Judaea was
 to send forth a ruler of wide sway.

Verses 2.—Where is he, etc.—This
 question was addressed, perhaps to
 Herod himself, and he is troubled. We
 have seen. It is not necessarily implied
 that the star was not visible also to
 others. His star in the east. What the
 phenomenon here spoken of really was,
 there is nothing outside of this passage
 itself to teach. The occurrence was
 probably extraordinary and supernatur-
 al. To worship him. Perhaps in the
 sense of homage as to a sovereign, per-
 haps in that of adoration as to a divine
 being.

Verses 3.—Was troubled. Herod was,
 no doubt, in fear of rival pretensions to
 his throne.

Verses 4.—And when he had gathered
 together, etc. Herod convened the best
 Jewish authorities, the Sanhedrim prob-
 ably, to consult them as to the place
 of nativity for their predicted Messiah.
 He was bent on taking suitable precau-
 tions to secure himself. Christ. That

is, the Christ, the Messiah, the predicted
 King and Saviour of Israel. Herod's
 investigation seems to show that the
 rumor of Messianic expectation was
 rife in his time.

Verses 5, 6.—And they said unto him,
 etc. The reply of the chief priests and
 scribes is summed up in a prophecy of
 Micah's (v. 2): "But thou, Bethlehem
 Ephratah, &c. Matthew does not him-
 self quote, but simply reports Herod's
 counsellors' quoting.

Verses 7.—The wise men were appar-
 ently waiting at Jerusalem to receive
 their answer. They were summoned to
 a secret audience with Herod.

Verses 8.—"Go to Bethlehem," Herod
 says to the wise men. "There search
 and make sure you find the child.
 When you have found him, bring me
 word. I want to pay him a visit of
 homage myself."

Verses 9.—Lo. This word, perhaps,
 imports a surprising suddenness in the
 re-appearance of the star. Apparently
 the moving of the star is a phenomenon
 now first observed.

Verses 10.—Rejoiced with exceeding
 great joy. Perhaps they had missed the
 star that first started them on their
 pilgrimage. Its re-appearance re-assured
 them. It was a token that their coming
 was not to be in vain.

Verses 11.—Fell down. After the
 fashion of their own country, the treas-
 ures they had brought consisted of
 gold, of frankincense ["a vegetable
 resin, used for the purpose of sacrificial
 fumigation (Ex. xxx. 34-36); and of
 myrrh [the product probably of an
 Arabian shrub described as a "thorny
 tree like an acacia, from which flows a
 white liquid, that thickens and becomes
 a gum"]—costly articles all of them,
 but in what quantity it is vain to con-
 jecture. They were, we may suppose,
 chiefly valuable, not for what they would
 fetch in the market, but for what they
 signified, that is, recognition and tribute.

Verses 12.—We naturally feel an in-
 terest in these men. Who were they?
 of what nation? of what region? of
 what religious faith? No one can tell.
 But God cared enough for them to warn
 them in a dream, and they cared enough
 for God to understand and obey the
 warning. They may have been Jews
 (the Jews were widely dispersed in those
 days, and Daniel, we may remember,
 presided over the "wise men" of
 Babylon. See Dan. ii. 48); but the
 language more naturally implies that
 they were Gentiles.

The visit of the Magi from the East
 may teach us a lesson in the infinite
 variety of God's ways of revealing him-
 self to men.

The wise men were professional ob-
 servers and students of the starry
 heavens.

We are not to impute power of reve-
 lation to dreams in general, simply be-
 cause God, in certain cases, chose to
 reveal himself in dreams.

For the Teacher of the Primary
 Class.

Tell the story in three Word Pictures:
 First: Seeking the King. Strangers
 from far away were first to see "the sign
 of the coming of the King." Picture the
 wise men, seeing the strange light, fol-
 lowing it, guided by it all the long way;
 their arrival at Jerusalem; instead of
 every one there eagerly watching, all
 the people of that place were thinking
 of their own affairs.

Second: Troubled about the King.
 Explain that Herod was not born king
 of the Jews, but made so by men who
 had conquered them, and whom they
 hated. Tell of the visit to him, and its
 results; why he and others were troubled
 by the inquiries of the wise men, in-
 stead of being glad because of the new
 born king.

Third: Finding the King. The wise
 men did not give up; they looked for
 their guide, followed it again, and it led
 them to the new King. Question on
 what they must have expected to find;
 and what they really did find; what
 they did when they had found him.

But all did not seek Jesus. Some
 were troubled about the king; did not
 want him.

If the wise men had not truly cared,
 been in earnest, they would not have
 gone on. All who truly seek Jesus will
 find him. What are they giving to
 Jesus? Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh.
 What are Our Gifts? Our love and
 obedience; he cares more for such gifts
 than for all the gold and other treasures
 in the world.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Answer to Enigma.

No. 51.

The Whale. Stanza 5 refers to Jonah.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- Mo. 19. Adam lived after the birth of
 Methuselah above 240 years.
 Methuselah died just before the
 flood. Noah may have known
 Methuselah for about 600 years
 and so have learned much of
 what Adam knew.
 20. Twenty, six letters.
 Six, four letters.
 Nine, four letters.
 Twelve, six letters.
 Five, four letters.

Bible Enigma.

No. 52.

- One weeping for her children dead,
 And none could stay the tears she
 shed?
- Who gave his privilege away,
 Forgetful of the future day?
- Who consecrated all his days
 With frequent prayers and holy
 praise?
- Who passed in fiery car to heaven,
 Completed all the work God-given?
- Who sinned when Time its course
 began,
 And brought all woe on guilty man?
- Who gave the laws that Israel broke,
 When God 'mid Sinai's thunders
 spoke?
- Who saw the vision of a "Child"—
 Of "God and mercy reconciled?"
- Who warned the world of punish-
 ment
 For wasted years, and called, "Re-
 pent?"
- A name of scorn once borne by Him
 Whose glories time can never dim?
- Who in the happy days of youth
 The lessons learned of lasting truth?
- Who saw when struck by dire disease
 The shadow alter ten degrees?
- The place where first the tempter's
 art
 Lured woman from the "better
 part?"
- A word that tells of doom profound,
 The balance weighed, and wanting
 found?
- An heir of promise, through whose
 race
 Came first the news of God's rich
 grace?
- Who saw of men the greatest age
 Recorded in the sacred page?
- Where dwelleth He who reacheth
 down
 To make the contrite heart His own?
 A New Year's motto here behold;
 It might be blazoned forth in gold:
 The initials take, and day by day
 The precept thus disclosed obey.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

- No. 21. A wagoner passing a store was
 asked what he had in his wagon.
 He replied:
 Three-fourths of a cross and a
 circle complete,
 An upright where two semi-
 circles meet;
 A rectangle triangle standing
 on feet,
 Two semi-circles and a circle
 complete.
 What did he have in the wagon?
 22. What are the names of two
 angels given in Scripture.

Boys' Department.

Christmas Eve.

BY MRS. S. M. WALSH.

Christmas Eve, I sat half-dreaming,
 In the fire-light's ruddy glow;
 And my busy brain was turning
 With the thoughts of long ago.

Oh, the light, and warmth, and glory
 Circling round a Christmas eve!
 Eastern tale or fairy story
 Never could such magic weave.

Children count the days and hours
 Till the Christmas time shall come;
 Watch them droplike leaves from flowers
 Till, at last, the Christmas bloom.

Well, to-night the old time feeling
 Breathed upon my heart again,
 While I heard the soft bells pealing,
 "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

By the mantel-piece I numbered
 Six small stockings in a row,
 While up stairs their owners slumbered,
 Just a pair for each, you know.

Tap, tap, tap, and jingle, jingle!
 "Tis the reindeer on the roof!
 Oh, you darling old Kris Kringle,
 You are coming here in truth!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" I heard him stamping,
 "Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed again;
 In a minute, in came tramping
 Just the tiniest of men.

After all his taps and knockings,
 Here his jolly saintship stands!
 Then he turns to count the stockings,
 While he blows his rosy hands.

"That's the way they try to get me!
 Sly young rogues! I know their game!
 If I would, dare say they'd let me,
 Fill a dozen all the same!"

"Ha! ha! ha! well, time is flying,
 Let us see what we can do;
 Dearie me! I can't help trying
 To do the best I can for you."

With a look quite keen and elfish,
 Harry's stocking down he took;
 "Here's a boy that's rather selfish—
 I can read him like a book."

"Shall I scant him, just to teach him
 Santa Claus don't like his ways?
 No, no! Christmas-time should preach
 him
 Sermons for all coming days;

"Teach him only loving lessons—
 Generous kindness and good-will;
 So, young master, here's my blessing
 While I both your stockings fill!"

Bertie's then he caught, and shook them,
 Laughed till tears stood in his eyes;
 "Ha! ha! ha! before I took them,
 I knew how this fellow cries!"

"Cries when hot and cries when breezy!
 Worries, too! Look out, my boy!
 When you learn to take things easy,
 Santa Claus will wish you joy."

Then, of course, he came to Robbie's,
 Gave them many a stretch and pull;
 "Ha! ha! ha! I have my hobbies—
 This chap wants his stockings full."

"His must be as big as t' other's,
 I can't scant the little ones;
 'Share and share alike' for brothers—
 That's the way my programme runs!"

So he stuffed and stuffed each stocking
 Till they looked just fit to burst;
 While I sat serenely rocking,
 Pleased and silent, as at first.

Suddenly I jumped affrighted!
 Some one came and pulled my nose!
 There I sat, the lamp dim-lighted,
 Fire gone out, and I half-froze.

Some one said that it was "shocking,"
 So I hurried off to bed:
 Not until I'd filled each stocking
 Just as Santa Claus had said!

The Christmas-Tree's Story.

BY ALICE WILLIAMS BROTHERTON.

It may be that I dreamed; but
 whether sleeping or waking, this is the
 story I learned from the Christmas-tree.
 I had put the last touches to the de-
 corations of the tree; every little gift
 was in its place, and every tiny taper
 was ready for lighting when I sank down
 into an easy chair to look at my com-
 pleted work. Did I fall asleep while I
 gazed?—for it seemed to me as if a voice
 came from the very center of the Christ-
 mas-tree.

"On the eve of every Christmas," said
 the voice, "in the hour before midnight,
 the forest wakes. Then it is the trees
 break their silence, and speak together.
 And it is always one story which they
 tell:

"Once upon a time a little babe lay
 cradled in a manger," said the Cedar,
 "in a ruined stable, where beasts of
 burden were stalled."

"And the angels sang in heaven,"
 cried a Star, "and a Star moved from its
 place and journeyed westward; and the
 wise men of the East followed it; and
 it stood still above the stable, and the
 wise ones entered there, and knelt be-
 fore the little child, worshiping and
 offering gifts."

"Gold and frankincense and myrrh,"
 said the Sycamore, "these were the
 costly gifts they brought."

"Three fled by night," cried the
 Locust, "escaping the mandate of a
 cruel king; journeying through rocky
 wildernesses and deserts of burning
 sand, ever onward."

"To the Nile!" cried the Brooklet.
 "All the waters of the earth know it;
 and they dwell there in the country of
 the pyramids."

"But only for a time," replied the
 Cedars, "for they returned after the
 cruel king was dead, to the land from
 whence they came; and the young child
 played under the cedars, and in time he
 worked diligently in the shop of the
 carpenter, and slowly grew in stature,
 and in the knowledge and love of God."

"A teacher walked by the banks of a
 flowing river," said the Willows, "and
 through the harvest fields, and in the
 wilderness, followed by a great con-
 course of people."

"And seeing the multitudes, he went
 up into a mountain," said the Olive-
 trees. "And he opened his mouth, and
 taught them many things, both of life
 and of the life to come."

"The powerful of the earth despised
 him," said the Oak, "but the poor heard
 him gladly."

"He went about among them doing
 good; he healed the sick and helped

the suffering, and the hearts of the
 people went out toward him," said the
 Palm-tree. "They spread their gar-
 ments as a carpet before him as he rode
 into the great city, and strewed palms
 in his way, and shouted hosannas as
 for a conqueror."

"But the scholars and the priests
 were angry, and took counsel together
 to slay him."

"Under the olives of the garden of
 Gethsemane they took him prisoner,"
 cried the Olive-tree, "and the leaves
 turned gray with horror. See! the
 leaves of all olive-trees are gray since
 that hour."

"The soldiers and the rabble mocked
 and jeered him."

"They plaited a crown of thorns," said
 the Thorn-tree, "and pressed it upon
 his forehead till the blood ran down in
 warm drops. Is it not fitting that the
 thorns upon my branches should be al-
 ways red like blood?"

"For a sceptre they gave him a bul-
 rush," said the Rushes. "And we sigh,
 as he sighed, with sorrow ever since."

"O what was it," moaned the Aspens,
 "that stood out dark against the sky?
 It was a cross made of aspen-wood,
 whereon they crucified him. Now you
 know why the leaves of all aspen-trees
 shiver with horror!"

"And his followers sorrowed for him,"
 said the Cedar, "all save one."

"I know," said the purple Judas
 tree, "it was the false traitor who sold
 his Master for thirty pieces of silver,
 and betrayed him with a kiss, and then
 went out and hanged himself; and the
 tree whereon he hung is called the
 Judas-tree, and its once white blossoms
 ever since blush red for shame."

"They came by night," said the Oak
 tree, "and lifted the dead form from
 the cross, and wrapped it in fine linen,
 and laid it in the rock-hewn sepulchre,
 and sealed the mouth of the tomb with
 a stone."

"But angels rolled away the stone!"
 cried the Palms. "Why seek ye the
 living among the dead?" they said to
 the disciples who sought him in the
 tomb. "For Life has overcome Death,
 and the Saviour of mankind is to-day
 an ever-living presence and a healer
 and helper for all crushed and weary
 hearts."

"For the third day he rose from the
 dead!" sang the Cedars joyfully.

"And sitteth on the right hand of
 God the Father Almighty," chanted all
 the trees in one grand triumphal chorus,
 "to whose name be honor and praise
 and glory for ever and ever. Amen!"

"This is the story the trees of the
 forest tell to each other on the eve of
 the blessed Christmas day."

Then the voice was silent, and I sat
 alone in the gloom of the twilight, under
 the boughs of the Christmas-tree.

The newest service rendered by mon-
 keys to mankind was recently illustrated
 in London. In one of the school dis-
 tricts too many parents reported no
 children in their families, and in order
 to ascertain the real number of children
 in the district, the school officers resorted
 to an ingenious measure. Two monkeys
 were gaily dressed, put in a wagon, and
 accompanied by a brass band, were
 carried through the streets of the dis-
 trict. At once crowds of children made
 their appearance. The procession was
 stopped in a park, and the school
 officers began their work; distributing
 candies to the youngsters, they took
 their names and addresses. They found
 out that over sixty parents kept their
 children from school. The ingenious
 measure brought to the school about
 200 boys and girls.

AN AGED TURTLE.—About the middle
 of June, a turtle was taken in the St.
 John's River, Florida, with the Spanish
 coat of arms and the date 1700 engraved
 upon his back. There was also inscrib-
 ed in Spanish the sentence: "Caught in
 1700, by Fernando Gomez, in the St.
 Sebastian, and was carried to Matanzas
 by Indians; from there to the Great
 Wekiva." The Great Wekiva is the
 name by which the St. John's River was
 formerly known. The turtle was put
 back into the river with the added in-
 scription: "Eastern Herald, Palatka,
 Florida, 1879."

Twelve French Canadian Catholics
 have embraced Protestantism, and have
 been received into the Baptist Church
 of Waterville, Me.