

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

Lesson XI.—DECEMBER 12.

THE LAST DAYS OF JOSEPH.

Gen. 1. 14-26.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 18-21.

Jacob finally blessed all his sons and died. His body was embalmed, carried to Canaan, and buried at Hebron with Abraham and Isaac. On the return from the burial, the events of this lesson took place.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“The memory of the just is blessed.”—Prov. x. 7.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Last Days of Joseph, Gen. 1. 14-26.
T. Final Words of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 1-15.
W. Final Words of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 16-33.
T. Jacob's Funeral, Gen. 1. 1-13.
F. Faithful in Life, Acts xxi. 1-14.
S. Hopeful in Death, 2 Tim. iv. 1-8.
S. Triumphant in Resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 42-57.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 15: Job xv. 21, 22.
With vs. 17: Prov. xxviii. 13; Gen. xlix. 25.
With vs. 18: Gen. xxxvii. 7, 10.
With vs. 19: Gen. xlv. 5; Deut. xxxii. 35; Rom. xii. 19.
With vs. 20: Psa. lvi. 5; Isa. x. 7; Gen. xlv. 5, 7; Acts iii. 13, 14, 15.
With vs. 21: Gen. xlvii. 12; Matt. v. 44.
With vs. 23: Job xlii. 16; Num. xxxii. 39.
With vs. 24: Gen. xv. 14, 18; xli. 4; Heb. xi. 22.
With vs. 25: Ex. xiii. 19; Joshua xxiv. 32.

FAITH STEADFAST TO THE END.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. For the Present, Vss. 15-23. II. For the Future, Vss. 14, 24-26.

QUESTIONS.—Give an outline of Joseph's life. At what age did he die? (Vs. 26.) At what age was he sold into Egypt?

I. Vss. 15-23.—What fear had Joseph's brethren after their father died? On what principle did they suppose Joseph would act? What promises did he make? How did he act toward them? How does all this show him superior to their estimate of him? How are Joseph's last days described in vs. 22, 23? Why does faith make men better in this life? In what respects are we to be steadfast? (1 Pet. v. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Heb. iii. 14).

II. Vss. 14, 24-26.—When about to die what assurance did Joseph give to his brethren? On what was this confidence based? What oath did he take of them? Why did he ask this? What steps toward fulfilling this were taken when Joseph died? Where is the fulfillment of this oath recorded? (See Parallel Texts.) How long after Joseph's death were his bones carried out of Egypt? Where were they buried? (See Parallel Texts.)

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 14.—*Returned into Egypt.* That is, from Canaan, whither Joseph, with a large retinue, consisting both of Egyptians and of the patriarchal family, had gone to bury Jacob, according to his own express desire. The honors paid for the sake of his son Joseph, to Jacob's memory, were a sign of Joseph's well-known filial reverence for his father, as well as of the esteem in which the saviour of Egypt was deservedly held.

Verse 15.—Joseph's brothers seem to have been incapable of appreciating their benefactor's magnanimity. Their suspicious fear betray their character. This was not essentially changed since the time when they did Joseph the harm which they now, judging him by themselves, apprehend that he may revenge upon them.

Verses 16, 17.—*Thy father.* The appeal is by the name, not of our father, but of *thy* father. This message has much the look of a fabrication on the brothers' part. The form of the message which they send to Joseph, betokens their sense of guilt. This prevails over their real sorrow so strongly, that they cannot believe themselves forgiven. True repentance finds it easy to accept forgiveness. The brothers accordingly plead with Joseph, in the name of his father; thus attesting his noble filial piety, Jacob's word to Joseph by his brothers, if genuine, may have been

first solicited by them from him. *The servants of thy father's God.* It was first, “I pray thee,” as from Jacob. It is now, “We pray thee,” as from the brothers. The poor men, in their abjectness, use every promising means to win their brother. They style themselves to Joseph, “servants of his father's God.” And Joseph wept. Tears, we may believe, of noble sorrow, that he could so fail of being comprehended by his kindred. Tears, too, of pity for his poor, humiliated brothers. The name of his father, also, touched his heart.

Verse 18.—How the statement of this verse exhibits these miserable men fulfilling, and even needlessly fulfilling, the dream of Joseph's youth, against the sense of which they once rebelled so wickedly. See chap. xxxvii. 7, 8.

Verse 19.—*Fear not.* It is a case in which both parties are to be pitied—those brethren, for their wretched fear; and Joseph, for being feared so wretchedly by his brethren. “Am I in the place of God?” he asks—that is, either to receive your abject submission, or to assume the part of punisher.

Verses 20, 21.—*Ye thought evil.* The antithesis is marked. Whereas you meant evil, God meant good. Joseph does not re-assure his brothers by false means. He is faithful to them. They were wicked; but even their wickedness God overruled for good. This did not make them blameless; but Joseph's recognition of God's providence in it all, might serve to dispel their fears of vengeance from him. *I will nourish you.* How strikingly this suggests the relation in which sinners stand to Christ! Saved, if saved, by the pure grace of a Saviour that they have themselves hated and crucified. *Spoke kindly unto them.* “Spoke to their heart,” is the vivid and beautiful Hebrew idiom. Admirable as we may justly deem Joseph's behaviour to be, let us not forget how much easier it was for him to be thus clement and gracious, that it was for Jesus to pray, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Joseph's trial was now past. He was in the plenitude of his power, and his brethren were bowed before him, utterly at his mercy.

Verses 22, 23.—*Of the third generation.* Probably this means that Joseph lived to see great-grandsons—descendants, that is, of Ephraim, belonging to the third generation. *Brought up upon Joseph's knees.* A customary phrase for saying that a child is born during the life-time of the person thus referred to. *Machir.* The Machirites, (Num. xxvi. 29; xxxii. 39; Judges v. 14), were descended from Machir.

Verses 24, 25.—*Will surely visit.* This form of expression is a common Hebrew one, to set forth the idea of special Divine intervention, whether for favor or for wrath. The connection here shows this to be an instance of favorable visiting. Joseph's faith was lively enough to make him wish, as did Jacob his father, before him, to be buried at last in the Land of Promise. He got his brothers to take an oath that, when God visited them, and led them forth on their return to Canaan, they would not leave his bones behind in Egypt. He would be identified for ever with the chosen people of God. He would have his dust mingled with theirs in the soil of the promised land. This loyalty to kindred and to race was more than the instinct of a noble nature. It was inspired by faith. See Heb. xi. 22. It was piety. There are few more blameless, more amiable, more honorable characters in history, than was Joseph.

Verse 26.—*They embalmed him.* Who—whether the Egyptians, or his brethren—is uncertain. The process is an elaborate and expensive one, of great antiquity in the customs of the Egyptians. Herodotus describes it in detail, as does also Diodorus Siculus. Costly spices were used profusely. The time necessary was from forty to seventy days. The period probably varied from one age to another. The instances mentioned in Genesis are the most ancient on record. The coffin, or case, in which the mummy—that is, the embalmed body—was finally deposited, in most cases had the shape of the human form.

Joseph's filial fidelity, attested in many different and independent ways, make his example an inspiration for rendering and securing obedience to the command, “Honor thy father and thy mother.”

Badness finds it hard to comprehend goodness.

Conscious guilt breeds distrust. Genuine repentance makes trust easy. Admirable self-control is evinced by Joseph, in refusing to let the simplicity and sweetness of his character be corrupted by the extraordinary advances in fortune that he experienced.

Guard against the intoxicating effect of prosperity.

Watch the ways of Divine Providence, and be quick and grateful to recognize God's overruling hand in bringing good to others out of evil to yourself.

Joseph's faith in God's promises, is evinced in his desire to have his bones removed to Canaan.

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Joseph had made his father's old age comfortable, the brothers had made their father unhappy for many years.

Joseph's brothers had plenty of time to think of their conduct; for it took forty days to prepare the body of Jacob for burial. Then they took it all the way to his old home in Canaan. Perhaps they had not thought much about their sin during the years in which they had lived in Egypt. They knew that Joseph would not grieve their father, by punishing them; but now that their father was gone, they were more and more afraid. For they felt that they deserved great punishment, and they knew how they would have acted, had they been in Joseph's place. Sin makes us cowards. The Bible says: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.”

Tell of the message sent to Joseph. Why did it make him weep? He was so sorry they did not love and trust him more.

Describe the scene where they kneel before Joseph. Ask, what part of Joseph's life that makes them think of. Do we love Jesus well enough to do what he said before he died? He left these messages: “Do good to them that hate you.” “Pray for them that wrongfully use you.”

Describe Joseph in his old age, with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren on his knees, telling them stories. Imagine what these stories were about: God's goodness and promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and himself.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Bouths' Department.

Bible Enigma.

No. 101.

With the initials of the following described names, form the name of a famous king in the Old Testament:

One of Saul's sons who was slain in the battle of Gilboa.
The mother of one of the Old Testament prophets.

A coppersmith mentioned by Paul in terms of severe reproach.
A Jew residing at Ephesus; he had seven sons who practiced exorcism.

A son of Abinidab, who was instantly killed by the immediate act of God, for laying his hand upon the ark in violation of divine law.

The great grandson of Shem, and an ancestor of Abraham.
A successor of Solomon, who reigned seventeen years.

The native place of Job.
A king of Assyria who began to reign in 724 B. C., and reigned fourteen years.

CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

138. Transpose the letters in these sentences and form of them the names of historical battles.

ANAGRAMS.

- (a) I trust zeal.
(b) Betty Ruggs.
(c) Leon answer.
(d) O low rate.
(e) Next in log.
(f) Meant wrong.
(g) Can burn knob.
(h) Behold if worst.

Answer to Bible Enigma.

No. 100.

1. T rog y llium.... Acts xx. 15.
2. H o r net..... Joshua xxiv. 12.
3. E n o ough..... Gen. xlv. 28.
4. C a t t l e..... Psa. i. 10.
5. H y s o p..... Heb. ix. 19.
6. R econc i liation..... Heb. ii. 17.
7. O p h rah..... Jud. viii. 32.
8. N ergal s hareser..... Jer. xxxix. 13, 14.
9. I a h uah..... Gen. xlii. 17.
10. C h a p e l..... Amos vii. 12, 13.
11. L a o d icea..... Rev. i. 11.
12. E r i u sai..... 1 Chron. xii. 5.
13. S e r j ant..... Acts xvi. 35-38.

THE CHRONICLES—JUDAH'S HISTORY.

ANSWERS TO CURIOUS QUESTIONS.

137. SLAUGHTERING.

- Wheat, heat, eat, at.
Coat, oat, at.
Whale, hale, ale.
Bear, ear, a.
Box, ox, O!
That, hat, at, t.

A Chinese Indictment against Drinking.

An old Chinese legend tells how in the days of the great Yu, some two thousand two hundred years before Christ, a I Ti made wine and gave some to Yu, who, when he had tasted it, pronounced its flavor to be good, but poured it upon the ground, and ordered I Ti to be banished, forbidding its further manufacture lest in after ages the kingdom should be lost through wine.

“Then,” says the legend, “the heavens rained gold for three days, no doubt in approval of the wise conduct of the old Chinese prohibitionist, Yu. We are reminded of this ancient story on reading some extracts from a Chinese religious book called ‘Oneness in Virtue.’ This work is said to be of great age, but the blocks were destroyed during the late rebellion, and the present edition was printed only thirteen years ago from new blocks. The author is a Mr. Sun Chiechai. We think our readers will be interested in the opinion of this old native writer on wine drinking. We are indebted for the translation to Rev. Frederick Galpin, of Ningpo.

“Wine confounds the character. Scarcely any man who drinks immoderately can possess self-control. Those whose dispositions naturally are stern, overbearing or tyrannical are helped to develop such evils by wine, and so with rapidity are thus made angry and mad. How great is the injury caused! For this reason several exhortations have been written: Wine may be used for religious obligations, but not violate propriety by becoming drunk with it. A little may nourish, but a large quantity destroys. Man when drunk will do that which, when sober, he would not dare to do; he will do anything.

“Through wine the scholar loses his good name, the magistrate his office, the merchant his trade, and the artisan his work. Persons, property, friends, family, and life, are all injured. What difference is between it and a venomous serpent?

“Hence the first of the Buddhist prohibitions is, ‘Abstain from wine.’ Wine is a cruel axe that cuts down the character: Is it good or evil to give to or press upon a man, as a kindness, that which may injure a man.

“Some may escape the evil, but nine out of every ten are destroyed. Wine may be of excellent flavor, but it is a madman's medicine. Wine is a source of disorder, it bequeaths hosts of hideous things, it spoils longevity, and hands down vicious habits.”

We now give the author's thirty-two evils of wine drinking:

1. It robs the heart of its purity.
2. It exhausts money and property.
3. Door of much sickness and disease.
4. Root of brawls and quarrels.
5. It makes men naked and barefooted as oxen or horses, but unlike cattle.
6. Reeling and dancing, idling and cursing. They are detested by all men.
7. Through it men never obtain what they should.
8. What they obtain they lose.
9. It causes men to waste deeds and exhaust speech; when they awake it is only to repeat.
10. It causes the loss of much, and an awakening only to shame and confusion.
11. It destroys physical force.
12. It spoils countenance and complexion.
13. Heart and mind are led astray.
14. Wisdom and knowledge are beclouded.
15. It destroys the capacity to honor parents.
16. Through it men cannot reverence the Gods;
17. Nor obey the words of good men;
18. Nor laws of empire.
19. It makes friendships with cruel and wicked men.
20. It causes a separation from the virtuous and good.
21. It makes men shameless.
22. It easily incites ferocious anger.
23. It destroys the power to control the passions.
24. It gives men over to evil without limit.
25. It causes them to resist the devout.
26. Produces a heart without fear.
27. Turns day into night.
28. Makes infamous in crime and teaches iniquity.
29. Rejects virtuous laws.
30. Drives men from the true and happy end of life, Nirvana.
31. Sows the seeds of insanity and madness.

32. Corrupts the body, destroys the life, and causes men to fall into the wicked ways.

One name for wine is “fountain of misery.”

It is said that the Emperor Yuan Tsung, A. D. 713, refused to drink wine because of its evil influence, and it is remarked, “If the Son of Heaven was willing to abstain, what must be the disposition of any man who will not follow such an example?”—*Shanghai Temperance Union.*

Rev. Joseph Parker's Habits of Exercise and Study—An Interview.

This eminent preacher, pastor of the City Temple, London, spent eight days last August in New York and neighborhood. We availed ourselves of an opportunity to get his views on various points. We have space for two:

“Do you pay attention to physical training?”

“My residence, at North Holme, High-bury Park, is three miles from City Temple. Every Sunday morning I walk to church and take a bath there, coming, therefore, to my work fresh and resilient.”

“A walk home gives me six miles for the day's exercise. My studies are not usually extended into the night. This trip is taken mainly for the invigoration to be gained by the ocean passage.”

“How do you prepare sermons?”

“I have no uniform plan of preparing for the pulpit. I have tried all plans except the memoriter, and that I have never been able to adopt. I cannot commit anything to memory with the certainty of recalling it when needed; indeed, I may say that for words I have no memory at all. Some of my most friendly critics have suggested that I should have been an actor, not knowing, I presume, that Shakespeare would have been verbally slain by my treacherous slips, and that Hamlet or Othello would have been a new character every night and an eternal surprise to the actor himself. I leave the words to suggest themselves at the moment of delivery, though sometimes, especially when the subject requires critical handling, I have carefully shaped and adjusted every sentence.

“Of all kinds of preaching, I love the expository most. You will understand this from the fact that I have, during the last seven years, expounded most of the first two books of the Pentateuch, the whole book of Nehemiah, the whole of the Ecclesiastes, and nearly half the Gospel by Matthew. I care less and less for mere catch-texts and for small ingenuities in pulpit mechanics. Our cleverness is our destruction as expositors. In its exercise we lose breadth, substance and dignity, and become mere tricksters and jugglers. I care very little for merely literary polish in preaching. We want intelligence, unction and directness. All the rest is comparatively worthless. The preacher is not an author, reading his own manuscript; he is a Voice, a Fire, a Herald, bold and eager in his sacred work—an orator speaking in heaven's name and strength. There are more authors in the pulpit than preachers. Here is the weakness of the pulpit. It has become a competitor of the press, and has abandoned its special and incommunicable function.”

Baby to Her Doll.

I wonder what you are thinking about While you look so smiling at me. You never frown, and you never pout; Your eyes are as clear as can be, And though you are often hurt, no doubt, Not a tear do I ever see!

GOOD RULES.—Tell your own faults, not those of others.—Never interrupt a conversation, but wait your turn to speak.—Do not reserve your good manners for company.—When told to do, or not to do, a thing, by either parent, never ask why you should or should not do it.

“Are you lost, my little fellow?” asked a gentleman of a four-year-old one day in Rochester. “No,” he sobbed; “b-but m-my mother is.”

“In what condition was the patriarch Job at the end of his life?” asked a Brooklyn Sunday school teacher of a quiet-looking boy at the foot of the class. “Dead,” calmly replied the quiet-looking boy. Better be careful how you word a question put to a class or school.