

Sunday Reading.

Thoughts on the Old Year.

The Lord thinketh upon me. (Ps. xl. 17).
The final step we soon must tread
Upon the pathway of this year,
And enter thence another year,
But yet we go without a fear.

For hitherto our watchword sweet
Hath cheered us constantly each day,
And still the words shall comfort bring
When this year shall have passed away.

Ay, well we know, though skies may change,
And tempests gather fierce and wild,
Though Satan all his hosts array,
Still God doth think upon each child.

He will not let one trouble come
Without the needful strength to bear;
And in our daily joy or grief
He yet will take a Father's share.

We did not know one half the good
He planned for us in bygone days;
But we have learned, and we can leave
The future now with songs of praise.

And feel that we can trust His care,
Though years may come and pass away;
For He will His own word fulfil,
And think of all we need each day.
—Charlotte Murray.

Close of the Year.

Has this year, so near its closing,
Brought me nearer to my God?
Do I love my Saviour better,
Trust more fully in His word?
Have my footsteps often wandered
In forbidden paths of sin?
Have I tried to honor Jesus?
Am I any more like Him?

Has my inward life grown purer?
Has my daily asking been,
"Lord, renew Thy spirit in me;
Make and keep me pure within?"
Have my hands been ever ready
To perform His blessed will?
Have I faithfully endeavored,
Every duty to fulfil?

Have I used my single talent
To draw sinners unto Him?
Can I ever claim the plaudit,
"Well done servant, enter in?"
Soon another book will open,
Let the entries made each day
Be of earnest, patient effort,
For a life more as I pray.

The Passover a Type of Christ.

READ FOR CRITICISM AT METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE COLLEGE, LONDON, BY AN UNDERGRADUATE, Jan. 25, 1867.

We read in Exodus xi. 7, that the Lord put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. This difference was awfully manifested on that black night, when the destroying angel, passing by the doors of the Israelites, entered the houses of the Egyptians and laid their first-born in the cold hand of death. No coloring is dark enough to paint the awful picture of the terror that reigned in the dwellings of the one; nor bright enough to set forth the serenity which lighted up the abodes of the other.

When God had threatened the Egyptians with the destruction of their first-born, he commanded Moses and Aaron to enjoin on the children of Israel to take a lamb on the tenth day of the month Abib and to slay it on the fourteenth day of the same month. They were to sprinkle the two side posts and the lintel of their houses with the blood of the lamb; and on the same night they were commanded to eat its flesh, roasted with fire, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was to be eaten in haste, with their feet shod, loins girded, and their staff in their hand.

On the same night on which this was done, the messenger of death passed through the land of Egypt and smote the first-born of the Egyptians; but into the houses of the Israelites he entered not, for God had said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

This arrangement constituted a lively, interesting, and instructive type of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Apart from Christ, the whole thing is mysterious and useless; but pointing as it does to Calvary, it preached in the most simple language, the glad tidings of freedom from eternal death and complete reconciliation to God.

It is impossible, in a short essay to notice every point of resemblance be-

tween the passover and Christ, or the type and the antitype. We will, however, touch upon the more prominent points, and these will appear if we speak 1st. Of the lamb chosen: 2nd. Of the use of its blood; and 3rd. Of the use of its flesh.

I. THE LAMB CHOSEN. How suggestive of all that is pure and harmless! Its lips are never reddened by the blood of its fellow, nor is its snowy fleece soiled by wilfully wallowing in the mire. It is no companion of the beasts of the night, that fear the light, and lurk for blood under the veil of darkness. It skips in the sunlight, and is a fit companion of a child. Christ was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. Pure in his nature by Divine conception, perfect in his character by inherent holiness.

2. It was imperative that the pascal lamb should be without blemish. The most careful scrutiny was made upon the lamb first proposed, but, upon the discovery of the least spot, it was rejected, and a further search was made until the perfect one was found. Christ was chosen of God as the only person whose character at all qualified him for the glorious purpose for which he was set apart. And no sooner had he appeared in the world than he was distinguished by his superiority. John discovered both the perfection of his character and his mission as he looked upon him and exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" He was the Lamb without blemish and without spot, and as such offered himself to God as the sacrifice of his people.

3. The lamb was to be a male of the first year, typifying the strength and courage of Christ. He entered upon his ministry in all the vigor of youth and the courage of a man. He was the great burden-bearer of his people, and the captain of their salvation. His ministry was a period of conflict. His great adversary prowled on Jordan's bank, as a lion who seeks his prey. But the Son of God willingly encountered him, and in a battle strong and lasting, triumphed gloriously. This was but the beginning of a long campaign. Hosts of adversaries opposed him near and far.

4. The lamb was taken from the sheep or the goats, and set apart for the passover, four days before the time. So, in the covenant of grace, Christ was set apart as the surety of his people, and hence he is said to be the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and, through him, God was enabled to say of every believing soul, in all ages of the world, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." So the Son of Man Jesus was raised up from his brethren to be a Prophet, Priest, and King to his church.

5. The lamb having been kept four days was slain. Here the Israelite read in lines clear and legible the gospel of an innocent Saviour suffering for guilty man. Look at that spotless creature, how meekly he yields to the hand that leads him to the slaughter. Not a sound is heard while the knife of the Israelite draws forth the vital stream which is to be a token of the peace and security which gladden his happy home. Turning from the lamb, which lies lifeless at the feet of the Israelite, let us for a moment behold the great antitype which it so vividly and beautifully represents. When the time of his death drew nigh he himself drew near to the place where he was to be offered. When the soldiers came to take him he said, "I am he." When he stood at Pilate's bar "he answered never a word." And at Calvary he lay passive in the hands of his persecutors, in agonies unutterable, until, by the shedding of his own blood, he appeased the wrath of God, and brought in an everlasting salvation.

II. We come now more particularly to the use of the blood of the lamb: The blood, having been taken in a basin was sprinkled by a bunch of hyssop upon the two side posts and the lintel of the doors of the houses of the Israelites. The blood, thus sprinkled, was at once the sign of inward consciousness and outward manifestation.

1. Inward consciousness. The blood shall be to you a token. It was the seal of their safety; and in the midst of the terror that reigned without it whispered "peace be still," to their anxious souls. So the blood of Christ

sprinkled upon the believer's conscience gives a peace and tranquility infinitely superior to earthly happiness; a peace which shall comfort him in the storm of life; cheer him in the dark valley of death, and accompany him to the Canaan of endless joy and happiness.

2. The blood was a sign of outward manifestation. The blood was sprinkled on the outside of the houses. Any one passing through the streets may have distinguished between the houses of God's people and those of the Egyptians. And it is equally true that whenever the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the heart, it will manifest itself in a holy walk and conversation. It "purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." The difference is still distinguished between the Egyptians of the world and God's spiritual Israel.

The safety of the Israelites lay in the fact that the blood had a power with God: "When I see the blood I will pass over you." The blood of Christ has a voice all powerful. It enters the court of heaven as an advocate, where it pleads and obtains peace and reconciliation with God. It procures for the believer every needful blessing; and by it he conquers every enemy. It gains for him; admission at the pearly gates of heaven, and gives him a seat among the glorified. Under the shelter of the blood, the Christian is safe, however terrible the destruction that sweeps around him a thousand shall fall at his side, and ten thousand at his right hand, but it shall not come nigh him; only with his eyes shall he behold and see the reward of the wicked.

III. THE USE OF THE FLESH of the lamb. The lamb, having been slain and its blood sprinkled on the door posts, was roasted and eaten the same night by the household. The washing of the lamb probably referred to the manner of Christ's death being exposed to the fire of Divine justice until his strength was dried up like a potsherd. Thus Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; and becomes the food by which the spiritual life of his people is sustained. This is the rich provision of eternal mercy. The bread which cometh down from heaven of which if a man eat he shall live for ever.

The manner of eating the pascal lamb was highly significant of the gospel feast.

1. It was eaten with unleavened bread. The house was carefully swept of every particle of leaven bread, and for seven days no leaven was allowed in the house. Now sin is often compared to leaven. Our Lord warns his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." And Paul exhorted the Corinthians to "purge out the old leaven and to keep the feast, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." There is a reformation going on in the heart of every regenerate man, a sweeping of the house of former defilement. The man's appetite is changed. The prodigal leaves the husks to feast at his father's table.

2. It was eaten with bitter herbs. If we have known what it is to feed on Christ, we are not at a loss to know the meaning of those bitter herbs. These sins of ours committed against such a gracious Saviour, pain us never so much as when we are feasting on his love; but the penitential tear is a precious condiment and adds a savour to the feast.

The bitter herbs, are also suggestive of the fellowship which the believer has with Christ in his sufferings. We are grateful that we do not live in the days of the fire and the sword, but the martyr-spirit is always needed in the faithful follower of Jesus. Yet this will be no interruption of our joy, if, in the conflict, we remember the crown, for suffering with him we know that we shall also reign with him.

3. It was eaten in haste in a state of readiness for departure. The chains of their bondage were broken, their long robes were carefully girded about their loins, their feet shod, and with their staff in their hand, they hastily partook of the strengthening meat, waiting for the command to depart. This is the position of the Christian. He is no longer a slave of Satan, but has girded himself to run in swift obedience in the ways of God. His feet are shod with iron and brass. The staff of God's word is in his hand. This will be his support in every step of his pilgrimage, and by this weapon he will conquer every foe.

4. The month on which the passover took place was therefore to be the BEGINNING OF THE YEAR: and the day of the feast was to be observed by an ordinance for ever. So Christ's death was the beginning of a new period in the history of the world, and especially in the church. It was the morn of a glorious day of grace, the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, whose radiant beams dispersed the gross darkness of the world, and whose benign influence imparts life and beauty in rich profusion, by which the wilderness is made to rejoice and to blossom like the rose.

When the blood of Christ is first applied to the heart of the believer a NEW YEAR begins in his soul, and all the blessings typified by the passover are his to enjoy for ever.

In conclusion, it is worthy of remark that the Israelites were commanded to tell the story of the Passover to their children. In like manner we are commanded to tell the story of the cross to all around, to preach the gospel to every creature. And who can be silent when the same blood that insures our safety is sufficient to protect all who trust in it. And it must be remembered that all who are not thus protected are exposed to a more terrible storm of wrath than any which swept over the dominions of the Egyptian tyrant.

There is a time coming when a more manifest distinction shall be seen between the righteous and the wicked than that of the night of the passover. While the wicked are driven from the presence of the Lord, the righteous, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, shall be invited to sit down at the marriage supper. There the communion will be perfect. "They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

A Touching Incident.

When Mrs. Mary A. Livermore lectured in Albion, Mich., recently at the close of the lecture an elderly, white-haired woman approached her with the following inquiry: "Do you remember writing a letter for John—, of the Twelfth Michigan Volunteers when he lay dying in the Overton Hospital at Memphis, during the spring of 1863, and of completing the letter to his wife and mother after he had died?"

Mrs. Livermore replied that she wrote so many letters during the war, under similar circumstances that she could not recall any particular case.

The woman drew a letter from her pocket, that had been worn into pieces in the folds of the note, and was then stitched together with fine sewing cotton.

"Do you remember this letter?" she asked.

Mrs. Livermore recognized her penmanship and admitted her authorship of the letter. The first four pages were written to his wife and mother at the dictation of a young soldier who had been shot through the lungs, and was dying of the wound. Then she had completed the letter by the addition of three pages written by herself, beside the dead husband and son, in which she sought to comfort the lonely and bereaved relatives.

"I think my daughter-in-law and I would have died when we heard that John was dead, but for this letter," said the worn and weary-looking woman.

"It comforted us both; and by-and-by, when we heard of other women similarly afflicted, we sent them the letter to read till it was worn in pieces. Then we sewed the pieces together, and made copies of the letter, which we sent to those of our acquaintances whom the war bereft."

"But Annie, my son's wife, never got over John's death. She kept about and worked and went to church; but the life had gone out of her. Eight years ago, she died of gastric fever. One day, a little before her death, she said: 'Mother, if you ever find Mrs. Livermore, or hear of her, I wish you would give her my wedding-ring, which has never been off my finger since John put it there, and which will not be taken off till I am dead. Tell her to wear it for John's sake and mine, and tell her that this was my dying request.'"

"I live eight miles from here," continued the woman, "and when I read in the papers that you were to lecture here to-night, I decided to drive over and give you the ring, if you will accept it."

Deeply affected by this touching narrative, not a particular of which she was able to recall, Mrs. Livermore extended her hand, and the widowed and childless woman put the ring on her finger with a fervently uttered benediction.—*Youth's Companion.*

Pulpit, platform, and political orators who are given to banging desk or Bible, take warning. Senator Stewart, the Independent Republican candidate for Governor of Pennsylvania, got so enthusiastic the other day that, in an emphatic gesture, he struck the large knuckle of his little finger on the table with such force as to break it. He now speaks with bandaged hand and mild movement.—*Examiner.*

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

FIRST QUARTER.

- Jan. 7.—The Ascending Lord, Acts i. 1-14.
" 14.—The Descending Spirit, Acts ii. 1-16.
" 21.—The Believing People, Acts ii. 37-47.
" 28.—The Healing Power, Acts iii. 1-11.
Feb. 4.—The Prince of Life, Acts iii. 12-21.
" 11.—None Other Name, Acts iv. 1-14.
" 18.—Christian Courage, Acts iv. 18-31.
" 25.—Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 1-11.
March 4.—Persecution Renewed, Acts v. 17-32.
" 11.—The Seven Chosen, Acts vi. 1-15.
" 18.—The First Christian Martyr, Acts vii. 54-60; viii. 1-4.
" 25.—Quarterly Review.

Lesson I.—JANUARY 7, 1883.

THE ASCENDING LORD.

Acts i. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 8-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up."—Acts i. 9.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Lesson, Acts i. 1-14.
T. Infallible Proofs, Luke xxiv. 33-53.
W. The Father and the Son, John xiv. 1-14.
T. Christ and the Spirit, John xiv. 15-31.
F. Christ and his Apostles, John, chap. xv.
S. The Glorified Lord, Rev., chap. i.
S. The Vacancy Filled, Acts i. 15-26.

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Apostles Instructed, Vers. 1-3. II. The Ascension of the Lord, Vers. 9-12. III. The Disciples Waiting and Praying, Vers. 13, 14.

PLACES.—Jerusalem and vicinity; especially Mount Olivet; also Galilee.

QUESTIONS.—The Book of Acts.—Who wrote this book? What other book had he written before? What about? What part of his work had Jesus fully accomplished? Heb. ix. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 2-4. What part did he only begin while on earth?

To whom did Jesus show himself after his resurrection? Could they be mistaken? Who else saw him? 1 Cor. xv. 3-8. How long did he remain on earth? Vers. 1-8.—For what had the Lord chosen the apostles? What did he give them? What is the kingdom of God? What directions and promises did Jesus give?

Vers. 9-12.—Place of the ascension? Its probable date? Describe the scene. Where did Jesus go? What receive? Eph. i. 20, 21. What bodily change did this glorification involve? (Cf. Luke xxiv. 39; 1 Cor. xv. 50; Phil. iii. 21). Where is Jesus now?

Vers. 13, 14.—Why are the apostles here formally named? Give their names. Why not twelve? How was the vacancy filled? Vers. 15-25. Who met with them? Where? How many in all?

Scripture Teachings.—Find the ten recorded appearances of the risen Lord. What were the "infallible proofs" that he had really risen?

NOTES.—I. Introduction, (Vers. 1-5).

Vs. 1.—Former treatise. The Gospel of Luke. See Luke i. 1-4, also its close, comparing vs. 9 with Luke xxiv. 51, and vs. 12-14 with Luke xxiv. 52, 53. Theophilus. Literally, "lover of God." The same person to whom Luke addressed his Gospel, (i. 3). Evidently a Christian, as indicated by Luke i. 4, and by the fact of his implied interest in the subject matter; a man of position, (see "Most Excellent," in Luke i. 4, and compare Acts xxiii. 26; xxvi. 25). Began. While on earth. He continues the work in heaven. To do and teach. The two portions of a complete whole. The Gospel of Luke records the beginning of the doing and teaching of Christ on earth; the Acts, the continuance of them by the ascending Lord.

Vs. 2, 3.—Until the day, etc. His earthly ministry extended to the very hour of his ascension. Through the Holy Ghost. The whole ministry of Jesus was of one moved by the Holy Spirit. See Luke iv. 1; Heb. ix. 14. Commandments. Not merely suggestions. Mark the binding force of the Great Commission. See Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15. To whom, also, he showed himself alive. To be witnesses, from a personal knowledge of his resurrection. See 1 Cor. xv. 5-8. Many infallible proofs. A whole library of Christian evidence is here given. He breathed upon them, (John xx. 22); ate with them, (Luke xxiv.

43); walked with them, (Luke xxiv. 15); talked with them, and did "many other signs in the presence of his disciples," (John xx. 30.) He also was seen of them forty days. The evidence of his resurrection rests upon no momentary view, or glance; but he was with his disciples long enough to make them, however slow to believe it, assured of the event; and Luke writes as one who had no doubt of it. The kingdom of God. His one theme. Another sign that he was the Christ that was crucified; for his subject before and after his death was the same.

Vs. 4, 5.—Being assembled together. Most likely, in the conference spoken of in Matt. xxvi. 32, and xxviii. 16, in the mountain of Galilee. Should not depart from Jerusalem. Even though the Great Commission said "Go," Timeliness is an element in obedience. One may go before he is sent. But wait. Most difficult of all lessons to learn, and most necessary to our perfect discipline. Promise of the Father. That is, of the Holy Spirit, without whom all their zeal was useless. See Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28-32. Heard of me. See John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7. John baptized, etc. Christ uses John's own words. See Matt. iii. 11. With the Holy Ghost. Rather, in the Holy Ghost, as in margin of New Version. Not many days hence. Only ten from the time of his ascension to the day of Pentecost.

II. Power From On High, (Vers. 6-8). Were come together. At a subsequent interview. Will thou at this time? etc. The emphasis is upon at this time. They evidently still clung to the idea of a temporal kingdom. It is not for you to know, etc. Jesus did not say that the kingdom would not be restored to Israel, but simply that it was not for them to know when. This knowledge the Father had reserved to himself. There is a needed discipline in limited knowledge of times and seasons, as well as in waiting. Ye shall receive power. The power of the Holy Spirit, necessary to enable them to do their work. Witnesses. The apostles were to be less prophets of the future than witnesses of the past. The apostles could have no successors after the then generation had passed away. In Jerusalem, and in all Judea, etc. The circle constantly widens, till it includes the uttermost part of the earth.

III. The Ascension, (Vers. 9-11). Vs. 9.—While they beheld. They were witnesses of his ascension, as well as of his resurrection. He was taken up. While in the act of blessing them, (Luke xxiv. 51). His last act on earth was a benediction. A cloud received him. Such a cloud as shut him from view on the Mount of Transfiguration, which Matthew calls a "bright cloud," (xxiii. 5). It may be the Old Testament Shechinah—the symbol of the divine presence and glory. The ascension of Christ was the fitting, and necessary close of his earthly mission. David gives a prophetic description of his triumphal entrance into heaven, (Psa. xlv. 7-10; ex. i. 1; lxxviii. 18, also Eph. i. 20; Heb. x. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 22). That Jesus ascended with our humanity, and is the man in heaven, seems clear.

Vs. 10, 11.—Two men . . . in white apparel. Perhaps the same angels that appeared at the empty tomb of Jesus, (Luke xxiv. 4; John xx. 12). Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? Other duties demanded their attention. They were not to mourn his departure, but to look forward to his coming again; and, in the meanwhile, to do their appointed work. In like manner, attended by angels. Shall so come. The joyful hope of the church; the great event of the future. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Notice it is *this same Jesus*. The human name is significant of his tender love for his own.

IV. The Prayer Meeting, (Vers. 12-14). Returned to Jerusalem. As he had bidden them, (Luke xxiv. 49). From Mount . . . Olivet. In his Gospel, Luke makes Bethany the scene of the ascension. The whole region bearing, probably, the name of Bethany. A Sabbath day's journey. About three-fourths of a mile, to which the traditions of the elders restricted the Jews in their travel upon the Sabbath. Come in. Into Jerusalem. Upper room, where he abode. Rather, as in New Version, where they were abiding. Continued. Or, better in New Version, continued steadfastly. That is, they persevered in prayer together, with one accord, having the same spirit of zeal and fervor, with intense spiritual earnestness, seeking the great blessing which had been promised them: "With the women." The special mention of the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, would seem to imply their taking part in the exercises. From this time, Mary passes from our view. Our last sight of her is in a prayer meeting in which she joins with the brethren; and is not herself, an object of adoration.