

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson VIII.—AUGUST 24, 1884.

THE PLAGUE STAYED.

2 Sam. xxiv. 15-25.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 24, 25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."—2 Sam. xxiv. 25.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Lesson.
T. Parallel Account. 1 Chron. xxi. 1-30.
W. Smiting the First Born in Egypt. Ex. xii. 23-30.
T. Smiting the Hosts of Sennacherib. 2 Kings xix. 32-37.
F. Giving the Refuse to God. Mal. i. 13, 14.
S. Giving the First Fruits to God. Neh. x. 35-37.
S. The Psalm Written on this Occasion. Ps. xxx.

ANALYSIS.—I. Pestilence and Penitence, Vs. 15-17. II. Preparation for Expiation, Vs. 18-24. III. The Altar and Sacrifices, Vs. 25.

QUESTIONS.—Is it wrong to take a census of our population? Num. i. 2. In what consisted David's sin? Of what three punishments did the Lord give him the choice? Which did he choose, and why?

Vs. 15-17.—Who sent the pestilence upon Israel? Is that an argument against God's love?—How wide spread was this pestilence? How many died of it? Whom did the Lord send on this destroying mission? How is the angel represented in 1 Chron. xxi. 15, 16?

Vs. 18-24.—Can sin be put away without expiation? What was God's message to David? Whom was Araunah? What was afterwards built upon the locality of this threshing-floor? Why must David build an altar at this time? How did Araunah greet the king? What answer did David give?

Lesson Provisions.—Where, in this lesson, do we find—1. That sin deserves and receives punishment? 2. That for the sinner to be forgiven, his must be expiated? 3. That confessed sin is put away because of the altar of sacrifice? 4. That the Lord is pleased, in our offerings, with what costs us something?

What an encouragement, in this lesson, to confess our sins to the Lord. Luther, before being led into the full light of Christ, was greatly oppressed with his guilt, and cried out in despair: "Oh, my sins, my sins!"

Review Questions and Answers for Whole School.—1. What was the sin of David, which the Lord severely punished? Pride of heart, and a vain glorious spirit in numbering Israel. 2. What was the punishment? A pestilence, which seventy thousand people died. 3. Where was this pestilence stayed? At the threshing-floor of Araunah, in the city of Jerusalem. 4. By what means? Through David's confession of sin, and the expiation he made. 5. How is the plague of sin taken away from us? By confession of it to God, and through the sacrifice to Christ for us.

David, prompted by a vain-glorious spirit, and by an unholiness and ambition, gave commandment that the people should be numbered. This was not an ordinary census, which was provided for in the Mosaic law; but a result of kingly vanity, accompanied, it may be, with a desire for a more imperial sway, which would have been dangerous to the liberties of the people. In punishment, the Lord gave him choice of three evils, viz.: three years of famine, a period of three months' defeat by his enemies, or a three day's pestilence. David chose the latter; preferring, as he said, to fall into the hands of the Lord.

NOTES.—Vs. 15, 16.—The Lord sent. We need not shrink from the statement that Jehovah sent a pestilence; for he is a Sovereign, and "the Judge of all the earth does right." Evidently the people have sinned as well as David (xxiv. 1); and national calamities are often God's way of punishing a nation. Pestilence. Some terrible epidemic, which made short work with human life. From the morning. Of the first day, when the prophet Gad came to David (vs. 13). The time appointed. The pestilence was to last three days. It began promptly, and made terrible havoc. But it looks, in verse 16, as if the time appointed was less than the three days. There are some who render this phrase, *even unto the time of assembly*—i. e., the time of the evening sacrifice. This would reduce the time of the pestilence to a single day. Dan. The chief city of the Israelites in the north. Beersheba. A city on the southern border. The phrase from Dan to Beersheba meant, from one end of the land to the other. Seventy thousand. No plague had ever fallen so heavily upon the Israelites. The angel. In 1 Chron. xxi. 15, we learn that "God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it, and

as he was destroying, the Lord repented him of the evil." Angels were often God's ministers in judgment, and shall be at the end of the world (Ex. xii. 23; 2 Kings xix. 35; Matt. xii. 41). The awful work of destruction had gone on under the direction of this angel who "excelled in might"; but when he reached Jerusalem, and stood with drawn sword stretched over the city (1 Chron. xxi. 16), his course was arrested by command of the Lord. Repented him. This is language suited to our way of speaking, as when we talk of the sun rising and setting. The Lord acted like one who had changed his mind, and had relented. But he had the same unchangeable view of sin, and was not surprised into a change of conduct by his sympathies. But by prompt confession and expiation of the sin, David and his people came into that position before God where he could shorten the period of judgment. The necessity of further punishment was taken away. Araunah: The Ornan of 1 Chron. xxi. 15, a Jebusite—one of the old families of Jebus (Jerusalem), perhaps belonging to the royal race.

Vs. 17.—This verse begins an explanation of how the plague was averted from Jerusalem. David saw the angel, or messenger of death, standing by Araunah's threshing-floor, between heaven and earth, threatening Jerusalem. He was moved at once to confession of his sin. Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. In numbering the people, with a vain glorious and ambitious spirit. Israel had shared in the sin, but with the magnanimity of a true perception of his own sinfulness, David takes all the blame to himself, and begs the Lord to confine the judgments to himself and his house.

Vs. 18-20.—Confession was not enough. There must be expiation, in order to put the sin away. Therefore, Gad, the prophet, and David's confidential counsellor, came to him, by direction of the angel (1 Chron. xxi. 18), and in answer to David's prayer, with a communication from the Lord. There must be an altar unto the Lord, and a sacrifice upon it. The command was specific, even to naming the locality—the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite—which afterwards became the site of Solomon's Temple, and hence the scene of repeated expiatory offerings for centuries. David promptly obeyed. With death all around him, there was no time for delay. Araunah . . . saw the king. He, like David, had already seen the angel (1 Chron. xx. 20), and was, in a measure, prepared for the king's visit. Went out. From the threshing-floor where he and his sons had hid themselves when they saw the angel (1 Chron. xxi. 20, 21).

Vs. 21-24.—To buy . . . to build an altar . . . that the plague may be stayed. David's answer covers the whole ground. He would buy, not seize as king, nor receive as a gift, the place designated by the angel. He would build an altar for sacrifices that spoke the language of both confession of sin and expiation, and he conditions the staying of the plague upon this. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." Araunah would gladly have given to David the oxen for sacrifices, with their yokes and the wooden threshing instruments to build the fire; but David would not receive them as a gratuity. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. David answered, Nay. He would buy it at a price—i. e., the right price, its full value. His refusal to take what was offered, as a gift, was not a matter of pride, but of religious principle—a principle which underlies all real giving to God. He would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. Fifty shekels of silver. About twenty-eight dollars. In 1 Chron. xxi. 25, the price is put at six hundred shekels of gold. It is thought the fifty paid merely for the oxen and implements of the threshing-floor; while the larger sum (amounting to \$5,356 00) was paid for the hill on which the threshing-floor stood.

Vs. 25.—Burnt offerings. Which spoke of renewed consecration to God through expiation of sin. Peace-offerings. Telling of renewed fellowship with God, with his sin put away. See 1 Chron. xxi. 26-30, for a fuller account.

The way to have sin put away is through confession—that confession which leads us to Christ. See 1 John i. 9.

The Lesson for the little Ones.

There must be real sorrow for sin—telling God that we are sorry, turning away from it and not doing it again, asking for forgiveness—then—there will be forgiveness.

See how many things they can find in the lesson which show that David was truly sorry.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rev. Isaiah Wallace.

Your readers learned with deep regret that our esteemed brother Wallace, the accounts of whose missionary labors of late have been so cheering to us all, was stricken down by paralysis in the midst of his engagements. Hastening homeward, he found himself growing rapidly worse, and the conviction was forced upon him that his work for the Master was done so far as this life is concerned. After reaching home he seemed to sink gradually, and all hope of restoration was given up by his physicians and family.

It affords me pleasure, however, to be able to report that, through the mercy of God, our brother still lives, and that he has so far improved during the past few days as to inspire his friends with strong hope of his partial, and, perhaps, complete recovery. The paralysis of his right side seems to be yielding gradually to skillful medical treatment; and it is hoped that a long rest and careful nursing will effect an entire removal of this difficulty.

Our brother has been laboring of late beyond his power of endurance. His marked success afforded a stimulus which urged him on when he should have been resting. Hence the result. For the present it will be necessary for him to lay aside all thought of missionary work, and spend months in perfect rest and quietude.

When stricken down, he was on his way to River John, where he purposed to spend some time in missionary labor. He felt disappointed in not being permitted to carry out this purpose, and his disappointment was intensified during his illness by receiving a kind letter from a good brother who, formerly resided in River John, but is in California at present, expressing great satisfaction with the appointment of Bro. Wallace by the H. M. Board to a mission at River John, and enclosing a draft for twenty dollars in aid of the good work. It is hoped that our H. M. Board will be able to secure at once a faithful and active missionary for that field.

Meanwhile we rejoice that Brother Wallace is convalescent, and our prayer is that he may be fully restored to health and strength.

W. H. WARREN.

Bridgetown, August 4th, 1884.

For the Christian Messenger.

Mr. Spurgeon's Jubilee.

Dear Mr. Editor,—

I fear my communication on the above will be somewhat stale coming so long after the event. If so, then commit it to the capacious maw of the well-fed editor's waste-basket, still I will venture a few notes, basket or no basket.

Spending a day or two with a friend near Upper Norwood, in the early part of the week of the Jubilee, and finding that Mr. Spurgeon's home was within an hour's walk, I set out on Monday 16th, to see the house and surroundings of the noted preacher. Passing close by the Crystal Palace, from which, after a walk of half an hour, I reach Beulah Hill. A painter is at work at the entrance gate, painting "Westwood" on the post, whereby I know I have found the object of my search. Going down a winding carriage drive well wooded on either side, seeing two men at work I enquired if Mr. Spurgeon is at home, when I am told he left at 3 o'clock. At this I felt some disappointment as he is interesting himself in the matter of finding ministers for Nova Scotia, and I wished to see him, but as I found when I met him at the Tabernacle on the 18th, his success is somewhat small. He had written to several but none had seemed to care about going. But this is a divergence.

His house is beautifully situated on a rising slope, commanding one of the most extensive and lovely landscapes I have ever seen. Although in a pretty thickly peopled part, the house is as secluded and quiet as if there were no other dwelling within twenty miles. It is about three quarters of an hour's drive from the Tabernacle. On the left of the house and adjoining it is a handsome square built tower, and on the right a round one with a parapet on top. On each side of the front door, which is reached by steps, is a lion, and while not chained like those Bunyan tells of, they strike no terror into the heart of the pilgrim to Westwood. The house altogether is not so large as I expected to find it, but it is the very perfection of neatness, airiness and cheerfulness. A grassy lawn in which are beautifully arranged flowerbeds, bright with bloom, slopes gently down from the front, surrounded by a shrubbery, with an occasional arbour of rustic oak, varnished, with thatched roof. Taking French

leave, I walked down a winding path and found myself by the stables and coach house, which were like every thing else connected with the place—models of neatness and cleanliness. Mr. Spurgeon is general superintendent at Westwood, as well as at the Tabernacle and its various institutions, and as the gardener said to me when looking through the garden, "He likes to see things looking nice." Near the stable, hung on the wall, is a huge horse-shoe, the gift of a friend who, evidently desirous that the place and its owner should be guarded against ghosts, hobgoblins and such like, presented it to Mr. S. It is I suppose about two feet in diameter, and weighing not much less than a couple of hundred weight. By and by, I reach the kitchen garden, where vegetables of many sorts grow abundantly, passing from there into the flower garden, the air is laden with the spicy perfume of pinks which grow in great profusion. Roses too in almost endless variety grow all around, and many rich varieties of other flowers both known and (to me) unknown. Seeing the gardener near the conservatory, I ask if I may go in, when he kindly conducts me through. The vines were heavily laden with very tempting looking grapes in various stages of perfection. I cannot answer for the quality of those that were ripe. (The gardener was near me). Passing through the vineery into the conservatory, a charming sight greets one's eyes in the beauty and variety of plants and flowers, both home and foreign. Nestled in among them is a very cosy looking seat with a table in front, where I dare say the preacher spends many a quiet hour. But perhaps not, for he is one of the busiest and hardest working men living. Another house is largely occupied with varieties of the fuchsia, cactus, ferns, &c.; the maiden-hair by its abundance and variety being evidently a favourite, and justly so. On leaving the fernery, I heard footsteps, and on looking round there was Mrs. Spurgeon and a lady friend. I had never seen Mrs. S. before but from photographs I had seen I knew her at once. I very humbly begged pardon, apologised for trespassing, and taking such liberty, &c., &c., and she with that generousness which marks her character, granted me full absolution, not even adding, "But don't let me catch you here again." A couple of stocks of bees were close by, which she appeared to have come out to look at, but I had my suspicions. She, like her partner has a kind and generous countenance, on which marks of her long illness are clearly traceable, while her hair is quite gray. I may here say that her health is better now than it has been for many years. After a short conversation on bees, Mrs. S. retires, and I visit the peachery. The trees are laden with fruit, much of which the gardener intends plucking that what is left may grow the larger. An engagement in the evening, and having some miles to walk prevented my lingering longer at this lovely spot, and as I left I could not help thinking that if any man deserves a beautiful home, and whatever nature or art can supply to make that home attractive, happy and joyous, it is the lowly minded, highly honoured, and justly renowned Tabernacle pastor. From his beautiful home on Beulah Hill, he has often heard the music of Heaven, and enjoy sweet communion with his King. Long may God spare him to win souls, and bless the church, and permit him to see a good old age, and then like a shock of corn fully ripe may he be taken by holy angels for ever to dwell in the "Beautiful Home on high."

With affectionate remembrance,

J. BROWN.

Melksham, Wilt., G.B.

P.S.—(a). I intended when I began to give some particulars about the Jubilee, but I have gone clean away from my text. I find my letter would be too long after my attempted sketch of Westwood, to give any account of the Jubilee at the Tabernacle, which I hope to do very soon.

P.S.—(b). The Lord's having rejected the Franchise Bill has caused a great stir up in the country. While I write (2 p.m., July 21), many thousands are collecting on the Thames Embankment to go in procession to Hyde Park, accompanied by about fifty bands. Excursion trains run from different parts of the country. One passed Melksham, (which is 100 miles from London) this morning composed of 18 carriages. There will be several platforms in the Park, and addresses by popular M. P's., &c., and similar resolutions put at each gathering. I am afraid there is rough weather ahead, and that the House of Lords will feel its force more than they will know how to appreciate. The Lords are unquestionably losing caste in the country, and that very rapidly. There is on one hand a growing and loud demand for the reformation of that House, and on the other for its total abolition, and judging from its procedure of late the Lords are helping on their own overthrow. This opinion is shared in very widely by others besides

J. B.

For the Christian Messenger.
Incidents of Ministerial Life.

A TALE AND SOMETHING MORE.

CHAPTER IX.

In her home, Miss Prudens was the same as when moving in circles of Christian work, with the extra charm of being even more at ease. Her mother, besides ever setting her daughters a good example in domestic life, used to exercise them, in turn, by giving them two or three weeks of full charge, in the management of household affairs. In this sphere they each did wisely, but the eldest excelled them all. Nothing seemed to have been forgotten by her, and she did not think the smallest matter beneath her notice; indeed, she had special regard for the minutia of house keeping, and used to say, the more important matters had a way of taking care of themselves. Every one who had the privilege of visiting the house felt her influence, though her personal appearance, like her manner, was of that class which nearly always escapes criticism.

That same providence and grace which had, for years, been preparing the pastor of Taxis for the work of the ministry, had been engaged in furnishing this young lady with the gifts and qualifications of a minister's wife; and Mr. Althes was not a year in making the discovery, though that period of his pastorate had expired ere he made it known. When Miss Prudens was made acquainted with the good opinion of her pastor and its consequences, she seemed more surprised than anybody in her acquaintance afterwards; but it was impossible there should not be a blending of heart where heaven smiled so benignantly.

Some ministers are not permitted to do as they please in these matters; and while the most of them justly complain, there may be one or two who afterwards wish their churches had prevented them getting married at all; but the betrothal at Taxis scarcely met a dissenting voice: it was thought so suitable, that it passed as an ordinary circumstance. The marriage did not take place for several months.

This interesting incident is suggestive of a sermon: the text is contained in the Book of Genesis, second chapter, and eighteenth verse—I will make an help meet for him. Faithful, labourous pastors, feeling always the burden of souls, and freighted with the cares of the church, need a wife as much as did Adam. God is as much interested in the welfare of his ministers as he was in that of our first parents; and as willing to provide them with wives. Our text, therefore, may be accommodated to this particular need of Christian pastors. Let us observe,

I. A good wife is God's workmanship. Adam's wife was made from a rib, out of his side. Matthew Henry says—"Not out of his head to top him, or out of his feet to be trampled upon by him; but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." It is all nonsense about ministers needing angels for partners in life. Think of these ethereal creatures taking a position in some minister's homes with only four hundred dollars per annum! In judging the divine workmanship in this matter, some will overlook the fact that the wives of ministers are, in general the same as those of other men. It is not intended they should be the extraordinary beings some look for. Persons who undertake to criticise their pastor's wives, would not do so badly, if they would only keep to the subject; but they wander, and, through the minister's wife, they often condemn all the idle members of the church, and themselves especially. It may be said of many a one who comes under this ordeal, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." If she be, in every respect, a real help to her husband she bears the stamp of the handiwork of God.

We cannot, in this brief discussion enter into a category of the traits of a suitable pastor's wife; and it will not be required. Every young minister must be supposed capable of looking out for himself; he will have ample opportunity, and no need of hurry. The matter is in the hand of God. A prudent wife is from the Lord. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: this beauty must be in the heart of the wife, "even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

II. A good wife will be a real help to a pastor. This, in three ways, especially; first, she will relieve him from the cares of the house; secondly, she will help his devotion; and, thirdly, he will be assisted by her in his work for Jesus. Yes, the church has a claim on the labours of the pastor's wife, exactly as

much as on any other of its members, having the same talent and time; and as long as the people trust her with candour and kindness they will get much more.

III. A good wife is God's promise. It is remarkable that the greatest event in human life should be the subject of so much amusing and trifling talk. Christian men, to an extent, must be permitted to indulge in pleasantries on the matter; but they should be careful not to be of the number of those who run, heedlessly, into the entanglement of unsuitable alliances. Young men in preparation for the ministry, need not give themselves a moment's anxiety on the prospect of matrimony. It is not in human nature altogether to resist the attraction of the theme; but when it steals our busy moments, we may listen to the admonition of David—"Delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

It soon appeared that the sympathies of Mr. Althes could not be confined to the sphere of his own congregation; and he was glad to find himself the pastor of a missionary church. Both pastor and people excel, in proportion to the missionary spirit existing among them. They had a regular system of foreign mission work, and the pastor soon became acquainted with the ministers of the Association, and the condition of many of the destitute churches. Several of these churches were subject to disorganisation, neglect, and abuses, exceedingly damaging to the interests of the denomination at large. In his second year, he arranged for change of pulpit with his brethren on several occasions, for no other reason than to become acquainted with the men and their work. To him, the Baptist denomination throughout the world was one; and he sought every occasion to become acquainted with its true condition. With regard to its prosperity or adversity, he manifested the disposition, to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice.

The pastor's wedding was appointed to take place on the tenth month of his second year at Taxis. All seemed inclined to participate in the joy of the occasion; and there were several willing hands helping in preparation of the interesting event.

(To be continued.)

THE Guardian, Church of England paper, published in England, usually has a large number of advertisements for curates. The following are seventeen taken from one paper and show the predilections of the parties wishing for such assistants:

1. A curate is wanted, "of High Church but not extreme views."
2. "A noble church, large congregations. Surplised choir. Daily service. Good schools. Plenty of parochial duty."
3. "Priest. Single. Musical preferred. Fine church. Surplised choir. Pretty Country. Nice Society. Good lodgings."
4. "Earnest worker. Sound Churchman. Total abstainer."
5. "Fine old church. Three short-clothed services. Active worker. No extremes. Oxford or Cambridge preferred. Music would be appreciated."
6. "Views mod. Dio. Oxford. Choral service."
7. "A sound, earnest churchman, two or three years in Holy Orders. A good preacher and a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge preferred."
8. "Restored church. Surplised choir."
9. "Earnest, decided Churchman. Graduate preferred. Hard worker and good preacher."
10. "Evangelical, earnest, good preacher. £150. Address Vicar."
11. "Priest, good worker, clear voice, frequent celebrations."
12. "Good reader and preacher. Musical. Earnest worker. Graduate"
13. "Married man of means. Three churches. Commodious house to be rented. Views moderate High Church."
14. "H. Ch. No extremes."
15. "Decided High Churchman. Population 6,700. Large church. Three clergy."
16. "Patron of a large pew-rented church in an important town wishes to meet with a popular preacher, whom he could appoint as the incumbent."
17. "Priest. E. P. Musical. Beautiful church and service."

This is only a sample of about one-fourth similar advertisements in one paper. This does not look like uniformity.

What we can do is a small thing, but we can will and aspire to great things.—John Tauler.