

3. God will raise friends for us wherever we have to go in obedience to the leadings of providence.

4. We can never serve God well till we love him, and when we do love him any service for him will be delightful. As Jacob felt seven years' toil short and sweet for Rachel, so all our years spent in God's service will be years of delight.

DOCTRINE TO BE PROVED.

Love lightens labor. Matt. xi. 28-30; 1 John v. 3; Micah vi. 8; Rom. xiii. 10; 2 Cor. viii. 24, with ix. 1, 2.

THIRD SABBATH

SUBJECT: *The word made flesh.* John i. 1-14.

The writer of this gospel was a fisherman, the son of a fisherman named Zebedee. His mother's name was Salome. John was about 25 years of age when called to follow Christ. It is said that Salome was the daughter of Joseph (the husband of Mary) by his first wife. If this was the case John and James were reckoned as our Lord's nephews. He was most intimately associated with Christ, who loved him with a peculiar affection. John was the apostle of *love*: yet he and James were called "Sons of Thunder." Besides this gospel he wrote three epistles, and the Book of Revelation. This gospel was written a few years later than the other three—probably between the years 68 and 70 of our era. It is the sublime completion of the other three, and lets us see more of the Being, the Thought, the Heart of our Saviour than the others. He begins his gospel in the unfathomed depths of eternity. Our lesson is at once a preface to, and a summary of, the whole book.

V. 1.—The other evangelists trace the genealogy of Christ upwards from Mary and Joseph to David, Abraham, Adam—and even to God. John begins with the unknown "beginning, before anything was made." See Gen. i. 1. "*The word*"—the Logos. This is a title of Christ as he existed from all eternity. It identifies him as the wisdom of God, the revealer of God, creating, quickening, enlightening. The *logos* is distinguished from God; he was with God; he was God. This shows that Christ is God, and was God "in the beginning"—before creation,—from all eternity. The meaning of "with God" is shown in ver. 18. There was no time when Christ was not God, distinct from the Father but with him. Matthew, Mark and Luke proved that the man Jesus was indeed Christ: and now lest any should think that he was a mere man John here shows us his real Godhead.

V. 2.—He was with God when none else existed; but though in the beginning *with* God, he became man *with* men.

V. 3.—"All things"—the whole universe. In Heb. i. 2, and Col. i. 16, this doctrine is repeated—that Christ (the Logos) made all things: that the Father created all things *by* Christ. Among the philosophers who flourished when John wrote, it was a favorite notion that matter was eternal,—was independent of God. This notion he shows to be groundless.

V. 4.—All life is of God; without him every living thing, vegetable, animal, spiritual, would fall back into nothingness. Life and light go together, as also darkness and death.

V. 5.—*Darkness*—all sin, alienation from God, whether it exists in the form of simple blindness, or of devilish, wilful, active hate. Those under the dominion of the darkness rejected the light, the Logos. The whole gospel shows the conflict between the true light and the opposing darkness. Christ is the light; the darkness is represented chiefly in the devil, and in a lower degree in fallen mankind.

Vv. 6, 7.—The office of John was to tell about Christ, the light. God constitutes,—"makes"—and sends forth every true teacher. For more about John see Mark i. 4, Matt. iii. 1-3. John Baptist gave more "light" to the world than all the prophets before him. Men are not required to believe without a good testimony, a "witness."

V. 8.—The Baptist was thought by some to be the Messiah, but his real office was to bear witness of the "Light."

V. 9.—Christ is the true Light, and every one is free to enjoy that Light.

V. 10.—He (Christ, the Light) was always in the world; he made it. But the impious love of the world prevents men from knowing the maker of the world, though his chief end in creating it was to make himself known.

V. 11.—His own—the children of Israel especially.

V. 12.—As many as received him,—be they Jews or Gentiles,—the line of demarcation is now wiped out. "Power"—he enables them to receive the Light and become the sons of God. Ver. 13. The adoption was irrespective of nationality or parentage.

V. 14.—The Word—Logos—the light, the truth, became incarnate, "was made flesh." Mystery of mysteries! he *became* flesh but did not cease to be what he was before. *Flesh* often denotes corrupt human nature. Here it means a human body. "We beheld his glory"—especially his transfiguration—his miracles, his death, resurrection and ascension. (See John ii. 11; Luke ix. 32, &c.)

The following words should be carefully studied by the classes, as they are used with a depth of meaning not met with except in the writings of John:—