

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS.**January 19. Luke iii : 15-22.**

In the estimation of John the Baptist the great gift which was to be obtained from the Anointed One who was to follow him was the baptism, or the consecration by the pouring on or into, (as by the Angels with the vials in the Apocalypse) of the Holy Breath or Spirit, and Fire. The effect of that consecration he unfolds in the figurative language of the time. His fan, the great shovel with which corn was tossed in the air, represented the purgative forces brought into action by the consecration, and the floor which was to be cleaned is the area (*halon* in the Greek, from which our word halo is derived,) or thought-sphere in which consciousness endures, into the garner or repository of which the good grain must be gathered, while the chaff is destroyed. As John's message was an exhortation to right conduct, the "greater than he" brought the message of right thought and the means of its attainment. And first of all he himself submits to the consecration of the outpouring of these spiritual powers. The symbolism of the dove is very ancient. It was sacred to Venus, or Lucifer, the Light-bringer or Star of the Dawn, a mystical name of the Christ.

January 26. Luke iv : 14-22.

If anything was necessary to emphasize the spiritual nature of the mission of Jesus, this passage should be sufficient. He had returned to Galilee (the circle) in the power of the Spirit, and in opening his public mission he reads a passage from one of the most spiritual of the ancient scriptures: "The Spirit of the Master is upon me, to proclaim the season or cycle of His goodwill or favour." or, in effect, to announce the advent of the Messianic cycle, and his own acceptance of the office of the Anointed One (Isaiah lxi : 1, 2). The labours of the Messiah may be compared with the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, to which they present some degree of correspondence. The poor, the mendicant in spirit, who have cast off the chain of attachment to property, a condition quite unconnected

with the possession or lack of worldly goods, are to hear of the good magic; the broken, or rather the contrite in heart, are to be healed as with the healing of the rays of that inward Sun of Justice which dawns with the new cycle; the captives, the spirits in the prison-houses of the flesh, of whom Peter tells us that the Christos descends and enters into their kingdom of darkness to teach them the good magic, are to learn of the Path of deliverance; the blind, in whom the Secret Eye is darkened, are to be enlightened; and, quoting another text in Isaiah (lviii : 6), the broken or oppressed are to go free. The citing of this particular chapter from Isaiah seems especially intended to enforce the spiritual and practical application of the Christ's message, and to rebuke the formalism of religious ceremony, and that mere attention to church duties and services which constitute, for the falsely pious, the whole of religion. The members of the little congregation were astonished at the favourable oracle they had heard, but what wonder the message would excite if enforced once more by precept and example. "Is not this the fast I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, that ye may break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?" (Isaiah lviii : 6, 7).

February 2. Luke v : 17-26.

"The power of the Master was with him to heal," is the reading in verse 17 of some MSS. Modern mental healers of various classes who instance such occurrences as the healing of the paralytic as an evidence of the power of mind over matter, usually omit consideration of the knowledge and wisdom in the possession of the Master whereby he was able to judge in each case as to whether such apparent interference with natural causes as he exercised was legitimate. The law must act justly to the last jot and tittle, and when the sick was healed we must be assured that the Master was satisfied of the exhaus-