

The Witness of John the Baptist to Jesus

those who have won the most victories over sin, and made the furthest progress in holiness, who see the greatest difference between themselves and Jesus Christ. In Him there is no spot. He possesses every virtue in its perfection. Altogether worthy is He of our loftiest and sincerest adoration, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, v. 29. "So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with

The Burden
and the Cross

the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." So wrote John Bunyan out of the fulness of his own heart. And what joy can be greater than to have forever taken away, the heavy burden of sin that would otherwise crush out our very life?

But that he should be made manifest, v. 31. There is not a blade of grass on the earth nor

a star in the sky that does not show the power and wisdom of Christ. Making Christ Known But it is human lives redeemed by His grace and made clean and strong by His Spirit that make Him known most clearly. It is the high privilege of every follower to help in bringing this knowledge to the whole world.

This is the Son of God, v. 34. We can tell the country from which a traveller comes by his language, or accent, or dress. So Christ, as He walked among men, by His words of grace and deeds of power gave proof that He was of heaven; and His presence in the Church, as the centuries have passed, has but confirmed this testimony. The lives of His faithful followers have been the best evidence of His power and grace. It is a service which even the humblest may render. It requires wealth, to give largely; one must have eloquence to move multitudes by your words. But the poorest and the most slow of speech can live a Christ-like life.

Christ's
Country

TEACHING HINTS

This section contains teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

Be as graphic as you can in describing John's great personality. Draw out the proofs of the wide amazement caused by this sudden voice in the wilderness breaking the long silence of prophecy: the dense crowds—the common people, the publicans, the soldiers, Herod, the royal auditor; at last, the ecclesiastical commission to inquire into the alarming situation. Raise the point, Why all this curiosity?

Did it centre on the striking personal appearance of the man? His long hair, his tanned face, his cheap food, his rough clothing, his simple habits? These alone would be insufficient to account for the prevailing curiosity.

Show, rather, how curiosity turned upon, (1) his identity, and (2) his practices.

Clearly he was a prophet. But which prophet? Have your class mention the different guesses that were made. What puzzled his contemporaries most, however, was one of his

practices: that of baptizing Jews. They were familiar with the practice of baptizing Gentiles, whenever they became proselytes. Since Gentiles were counted unclean, baptism in their case had a clear meaning: they needed to be washed before they could be "born again" as Jews. But a Jew thought himself all right by natural birth. What did John mean by this practice of baptizing Jews, as if they were no better than Gentiles?

When you have sufficiently dwelt upon the curiosity aroused by John's personal appearance, identity, and practices, proceed to discuss his *humility*. He does not act like one who feels flattered to be thought great. He acknowledges himself to be an inferior. His humility, indeed, is so great that he anticipates one of the deepest secrets of Christ's teaching. See Mark 9: 35 in connection with Christ's object lesson from the little child.

Show how John, in answer to the commission, takes a lower place for himself than Christ gave him, Matt. 11: 9, 11. He counts himself lower than a slave in his unfitness to look after even the foot-gear of guests, v. 27.