

will be perfectly flat under a gust of wind, and immediately resume its upright position. It grows in great canobreaks in many parts of Palestine, especially on the west side of the Dead Sea, where, nourished by the warm springs, it lines the shore for several miles with an impenetrable fringe—the lair of wild boars and leopards—to the exclusion of all other vegetation. On the banks of the Jordan it occurs in great patches but not so lofty. (Canon Tristram) John was not a fickle, changeable man, veering with every turn of the wind of popularity. He neither catered to the public for applause, nor truckled to the king for patronage. He was a man of dauntless courage, inflexible resolution and fearless tongue.

25. Soft raiment—He reminds them of the camel's hair coat and leathern girdle which John wore, and the locusts and wild honey on which he fared (Matt. 3: 4) There is an implied contrast with the effeminate courtiers of Herod, thus arousing feelings of respect and admiration for John. Live delicately—live in luxury, referring to the whole mode of life. The word is from a verb which means to enervate by debauchery and excess. **Kings' courts**—The Herods had palaces at Tiberias, Cæsarea Philippi and Jerusalem.

26. Much more than a prophet—John was the only prophet whose coming had been predicted (Mal. 3: 1); others merely foretold the coming of Christ, he actually pointed him out (John 1; 29); and he was in immediate personal relation to Christ as his Forerunner, preparing the people to listen to his teachings (John 3: 26-36).

27. Of whom it is written—(Mal. 3: 1; Isa. 40: 3; Luke 1: 15-17, 76). In Malachi the words are "before me," and God is the speaker. Christ was therefore Immanuel, God manifest in human nature. Matthew tells us that Jesus told them further that John was the Elijah who was to come (Mal. 4: 5; compare Luke 7: 17) **Prepare the way**—On every occasion of the visit of a prince, whether native or a foreign visitor, it is the custom to send official messengers to impress laborers and put the highways in travelling order. It was done, for instance, in several cases, when the Grand Duke of Russia, father of the recently deceased Czar, visited the East. The highways are usually mere tracks, which would not, in this country, be recognized as roads, or hardly as Indian trails, and yet they are the avenues of an immense commerce. But much work is needed to make the way tolerable for the passage of a prince and his escort. (Dr. I. H. Hall.)

28. Born of women—a general description of mankind (Job 14: 1). Compare Gal. 4: 4. Our Saviour's true humanity is

expressed in this way. **He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven** (R. V.)—By "kingdom of heaven," the spiritual kingdom which Christ founded, is meant. Those who are "but little" or "lesser," "inferior," in that kingdom are **Greater than he**—"Not greater in personal character nor in external condition, but in present privilege, prerogative, station as the least child is greater than the highest servant." (Abbott.) He is greater in respect to the development of his knowledge, spiritual insight and experience. The humblest Christian knows more about Christ than John did; enjoys more of the Holy Spirit, for He applies to him the benefits purchased by Christ; John was a servant, though a prophet he is a son (Rom 8: 14-17); and, in fine, he belongs to a new and brighter era in the history of redemption. In Matthew's account Christ goes on to say that multitudes thronged around John like a besieging army entering, pouring into, a captured city. When John came the prophetic dispensation ended and the new era dawned. For John was the Elijah of which Malachi spoke.

II. CHRIST CONDEMNING THE PEOPLE. 29. It is not quite clear whether verses 29 and 30 were spoken by Christ, or are a comment by the evangelist. In favor of the former view is the fact that the words "and the Lord said," in verse 31, are spurious, and there is no such break in the continuity of the subject; the words come naturally in connection with the verses in Matthew regarding the thronging crowds just referred to; and there is no other example of a similar interpolation by Luke. On the other hand the tone of the verses is so much calmer than the preceding words of Jesus, that they strike the ear more naturally as a comment of Luke himself. Good authorities are about equally divided in their opinions on this point. We adopt the latter view. All the people—(Mark 12: 37.) Christ's poor in contrast with the pharisees and lawyers. These had accepted John's preaching, and prepared their hearts by repentance to receive Christ. **Justified God**—declared that God's plan for saving men was the right one, and so they readily submitted to Christ's teaching (Matt. 3: 5; Luke 3: 12). They came to Christ as having a right to the allegiance they had formerly given their imprisoned master.

30. Rejected for themselves (R. V.)—frustrated, as far as they were concerned, the counsel of God. God's plan was that by repenting of sin and accepting Christ, they should enter the kingdom of God. They refused John, and so would not now come to Jesus. They were too proud and self-righteous to submit to the humbling doctrines of either. "*Frustrated by words and deeds God's way of salvation in their own cases* (Gal.