

put it away, there was a propriety in His submitting to the ordinance symbolical of the removal of sin.

It was on the occasion of His baptism that John received such full evidence of the divine Sonship and the Messiahship of Jesus as warranted his bearing witness to Him as the "Son of God," and as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29-34. For no sooner had he baptized Him than he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and resting upon Him. And, no doubt, he heard the accompanying voice from heaven, referred to by the first three evangelists, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But before our Lord actually entered on the work of His public ministry He had to pass through a protracted and very remarkable trial, which is only briefly referred to by Mark, fuller details being given by Matthew and Luke. Before entering on our proposed exposition of the account of this trial, we preface a few remarks that may help in our endeavor to take up its full meaning and its lessons.

It was only now that our Lord was on the eve of His great personal conflict with Satan. In the counsels of God, the utter overthrow of the great adversary by the "seed of the woman" was sure. For four thousand years, at least, the war declared in Eden had been maintained. Largely as "darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people," God had maintained a visible kingdom in the world, where the light of His saving truth shone. Satan was never permitted to forget the primeval threatening of his overthrow, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," Gen. iii. 15. But we may well suppose that, notwithstanding multiplying intimations of God's purpose of grace, first revealed in that threatening, Satan did not renounce his hope of defeating it. The conquests made, from age to age, in rescuing men from his rule of sin and death, were indeed displays, often very wonderful, of God's *grace* and *power*; but they were *not* the displays of His *wisdom* that they are now seen to be, since Christ has completed His work of redemption. For the *dishonor* of God, *far more than the misery and ruin of man*, is the *supreme design and aim* of Satan; and, if so, we can not but think that, however much he might be galled by the