

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Adapted from Publishers' Select Notes.

SECOND QUARTER.

Lesson VI. Aug. 5. Mark 1:1-11.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

GOLDEN TEXT. "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—Mark 1:11.

THE SECOND DIVISION of the life of Christ, "preparations for His public ministry" (Lessons VI. and VII.) includes: (1) The ministry of John, (2) The baptism of Jesus, and (3) The forty days' temptation.

THE SECTIONS of the story belonging to this lesson includes the ministry of John, Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18; and the baptism of Jesus, Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23.

EXPLANATORY. I. THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST.—Vs. 1-3. 1. "The beginning of the gospel. This verse is a title to the book of Matthew. It is equivalent to the words, 'The beginning of the gospel, etc.' 'The gospel,' shortened from 'good spell'; i. e., good story, news, tidings. The best news the world ever received was brought by Jesus Christ; nay, more, Jesus Christ himself won the gospel news, 'the gospel alive.' 'Jesus Christ the Son of God.' This is the full title of our Lord, a complete description of our glorious Saviour. 'Jesus' (meaning Saviour) was his personal name, showing his human nature. He was a Jewish man. 'Christ' (meaning anointed) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. He was the PROMISED MESSIAH. 'The Son of God.' This declares his eternal and divine nature, as expressed more fully in John 1:1-3, 14. He was the TRUE GOD, the second person in the glorious Trinity.

2. "As it is written." (i. e., even as.) Note the punctuation of verses 2, 3, 4. In the Revised Version, where this phrase is connected with verse 4, then as the prophets foretold, so John came, etc. "In the prophets." Verse 2 is from Mal. 3:1, and verse 3 from Isa. 40:3. "Behold I send my messenger before my face," a herald went before the oriental king, proclaiming their coming, and bidding every one to make way for them, so John was a herald to make proclamation of the coming of Christ and his kingdom.

3. "The voice." (i. e., Isa. 40:3-5.) The prophet was transported, as it were, into the midst of the scenes he describes, and seems to hear the voice. John is called "a voice" because: (1) He was the utterer of God's thought; (2) "The whole man, was a sermon" (3) Because the emphasis and importance lay chiefly in the message, not in the messenger; (4) Himself weak and insignificant, he yet produced a mighty effect on the souls of men. "Of one crying heraldically in the wilderness. A wild, thinly inhabited district. 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' This refers to the custom of sending persons to prepare the way for the march of a monarch through a wild and uncultivated region. It consisted of leveling hills, filling valleys, putting roads in order, and getting everything in readiness.

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARING THE WAY FOR CHRIST.—Vs. 4-8. Studying these verses in connection with the description of John's work as given in Matthew and Luke, we note several ways in which John prepared the way for the work of Jesus Christ.

FIRST, JOHN CALLED THE ATTENTION OF THE PEOPLE TO THE FACT that the new kingdom of God was at hand. His preaching would set them to searching the scriptures and watching the signs of the times (Matt. 3:2).

Second, HE LED THE PEOPLE TO DEEP CONTRITION OF THE HEART, and thus made the people feel their need of a Saviour. 4. "John." Called The Baptist (The Baptizer) in Matthew. "Baptize, . . . preach." An explanation of how John performed the duty of forwarding the people to the prophesy "Baptize." (See under "Baptism" below.) "In the wilderness." (See Place.) "Preach." Publicly announce, proclaim in a heraldic way. "Baptism of repentance;" a baptism, the characteristics of which was repentance; which involved an obligation to repent. Abolition in the East is, indeed, of itself, almost a religious duty. The dust and heat weigh upon the spirits and heat like a load; its removal is refreshment and happiness. It was, hence, impossible to see a convert go down into a stream, travel-worn and soiled with dust, and in a moment emerge pure and fresh, without feeling that the symbol suited and interpreted a craving of the human heart. "Repentance." A change of mind, of heart as to sin; implying grief over sin, as its source, and a change of life and conduct, as its result. "For," rather unto, as the result and fruit of confessed repentance, an indispensable prerequisite. "Remission of sins." Remission of sins, or forgiveness, is more than the taking away of the punishment due for our sins. It is the being received back into the family of God, as his true children, so that we may draw near to God as to a loving father, who treats us as if we never had sinned.

was it miraculously opened by Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:8, 14). "Confessing their sins." The very act of baptism was a confession of sins and a promise of repentance, but doubtless they also, as Alfred says, made "a particular and individual confession"; not, however, made privately to John, but before the people. No one truly repents who does not also confess—to God the sins against God, to man the sins against man, ever also making restitution as far as possible.

10. "And straightway coming up out of the water." As soon as the baptism was completed, and he was going up the bank of the river. He went up praying. All such men ordinarily should be bathed in a spirit of prayer. "He saw." While he prayed in answer to prayer. Even to Jesus the best gifts came through prayer. So it was that the transfiguration came. "The heavens opened, or, as in Revised Version, 'All that had hidden from the view of his heavenly home and his Father above were raised, and he saw into the very heaven above.'" The Spirit like a dove descending upon him. "This is a most captivating symbol. It is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the power of his gentleness and tenderness and meekness, his love, in short, that has been victorious. He has 'wood' and won. We are apt to think of Jesus Christ as the only gentle man of the world. The very words express God's abiding love in our hearts; even the Spirit produces, in the hearts of those who dwell in the spirit, the dove-like nature, gentle, loving, attractive.

That Life Eternal. SUAN TEALE PERRY. How very mysterious it seems to us when a loved one goes out of our home on a journey whence none ever return.

SIXTH, JOHN PREACHED CHRIST TO THE PEOPLE. "And preached," John did much more than baptize; he warned, and exhorted, and persuaded men to repentance, and proclaimed the coming Christ. "There cometh one mightier than I." He called attention away from himself, who was but a man, to the divine Saviour, who was able to save them from their sins, who could wield all influences and conquer all enemies. "The latchet of whose shoes, or rather, sandal, I am not worthy to touch." The more common method, however, was to pull off the legs and sandals and wash them in an iron dish. Then they were thrown into a bag and eaten like parched corn, each one taking the handful they chose. They are still eaten by the Bedouins, and by some of our American Indians. "And wild honey," made by wild bees, and stored in hollow trees or clefts in the rocks.

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III. JESUS CHRIST ENTERING UPON HIS WORK BY BAPTISM.—Vs. 9-11. 9. "In those days." When John was preaching and baptizing. Probably in January, A. D. 27. "Jesus came from Nazareth." His home with his parents, where he lived till he was now about thirty years old (Luke 2:23); the age at which the Levites began their ministry, and the rabbis their teaching. He left Nazareth, and came to Bethabara for the purpose of being baptized, thus commencing his ministry. "And was baptized of John in Jordan." It is uncertain where, but probably at a ford near Jericho, where John had been baptizing.

WHY JESUS WAS BAPTIZED. Matthew says it was in order "to fulfil all righteousness." (1) It was right for all good men to be baptized; and Jesus, as a man, was under obligations to do what was incumbent on other good men. If one so deeply devout had stayed away from the ministry and baptism of the new prophet, it would have been setting a very bad example, unless explained. (2) Jesus was the example for his disciples to imitate; and as baptism was to be an ordinance of perpetual obligation in the new dispensation, we see in the baptism of Jesus an example to his followers. (3) It was a public renunciation of sin and a public profession of religion. It is true that Christ himself knew no sin and needed no repentance (John 8:46; 14:30), but all the more would he renounce all sin publicly, showing where he stood in relation to it. (4) Our Lord was now at the age (the thirtieth year) of the priests at their entrance into office (Num. 4:3). This was his own personal obligation to all righteousness. Jesus was prepared to teach the people.

PUBLIC PROFESSION AND OBEDIENCE, as a preparation for all workers for God. The true follower of Christ must follow him in this public renunciation of sin and profession of religion. It is not true, as is sometimes said, that Christ professed religion only by his life. The teacher who refuses to obey the ordinances of his Lord and Master cannot effectually lead the scholars under his

very hard to break. Why did God give us these ties of kinship and loving companionship if they are to be ruthlessly broken forever? "Love," says Drummond, "must be eternal. It is what God is. Love is life. Love never falters. He that dwells in love dwells in 'ready' in God, for God is love." And our dear ones on earth who loved us so well, love us in heaven. They have a ministry of love and help for us, we would fain believe, that has grown more divine with their change of habitation, and as Longfellow thought, "when the hours of day are numbered."

"Then the forms of the departed Enter in at the open door; The beloved, the true-hearted, Come to visit me once more.

And what are they doing in that beautiful land—those who laid aside their work here and went with the messenger? In Luke 20:36 we find these words: "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." "Children of God"—is that not enough for us to know? In such personal relation to Him, what a beautiful life must theirs be! Let us who have not yet finished our work here see to it that we do not let it wait, because of our days of mourning. Why should we cover ourselves with willow because they—the ones so dear to us, and whose happiness on earth we sought—have passed into that country "where the air is always sweet and pleasant, and where the birds continually do sing," and the promise fulfilled that was made by our blessed Lord: "And I will go and prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also."

They are not not dead, but have entered into life eternal. And when we ask what of the country to which they have gone, let us read St. John's description of the Holy City and the inhabitants thereof.—Zions Herald.

Oh, the rain-song of the robin! How it thrills my heart to hear The rain-song of the robin in the summer of the year How I long for wings to join him where his carol pours free, And for words to beg the secret of his magic minstrelsy.

Does he sing because he revels in the fury of the storm? In the thunder and the lightning does he find a hidden charm? Or with phosphenic eyes, unsmiled, does he see the dark sea pasted with light? And the beauty which shall blossom when the clouds disperse at last?

When they rain on me descendeth, and Thy clouds about me roll. Grant, O God, the power of singing to my O-mest-thank soul! May I see Thy mercy shining far behind the outer gloom May I hear Thy angels chanting: May I see Thy lilies bloom! —Kate Upson Clark, in Harper's Bazar.

The fussy church must be doing something, if it is only mischief; the mechanical cannot stand still; church-mongers are infinitely too busy; they lack repose; they consider that if they are waking up and down very much they are doing something; they consider that if they are bustling quietly still, doing with wonderful alacrity to the great silent heavens in exorcism and eager love, they are doing nothing.—Joseph Parker, D. D.

If we could only think of the pain and the suffering, the unpleasant surroundings, and all the things that make living so hard, and the bed out of which the lily beads may come, and, with our hidden hearts golden and glowing, just climb up slowly through the deep waters, until the soul shall open out all white and lovely under the full sunlight of God, would it not pay for all we have to bear?—Mary Lowe Dickinson.

Only in the sacredness of inward silence does the soul truly meet the secret-hiding God. The strength of resolve, which afterwards shapes life and mixes itself with action, is the fruit of those sacred, solitary moments when we meet God alone.—Frederick William Robertson.

Don't complain about the weather, For easier 'tis, you'll find, To make your mind to weather Than weather to your mind.

Don't complain about the sermon, And about your lack of wit, For, like a boot, a sermon hurts The clearer it doth fit.

Don't complain about your neighbor, For in your neighbor's view His neighbor is not families— That neighbor being you.

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