

meet you, and told you these words? And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Again: it was distinctly foretold, that a messenger resembling Elijah should precede the Messiah. In the last chapter of the prophecy which closes the Old Testament, it was declared: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." It is this prediction that explains the question, "Art thou Elias?" *i. e.* "Art thou Elijah?" which occurs John i. 23.

— *locusts and wild honey.*] The locust was allowed to be eaten. "These may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth; even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind." Lev. xi. 21, 22.

Ver. 5. *Then went out to him Jerusalem*] *i. e.* the people of Jerusalem.—Thus St. Paul says: "I boast of you (the Corinthian Christians) to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago"—*i. e.* the Christians of Achaia. 2 Cor. ix. 2.—Thus we say, "The Church," meaning "the people composing the Church, or Association of men, founded and organized by our Lord."—"All," in this verse = "very many."

Ver. 7. *The Pharisees and Sadducees.*] These were factions, partly religious, partly political. They arose in the troublous times that followed the days of Simon Maccabæus, B. C. 135. In the year 63, B. C., began the final struggle between Hyrcanus and his younger brother Aristobulus, two members of the Maccabean family, for the chief authority. The Pharisees were the partisans of Hyrcanus, and the Sadducees of Aristobulus. The disputes between these factions led to the intervention of the Roman power, the establishment of the family of Antipater and Herod as rulers in Judæa, and finally the subjugation and annihilation of the Jewish

State. The religious differences between these two sections of the Jewish people will be given hereafter.

— *O generation of vipers.*] The rival sects which distracted the Jewish Church and State, are well described as broods of vipers—ever writhing—hissing at and menacing each other—full of wily craft—with the poison of asps under their lips.

Ver. 8. *fruits meet for repentance*]—'a conduct and life that shall fully prove that you have given up your old habits of thought, and are really desirous of being good men.'

Ver. 9. *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*] Many amongst the degenerate Jewish people thought that their election was sufficient to secure their salvation. St. John here teaches the persons before him, that, in order to render their election sure and finally useful to them, they must be intrinsically honest and good. God could produce persons worthy to bear the name of children of Abraham out of the stones of the desert. It would speedily be shown, when the Messiah came, that it did not require the blood of Abraham in the natural veins to render a man acceptable to God. From every nation of the earth would some be taken who should be worthily called 'true children of Abraham'—true servants of God.—Even so now, the members of the Church founded by our Lord must ever be admonished, that their election,—*i. e.* their baptism,—is not sufficient, if the life, to which that was an introduction, be not heartily adopted and carried out.

Ver. 10. *The axe is laid to the root.*] The reformation which the Messiah would establish would be radical and thorough.

Ver. 11. *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*] Not with water merely, but with the Holy Ghost acting on the spirit of a man with a purifying power, as that of fire on metals. An abundant outpouring of God's Holy Spirit was to characterize the dispensation introduced by the Messiah. "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon upon the servants and the handmaids in