



LESSON IV.—JAN. 28.

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.

Matt. iii., 13, to iv., 11. Memory verses, iii., 16, 17. Compare Luke iii., 21, 22, and iv., 1-13.

Daily Readings.

M. A Greater—Matt. xi., 11-19.
T. His Sons—Exod. xxix.; 1-9.
W. The Honor—Heb. v., 1-10.
T. Heir of All—Heb. i., 1-14.
F. Temptation—Jas. i., 1-81.
S. Triumph—I. Cor. x.; 1-31.

Golden Text.

'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—Matt. iii., 17.

Lesson Text.

Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. (14) But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? (15) And Jesus answering, said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. (16) And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him: (17) And to a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (1) Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. (2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. (3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. (4) But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, (6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (8) Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.; (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (11) Then the devil leaveth him; and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Suggestions.

As John the Baptist was preaching in the sparsely inhabited region near the river Jordan, crowds flocked to hear him and to receive baptism at his hands. But one day there came a Man before whom John bowed in humility, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But the Son of Man had come to fulfil all righteousness and by the act of being baptized put himself publicly on the side of righteousness. After the baptism, as they came up out of the water, the heavens suddenly opened and the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove, while God spoke from heaven, testifying that Jesus was his own well-beloved Son. The Father was pleased by the obedience of Christ.

Jesus received the Holy Spirit. He had to be endowed with power from on high before he could begin his public ministry. He had to be filled with the Spirit to be able to resist temptation and to live a life pleasing to God. No one can live a strong, pure life in his own strength. Only the indwelling Spirit of God can drive out the ingrained selfishness of the human heart. After his baptism and reception of the Holy Spirit, Jesus went up into the wilderness, and was there forty days without hu-

man companionship, without food, without temporal comforts of any kind, and besieged by temptations. He was tempted in every point just as we are. (Heb. iv., 15.) The temptation was not easier to bear than ours are; it was much harder, for the fiercest struggle always comes at the last. The devil tried his utmost by seductive flattery, by trying to instil doubts, by promising outward power, by striving in every way to make evil appear right. Yet through the severest strain the Son of Man held true and in the power of the Spirit rebuked the tempter. (I. Cor. x., 13.)

Many old pictures of the life of our Lord represent the tempter to some horrible form of darkness easily recognizable as the devil. But that is not the way that temptations come to us, and we may be sure that temptation in such a form would not have tempted our Lord. It was apparently after the third great attack that the Son of Man recognized that this was the work of the devil, not just the workings of his own mind. When he had fasted forty days, what more natural than for the thought to occur to him that he might use the new supernatural power with which he was endowed, for his own human satisfaction? And it takes a good deal of close thinking to see just where the sin would lie. But such use of power would have put an insurmountable barrier between him and the men whom he came to save. If he used divine power to overcome the natural difficulties of life, he would be only God, and not man. He could only be perfect in humanity by conforming perfectly to the conditions of human nature. (Heb. ii., 16-18.)

If the Son of God were to suddenly appear among the people surrounded by a company of angels, as though he had just dropped from the sky, he would certainly be received with great enthusiasm, and people would flock to hail him as the Messiah, his work would be easily accomplished, so reasoned the tempter as he presented the second temptation. But Jesus saw that the way of ease was not the way to the fulfilment of his mission; he knew that he had come to earth not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and finally to give his very life for the salvation of those who would believe on him.

Neither would he take the world by storm and set up his kingdom by force as the third temptation seems to suggest. It would be easy enough to come as a mighty conqueror and compel men's outward allegiance but their hearts would never be gained in that way, and the purpose of his coming would be utterly defeated.

The word of God was the sword with which our Lord put the enemy to flight. Each attack is answered with a quotation from Deuteronomy, the book of the Law. This shows how our Lord had filled his heart and mind with the words of his Father. So we should fill our minds with the blessed Scriptures, that we may have ready weapons to repel and defeat the tempter.

C. E. Topic.

(Quarterly Missionary Meeting.)
28. Lessons for Simon and us. Luke vii., 36-50.

Junior C. E. Topic.

DAILY READINGS.

Mon., Jan. 22—When we repent. Isa. iv., 7.
Tues., Jan. 23—When we believe in Jesus. Acts xvi., 31.
Wed., Jan. 24—When we try to obey Him. Acts v., 29.
Thu., Jan. 25—When we have faith. Matt. ix., 6.
Fri., Jan. 26—When we are careful of speech. I. Tim. iv., 12.
Sat., Jan. 27—When we forgive others. Matt. vi., 15.
Sun., Jan. 28—Topic—When will God forgive our sins? Luke vii., 36-50.

Sunday-School Work in India

I give out a hymn each Sunday, to be learnt in both schools, one verse a day, during the week. The result is that the children already know quite a number of hymns by heart, and we sing these over on Sundays immediately after the opening prayer. Following an old Rathgar practice,

the children are learning to sing in alternate verses, boys and girls, or some verses softly and the chorus loudly, and so on with variations, which keep up their attention. Then, when they are tired of singing, which they seem to enjoy, Rambhai tells them the Bible story for the day, and shows them the Bible picture to illustrate it, and then I ask them a few questions on what they have heard, and teach them a golden text, and usually finish with part of the Catechism, the Ten Commandments, another hymn or two, and the Lord's Prayer, after which the roll is called, and each child gets one of the picture leaflets of the 'Children's Special Service Mission at the door going out. If they keep these carefully ten leaflets win a prize of a small tract, and four such tracts a book, and this encourages the attendance, which now keeps up to between forty and fifty. Sunday-school takes place after church, and when all is over it seems like a pretty long morning's work. We have lately started an afternoon Sunday-school, something like Miss Stavelly's Surat plan, in a village on the borders of the camp. I wanted to see how far the two boys, Vishvas and Henry, would be willing to help, so I suggested to them that it should be their affair. They responded most willingly, and seemed quite delighted about it. The idea arose chiefly through our having gone to their village on several mornings to preach and found the audience almost entirely composed of children, who in only one or two cases attended either our day or Sunday-schools. We started two or three Sundays ago. Rambhai, of course, offered to come; but he has a hard enough Sunday as it is, and I told him if he came the boys would not open their mouths. The evening, however, turned out very doubtful, and I said to the boys that it would be sure to rain and we had better not go. (I wanted to give them a chance of backing out if they weren't really keen, for you never can tell how far they agree to a thing merely to please the sahib). But they insisted that we must go; the rain was sure to keep off; everything would be all right, and we could take umbrellas—which we fortunately did, for long before we got to the village the rain had come on. In spite of the wet, however, we were able to gather quite a number of children under the shelter of a large tree in the village street, and behind the children stood a good sprinkling of grown-ups. Vishvas explained the pictures, Henry taught the hymns and Catechism, and I had only to put in a word here and there. It was delightful, and not only the children, but their parents, too, seemed quite pleased, and thanked us for coming. The next Sunday it really was too wet, but last Sunday we went again, and had a far larger Sunday-school than our proper one in the church—about fifty-five children and twenty-five grown-ups—and they learnt their verse well, and began also to pick up the tune, too, and listened wonderfully quietly considering the circumstances and the babies in arms! Our morning Sunday-school is hardly ripe yet for teachers and classes, and this little effort supplies a place for voluntary workers, whom one wants to keep always employed. If those Waghris or others would only come out, and we had the workers, I believe we could start an equally successful children's open-air in a large village just the other side of the camp. What pleased me most, however, was the exceeding willingness of the boys to help, though they, too, have little enough time to themselves on Sundays.—'Irish Missionary Herald.'

Hymn.

God bless our native land!
May Heaven's protecting hand
Still guard her shore;
May peace her sway extend,
Foe be transformed to friend,
And Britain's power depend
On war no more.
And not our land alone,
But be Thy mercies known
From shore to shore.
Lord, make the nations see
That men should brothers be,
And form one family,
The wide world o'er.

—W. E. Hickson.