

people (ver. 31). But what happened? A prophet out of Judah came to Bethel, and as Jeroboam was himself offering incense, which according to the law he had no right to do, declared to him that his idolatrous worship should be overthrown (Chron. xiii. 1, 2). One, Josiah of the house of David, should be born, who on these very altars would burn the bones of men, which prophecy was literally fulfilled (2 Kings xxiii. 15-20). Angry with the prophet, Jeroboam attempted to lay hold on him, when his hand was dried up as a sign that this should come to pass. He was distressed, and in answer to the prayers of the man of God his hand was restored to him, though he deserved no such mercy. How sad it is when the leaders of a people—their kings, their prophets, or their priests—cause them to go astray? Learn Isa. ix. 16; and keep yourselves from idols (1 John v. 21).

Jan. 21. *Morning.* THE INFANT SAVIOUR. (Matt. ii. 13-23.) The magi entered the house, not the stable in which Jesus was born—for about forty days had transpired—and now there was room for him in some dwelling or other. Here they presented to Him their homage, and laid before Him their precious gifts. *Gold* they offered to Him as a king (Isa. ix. 6), *myrrh*, a gum which exudes from a thorn tree, and which on account of its antiseptic properties was used in embalming the dead, they offered to Him as a prophet; *frankincense*, another costly gum of a very pleasant odour, they offered to Him as a priest. These magi were rich and opulent, and presented their best to the new-born Saviour, as we also ought to do. Mary received these gifts, and thus all her wants were met. (verses 11, 12). Learn Luke i. 32. Herod sought to destroy the young child (verse 16), and Joseph was warned in a dream to carry him down to Egypt. First, for His safety; secondly, to show God's care of the Holy Child; and thirdly, for the fulfilment of prophecy (verse 15). For as God called the collective people of Israel out of Egypt, so He would also call His only begotten Son (verse 19-23).

But what did Herod? He slew all the infant children in and around Bethlehem probably from thirty to fifty—but he died a miserable death, of which you may read in Josephus, "Antiquities," book xvii. 6-8). Joseph did not return with his charge to Bethlehem, but went to Nazareth (verse 23) for Jesus was to be called the Nazarene—that is, the despised one, according to some writers, but according to others, the germ or branch (Zech. vi. 12; Isa. xi. 1), from the Hebrew word "netzer."

*Afternoon.* OMRI AND AHAH. (1 Kings xvi. 21-31.) Omri became King of Israel, and bought of Shimei the hill Samaria for two talents of silver, amounting in value to £750, and built a city on it which he made his capital, calling it Shomron, after the name of its owner. Here he was buried, after a wicked reign of twelve years—six in Tirzah, which he captured from Zimri, and six more in Samaria. He was succeeded by his son Ahab, who sinned above all that were before him. He built a temple, and reared an altar for Baal, the sun-god of the Phœnicians, etc. (Isa. xlvii. 1). He married Jezebel,

who was a zealous worshipper of Baal, and he made a grove Asherah, which was the name of a goddess, called here the grove, perhaps because her image was the straight stem of a tree, or because her worship was celebrated under the shadow of several trees. In Ahab's reign, and under his direction, Hiel rebuilt Jericho as a fortified city, but paid so to his cost (verse 31, Jos. vi. 26). Learn Prov. xiv. 11.

Jan. 28. *Morning.* JESUS BAPTIZED. (Matthew iii. 13; iv. 11.) Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. John wondered and objected: but Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now," etc. Why? Because He was the representative of humanity; because John, at this moment, was superior to Him in office; and because in His baptism He was to receive the unction of the Holy One. In a dove-like shape (Luke iii. 22) the Spirit hovered over Him, and abode upon Him, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son," etc. Here the whole Trinity is united (John i. 32, 33). There is no evidence that others saw this scene. It was probably private, and took place in the Jordan, not far from the Lake of Galilee. Upon it followed

Christ's temptation, which was threefold. 1. To mistrust of God (chap. iv. 3); 2. To over-trust, or trusting without authority (ver. 6); 3. To distrust, or not trusting at all (verses 7-11). The agent was Satan; but how he gained access to the spotless mind of Christ we do not know. It is possible to be tempted in all points, and yet not to sin (Heb. ii. 15). To every temptation this should be our reply: "It is written"—and if that is not enough:—"Get thee behind me, Satan."

Jan. 29. *Afternoon.* ELIJAH THE TISHBITER. (1 Kings xvii. 1-16.) So called, perhaps, from Tishbeth, a place in Upper Galilee. In answer to his prayer—(James v. 17)—there was a drought in the land for three years. How was he sustained? 1. At the brook Cherith, on the Jordan, of which he drank, whilst ravens—not Arabs, as some have thought, but birds—fed him. They were under God's control, and brought him

bread and flesh each day, no doubt from a considerable distance. 2. When the brook dried up—for the ravens could not bring him water too—by a widow woman. Zarephath was situated on the Mediterranean Sea between Tyre and Sidon. Observe the prophet's request (v. 10), and mark the woman's faith. Elijah was a stranger, yet she believed his word; and she obtained a rich reward. Day after day her barrel of meal and her cruse of oil were re-supplied. Learn Job v. 20; and think of the care which God takes of His servants who put their trust in Him; but He does not always supply their wants long beforehand. The prayer we are taught is for *daily bread*.

"I never go to church," said one; "I spend Sunday in settling accounts." "The day of judgment will be spent in the same way," was the reply.

Subscribe a blank submission, and put it in Christ's hands. When Christ draweth blood He hath skill to cut the right vein; and when He openeth the vein He taketh nothing but ill blood from His sick ones.