

* The Sunday School *

BIBLE LESSON

Abridged from Peloubet's Notes.

First Quarter.

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

Lesson IV. January 28. Matt. 3:13; 4:1-11.

Compare Luke 3:21, 22 and 4:1-13.

Commit 3:16, 17.

GOLDEN TEXT.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—Matt. 3:17.

EXPLANATORY.

THREE ESSENTIAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE BEST LIFE.

FIRST. BAPTISM.—Vs. 13-15. 13. THEN COMETH JESUS. Probably in January, A. D. 27, after John had been preaching six months; from Nazareth, his home in GALILEE, being about 30 years old (Luke 3:23). To JORDAN. Probably at the ford near Jericho and not far from Bethabara (John 1:28). To BE BAPTIZED OF (BY) HIM. Why did Jesus wish to be baptized? (1) It showed where Jesus stood in relation to the preaching of John.—It was a public renunciation of sin, and profession of the true religious life which John preached. It was taking sides with righteousness, against sin. (2) It was doing what he wished others to do. (3) It was the solemn inauguration of his mission.

14. JOHN FORBADE HIM. The imperfect tense in the original implies that John was about to forbid him, as R. V., "would have hindered him." I HAVE NEEDED. I am the sinful but repentant one. I am the inferior, only the doorkeeper, the preparer of the way.

15. SUFFER. Permit. THUS IT BECOMETH US TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS. For the reasons given above (v. 13). It was the right thing to do.

SECOND. RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—V. 16. WENT UP STRAIGHTWAY OUT OF THE WATER and up the bank of the river. He was praying as he went (Luke 3:21). Thus it was when he was transfigured. THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED. In Mark, R. V., "rent asunder." HE (Jesus) SAW, so did John (John 1:34). THE SPIRIT OF GOD DESCENDING LIKE A DOVE. The Holy Spirit descending not only in the "manner" of a dove, but in the bodily shape of a dove. The dove and the fire are complementary symbols expressing different aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit.

THIRD. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY.—V. 17. LO, A VOICE FROM HEAVEN. Three times during our Lord's earthly ministry was a voice heard from heaven: (1) at his baptism; (2) at his transfiguration (Mark 9:7); (3) in the courts of the temple during Passion Week (John 12:28). THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. Thus God endorsed him and his mission, and showed to the Jewish nation that he was the Messiah. It must also have strengthened and confirmed the human Jesus as to his nature and his work.

A FOURTH PREPARATION, BY OVERCOMING TEMPTATION.

I. WHAT IS TEMPTATION?—V. 1. THEN WAS JESUS LED UP OF THE SPIRIT. It was some impulse of this Spirit that impelled him to go (Mark 1:12). INTO THE WILDERNESS. Where in solitude he could be absorbed in intense meditation, and fight for himself the great battle with temptation. To BE TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL. For the whole forty days, according to Luke. It was not merely one sudden assault.

Temptation is the testing of a person: either to see what he is fit for, with the desire that he stand the strain; or with the intent to make him fall. The first is God's way; he "tests" and "tries" men. The second is Satan's way; he "tempts." God never tempts men (Jas. 1:13). But God does transform the temptations of Satan and of men into "trials" for their good.

In whatever form the temptations came, the battle was real. It was no sham fight. It was no mere form, for example's sake. And Jesus knew that he could choose good or evil, and that the result for himself, for the human race, and for the kingdom of God depended upon his choice.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION. THROUGH NATURAL APPETITES AND DESIRES.—Vs. 2-4. 2. FASTED FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS. Being tempted all the time (Mark, Luke). He was probably thinking, praying, planning.

HE WAS AFTERWARD AN HUNGERED. When the reaction has begun, hunger asserts its claims with a force so terrible that (as has been shown again and again in human experience) such moments are fraught with the extremest peril to the soul.

3. THE TEMPTER CAME TO HIM. In this hour, when his desire for food was strongest, and his powers of resistance weakest. Satan still watches his time, and

attacks us when weary, sick, troubled, disheartened and nervous.

IF THOU BE (art) THE SON OF GOD, if you really are God's Son, and hence are possessed of miraculous powers, COMMAND THAT THESE STONES BE MADE BREAD.

The temptation was very intense, but entirely innocent. What was the harm in yielding to his desire for food? To have worked a miracle for the purpose would have destroyed his power as a Saviour, for then he would not be tempted like we are, and his humanity would have been merely in appearance.

The victory came through the truths and promises of God's Word.

4. IT IS WRITTEN. In D. ut. 8:3, quoted from the Greek translation. MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE. By food for the body. Jesus meant (1) that God could feed him in other ways than by his doing wrong, as indeed he did soon after, for the angels ministered unto him; (2) that there was something higher, better, more needful than earthly food, even obedience, faith, love, character, righteousness.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION. THROUGH THE MISUSE OF FAITH.—Vs. 5-7. It is the expectation of results and blessings, without fulfilling the conditions.

5. TAKE THY SHOE OFF. INTO THE HOLY CITY. Jerusalem, literally, or in spirit. ON A (the) PINNACLE, or rather, wing, OF THE TEMPLE. From it one looked down six hundred feet into the valley of Hinnom.

6. IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD, THEN CAST THYSELF DOWN. Not into the valley of Hinnom, but into the court of the temple among the crowds.

What Tempting Allurement in This?

(1) It would prove that he was indeed the Son of God. (2) It would seemingly prove his perfect trust in God. FOR IT IS WRITTEN, in Psalm 91:11, Septuagint (Greek) version then in common use.

"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE, etc. Satan's meaning is, You can do this act in perfect safety, for you rest on God's promise, which cannot be broken, and you honor God by your perfect confidence in his Word. (3) But most attractive of all was that, seeing him come in this way, the people would hail him as their Messiah.

7. IT IS WRITTEN (Deut. 6:16) AGAIN. On the other hand, as explaining the words you quote. THOU SHALT NOT TEMPT THE LORD THY GOD. That is, "distrust God or test his power presumptuously."

Whatever had happened to Jesus, had he yielded, the victory would have been Satan's. Either he would have been killed, and that would have ended his work; or if by chance he survived, he would have lost faith, obedience, character, and his whole mission to man.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION. TO GAIN SUCCESS BY WRONG-DOING.—Vs. 8-10. 8. THE DEVIL TAKETH HIM UP, probably in vision or imagination, as there is no mountain from which can be seen with the natural eye ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD, AND THE GLORY OF THEM.

9. ALL THESE THINGS WILL I GIVE THEE. In a measure Satan did have these things. Christ later called him the "prince of this world." On everything he had stamped his seal.

IF THOU WILT FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME. Satan does not mean a bald act of worship, a bending in outward reverence to the grim king of darkness. As Weiss says, "The suggestion that he would fall down before the actual devil and worship him is a suggestion which even he who is but moderately pious would without hesitation and with abhorrence refuse to entertain." Rather, Satan asked such an act of worship as when men worship money by loving it better than God; when they worship success by placing it before duty; a "real," not a formal worship. Satan is too shrewd to insist on the "form" if he can gain the "heart."

10. GET THEE HENCE, SATAN.—It was by this proposal that Satan revealed himself. FOR IT IS WRITTEN (Deut. 6:13), THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD. The first and great commandment. There is none other worthy of worship, and there is no other way of gaining the true kingdom of God.

CONSULTATION AFTER VICTORY.—No greater victory has ever been recorded.

11. THEN THE DEVIL LEAVETH HIM. "For a season," (Luke 4:13). He was tempted again and again; at last in Gethsemane and on the cross. AND BEHOLD, ANGELS. Spiritual beings. MINISTERED most naturally means "supplied him with food," as in the case of Elijah (1 Kings 19:5); and with all spiritual support, comfort and companionship.

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NORMAL LESSON.

No. 8.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. (FIRST PART).

According to our reckoning the number of these books is 12,—from Joshua to



Healthy, Happy Girls.

Healthy, happy girls often become languid and despondent, from no apparent cause, in the early days of their womanhood. They drag along, always tired, never hungry, breathless and with palpitating hearts after slight exercise, so that to merely walk up stairs is exhausting. Sometimes a short, dry cough leads to the fear that they are going into consumption. Doctors tell them they are anæmic—which means that they have too little blood. Are you like that?

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Either inclusive. The Jews reckoned them as six, counting Ruth with Judges, Nehemiah with Ezra, and regarding the double books as one. These books deal almost exclusively with the history of Israel, and only refer incidentally to other nations. Everything is subservient to the church and the Christ. John 1:45; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6. The story told is a chequered one of sin and sorrow, struggle and victory, judgment and mercy, and it abounds with lessons for God's people today. 1 Cor. 10:11.

I. JOSHUA. Derives its name from the man who is the principal figure in it, and to whom its authorship has been generally credited. Joshua, for many years the colleague of Moses, becomes his successor. (1:1-9). It carries on the history of Israel from the point reached at the time the great law-giver died. In it we see Israel's transition from a wandering horde to a confederation of tribes, and we will therefore call it "the making of a nation." It has been well said that this book is to the Pentateuch what the Acts is to the gospels.

It consists of three parts: (1) The conquest of Canaan, chap. 1-12; (2) The division of Canaan, chap. 13-22; (3) Joshua's farewell words and death, the latter added by a subsequent writer, chap. 23, 25.

The book embraces a period of some 25 years. Joshua's name is significant—meaning "he shall save," and he typifies in title and office the true Saviour, who leads his people into the heavenly rest, Matt. 1:21; Heb. 4:7-8. Canaan, however, is not a perfect type of heaven, but sets forth the state of believers here below: possessing a goodly heritage, and yet beset with foes, and needing to fight the good fight of faith. See above reference and Micah 2:10; John 16:33; Heb. 13:14; 1 John 5:4.

II. JUDGES. Its title is self-explanatory, the book being chiefly a record of the characters and deeds of men and women who filled the office of Judge. The Judges seemed to combine the functions of civil governors and military generals. They were the vice-generals of Israel's true King Jehovah. They were God-raised (11:16) and God-endued (3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25). There was not an unbroken succession of Judges, but God gave them as occasion required.

This book contains many thrilling stories, and some of its heroes and heroines receive honorable mention in Heb. 11:31, 32. The period during which the Judges ruled was about 450 years, and its history alternates between sin and punishment, danger and deliverance, 2:14-23. That we may remember its significance we will entitle it, "Israel's Declension and Discipline." Observe Israel's weakness and wickedness, 2:11-13; Isa. 1:1-4; Jer. 17:9; Luke 22:61, 62; 1 John 1:8; God's faithfulness, 2:16, 18; Lamentations 3:22; Malachi 3:6; Rom. 11:29; 2 Tim. 2:13; and the chastisement of his erring children, 2:14, 15, 20-23; Prov. 3:11, 12; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19.

RUTH. The title of the book arises from its heroine, and we may amplify that title by calling this part of divine writ "The Story of the Beautiful Gleaner." It is a delightful domestic episode in the time of the Judges (Ruth 1:1), occupying

a period of ten years. While it deals with matters of a social nature, it has a peculiar relation to the larger history, being, indeed, a genealogical link in the pedigree of David, and therefore of Christ, 4:17; Matt. 1:5, 6; Luke 3:32. The Gentile Ruth becomes a mother in Israel, and thus antedates the ingathering of the Gentiles, Matt. 8:11; Eph. 2:12, 13.

Everything hinges upon her godly choice, 1:16, 17; Heb. 11:8-10, 14-16, 24-27; John 6:66-69; Luke 10:42.

The message of this book is found in Ps. 45:10, 11, "Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."

I. AND II. SAMUEL. We will class these two books together, as in the Old Hebrew Version they were regarded as one volume. In the Vulgate and Septuagint Versions they are denominated the first and second books of Kings. Such an appellation was appropriate as they have to do with the origin of earthly kingship among the Jews. We will sub-name this portion of Scripture "The founding of the Monarchy."

In the earlier part of this record Samuel figures largely. By many he has been considered its author, and it is likely that, if not entirely written by him, the narrative is based upon some writings of his, 1 Sam. 10:25.

There are three striking characters about whom the interest clusters: Samuel himself, 1 Sam. 1:12; Saul, 1 Sam. 13-2 Sam. 1; David, 2 Sam. 2-24.

Remarkable men truly, Samuel—who came into the world around the gates of prayer, and who more than fulfilled his early promise. Saul—runic of stature, but wayward of will and small of soul. David—Saint, hero, poet. The life-story of each of these men suggests far more lessons than we have space to enumerate. A few instructive thoughts concerning the giving of a king may, however, be indicated. (1) God sometimes grants requests that are not according to his own wise will, and thereby punishes those who make them, 1 Sam. 8:6-9; Hosea 13:11; Ps. 106:15. (2) God seeth not as man seeth, 1 Sam. 16:7; Acts 10:34; 1 Cor. 5:12, 16, 17; Isa. 55:8. (3) God's choice is ever best, 1 Sam. 1:14, 1 Kings 15:3-5; 2 Sam. 3:1-5; Ps. 47:4; 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

The period covered by these books is somewhat under 155 years.

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