

than three months after John's circumcision.

V. 69.—*Horn*—an emblem of strength and honour; still worn in the East. Psalm cxxii. 17. Jesus is referred to, not John. *House of David*—family, descendants.

V. 70.—All the prophets spake of Christ.

V. 71.—Our haters and enemies are Satan, death and sin, and from these Christ redeems us.

Vv. 72, 73.—*Holy Covenant*—the gospel. God remembered it when he completed it, and proclaimed its full freeness. This covenant is the oath of the seventy-third verse.

Vv. 74-75.—*Without fear*—i. e. the fear of enemies. It is always right to look to God with holy, loving fear.

Vv. 76-79.—The destiny and the work of the tender babe are marked out. God knows the end from the beginning. John was the last prophet of the old covenant and the first of the new. He was the *Elijah* spoken of by Malachi. *Darkness*:—as light is used as a symbol of what is pure, holy, loving, God-like, so is darkness the symbol of ignorance, impurity, hatred, and everything satanic. *Shadow of death*—an awful figure! Death is represented as standing between us and God, and we resting in its baleful shadow. "The dayspring from on high" dispels this shadow, conquers death.

V. 80.—Here we have the biography of John till he was 30 years of age. *Showing unto Israel*—his entry on his public ministry as a prophet.

LESSONS.

1. From God's dealings with Zacharias and Elizabeth we may learn that he is faithful and merciful, and at the same time that he marks unbelief with stern displeasure, even in those who love him.

2. Zacharias used his restored power of speech to praise God; so should we use all our powers: especially when God gives us health after sickness, wealth after poverty, &c., should we use our advantages at once to his glory.

3. From the prophecy we learn that Christ is the only redeemer, the horn of our salvation, and that he can save us from our enemies. Holy prophets spake of him since the world began, and we should think and speak very often of him.

4. From ver. 74 and 75 we have to learn that Christ saves us *in order* that we may serve him all the days of our life, in holiness and righteousness.

5. The forgiveness of sins is through the tender mercy of God, for the sake of Christ. Without Christ we shall be forever in darkness, error and death.

6. From this much of the life of John we learn that children should be set apart to God, and that he can dwell in them by his spirit and make them holy. John was circumcised when eight days old; therefore

infant children may and should be consecrated to God by baptism.

FOURTH SABBATH.

SUBJECT: *Birth of Jesus.* Mat 1-25.

Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who is God over all blessed forever, is also a man, and was born of the virgin Mary at Bethlehem, near the end of the reign of Herod the Great. The precise date of his birth is unknown; but the glorious event probably occurred four years before the date usually given—that is about 1870 years ago, not 1866. Matt. i. 1-16 gives the genealogy of Joseph the husband of Mary in the line, not of actual descent, but of succession, as heir to the kingdom. It is no doubt an extract from a public document, and it proves clearly that Jesus, by his *reputed father* was rightful heir to the throne of David. If you turn to Luke iii. 23, &c., you will find another genealogy of Joseph given which differs very much from the one in Matthew. There are several ways of explaining the differences, but we believe the one we have hinted at is the most satisfactory, viz.: that Matthew gives the public genealogy of Joseph as heir to the throne, and that Luke gives his private genealogy showing his real birth and parentage. The genealogy of Mary was nearly the same as that of Joseph, she being probably his cousin.

V. 1.—"*Book of the generation*,"—this phrase originally meant the *genealogical tables*, but it here includes the history as well as the genealogy of our Lord. Christ is called *Son of David* and *Son of Abraham* because he was with special emphasis promised to both. They both believed in the great Deliverer. *Jesus* is the proper name of our Lord; Christ his surname signifying his office as Anointed, King. He was not ordinarily called "*Jesus Christ*" till after his ascension.

V. 18.—*Espoused*—betrothed. After betrothal (or as we would say *engagement*) the bride remained in her father's house, often a long time. "*Before they came together*" means, *before Joseph took her to his own house*.

V. 19.—Joseph suspects that Mary was guilty of the crime of adultery for which she would if exposed be put to death. But his kind heart led him to form the intention of putting her away without a public exposure.

V. 20.—God comes to his relief, "*Dream*"—Matt. alone in the New Testament records dreams. *Mary*—the Greek form of this word is here *Mariam*, which means *Rebellion*.

V. 21.—*Jesus*—meaning salvation. The angel explains the full significance of this precious name. "*He*" (that is *He only*) "*shall save his people from their sins.*"