

labor" that is ever expended upon them. John prepared the way for Christ by announcing his speedy advent; awakening the people to conviction of sin and their need of salvation; arousing a general interest in religion among all classes; and pointing out Christ when he appeared.

II. THE HERALD PROCLAIMING. 4.
John came (R. V.)—Read the narrative of his birth in the first chapter of Luke. In Luke 1: 36 Elizabeth is called Mary's "kinswoman" (R. V.) hence John and Jesus were kinsmen. **In the wilderness**—"of Judea" (Matt. 3: 1) lying west of the Dead sea. It was not wholly uninhabited (Judges 1: 16; Josh. 15: 61,) but was chiefly devoted to grazing purposes. John extended his preaching tours to the valley of the Jordan (Luke 3: 3.) **Baptism of repentance**—the baptism which implied repentance as its prerequisite. It was a baptism of the old economy, not strictly Christian baptism. This carries with it an expression of faith in Christ. It here stands simply for a moral transformation according to the requirements of the law. (Meyer) The baptism of the Holy Ghost is necessary to complete the Christian idea. The word "baptize" in classic Greek means "to immerse," but in the New Testament it receives a technical sense and stands for the initiatory Christian rite and all that it implies, without any reference whatever to the mode in which it is performed. (For a clear exposition, and a trenchant defence, of the doctrine of our church in regard to the mode of baptism, see "Immersion, a Romish Invention," by Rev. W. A. McKay, D. D., Woodstock, Ont. It can be obtained from the author.) **Unto remission of sins** (R. V.)—(Luke 3: 3) i. e. "with a view to the remission of sins." This they have to receive from the Messiah. Repentance prepared them to receive it. "Never will Christ come into that soul where the herald of repentance hath not been before him." "Remission" is literally "the taking away" of sin. It is more than pardon, it is restoration to lost favor.

5. All the land—See Matt. 3: 5; Luke 3: 10-14. A vivid expression corresponding to our "everybody." Not literally true, but denoting his immense popularity and the remarkable effect of his preaching. **In the river Jordan**—Not necessarily immersed in it. The locality merely is pointed out. Compare "baptized in the wilderness" (Mark 1: 4) "in Bethabara" (John 1: 28) "in Enon" (John 3: 23.) The same preposition as is here rendered "in" is translated "at" in Eph. 1: 20, "at his own right hand." "The numbers that flocked to John's baptism made it physically impossible that he could have baptized them by dipping. It is said that all Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan came and were baptized of him. We need not, of course, take the expression 'all' in its most literal sense as meaning all without exception; but it undoubtedly means a very large proportion of the people. It

is probable that the entire population of the district was about five millions, and if we suppose that even one-fifth of these were immersed, and that John's ministry lasted for a whole year, then he must have immersed 2,700 each day, which is an impossibility. Nor could any man live, standing day after day for a year, up to his waist in water. If, on the other hand, John baptized by sprinkling or pouring the thing was possible and easy. The unseemliness of the the sight makes it morally certain that John did not baptize by dipping. Few, if any would come prepared with suitable garments for the ceremony. How then could they be immersed? Either in a state of nudity, or in their ordinary clothes. Decency would forbid the former, and a due regard to health the latter." (McKay.) **Confessing their sins**—Prov. 28: 13; 1 John 1: 9. The place was Bethabara, or Bethany, (John 1: 28) five miles N. E. of Jericho. Here probably the Israelites first crossed into Canaan, and here the mantle of Elijah divided the waters. (2 Kings 2: 8, 14.)

*** 6. Camel's hair**—A coarse cloth made from the larger and coarser hairs, spun and woven like wool. A finer kind of cloth called *Camlet* is made from the soft hairs, and the name is retained by similar fabrics of silk and wool. This was Elijah's garb (2 Kings 1: 8.)

A leathern girdle (R. V.)—A belt of untanned skin. The dress of a common laborer. The rich wore sashes of silk or cotton, or girdles ornamented with gold and precious stones. John embodied the conventional idea of Elijah. His dress and food were in harmony with his stern preaching. **Locusts**—(Lev. 11: 22.) "I have seen at Medina and Tayf locust shops, where these animals were sold by measure. In Egypt and Nubia they are eaten only by the poorest beggars. The Arabs, in preparing locusts as an article of food, throw them alive into boiling water with which a good deal of salt has been mixed. After a few minutes they are taken out and dried in the sun; the head, feet, and wings are then torn off, the bodies are cleansed from the salt and perfectly dried, after which process whole sacks are filled by the Bedouin. They are sometimes eaten boiled in butter, and they often contribute materials for a breakfast when spread over unleavened bread mixed with butter." (Bruckhardt.) The conjectures of the older writers who, deeming this food unworthy of John, have substituted other things, deserve no consideration. (Meyer.) **Wild honey**—Abundant in Palestine (Ex. 3: 8; Judges 14: 5-9; 1 Sam. 14: 25, 26.) Generally understood to mean the honey of the wild bee, but others say that it means "tree-honey," an exudation from palms, figs and other trees. Meyer says that there was no such thing as "tame" honey, the common honey being that of the wild bee. Also that the name "wild honey" is given by ancient writers to the substance in question, but is never used to designate honey properly so called. This view is not generally adopted.

7. Latchet—diminutive of "latch," and