

LESSON III.

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST January 21, 1900

Luke 3: 1-17. (May be used as a Temperance Lesson.) Commit to memory vs. 3-6. Read Mal. 3: 1-7 and 4: 1-6.

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

**Revised Version**—1 The region of Ituræa and Trachonitis; 2 In the high-priesthood of; 3 Region round about; 4 Unto; 5 Esaias; 6 *Or* saying; 7 Make ye ready; 8 The rough ways smooth; 9 He said therefore to the multitudes that went out; 10 Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you; 11 Even now is the axe also; 12 Multitudes; 13 What then must we do? 14 Food; 15 Extort; 16 *Martyr* (Greek) soldiers on service; 17 We, what shall we do? 18 Exact anything wrongfully; 19 Reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; 20 There cometh he that is mightier than I; 21 Thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat; 22 Burn up.

EXPLANATION

**Connection**—The lesson tells of Christ's forerunner. He was cousin to Jesus, and had lived much in the wilderness alone with God.

**1-3. Tiberius Cæsar**; the Roman Emperor. **Pontius Pilate**; who afterwards condemned Christ to death. This was his first year as governor. **Herod**; Herod Antipas, the son of the Herod who slew the children of Bethlehem. **Tetrarch**; literally, a ruler of "a fourth part": used for petty monarchs under the Roman rule. **Annas** was the rightful high priest. **Caiaphas** had been put in his place. **The word of God**. John was divinely inspired. **The baptism of repentance**; John's baptism symbolized cleansing. (Ezek. 36: 25, 26.) Repentance means a thorough change of mind and action with respect to sin.

**4-6. The voice . . . crying**. Referring to the runner who ran ahead when a king was coming to have everything made ready. Often men were sent days in advance to mend the roads. **Prepare ye the way**; by straightening out their crooked lives and levelling them up to the standard of righteousness. **All flesh shall see**. If they would but make ready Christ's way, the whole world would see His salvation.

**7-9. Offspring of vipers** (Rev. Ver.), venomous and treacherous; addressed to the Sadducees and Pharisees (Matt. 3: 7). **Who hath warned you?** The emphasis is on

"you." The serpents of all sorts flee when the stubble is set on fire. "There is grim humor as well as wrath in the similitude." (Bruce.) **Bring forth therefore fruits**; prove your repentance by right-living. **Abraham to our father**. They thought they were saved through their descent from Abraham. Of these stones. God could find spiritual children apart altogether from them. **The axe, etc.**; a vivid picture of judgment close at hand. It came forty years later.

**11-14. Two coats**; tunics, under garments. **Let him impart**; in a spirit of unselfishness (James 2: 15-17). **Meat**; any kind of food. **Publicans**; tax-gatherers. **Exact no more**. They were noted for taking more than their own. **Do violence**. They used to extract money by brutal threats. **Neither accuse**. This was practised against the rich to extort gain; blackmail.

**15-17. In expectation**; of the coming of the Messiah. **I . . . with water**; if they made their lives clean they would escape. **Latchet**; the thong that bound the sandal. **He . . . with the Holy Ghost and with fire**; with wind and fire, the fire destroying what the wind leaves. (Bruce.) The usual interpretation is "purifying." **Fan**; a light shovel for separating grain from chaff. **Wheat**; the true members of Christ's kingdom. **Chaff**; an emblem of the wicked. (Ps. 1: 4.)