

LESSON I.—January 2nd, 1898.

JESUS AND JOHN. MATT. 3. 7-17.

Commit vs. 13-17.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8. Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance: 9. And think 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.

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

11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; 12. whose fan is in

his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14. But John would have hindered him saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15. But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him.

16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

- LESSON PLAN. { I. The Pharisees and John. vs. 7-12.
II. Jesus and John. vs. 13-15.
III. Father, Son, and Spirit. vs. 16.

HELPS IN STUDYING.

INTRODUCTORY. The first Gospel was written by Matthew, or Levi, the publican, whose call to discipleship forms the subject of Lesson VII. It was written for Jewish Christians about A.D. 60, and constantly keeps in view the fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus.

The exact spot where Jesus was baptized is not known with certainty. Tradition places it in the neighborhood of Jericho. The time was January A.D. 27, when Jesus was thirty years of age. (Luke 3: 23).

7. He saw—John, the Baptist, who was now at the height of his popularity. **Phari-sees**—Lit. "Separatists." They were rigid observers of the law, and believed that they would be saved because they were descendants of Abraham. **Sad-du-cess**—They did not believe in a future life, or a spirit's world. (Acts 23: 8.) **A generation**—R.V. "Ye offspring of vipers." Behind their pious exterior John saw their malicious hearts.

8. Fruit worthy of repentance (R.V.)—True repentance will shew itself in godly sorrow for sin, and forsaking of it. (Gal. 5: 22, 23; 2 Pet. 1: 5-7.)

9. We have A'bra-ham—The rabbis taught that no son of Abraham could be lost. Natural descent, however, gave no more right to share Abraham's blessedness than stones made into men would have. (Gal. 3: 7.) They must believe and obey God if they would be saved.

10. And even now (R.V.)—The time was come when those who did not bring forth the fruits of repentance would be judged. (Mal. 4: 1.)

11. Baptize you unto repentance—John baptized those who repented of sin, as a sign that they were ready to welcome the Saviour, who would give them "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus

3: 5.) **With fire**—implying purification, zeal or enthusiasm, and enlightenment. To take off, and carry away the sandals of their master was a most menial service, and was rendered only by the lowest slaves. (Mark 1: 7; John 1: 27.)

12. Fan—A light wooden shovel by which the grain and chaff were tossed into the air. The wind blew away the chaff and the cleaned grain fell on the threshing floor. **His floor**—The Jewish people, God's covenant people. **His wheat—the chaff**—There will be a final separation between the righteous and the wicked. (Matt. 25: 41-46.)

13. To Jordan—Probably at "Aenon, near Salim." (John 3: 23.) About 22 miles from Nazareth.

14. Would have hindered Him (R.V.)—He modestly felt His own inferiority to the sinless Jesus, although He did not know at that moment that He was the Messiah. (John 1: 33.)

15. Fulfil all righteousness—Do everything that God has appointed to be done. The entrance into the "Kingdom of God" was by John's baptism, and Jesus wished to be consecrated to His work as others were for His coming.

16. Up from the water—The earliest paintings representing our Lord's baptism, shew Him standing waist-deep in the water while John pours water upon His head from a cup-shaped shell. Jesus was praying as He came up. (Luke 3: 21.) **Like a dove**—Both in manner and appearance. (Luke 3: 22.) John also saw the dove and heard the voice. (John 1: 32, 33.)

17. My beloved Son—This points out Jesus as the one referred to in Ps. 2: 7 (2 Pet. 1: 7). Notice here the presence of all three persons of the Godhead.