

scribed afterward, a "reed shaken by the wind," or a "man clothed in soft raiment" (Matt. 11, 7, 8), his burning eloquence and the significant rite which he performed might have spoken in vain. But the utterance came from the whole man. His style of dress and diving, model of the prophets of old, and his fearless, uncompromising attitude toward all that was wrong (comp. chap. 6, 18; Matt. 3, 7) spoke as loudly.

It tells us the occasion of the utterance. John was sent to "prepare the way of the Lord." All he did, all he said—the whole man—converged to this point: "There cometh One after me," etc. The object of the "voice" was to announce and clear the way for Christ.

There will be many, doubtless, resolving this new year to devote themselves to the service of God. Now what does God want for his service? He wants voices to "prepare the way of the Lord"—not great powers of mind, not great powers of speech, not clever plans, not ingenious expedients. The humblest, who seems to have no voice, may be a voice. The daily life, the whole life if put at God's disposal, like that of John the Baptist, will speak for him.

I have more than once been asked to find a place at a seaside town for some intending visitors, and, after making inquiries at lodging and boarding houses have had the mortification of finding my correspondents were not coming after all, so that my announcement of their approach seemed a sham and a deception. It was not so with the announcement with which John was entrusted. "There cometh One after me," he said; and we read, "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John." The announcement that Jesus is coming can never deceive. He will come whenever a heart will receive him. And he will come again as Lord over all the earth. The message God sends by his "voice" shall be proved true before all.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. What was the significance of John's baptism?

John inaugurated a reform, based on repentance and preparation for the kingdom of heaven, declared to be at hand. His baptism, in harmony with the Jewish idea of ceremonial purifying, signified such repentance and preparation on the part of those baptized. It was doubtless also typical of the spiritual baptism to be administered in the approaching kingdom, as intimated in verse 8, also Matt. 3, 11.—*Rev. H. G. Jackson, Chicago, Ill.*

John's baptism was a sign of personal guilt and impurity, and signified that a cleansing was necessary before the subject could be admitted into the kingdom, which was near at hand. It was not an initiation into that kingdom, but a symbolic confession of the need of preparation.—*Rev. D. C. Knowles, D.D., Tilton, N. H.*

The persons who responded to John's exhortation and were baptized by him took a like step to the one a person takes in our Methodist meetings when he resolves to stop the wrong-doing of which he is accused by his conscience, and rises and goes forward for

prayers. It is an act under the law, a right-about-face from immorality to morality. It is what one revivalist calls "quitting your meanness." It is the work of making the house ready for the guest, rather than the ceremonies and courtesies of his reception.—*Rev. William Ingraham Haven, Boston, Mass.*

John's baptism was strictly legal in its character. His preaching was an emphasis of the law at the close of the legal dispensation: Repent, obey, do works meet for repentance, etc. His baptism was a summing up of all the ablations and ceremonial cleansings of the Old Testament. The whole of the ceremonial law glowed up in him before expiring.—*Rev. Olin B. Coit, Clinton, N. J.*

2. What was the significance of the baptism of Jesus? Jesus, in submitting to baptism identified himself with the movement commenced by John, thus approving it. He conformed to the not unreasonable requirement that one who was to become the leader in the reform should be regularly initiated into it. And he set the example in this instance, as in many others, of submitting to ordinances, not necessary in his case, but important in the case of others. The baptism of Jesus was neither a baptism unto repentance, nor Christian baptism, but unique.—*Rev. H. G. Jackson.*

The baptism of Jesus could not have been a sign of personal guilt and a confession of need of preparation for the coming kingdom. John refused to baptize Christ with such a signification to his act. It would have been deceptive for Christ to have received it with such an interpretation. It was rather a public initiation into his Messiahship. Christian baptism symbolizes the fact that we have entered the kingdom. Hence the disciples rebaptized John's converts to symbolize this new relation.—*Rev. D. C. Knowles, D.D.*

When a penitent soul, striving with all his strength to live a holy life, feeling a sense of discouragement and weakness, looks up and sees the loving, helpful nearness of God; when the glance of the eye of the Lord calms him, cheers him, and holds him; when he forgets his struggles and fears in the charm of the presence of his Friend, then with a gentle tremor he feels his weakness falling from him as a garment from his shoulders, falling he cares not where; then a glow is in his heart, and to his fellows he appears as a vase through which a candle has begun to shine; then he knows the meaning of the baptism of fire, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is the baptism of Jesus Christ.—*Rev. William Ingraham Haven.*

When Jesus heard the stern legal demands of John, and saw the people taking such vows as he knew they could not fulfill, he asked John to baptize him. He wished to sorrow with humanity and obey for humanity, thus accepting his humiliation by condescending to the sinner's position under the law. Immediately the whole spiritual world in its eternal character opened before him. The divine manifestation came upon him as the seal and confirmation from the Father.—*Rev. Olin B. Coit.*

Cambridge Notes.

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[These notes are based on the Revised Version.]

Mark 1, 1-11 (vers. 2-4)—Matt. 3, 1-3; Luke 3, 3, 4; vers. 5, 6—Matt. 3, 4-6; vers. 7, 8—Matt. 3, 11, 12; Luke 3, 16; vers. 9-11—Matt. 3, 13, 16, 17; Luke 3, 21, 22).

Space forbids any general description of the Gospel we now enter on. A few details concerning the life of