

## The Birth of Jesus.

JANUARY 23rd.

LUKE 11 : 8-20.

IT was necessary that the Jews should register themselves in their ancestral districts to preserve the tribes and families distinct. The decree of Augustus "that all the world should be taxed" shews that the Roman Empire included the whole then known world. Not only so; there was peace all over the earth, which left all countries open to the introduction and spread of the Gospel. Joseph and Mary—both descended from David—went to "the city of David," 1 Sam. 17 : 12, where Jesus was born according to prophecy, Mic. 5 : 2. V. 8. *Shepherds... keeping watch*—a group of shepherds relieving each other by "watches" as the sailors do. It may have been in the month of December, or it may have been in April. V. 9. *Lo, an angel*—sudden and unexpected the apparition may have been, but it is more than likely that these humble men were among the number of the faithful who "waited" for the redemption of Israel, v. 38, and who sought for themselves that Kingdom of God soon to be revealed in their nation. *They were afraid*—fear is common to all who come into contact with the supernatural, ch. 1 : 12 V. 10 The angel calms their fears by imparting to them the best news they had ever heard—joyful news, to all people, i. e. to Israel first, and through them to the whole world, ch. 1 33. Col. 1. 23. V. 11. *Unto you*—you shepherds, Israel, mankind. *A saviour*—much needed and long looked for. CHRIST THE LORD—the only place where this grand title is found. For other high titles see Isa. 9 : 6. Christ is *born*—"made flesh," John 1 : 14, exactly when, where, and in the manner predicted centuries before, and as faith expected. *A sign*—a token, where none was asked, such a sign as simple folk could comprehend. *The babe*—rather a babe—a saviour—Christ the Lord—a universal king—in a manger ! wonderful contrasts ! V. 13, 14. *The heavenly hosts*—to let it be known how the event is regarded in the *highest* heavens, among the highest intelligences, and how it should be regarded on earth. *Peace*—Christ's legacy to mankind, John 14 : 27—the grand necessity of a fallen world—Peace with God—with our own consciences—peace between man and man, Phil. 4 : 7. *Good-will*—represents men in and through Christ as objects of complacency to God, 2 Cor. 5 : 19 and 6 : 18. Vs. 15-20. Having verified the wonderful statement, the shepherds *hasten* to publish the glad tidings. They were the first evangelists among men. Notice also their fidelity in returning to their ordinary duties notwithstanding what they had heard and seen. Observe the different effect upon Mary and upon the people outside. They were amazed ; they had not looked for the Messiah to come in this humble manner. Mary, recalling the words of the angel, ch. 1 : 32, 33, compared, considered, and endeavoured to realize their fulfilment.

LEARN to seek first for ourselves the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the duty and blessedness of bringing others to the knowledge of the Saviour, Dan 12 : 3.

## Simeon and the Child Jesus.

JANUARY 30th.

LUKE 11 : 25-35.

TO commemorate the deliverance of the first born of Israel from the destroying angel in Egypt, Exo. 13 : 2, it was ordained that the first-born of man and beast should be set apart to sacred uses. Of the lower creatures, some were offered on the altar, others were redeemed at a fixed price. The first-born son was to be consecrated to the Lord a month after birth, but a money payment of not more than five shekels was to be accepted as a *redemption* of the right thus involved, see Lev. ch. 27 and Num. 18 : 16. By the setting apart of the tribe of Levi, Num. 3 : 12, the priestly services of the first-born generally were no longer required, but the custom of formal presentation and redemption continued, and is observed to this day by strict Jews. For this purpose his parents brought Jesus to Jerusalem, v. 22. The offering brought by Mary, v. 24, indicated that she was in humble circumstances, Lev. 12-8, affording fresh proof of the apostolic word, 2 Cor. 8 : 9, and also teaching the *reasonableness* of God's requirements, 2 Cor. 8 : 12. V. 25. *Simeon* was doubtless an old man, noted for his piety and frequent attendance in the sanctuary. *Just*—upright in his moral character and towards his fellowmen ; *devout*—in his worship of God ; *waiting*—the attitude of all true believers, Ps. 27 : 4, 14. "*The Consolation of Israel*"—a beautiful name for Him through whom we obtain consolation, 2 Thess 2 : 16. Vs. 26, 27. *Revealed*—How, we do not know, but it had long been his daily habit to come to the house of God—*expecting* to see Jesus. *By the spirit*—in the right frame of mind to receive a blessing. *The custom*—the formal presentation, accompanied with the offering, above referred to. V. 28. *In his arms*—He not only was permitted to see, but he embraced him ; as if he had said, "This is all my salvation and all my desire," 2 Sam. 23 : 5. Vs. 29, 30. "Now let me die," evidencing the expectation of a happy state on the other side of death V. 31, 32. *All people*—mankind at large ; *A light to the Gentiles*—then in thick darkness ; *the glory of Israel*—already thine, and, to those who shall believe, to be so more gloriously than ever. V. 34. *Falling and rising*—referring to the many who fell through unbelief during our Lord's ministry and the subsequent "rising again" of the same persons at and after Pentecost. *Spoken against*—applies to the determined enemies of the Lord Jesus. V. 35. *A sword, &c.*—points to the agonies which Mary was to witness at the Cross, her desolate condition thereafter, and the alternations of hope and fear regarding Him which she would pass through. *That the thoughts of many may be revealed*—Ps. 42 : 10. Jesus had many eyes upon him during his public ministry. Some secretly friendly towards him, who had not the courage to openly own him, like Joseph, of Arimathea, John 19 : 38, and Nicodemus, John 3 : 2 ; The secrets of their hearts were revealed by their ultimate acceptance of Christ. Others secretly hated him ; their thoughts too were revealed when they cried out "crucify him."