



LESSON III.—JAN. 17.

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.

Matt. iii., 13-iv., 11.

Golden Text.

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matt. iii., 17.

Home Readings.

Monday, Jan. 11.—Matt. iii., 13-iv., 11.
 Tuesday, Jan. 12.—Is. xi., 1-9.
 Wednesday, Jan. 13.—John i., 29-37.
 Thursday, Jan. 14.—Heb. iv., 14-v., 10.
 Friday, Jan. 15.—Deut. vi., 10-19.
 Saturday, Jan. 16.—Deut. viii., 1-11.
 Sunday, Jan. 17.—Luke iii., 1-13.

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

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

15. And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

1. Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6. And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

(From the 'Pilgrim Senior Quarterly'.)

This lesson follows the last without a break. The time was A.D. 26, Jesus' thirtieth year, and the place, one of the fords of the lower Jordan. 'Then cometh Jesus . . . to be baptized': Jesus did not come

as the Pharisees had done, in a critical spirit, but in full sympathy with John's movement and with the definite purpose of identifying himself with it. 'Suffer it now': Deferential, half-yielding, yet strong in its very gentleness. 'For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness': To John it seemed inappropriate he should baptize this pure and kingly soul that had just come to him. Jesus did not discuss proprieties with John, but said that it was 'right' and 'his duty' to be baptized. It did not imply confession of sin on Jesus' part: it meant identifying himself with John's movement, which he believed to be of God. Compare Luke vii., 24-30. It was, too, a dedication of himself to the great work that was calling him. The rite was essentially a Jewish one, the final preparatory rite of the Old Testament economy, and hence not identical with Christian baptism. 'The heavens were opened unto him': Mark says 'he saw the heavens,' etc. It is not said that this was seen except by Christ. It was a vision, coming to him at the crisis of his life. The baptism was not purely physical. To him it was a baptism with the Spirit of God and with power to do the great work that was opening before him. 'He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove': not a dove, but 'as' a dove. The symbol of all that is gentle and pure and good. 'A voice': This was Jesus' heavenly recognition, an assurance that God was with him. It was for himself and his strengthening, not for the people. Luke adds that the vision came while Jesus was praying.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

(Matt. iv., 1-4.) We must remember when the temptation came. It was just after Jesus' public consecration to his great work. The voice of God was still ringing in his ears, 'Thou art my beloved Son.' He was conscious as never before, of himself, of his power, not necessarily at this time miraculous power, and of his great mission. Consciousness of power quickens the imagination, and two possibilities rush into the mind—the right use of that power and a less high and more popular—a wrong use of it.

The first temptation came to Jesus in connection with the human side of his nature. He was hungry. He was the Son of God, and was it necessary for him to suffer even the pangs of hunger like the very poor? Must he be the brother of all men to that extent? A life of physical comfort was within his reach. He had only to put out his hand and take it, but in taking it he would have been laying down the cross that he knew it was his mission to bear through life. The attractions were great, the struggle real, but he did not for an instant swerve from his purpose. There were greater things to be considered in life than physical comfort, than bread. 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

(Vs. 5-7.) The second temptation can be better understood if we remember that there was a belief among the Jews recorded in the Talmud, to the effect that the deliverer, the Messiah, was to appear on the roof of the temple in a blaze of glory and proclaim himself. The question seems to have entered his mind as to whether he could not yield a little to popular notions of the Messiah, and be the Messiah described in the favorite prophecies, without being untrue to his mission. Could he not appear in a spectacular way, and win instant acceptance? Must he be unpopular to be the Christ? Must he start in on the path that led straight to a cross?

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.

(Vs. 8-11.) The third temptation was to gain earthly power, a world-wide empire by compromise with evil. Jesus was a man, and had ambitions. Great good might come from such an empire with such a sovereign. The end might justify the means—but no, the Saviour indignantly puts the thought away. He will not favor

the Pharisees, nor 'cultivate' the rich young ruler, nor wink at things that are wrong in the lives of common people, because to attack those things would be unpleasant and unpopular. He can bow only to conscience and to God.

C. E. Topic

Sunday, Jan. 17.—Topic—How may I overcome temptations? I. Cor. x., 12, 13; Heb. iv., 14-16.

Junior C. E. Topic.

OUR OWN COUNTRY.

Monday, Jan. 11.—God's care for a nation. Ps. cxlvii., 20.

Tuesday, Jan. 12.—King of nations. Jer. x., 6, 7.

Wednesday, Jan. 13.—Peace in our country. Lev. xxvi., 3-6.

Thursday, Jan. 14.—East and West. Zech. viii., 7, 8.

Friday, Jan. 15.—A righteous nation. Isa. xxvi., 2.

Saturday, Jan. 16.—A happy people. Deut. xxxiii., 29.

Sunday, Jan. 17.—Topic—Our own country. Ps. xxxiii., 12. (Home Missionary Meeting.)

Intercessory Prayer.

('The Christian'.)

First and foremost, says the Rev. James Mursell, the teacher must pray for his scholars. The prayers should be personal, persistent, and detailed. Each should be brought by name before the Throne of grace. If the class is large, the names should be divided among the days of the week. Individual characteristics, special circumstances, definite events, will naturally color his intercessions. There will be times when one scholar will be mentioned specially day after day. If prayer is offered oftener for one than for another, it should be for the child toward whom the teacher feels the least attraction, and who gives most trouble and pays least attention. You cannot help loving the child for whom you pray.

Prayer fills the heart with the Saviour's own yearning for the lambs of the flock, and gives to human lips the tenderness of him who carrieth the lambs in his bosom. Moreover, our Father answers such intercessions in ways beyond our ken. 'It is impossible that the child of those tears should perish,' said the wise Archbishop of Milan to Augustine's mother. And it is impossible that the most vicious boy or the most frivolous girl who is the child of a teacher's earnest intercessions, should perish. He may have to pray and weep longer than Monica did for Augustine; longer even than Mr. Muller did for a man of whom he said: 'I have prayed for him daily for fifty-two years, and he is not converted yet; but he will be.' Let teachers bear the burden of their scholars' salvation on their prayerful hearts, and there will come a day when he who hears their prayers will touch that sacred load with his finger and change it into their crown of rejoicing.

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