

Saviour with his Church in all ages, to guide, protect, and comfort his people.

LESSONS:

1. We should be willing to resign to God whatever is dearest and most valuable.
2. We must be solicitous to put away all sin.
3. We must diligently instruct our children.
4. On suitable occasions we must not hesitate to speak of the wonderful works of God. V. 9.

DOCTRINE:

God claims our best services. Lev. xxii. 20; Mal. i. 13; Luke ix. 16, 17.

THIRD SABBATH.

SUBJECT:—*John beheaded.* Mark vi. 12-29.

V. 12.—Repentance means turning from sin. This was the burden of John's preaching, and was prominent in the teaching of the apostles. The Jews were called on to forsake their sins, because the Messiah had come to offer forgiveness to the penitent.

V. 12.—Demonic possession seems to have been permitted during the time of our Saviour, in order that his almighty power might be manifested in expelling evil spirits, and in enabling the disciples to do the same. Anointing with oil was supposed to have a remedial effect in many diseases, but it seems to have been performed by the Apostles as a symbol of the miraculous cures which they wrought, as the Saviour himself anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay.

Vv. 14-16.—The Herod here mentioned was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who ruled over Galilee and Perea. He had basely and cruelly killed John the Baptist for reasons subsequently stated; and so great is the power of a guilty conscience, that though, as we learn from history, he inclined to the views of the Sadducees, who believed neither in angel nor spirit, yet on this occasion he could not resist the superstitious impression that this wonderful teacher, suddenly appearing after John's decease, and performing such marvellous works, must be John himself, whom God had permitted to return to life, and from whom therefore he might expect a terrible retribution. Others, however, believed that Jesus was Elijah, whose return had been predicted by Malachi, or perhaps that he was the Prophet, like to himself of whom Moses had written.

Vv. 17-29, contain an account of the murder of John the Baptist, and the circumstances which led to it. Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, and therefore niece to Herod Antipas. She had been first married to his brother Philip, by

whom she had a daughter named Salome. Herod, having become enamoured of her, put away his former wife, and persuaded her to leave her first husband and live with him. Hence they were living in both adultery and incest, as marriages between such near relations were forbidden. Lev. xviii. 16.

From verse 20th it appears that when Herod first heard John preach, he was deeply impressed by his eloquence, earnestness, and faithfulness, listened to him with pleasure, and did much to show how highly he appreciated his holy character. So men may often delight in hearing the gospel, may liberally contribute to the cause of religion, may show great kindness and respect to the ministers of Christ, and like Herod may do many things; but like him also they may still cleave to their sins. John's noble boldness and faithfulness furnish an admirable pattern for the imitation of every minister of Christ, and indeed of every Christian. He was highly honoured by this haughty monarch, and had the strongest inducements to temporize: but as he had been sent to denounce the sins of the nation and to urge them to repent, so he could not be unfaithful to this great sinnet because he was a monarch.

From the way in which Herod at first treated John, it is probable that he would not have imprisoned him, if he had not been urged on by the bitter malice and rage of the wicked Herodias. For a long time he resisted her solicitations that he would put John to death, but her perseverance was at length successful. At a sumptuous entertainment given by Herod on his birth day to the dignitaries of his court, Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced before them with so much grace and spirit, that Herod, carried away by his admiration, rashly promised that she should have whatever she might ask, if it were the half of his kingdom. The conduct of this young lady, which violated all the rules of modesty and propriety then existing among eastern nations, shows that her abandoned mother had too faithfully trained her daughter in her own ways. Salome having consulted with Herodias, demanded that the head of John should be given her in a large dish, in order that she might take it to her mother, and let her feast her eyes on the proof that the man whom she hated had been destroyed. Herod was shocked by this brutal request; but regard for a sinful oath, and respect for a false code of honour, induced him to grant it; and John was accordingly beheaded.

The judgments of God descended on the heads of all the actors in this shameful crime. Herod's army was defeated in a war which arose out of his marriage with Herodias. They were both subsequently