

## The Sunday School

### BIBLE LESSON.

Abridged from Peloubeta's Notes.

#### First Quarter.

#### JESUS AND JOHN.

Study Isa. 40: 1-5; Matt. 1 and 2. Commit verses 13-17.

Lesson I. Jan. 2.—Matt. 3: 7-17.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Matt. 3: 17.

#### EXPLANATORY.

SUBJECT: "Preparations for the life work of Jesus."

I. BY HIS EARLY LIFE AND TRAINING.—First, "His Divine Nature."—John 1: 1-4; Heb. 1: 2, 3. The Word, who became Jesus on earth, was the Eternal Son of God.

Second, "His Human Nature." Jesus was born, probably in December, B. C. 5, four years (and a few days) before the era marked by his name, A. D. (*Anno Domini*), in Bethlehem of Judea. His mother was the Virgin Mary, but his father was God Himself, through the Holy Ghost.

II. PREPARATION THROUGH THE WORK OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.—Vs. 7-12. John the Baptist was born in the summer of B. C. 5, six months before Jesus, probably at Hebron. His parents' names were Zacharias and Elizabeth, both of priestly descent from Aaron. John was a relative of Jesus (Luke 1: 36). He was brought up in a retired way in the wilderness, till he was 30 years old. Then six months before the public appearance of Jesus he began to preach repentance in the wilderness of Judea.

First, John the Baptist prepared the way by awakening a great religious interest among the people.

This was "Building the Highways."

Second, By leading men to repentance and the forsaking of sin.

This was "Bringing the Mountains Low."

Third, He held up a mirror before the leaders so that they might realize how far and wide they strayed.

This was "Straightening the Crooked Places."

7. WHEN HE SAW MANY OF THE PHARISES AND SADDUCEES. The two leading religious sects of the Jews, including the principal men of the nation. COME TO HIS BAPTISM. Why? (1) Drawn by the general interest and excitement. (2) Perhaps to watch what was going on, so as to hinder the work if need be. (3) Possibly with a half conscious feeling of sin and need. If the new kingdom was coming they might want chief places in it. They would be baptized (Luke), if by so easy a form they could be partakers in the kingdom. O GENERATION OF Vipers. Progeny, brood of vipers. "The most venomous and dangerous of the many poisonous snakes of Syria."

WHO HATH WARNED YOU TO FLEE FROM THE WRATH. They had come to be baptized, not to repent, to go through a form, not to change their natures. Who had told them that the outward form would save them? THE WRATH TO COME. The punishment that must come upon the guilty nation, and the sinful individual, unless they forsook their sin.

Fourth, "By Removing false hopes."—vs. 8, 9. 8. BRING FORTH THEREFORE, if you really wish to be saved, and to escape. If you wish to be baptized. FRUITS MEET FOR REPENTANCE. The fruits that grow out of true repentance, and prove it true as good fruit proves the tree to be good.

9. AND THINK NOT TO SAY WITHIN YOURSELVES, as your secret hope and confidence. WE HAVE ABRAHAM TO (AS) OUR FATHER. We must be saved because we belong to the race of Abraham and the kingdom he founded, and are inheritors of the promises to him and his children, even if we do not repent, and whatever our character. Such hopes, says John, are absolutely vain. You must inherit Abraham's faith and character if you would inherit the promises to Abraham. GOD IS ABLE OF THESE STONES, doubtless pointing to the stones that lay on the shore of Jordan, where he was baptizing. May there not be a play on the words *barim* (children) *abanim* (stones)?

Fifth, "By Warnings."—Vs. 10. THE AXE IS LAID (is lying) UNTO (at) THE ROOT OF THE TREES, all ready to cut them down when the time came. Yet there was a brief respite, with the possibility of such a change into fruit bearing, that the axe need not be used. Compare the parable, Luke 13: 6-10.

EVERY TREE WHICH BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT IS HEWN DOWN. Because it takes the place of something better. Moreover, in Palestine the fruit trees are all taxed, whether they bear fruit or not. So that a fruitless tree brings its owner into debt. A few years ago when taxes were heavy, and olive products light, mul-

titudes of olive trees were cut down on the spurs of Lebanon, to save taxes.

Sixth, "By pointing to the Saviour."—Vs. 11, 12. 11. I WENT TO BAPTIZE YOU WITH WATER. I give you the sign and symbol. I call you to repentance; but I cannot give you new life. I point you to one THAT COMETH AFTER ME, whose forerunner I am, but who is so much greater, better, more worthy than I, that His SHOES I AM NOT WORTHY TO BEAR, I am not worthy to perform the lowest, most humble service for Him. HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE, of whom and of whose work fire is the symbol; enlightening, purifying, life-giving, health-giving, comforting, consuming impurities, full of power. Jesus should give what baptism symbolized, and make effective all that John sought by preaching repentance, as the sun in the spring gives life to the earth.

12. WHOSE FAN IS IN HIS HAND. A winnowing fan, which was only a light shovel, or wooden fork with two or more tines, by which the pile of mingled grain and chaff is thrown up into the wind, which blows the chaff away and leaves the grain upon the floor. In his hand all ready for use, AND HE WILL THOROUGHLY, "thoroughly," PURGE, cleanse, HIS FLOOR, separating the chaff from the wheat, the bad from the good. HIS WHEAT. The good, the true members of his kingdom. INTO THE GRANARY. Granary; the right place for the wheat; the kingdom of heaven; heaven. BUT... THE CHAFF. The refuse, the useless, representing all who continue in sin, unrepentant, good for nothing, harmful. Those who refuse to be converted, and thus to be made into good wheat. HE WILL BURN... WITH UNQUENCHABLE FIRE, that no power can put out or enable them to escape.

III. PREPARATION THROUGH BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.—Vs. 13-17. 13. THEN COMETH JESUS, probably in January, A. D. 27, after John had been preaching six months; from Nazareth, his home in GALILEE, being about 30 years old (Luke 3: 23). TO JORDAN, probably at the ford near Jericho and not far from Bethabara (John 1: 28). TO BE BAPTIZED OF HIM, as the other people were doing.

14. JOHN FORBADE HIM. The imperfect tense in the original implies that John was about to forbid him, had it in mind to prevent him. He protested against it. I HAVE NEED. He recognized in some degree who it was.

15. SUFFER, permit. THUS IT BECOMETH US TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS, so that he would be prepared for his great work. (1) As a teacher of the law he should recognize its authority and obey it. (2) This was especially needful, since baptism was to be an ordinance of perpetual obligation in the new dispensation; we see in the baptism of Jesus an example to his followers. (3) As men could consecrate themselves to a holy life and work in baptism, so could he; and so he did, pledging himself to the higher activity of that Messianic life which he was only then entering.

16. WENT UP STRAIGHTWAY OUT OF THE WATER and up the bank of the river. He was praying as He went (Luke 3: 21). Thus it was when he was transfigured. THE HEAVENS WERE OPENED: in Mark, R. V., rent asunder. All that had hidden from Him the view of His heavenly home and His Father above was rent asunder, and he saw into the very heaven of heavens. He (Jesus) saw, so did John (John 1: 34), and doubtless all who were looking. THE SPIRIT OF GOD DESCENDING LIKE A DOVE. The Holy Spirit descended not only in the manner of a dove, but in the bodily shape, which I cannot understand in any but the literal sense, as the bodily shape of a dove (Luke 3: 22). LIGHTING UPON HIM, to point Him out as the Son of God (John 1: 32-34).

17. LO A VOICE FROM HEAVEN. Three times during our Lord's earthly ministry was a voice heard from heaven: (1) at His baptism; (2) at His transfiguration (Mark 9: 7); (3) in the courts of the temple during Passion Week (John 12: 28). THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. Thus God endorsed Him and His mission, and showed to the Jewish nation that here was the Messiah. It must also have strengthened and confirmed the human Jesus as to His nature and His work.

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## EQUITY SALE.

There will be sold at public auction on Saturday, the 29th day of January next, at 12 o'clock noon, at Chubb's Corner (so called) in the City of St. John pursuant to the directions of a certain decretal order of the Supreme Court in Equity made on the nineteenth day of October, A. D. 1897, in a certain cause therein pending wherein Mary Blanche Williams is Plaintiff and William Holman is Defendant, with the approbation of the undersigned Referee in Equity, the land and premises mentioned in the said Plaintiff's bill and in the said decretal order, and therein described as follows: All the right, title and interest of the Defendant in and to a certain Indenture of Lease bearing date the first day of March, A. D. 1887, and made between the Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry of Trinity Church, in the Parish of St. John, of the first part, and William Holman, Junior, of the second part, and by the said William Holman assigned to John M. Robinson (which said Indenture of Lease by certain assignments and the land thereby demised and all the buildings thereon have become vested in the defendant) and in and to the lands and premises therein and in the Plaintiff's bill described as "all that certain lot, piece and parcel of land situate, lying and being in Duke's Ward, in the City of St. John, bounded as follows, namely, beginning at the South Eastern corner of a lot of ground, formerly leased by the said Rector, Church Wardens and Vestry to one, Caleb Radcliffe, the said corner being on the western side of Charlotte Street, thence running along the southern boundary line of said Radcliffe lot the extent thereof eighty feet, thence southerly on a line parallel with the said street thirty-three feet four inches, thence easterly on a line parallel with the said Radcliffe southern boundary eighty feet to the said street and thence northerly on the line of the said street to the place of beginning with all the privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging.

For terms of sale and other particulars apply to the Plaintiff's Solicitor or the undersigned Referee.  
Dated at the City of St. John this 16th day of November, A. D. 1897. E. H. McALPINE,  
SILAS ALWARD, Referee in Equity.  
Plaintiff's Solicitor.  
W. A. LOCKHART, Auctioneer.

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