

Sabbath School Lessons.

May 4th, 1861.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—Luke 3, 1, 21.

1. *The time of his Ministry*—It began in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberias Cæsar, A.D. 26. At this time the Lord Jesus who had not appeared unto Israel was 30 years of age. Luke 3, 22. John was six months older than Jesus. John was living in the wilderness when the word of God came to him. v. 2. God fitted John in the wilderness, and then when he was prepared called him. This is often God's way. He fits (in the wilderness still), many young men for places of usefulness in the church, and in the world. The schools and schoolmasters are various. When they are fitted he calls them forth.

As soon as the word of God came to him, he obeyed. He left the country and travelled into all the country round about Jordan preaching.

2. *The subjects of his preaching.*—(a)—Repentance for the remission of sins, v. 3. Repentance is a change of mind which, when genuine, manifests itself by immediate confession of sin and heartily forsaking it. See the Jailor of Philippi, Acts 16, 23, 30, 33, 34. Zaccheus, Luke 19, 8. Peter. Matt. 26, 75. John exhorted them to leave off many great transgressions. To bring down every lofty thought. To make straight every crooked way. Luke, 3, 8.

(b). The coming of Christ, v. 16, 17. He proclaimed the greatness of Christ. He proclaimed the power of Christ, v. 16, 17.

(c). Good works as an evidence of reformation, v. 8.

(d). Many other things, v. 18.

3. *The style of John's preaching.*—(a)—It was bold. Luke 3, 7. He was not afraid to speak to those who came to him, whether rich or poor, dignified or otherwise. He was one of those who did not fear the face of man. v. 19.

(b). It was attractive. Luke 3, 7. Multitudes came to hear him. He appears to have roused the entire of the south of Palestine, and people flocked from all parts to the spot where on the banks of the Jordan he baptized thousands unto repentance. Such was the fame of his preaching that men mused in their heart whether he were the Christ.

(c). It was personal. Luke 3, 8 & 19. He did not declaim in generalities. Where he had individual transgressors; he faithfully rebuked their sins, and pointed out their res-

pective duties. Instance the children of Abraham, v. 8. the people v. 11, the publicans v. 12. The soldiers, v. 14. The tetrach, v. 14.

(d). It was practical. Luke 3, 12, 13. He proclaimed the coming of the Lord Jesus. He said that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Therefore he pressed on their attention the performance of practical duties and the forsaking of sins.

(e). It was effective, v. 7, 12. Multitudes came to be baptized of him, of every class. Pharisees, Luke 13, 9. Sadducees, see Acts 23, 8. Publicans and sinners alike came to him. He was surprised at the former professing repentance and being afraid of hypocrisy in their confessions, he dealt most faithfully towards them, by telling them that repentance must appear in suitable fruit. Profession is but the blossom of a tree which unless followed up by suitable fruit would in the end be cut down and cast into perdition. v. 8, 9.

4. John was faithful to his Master, v. 16. He was very popular and had he been disposed to be false, might have deceived the people by representing himself as the 'one that was to come.' He however said that he was but the forerunner of one greater than he and that his baptism was but a sign of spiritual truth. v. 16, 17.

May 11th, 1861.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.— Gen. 9, 8, 17.

The term Covenant is used in Scripture to designate the Divine dealings with mankind or with individuals of the race. In all such cases the proper idea of a covenant or mutual contract between parties, each of which is bound to render certain benefits to the other is obviously excluded and one of a merely analogical nature substituted in its place. Where God is one of the parties, and man the other, in a covenant all the benefits conferred must be on the part of the former, and all the obligations sustained on the part of the latter. Hence the covenant of God is in Scripture sometimes, called his 'counsel,' his 'out,' his promise. Ps. 89, 34; 105, 8, 9. Heb. 6, 13, 20, &c.

The divine covenants were ratified by a sacrifice, the design of which was to show that without an atonement there could be no communication of blessing from God to man. See Covenant with Abraham, Gen. 15, 1-18, the Levitical Covenant, Exod. 24, 6-8. The Covenant with Christ, Heb. 9, 16.

Of the various Divine Covenants mentioned in Scripture, the first place is due to that which is called by Jehovah himself 'My Covenant.' This is God's gracious engage-