

2. To work miracles as proof of their mission.

3. To be simple in their habits—no change of dress.

4. To avoid giving offence by moving from house to house.

III. THEIR DANGERS. (16—27.) Would be as sheep among wolves seeking their lives.

1. Delivered to councils, as Stephen. (Acts vi. 16.)

2. Scourged in synagogues, as St. Paul at Iconium. (Acts xiv. 1, 5)

3 Brought before kings, as Paul before Agrippa. (Acts xxvi. 1.)

Must expect to be *hated*, as Stephen (Acts vii. 54); *persecuted* from city to city (see Acts viii. 1, 4); *reviled* like Christ (Acts xxii. 22).

IV. THEIR ENCOURAGEMENTS. (20, 28—42.) 1. *The Spirit's help.*

First given at Pentecost, enabling them to speak in different languages (Acts ii. 6); afterwards helping them to speak boldly (Acts iv. 8, 13). (2) *The Father's care.* Their enemies could at worst only kill their bodies. God will protect them. He cares for sparrows, much more for them.

But they must be prepared to do two things—(1) *Confess Christ*—not deny Him, as Peter did among the servants, but speak boldly for Him, as same Peter did before elders. (Acts iv. 13.) Then Christ will acknowledge them at the last day. (2) *Renounce all for Christ*, as Paul did at his conversion (Gal. i. 16); willing to lose life for Christ, as James did (Acts xiii. 1), and many others.

V. THEIR REWARDS. (40—42.)

1. *Be received as ambassadors for Christ.* 2. *Receive God's approval.*

No. 20. ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

To read—St. Matthew xi. 1—19.

I. ST. JOHN'S MESSAGE. (1—6.) Christ's disciples gone on their mission. Christ followed to proclaim

Himself. They were to preach repentance—turn men's hearts—proclaim the Saviour—then He showed Himself the Lamb of God. (St. John i. 29.) Christ's miracles begin to be talked about—fame reaches St. John in his prison at Machærus—fortress near Dead Sea. Why was he there? Because he had denounced the sin of Herod Antipas in taking his brother's wife (xiv. 1). Allowed to have visits in prison from his disciples. Now hears of Christ, and sends two messengers to ask Him if he is indeed the expected Christ. What had St. John already known of Christ?—1. Probably brought up with Him (his cousin) from childhood—his own parents having died. 2. Had baptised Him in the River Jordan. (St. Matt. iii. 16.) 3. Had testified to Him as the Son of God. (St. John i. 34.)

Why then did St. John send to ask Christ? Three reasons been suggested:—

1. To confirm his own doubts—because Christ did not set him free.

2. To confirm the faith of his disciples.

3. To induce Christ to proclaim Himself publicly as Messiah.

II. ST. JOHN'S CHARACTER. (7—15.) (1) *What it was not.* Weak, like a reed. He had not been afraid of publicans, soldiers, etc. (St. Luke iii. 12—14.) He had rebuked Herod. Was bold and unflinching in his conduct. *Effeminate.* Not seeking king's palaces—clad in soft clothes—but leading austere life in desert (iii. 4), setting example of frugality and self-denial. (2) *What it was.* Great in position, as prophet and forerunner of Christ; and great in fact, as holy, patient man.

How was his greatness shown?—

1. An angel announced his birth.
2. Full of Holy Ghost from birth.
3. Was special messenger of Christ.
4. Baptised Christ.