

LESSON I—January 5th, 1896.

The Forerunner of Christ. LUKE 1: 5-17.

(Commit to memory verses 15 and 16).

GOLDEN TEXT: "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways." Luke 1: 76.

PROVE THAT—We should prepare for Christ's coming. Isa. 40: 3.

SHORTER CATECHISM. Quest. 39. *What is the duty which God requireth of man?* A. The duty which God requireth of man is obedience to his revealed will.

LESSON HYMNS. *Children's Hymnal*. Nos. 248, 249, 26, 28.

DAILY PORTIONS. *Monday*. The Forerunner of Christ. Luke 1: 5-17. *Tuesday*. A wondrous infancy. Luke 1: 59-66. *Wednesday*. Prophecy of greatness. Luke 1: 67-80. *Thursday*. Service of the altar. Ex. 30: 1-10. *Friday*. The Lord's Messenger. Mal. 3: 1-6. *Saturday*. Promise of Elijah. Mal. 4. *Sabbath*. Christ's testimony to John. Matt. 11: 7-14. (*The I. B. R. A. Selections*).

HELPS IN STUDYING.

INTRODUCTORY. This Gospel was written by Luke, "the beloved physician" (Col. 4: 14), who was the companion of Paul, and also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The first two chapters have been called "The Gospel of the Infancy," because they narrate events connected with the birth and youth of Jesus.

LESSON PLAN. I. His Godly Parents. vs. 5-7. II. His Birth Announced. vs. 8-14. III. His Character Described. vs. 15-17.

I. When king David arranged the order of service in connection with the tabernacle¹ he divided the priests into twenty-four courses, appointing each to serve a week at a time and twice during the year. The course on duty appointed by lot the one who was to offer the daily incense.² On the occasion referred to in our lesson, this had fallen to an aged and pious priest called Zacharias. Both he and his wife Elisabeth were well-known for their consistent, godly lives.³

II. As Zacharias was offering the incense alone in the Holy Place, as the law required,⁴ the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and bidding the astonished priest not to fear,⁵ announced to him that his prayer, and that of all Israel, was about to be answered. The long-promised Messiah would soon come, and the son, which God was to give him, would be the herald of

His advent. The birth of this son, whom he was to name John, would not only bring joy and gladness to his own childless home, but many others also would rejoice with him.

III. The angel then proceeded to describe the character of this Forerunner of Christ. He would be bound by the strict vow of the Nazirite⁶ to indicate his entire consecration to the service of God. The Holy Spirit would enter into him as soon as he was born, so that from his earliest years he would be enlightened, guided, and sanctified by Him.⁷ He would be the means of turning many from sin to the service of God. The effect of his ministry would be to increase family affection, heal discord, make parents anxious for the salvation of their children, and children for that of their parents, and so by awakening men to feel their need of a Saviour prepare them to receive him.⁸

¹ 1 Chr. 24: 10. ² Ex. 30: 7, 8, 34. ³ Ps. 119: 6; 2 Cor. 1: 12. ⁴ Lev. 16: 17. ⁵ Dan. 10: 8; Acts 10: 4; Rev. 1: 17. ⁶ Num. 6: 1-5; Judges 13: 5; 1 Sam. 1: 12. ⁷ Jer. 1: 5; Ps. 22: 9, 10; Gal. 1: 5. ⁸ Mal. 4: 4-6; 3: 1; Matt. 11: 14; 17: 10-13.

LESSONS. 1. Religion makes happy and beautiful every home in which it dwells. 2. God's angels are sent to minister to his people. 3. God will answer every prayer, so far as it is for his own glory and our good. 4. No one is too young to be filled with the Holy Spirit. 5. Repentance must precede pardon and acceptance with God.