

## LESSON I.—January 2nd, 1898.

### JESUS AND JOHN. MATT. 3. 7-17.

*Commit vs. 13-17.*

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8. Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance:

9. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10. And even now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11. Indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; 12. whose fan is in

his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14. But John would have hindered him saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15. But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him.

16. And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightway from the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

LESSON PLAN.	{	I. The Pharisees and John. vs. 7-12.
		II. Jesus and John. vs. 13-15.
		III. Father, Son, and Spirit. vs. 16.

#### HELPS IN STUDYING.

**INTRODUCTORY.** The first Gospel was written by Matthew, or Levi, the publican, whose call to discipleship forms the subject of Lesson VII. It was written for Jewish Christians about A.D. 60, and constantly keeps in view the fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus.

The exact spot where Jesus was baptized is not known with certainty. Tradition places it in the neighborhood of Jericho. The time was January A.D. 27, when Jesus was thirty years of age. (Luke 3: 23).

**7.**—Everybody came out to hear this wonderful preacher who dressed like one of the ancient prophets and was not afraid to rebuke sinners no matter who they were, from Herod on the throne to the soldiers who stood in the ranks. Pharisees and Publicans alike were the subjects of his stern reproofs. John was now at the height of his popularity, but he told the people that he only prepared the way for another mightier than himself. The Pharisees were rigid observers of the law, while the Sadducees did not even believe in a future life or spirit world. John saw how wicked and hypocritical they were notwithstanding their professions of sanctity, so he called them "vipers." Christ used the same word to them afterwards and their treatment of him shows that they deserved it.

**8.**—If one is really sorry for sin he will try to avoid it. See what kind of fruit we ought to bear. Gal. 5: 22, 23.

**9.**—The Pharisees believed that they would be saved just because they were descendants of Abraham, but John said that if the pebbles on the banks of the Jordan were made into men, they would be just as much children of Abraham as they were. Mere descent from Abraham gave them no claim upon God. Their privileges, however, gave God a claim upon them and made their guilt all the more inexcusable.

**10.**—Read Christ's parable in Luke 13: 6-9, and you will understand this verse better. John means that the time had come when those who did not show themselves true children of Abraham would be rejected from the kingdom of the Messiah. All who will not receive Jesus as their Saviour must perish eternally.

**11.**—John baptized those who repented, as a sign that they were truly sorry for sin and would receive Christ when he came. But Christ would give them the true baptism of the Holy Spirit, of which the water was merely a sign. This would renew their hearts, cleanse them from sin, fill them with the fire of zeal and love, and enlighten their minds in the knowledge of divine truth.

**12.**—The "fan" was a light wooden shovel by which the grain and chaff were tossed into the air. The wind blew away the chaff and the wheat fell on the threshing floor. The Gospel of Christ would separate between real disciples and those who were not, or who pretended to be. (Read Matt. 25: 31-46 and Lesson XI.)

**13.**—Jesus had lived at Nazareth till about thirty years of age, when he came to be consecrated to his life-work by John.

**14-15.**—John was unwilling to baptize one whom he knew to be so blameless, although at that moment he did not know that Jesus was the Messiah. (John 1: 33.) But Jesus reminded him that it was their duty to do everything that God had appointed to be done. He wished to be set apart for his work just as others had been set apart for his coming.

**16-17.**—Luke tells us that Jesus was praying as he came up from the water. By these signs Jesus was pointed out as the promised Messiah, the Son of God (Ps. 2: 7).