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STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

Third Quarter.

Lesson IV. July 24. Matt. 3: 13-17.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

GOLDEN TEXT.

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

I. THE MEETING OF JESUS AND JOHN.

13. Then cometh Jesus. Luke (3: 21) has this important addition: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus being baptized, etc., implying that Jesus waited till all other applicants for baptism that day had been disposed of, ere he stepped forward, that he might not seem to be merely one of the crowd."

II. THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer (permit) if I now. The antithesis of time is here not that of the past, but of the future. For thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. To leave nothing undone which would be honoring to the seemingly and significant ordinance of God.

III. THE SPIRIT OF GOD DESCENDS ON JESUS.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water. Mark has "out of the water"; and, adds Luke (3: 21), "while he was praying, a grand piece of information. And lo! While he prayed, in answer to prayer, Even to the best gifts came through prayer. The heavens were opened. An apparent separation or division of the visible expanse, as if to afford passage to the form and voice which are mentioned in the next clause. Unto Jesus. To Jesus, He (Jesus) came. We should infer from the text that the vision was to Jesus, as it was the Baptist was also a witness, as we learn from John 1: 32, "And John here record, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. This was to John the sign by which the Messiah should be recognized. The Spirit of God descending like a dove. In bodily shape like a dove, says Luke 3: 22. The appearance and voice seem to have been manifested to our Lord and the Baptist only. They may have been alone at the time. And Hyming (coming) upon him. John (1: 32) says: "It abode upon him"; the outward sign was temporary, the anointing was permanent. His active ministry now begins in the fulness of the Spirit, which he received without measure (John 3: 34). The baptism with the Holy Spirit of One "conceived by the Holy Spirit," is a divine mystery.

IV. THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

And lo, a voice from heaven. The first of the three heavenly voices to be heard during our Lord's ministry was at (1) his baptism; (2) his transfiguration (Mark 9: 7); (3) in the courts of the temple during Holy Week (John 12: 28). This voice attested in the presence of his followers the divine nature of our Lord, and inaugurated his public ministry. My beloved Son. Here the whole Trinity united at the scene. The Son is consecrated by the Spirit, and proclaimed by the Father. In whom I am well pleased. The English here, at least to modern ears, is scarcely strong enough. "I delight" comes the nearest, perhaps, to that ineffable "completeness" which is usually intended. Let Christ. Sufferings - 1. Ver. 13. Let Christ be our example in baptism, who came such a distance to receive it, and who said, "Thus it becometh us," including, in a subordinate sense, all his followers. If it became him to "fulfill all righteousness," it surely becomes us to walk in his ordinances and to obey all his commandments (ver. 10; John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3; Acts 2: 38).

2. As Jesus made a public renunciation of all unrighteousness, and of complete consecration to God, so should we publicly profess Christ, and stand openly on the side of righteousness, and opposed to all sin. A religion that is not worth professing is not worth possessing.

3. Ver. 14. John showed his humility in baptizing Jesus, as well as in hesitating and shrinking from it at first. Humility and obedience to God go hand in hand. Disobedience and pride are twin brothers (1 Sam. 15: 22).

4. Ver. 15. Every Christian should seek to fulfill all righteousness. Every deed in outward religion, or in character, or in life, lessons his power for good.

5. Ver. 16. Let us open our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit whom the Father has promised to send on his people.

6. Let us pray for, and strive to possess, the dove-like spirit of Christ, gentleness, harmlessness, love, and purity.

7. Ver. 17. God pleased thus to reveal his Son: in him we should trust. God fixed in him his delight: so should we. In him God was well pleased: only when we are in him is God well pleased with us. God publicly attested him: we should be ready to profess him.

A Cuban Story.

One Sunday, in Havana, Cuba, a young lady came forward and joined the Baptist church. After she had received Bro. Diaz, the pastor, gave her a New Testament, and asked her to read it carefully, and learn what are the duties of one who professes Christ. Her baptism was necessarily postponed for a time, and he wished her to understand fully what was meant by consecrating herself to Christ in that holy ordinance.

She took the book, and while she read of Christ, she loved him and his people more and more, and her heart longed to do something by which she could express her love to both her Saviour and her church.

She was an orphan, having neither father nor mother; was without means of support, and was living with her aunt, who was a rigid Catholic. What could she do? Being expert with her needle, she resolved that she would make a handsome cover for the communion table of the church.

Procuring a suitable piece of cloth, she proceeded, with those deft fingers of hers, to ornament it. One part of the plan was to work in large letters, in the centre of the cloth the name of the church. Everybody in Havana knows that name - "The Gethsemane Baptist Church." So "Gethsemane" was the word she proposed to work in the centre of the cover for the table.

She had more than half finished this work, working on it by night, because she knew her Catholic aunt had no use for the Baptist church, when, one night to her great surprise, her aunt came into her room. "What are you doing, my daughter?" said she to the startled girl, who had thrown the end of the cloth over the letters worked in it. "Let me see," said she, unfolding the table cover - "Gethsemane."

"What is this? Gethsemane? What are you a Baptist?" The girl, strengthened by divine grace, boldly told her aunt she was. Some further conversation passed, when her aunt said to her: "That will do! Go to bed now, and we will see about all this in the morning."

The poor girl apprehended the meaning of these seemingly polite words, and as soon as her aunt left the room, bowed down and asked her Saviour not to forsake her in this hour of her sorest need. Arising from her knees, she took her pen and wrote to Bro. Diaz, her pastor, what had happened, and her conviction that she would be sent to a convent next day; that she probably never would see her again; and asked him and the church to pray for her continually, and expressing her unalterable purpose wherever she went, to love and obey her Saviour. Next morning she folded the unfinished cloth and contrived to send it with the letter to Bro. Diaz. The story went abroad, among all the members of the congregation, and the most diligent inquiries were made to ascertain where she was. Two months passed, and not one word had been heard from her. The church had about given her up as lost to them forever; when, one day, Bro. Diaz received a brief note, written on a piece of coarse paper, asking him and his wife and other sisters, if possible, to meet her at the church that afternoon at 4 o'clock. The joyful news spread, and at the appointed hour, several of the sisters, with the pastor, were at the church awaiting her coming.

Suddenly she stepped in at the front door. They advanced to meet her. "Hush! Hush!" said she "there are two Sisters of Charity waiting at the door for me - I have but a minute to stay. Pastor, you must baptize me. It is my last opportunity. They have put me in a convent, and I shall probably never see you all any more. Baptize me now, pastor."

"Why," said Bro. Diaz, "baptize you? you have no clothes to exchange for those you have on."

"No matter! Baptize me just as I am! I cannot wait. I shall never have another opportunity."

"But, sister, I have on my Sunday suit, and it will soil it," said Bro. Diaz.

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They drove to the convent, and immediately reported to the Mother Superior what had occurred. "Well, said she, "No Baptist can stay in this convent!" She instantly gave orders that the young lady, with all her baggage, be put out upon the sidewalk. In a few minutes the poor girl, in her dripping clothes, stood by her trunk upon the pavement and saw the gates locked against her. "What should she do? Where should she go? Her aunt would not receive her now, and there was no place she could go! She seemed to herself, like her Master, to have nowhere to lay her head. At length, as the rude boys and ruder men gathered around her, cheering and ridiculing her, she determined to go to Brother Diaz, and tell him all about it. Calling a carriage, she was soon at his door. In reply to her mournful story, told with many tears, that she had nowhere to go, no friends to help her, he said: "My sister, God has sent you to us, and here you shall stay! My wife will be a mother to you, and as long as God gives us bread to eat, we will divide it with you." - Christian Index.

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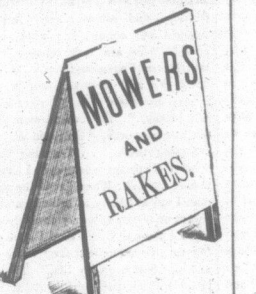
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