

PAGES

MISSING

W. Redden

SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for
TEACHERS
AND
YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. 24.]

JANUARY, 1890.

[No. 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Bethany	1	A New Departure	7
The Epworth League	2	The Epworth League	8
The Epworth League, Its Objects and Methods	3	Epworth League Notes	8
The Gate of the Year	5	Book Notices	9
Epworth League Convention	6	Opening and Closing Services	9
		International Bible Lessons	10

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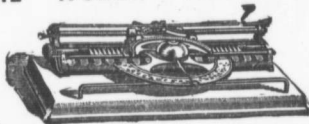
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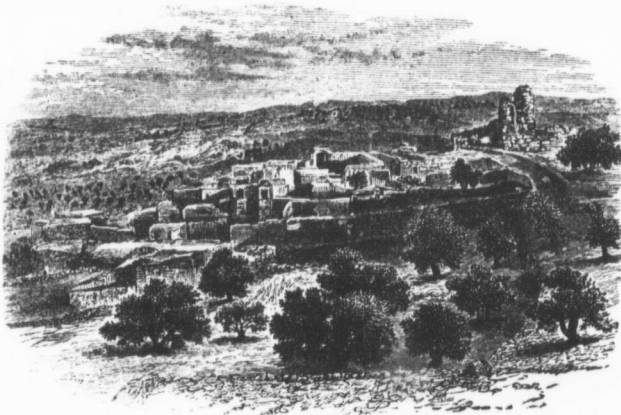
SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for
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YOUNG PEOPLE.

[VOL. XXIV.]

JANUARY, 1890.

[No. 1.]



BETHANY.

Bethany.

(From Photograph.)

THIS place, which is of peculiar interest to the Scriptural student from having been the residence of Lazarus and his sisters, and the last earthly spot touched by the feet of the risen Jesus, lay a little less than two miles and fifteen furlongs east-south-east from Jerusalem, in a shallow Wady, or vale, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, and on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. In this village, our Lord found the solace and endearments of friendship in the bosom of the family of Lazarus, which was obviously possessed of considerable substance. No place was more ap-

propriate than Bethany to be the spot whence the Redeemer should ascend to his Father; for here His person was well known, and here were friends who would naturally wish to see with their own eyes the last traces of their Lord.

Bethany has been smitten with that general appearance of desolation which now characterizes much of Palestine. It is a poor village, of some twenty or thirty families, having its precincts adorned by fig and olive trees. In the walls of a few of the houses there are marks of antiquity. The most conspicuous object is a ruined tower, built of large square stones, which the Mohammedan villagers declare to have been the abode of Lazarus. His tomb is also shown at some distance north of the town, on the edge of the village.

*Specimens of numerous cuts on Bible Lands to appear in *METHODIST MAGAZINE* for 1890.

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Sunday School Banner.

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1890.

The Epworth League.

I HAVE been asked to give some further information concerning this new social and religious movement, which is attracting so much attention throughout the Methodist Church both in Canada and the United States. To my mind the Epworth League is first of all and most of all a *religious* institution. Its great object is to promote personal piety, Christian culture and Christian service. Unless these objects be kept in the very forefront it cannot reach the deep, wide, permanent results which are the prime cause for its organization. Where it is practicable, where there are a large number of young people in a congregation, it may be well to organize all the departments at once. In many cases, however, it may be best to begin with two or three, or even with one. In all cases the department of Christian work should be foremost. It may begin with a young people's prayer-meeting or class-meeting or the two combined. The motto of the League will indicate, in a word, its purpose: "Look up; Lift up." Look up to God for help and guidance, and then try to lift up others. The divine command to each is, "Son, go work *to-day* in my vineyard." Lo! the fields are white unto the harvest all around. In recruiting for the

Sunday-school, for the services of the church, for the religious meetings of the League, abundant opportunities for usefulness will be found.

To this may be added the Department of Literary Work; especially the study of the Bible, of the early history and biography of Methodism, and of broader reading and culture. The Departments of Social Work and of Entertainments are also of importance, but relatively of less than those just mentioned. They are designed to bring into harmony with the religious spirit of Methodism the social life and amusements of its young people, so that these shall be helpful to their growth in knowledge and piety, instead of being, as they too often are, antagonistic to both. It is to lay the hand of the church gently yet kindly upon the entertainments which are held within its walls, and to restrain them from degenerating into mere frivolous and profitless assemblies.

Much time is wasted by young people in this age of books in light reading, often of a pernicious character. One function of the League is furnish guidance amid the wilderness of reading to a course of instructive, interesting and mentally and spiritually profitable study, such as will commend itself to the judgment of the young people themselves.

It is not the purpose of the league to needlessly multiply organizations—to add a fifth wheel to a coach which has already a complete running gear. It will rather bind these wheels together so that they may run in harmony and with greater efficiency. It is not an antagonist to any existing church organization. Almost any society for religious culture or mental improvement can become a department of the League without in the least affecting its self-management. It merely lends its strength to this movement, and helps to give a unity and solidarity and *esprit de corps* to all the Young People's Associations of the Methodist Church throughout the Dominion—throughout the continent.

The undersigned will be happy to furnish copies of the Constitution of League, Course of Reading, and any further information that may be desired.

W. H. WITHROW,
Office of Epworth League, Toronto.

TRUE goodness is like the glow-worm—it shines most when no eyes except those of heaven are upon it.—Anon.

The Epworth League, Its Objects and Methods.

ABRIDGED FROM ARTICLE IN THE METHODIST MAGAZINE.

"I desire to form a League, offensive and defensive, with every soldier in Christ Jesus."—*John Wesley.*

THE religious training of its young people is the most important duty of the Church. These are especially, by the providence of God, committed to its care. These are, in the most emphatic sense, the hope of the Church and of the world. Methodism, in both the old world and the new, by means of its admirable Sunday-school system, has done her full share in training the young generations in religious knowledge and duty. She is now preparing to step out into the still wider field, that of following these young people as they attain the years of adolescence, of finding the missing link between the school and the Church, and of promoting the development of all their faculties under Christian auspices. She is seeking, first of all and most of all, the cultivation among her young people of personal piety. She then seeks the organizing and training of the young life of Methodism in practical Christian effort, in intelligent acquaintance, and deep sympathy, and active co-operation with its great enterprises of evangelistic and missionary work. She seeks, thirdly, to promote their intellectual culture—to make them better acquainted, first of all, with that grandest book in the universe, the Word of God—to study it as a whole; to study it in the relations of its various parts; to know when, where, why, by whom, and for whom, were written its different books. She seeks to make them better acquainted with the providential dealings of God with the race as recorded on the page of history; especially of the history of the great religious movements of the ages; and most of all, as recorded in the soul-stirring story of the great revival called Methodism—to make them familiar with its noble traditions, and to bring them into sympathy with its religious spirit.

Nor does this movement overlook the social and æsthetic natures of the young. All that can elevate the taste, all that can ennoble the character, all that can dignify the life—whatever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—these things she seeks to cultivate and promote as the noblest heritage our young people can possess.

Such are, in brief, the aims and objects of the new social and religious movement known as the "Epworth League." Like most things in Methodism, it is a growth, a development—the adaptation of new means to a pressing need. For some years the Methodism of this continent has been feeling its way to such an organization. In the affiliated Methodism of the neighboring Republic they have had their local associations—the Church Lyceum, the Christian Alliance, the Methodist Young People's Alliance, the Oxford League, the Chau-

taqua Movement, and other associations. But none of these seemed to be sufficiently broad, sufficiently flexible, sufficiently vital in its organization, to meet the varied needs and varied circumstances of societies in town and country, in the east and west, in the north and south. At length, last May, these various associations met, through their representatives, in the city of Cleveland, and mutually agreed to disband and reorganize as a united society—the Epworth League. The success of the League has been phenomenal. Since the month of May over 1,300 branches have been formed, some with a membership of 400, and that during a portion of the year least favorable for such work. The utmost enthusiasm has been manifested, and the most beneficial practical results have been realized. The vast possibilities of the movement led Bishop Newman to designate it one of the most important movements of modern Methodism. It is taking hold of the young life of the Church and consecrating it to Christian culture and Christian service as no other agency has ever done.

Canadian Methodism has, meantime, been feeling the need of a similar organization, and endeavoring to supply that need. Seven years ago, at the Hamilton General Conference, the present writer procured the passage of a resolution recommending the formation, wherever practicable, of young people's associations for home reading and religious culture on the lines of the Church Lyceum. The Union of Methodism and reconstruction of our organization caused that scheme for the time to remain in abeyance. At the last General Conference the effort was repeated, and an influential committee* was appointed "to arrange for and carry out, at as early a period as possible," such a course of home reading and culture. That committee met twice, arranged and published a course of reading, chiefly in lines of Bible study. A considerable number of readers adopted and for some time followed it up, not without marked benefit.

Meanwhile other associations for young people were springing up among us, excellent in their way, but owing no allegiance to Methodism, and in no way under the control of our Church, either as to the courses of prescribed reading, or general management, and having their chief affiliated relations in a foreign land. The Methodist Church is strong enough, its sympathies with its young people are warm enough, to enable it to offer them every advantage and enjoyment that they can find anywhere. The need was felt for an organization which should be frankly and distinctively Methodist—which should cultivate, first of all, loyalty to the Church under whose fostering watch-care these young people are placed, and to the institutions of the country in which they

* The following are the names of the committee: Rev. John Potts, D.D., Rev. E. A. Stafford, D.D., LL.D., Rev. Hugh Johnston, D.D., Rev. B. F. Austin, B.D., Rev. Alex. Burns, D.D., LL.D., L. C. Peake, Esq., R. Brown, Esq., J. B. Houstead, Esq., and Rev. A. M. Phillips, M.A., Rev. Prof. Shaw, LL.D., Rev. S. Card, Rev. Dr. Burwash, S.T.D., George Bishop, Esq., Advisory Members. Rev. W. H. Withrow, Secretary.

precious faith. Its aim may be more fully paraphrased by these lines :

"O live for those who love you,
For those who know you true,
For heaven that bends above you,
And awaits your coming too;
For the good that lacks assistance,
For the wrong that needs resistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that you may do."

THE EPWORTH LEAGUE—WHAT IS SAID OF IT.

REV. DR. CARMAN, General Superintendent, writes: "I am with you in conviction, desire and purpose in this grand movement, so happily supplementary to, and co-operative with, our Sunday-school and Church work. The demand of these times is a well-informed Christianity, as not giving way to the mere emotional; and a social and mutually helpful type of our Christian faith, as opposed to the selfish and exclusive. We must say to the people, "Move forward," and this League in its gradations will, under God's blessing, prove a noble preparatory training for our youth."

The REV. DR. POTTS says: "I am very anxious that our Church should have some better provision for Young People's Associations, and I think the EPWORTH LEAGUE about the best kind of organization for our Church. I shall do all in my power to help to make it a success."

The REV. DR. SUTHERLAND, Missionary Secretary writes: "The movement enlists my warmest sympathies, and it will have any support that I can give. The general plan of the League seems to be admirable, affording scope for all kinds of talent, and giving every one something to do."

The HON. SENATOR MACDONALD, writes: "The hope of our country is in the young. To have them convinced of the need and importance of the Christian literary and social work, which it is the aim of the EPWORTH LEAGUE to inculcate, will not only mean happiness in the home but prosperity to the nation. I trust, therefore, that we may expect from its working the very best results."

J. J. MACLAREN, Esq., Q.C., LL.D., writes: "It seems to me that the League is admirably calculated to further the very desirable ends proposed, and I have confidence that it will serve in a very substantial way, not only to wisely direct valuable energies of our young people that are now being largely frittered away for want of such direction, but also to arouse forces that have hitherto remained latent, and to press them into the service of Christ and the Church."

The REV. W. GALBRAITH, LL.B., writes: "I have full sympathy with the plans and purposes of the League. I regard it as one of the most important movements that have ever been made for the improvement and elevation of the young people."

The REV. HUGH JOHNSTON, D.D., who organized the first League in Toronto, writes: "My heart, my head, my whole being is in sympathy with the EPWORTH LEAGUE movement. It has come upon the Church like an inspiration. It is like the ringing of a trumpet blast, summoning our young people to baid themselves together under its standard. It meets every demand—intellectual, spiritual, and social. I trust that every church in the city will organize at once, and that branches will spring up everywhere."

The Gate of the Year.

"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness."
—PSALM cvii. 8.

I saw a countless multitude before a golden gate;
I saw their eager earnestness, I saw them watch and wait;
I saw the Porter opening, his gracious form I knew,
And yet, alas! how thoughtlessly that giddy throng passed through.

How few with heartfelt gratitude adored the wondrous grace
That opened thus another year to our unworthy race!
How few were they who turned aside to give Him thanks who stood
And watched, as with a weeping eye, the rushing human flood!

I heard His voice of tenderness, as lovingly He cried,
"Behold My wounded hands and feet; behold My pierced side!
It was for sin I suffered thus, that ye might share my love,
Oh, will ye coldly hasten by, and thus ungrateful prove?"

I saw the aged trembling come and pass that golden door;
But would they pass the Heavenly Friend, so often passed before?
He looked, He spake, He stretched His hand, as o'er the step they trod;
But no, their eyes were turned to earth; they passed the Son of God!

I saw the young step lightly up; I heard the Saviour say,
"Young man, give Me thy noble life, My blessed will obey;"
And as a maiden hurried through, He drew her near His side,
"Forsake the world's frivolities; I love thee, I have died."

I saw the matron and the sire, in life's meridian prime;
I saw the feeble and the strong, pass 'neath the gate of Time,
On, on into another year; and yet, alas! how few
Who even turned a glance on Him whose mercy let them through!

His mercy! yes, 'twas mercy still that let the
through go by;
For at the threshold, scythe in hand, Death
lingered ever nigh;
And in the porch I saw a weary pilgrim stay—
Death called him back; he must not pass along
that opening way.

O traveller, at the golden gate the Saviour
speaks to thee:
"Believe My love, believe and live; commit thy
soul to Me."
Stay; wilt thou thus begin the year, or shall
the Lord be passed?
Nay, at its threshold, trust Him now, lest it
should be thy last. —William Luff.

Epworth League Convention.

REV. FREDERICK BURRILL GRAVES.

AS IN the closing decade of the last century English poetry fell to its lowest watermark, to be followed by the sweeping flood-tide of this century, so the religious sky, dark and threatening in these waning years of this century, is yet faintly heralding a splendid dawn in the beginning of the twentieth century. The rosiest streak in this bright morning sky is the young people's movement the world over. The days are electric. All denominations are awake. Convention follows convention, meeting succeeds meeting. One of the most significant was the second annual meeting of the young people's societies of New England in convention, at the People's Church, Boston.

Rev. W. Haven presided. After the collection of credentials, he said: We have gathered here in the name of our Redeemer and to glorify Him. Two years ago, when we organized this movement, we felt it was a Divine suggestion. Following the instructions which you gave us, we, the officers who serve you, have labored to bring together different portions of the Methodist army under one head.

Rev. G. Phinney, of Salem, said: Special branches of industry in the Church are necessary. The earlier Methodists did not provide for young people, but it is no discredit to them. They did the basal work. They had no time. They met the demands of their generation. Emphasis should be put in the first place on the education of the young people in the local church; in the second place on social power. Restraint by the pastor may be essential, but the Church should not frown upon and freeze its associates. Another essential part of this work is the organization of young people for work in the Church. Place responsibility upon the young people, for they are an abiding factor in the growth of the kingdom of God. The young people must be in organic connection with the Church, and not, as in the past of Methodism, a mere appendage to the Church. The work of the League is very effective, because it is supplementary to the pastor. The pastor, the League says, cannot alone do the work of the world. The pastor is expected to visit, but the

surprise of a visitation from a member of the church is necessary. The League is further a source of inspiration to the local church. The signs of it are already seen.

Miss Bertha Vella, of Lynn, then told what young women can do. After picturing a familiar church scene, with a congregation made up of many young people and an aged pastor in the pulpit, she pertinently inquired why young women could not, in the work, growth, and spirituality of the Church, do as they would do in the secular world if they wished to find some congenial occupation—choose the right work, and then do it intelligently and thoroughly? It was pleasurable to hear her recommend the formation of Bands of Mercy among the children, of which there are now 6,000, with a membership of 400,000. She spoke also of the formation of the "King's Own" and Mission Bands. Such societies will keep the young people in touch with the pastor in his work. A kind and helpful visit by a young lady to the aged and sick will be going about doing good and will help us to remember that we are the King's Daughters. Above all, however, the young women are to endeavor to promote the spirituality of the Church; and to do this we must first ourselves be spiritual, cultivate a spirit of constant prayer, and be thoughtful. Then, taking the name of "Epworth" and building an acrostic, she suggested that the young women of the League should be

EARNEST
PRAISEFUL
WATCHFUL
OBEDIENT
READY
THOUGHTFUL
HAPPY

with pithy, pertinent, paragraphs of comment.

EVENING SESSION.

Rev. F. H. Knight conducted a love-feast in which there was love and a feast, for, during the few moments given to it, there were, besides the singing, exactly fifty testimonies. Rev. J. L. Huribut, D.D., spoke substantially as follows:—

"There is just now a great deal of interest in the World's Fair to be held in 1892. I am reminded of the first of the great expositions held in New York in 1853, in the famous Crystal Palace. As a boy I remember this splendid building, and it seemed to me that I was in the midst of a scene of the Arabian Nights. But what impressed me most was a group of statuary. When I drew aside the veil I was startled to see Christ and the group of the twelve apostles. It was wonderfully impressive. We are all of us, like Thorwaldsen who carved the famous original of this group, living two lives, the real and the ideal. This is true in the meanest acts of our lives. It is a sad hour for a man when he turns his back on his ideals; it

is a good thing when he keeps this ideal ever before him in the sky and climbs up the heights to it. I want to tell you what my ideal of a youthful Christian is. There may be some hearer who is looking for that ideal. First, I would name a spiritual life—that divine spark which God put into a man, and thus differentiates him from every other man. You cannot build a rose or a lily, but you can grow them. Christians have life, and they know it. This lies at the basis. How can you get it? Your eyes must be opened to see the light of God, and your ears unstopped to hear the voice of the Father. Be a Christian and walk faithfully, and light will be revealed. In the next place, a youthful Christian wants intelligence. The steam in the boiler is not enough, but a sober engineer at the throttle; the winds and the sails are good in their place, but a cautious pilot at the wheel is necessary. Read the Bible, not because you ought—though that is well—but because you love it, for this book is a message of love to you. The Bible is a chart to guide us on our voyage over the sea of life. Coleridge said that the sublimest composition of man is the Gospel of St. John, and the profoundest composition of man is Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Read, then, worthy books. A rich reward follows the study of the Book. A third element in the youthful Christian of my ideal is an intense loyalty to that church where God has put him. What is the difference between a mob and an army? The difference between organization and no organization. We want an army, not a mob, in the church of Jesus Christ. The young Christian soldier is intelligent and thoughtful; he loves his church and knows her doctrines. He is obedient to the discipline of the church. Remember that the people who got up the Discipline knew something, and had observed a generation or two of Christians.

One more element of this ideal Christian is that he is a working Christian. He will find his place and try to fill it. He will not be like the man with the withered hand, the result perhaps of idleness. We want this type of the young Christian—fair, noble and strong. The twentieth century is upon us, and the nineteenth is fading into the dimness of the past.

A New Departure—The Epworth League.

BY REV. DR. DOUGLAS.

SELDOM, if ever, has a new departure come with such promise of immediate advantage and prophecy of future good, as the proposal to establish the Epworth League throughout the Methodist Church of Canada. For more than two generations the problem of how to save the youth of the Church has engaged the best minds of English and American Methodism. The Catechumen Movement, under the leadership of Samuel Jackson, in England, and the

Lyceum Movement in the United States, aimed at the solution of the problem, but the results were only a partial success.

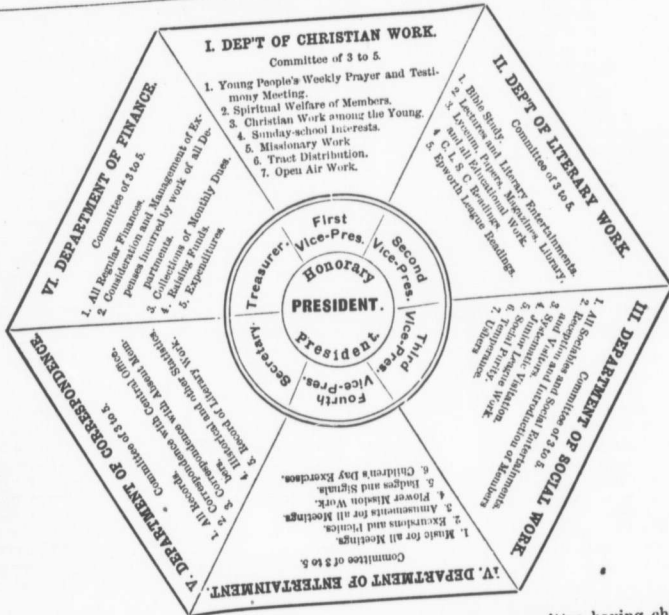
In the proposed Epworth League we have a scheme at once comprehensive and singularly adapted to the constitution of the Methodist Church. Its objects are threefold. It proposes to take hold of the young when the Sabbath-school has largely done its work, and seeks to develop a piety at once sweet and beautiful on the lines of Carvossa and Heister Ann Rogers, where the exalted "spiritual" of experimental piety is so finely exemplified. It proposes to take the best features of the Chautauqua scheme and cultivate intellectual habits by a well selected and organized course of reading, giving emphasis to works which unfold the marvellous history of early Methodism with those which aim at the broadest culture. It proposes to take the best elements in the recent Christian Endeavor enterprise and inaugurate methods of training for the several departments of Christian work, with special reference to the peculiarities of our Church organization. It will thus be seen that piety, intelligence, and usefulness are embodied in this new departure of the Epworth League. Already it has widely obtained in American Methodism, and we confidently anticipate it will prove an abounding benediction to our churches of our Dominion. As the League is loyally associated with the constitution of the Sabbath-school, and depends for recognition upon the Quarterly Meeting of the churches, it will form an additional element of strength.

A great army, crowned with the vernal coronal of youth, is coming on apace to play their part in our Church life. Whatever can contribute to give consecrated elevation of character and loyal intelligent attachment to the "city of our sublimities," the "Zion of our love," is worthy the profoundest thought and zealous endeavor of every minister and member of our Church. Grand is our heritage in the youth of the land, and we firmly believe that the adoption of this League will be an additional aid to bring about the blissful consummation, when "our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace."

Let every minister and superintendent correspond with Dr. Withrow, the valued and aggressive editor of our Sabbath-school literature, and his efficient direction will be given to form an Epworth League.

—Wesleyan Theological College, Montreal,
November 23rd, 1889.

"THE primary object of the Epworth League is to awaken and promote an earnest, enthusiastic, and loyal piety. We want piety in our young people; not morality alone, but a faithful, earnest piety and enthusiasm as well. This latter is a safeguard to our young people. If we are supremely devoted to God we shall be safe."—*Rev. Wallace McMullen.*



The Epworth League.

THE above diagram shows the mutual relations of the different departments of the Epworth League. It rallies around the pastor, who is Honorary President, all the working forces of the young membership of the church. These departments need not all be taken up at once. In smaller local branches some of these may not be taken up at all. But it will be seen that almost any existing organization of young people can come under one or other of these departments, and the sub-sections will show what a variety of Christian work or literary culture may be taken up. We hope that in every Methodist church at least the one department—that of Christian work—will soon be organized.

Epworth League Notes.

READ Mr. Graves' admirable report. We are now under a new banner, with added legends to our inspiring motto. We are a division of a larger army. But we face the same foe of infidelity, disloyalty, and folly, and we have the same Captain.

"Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
And He must win the battle."

A word to the committee having charge of social gatherings. As you love the Lord Jesus Christ, watch, lest you bring into your meetings during this fall and winter some form of entertainment that is not elevating in its influence. The young people in some of our churches by their thoughtlessness have brought reproach upon the name Christian. Always consult with your pastor, not after your plans have been started, when it would cause confusion and hard feeling to make changes, but before you begin. While intellectual and social recreation may be holy and suitable for a company of Christians in a house dedicated for religious purposes, by carelessness, and stubbornness, and sometimes unrighteous desire to have an affair which unchristian friends would call a "success," scenes that hurt the Lord's cause have occurred in our churches. Let us keep our Epworth League free from all blame. Remember our General Rule: "Do no harm by the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus."—*Zion's Herald*.

LET thy conversation with men be sober and sincere; let thy devotion to God be dutiful and decent; let the one be hearty and not haughty; let the other be humble and not homely; so live with men as if God saw thee, so pray to God as if men heard thee.—*Enchiridion*.

whose wicked wife Herodias deserted him to become his brother Antipas's queen; and of the Herod (Herod Philip II.) who built Cesarea-Philippi, and is mentioned by Luke as Philip the tetrarch. These three were half-brothers. Herod the Great was *grandfather* of the Herods (Herod Agrippa I.) who put to death James the elder, cast Peter into prison, and, being hailed by his flatterers as a god, was smitten by an angel of the Lord "because he gave not God the glory;" and *great-grandfather* of that Herod (Herod Agrippa II.) who trembled when Paul preached. **King of Judea.** The Roman Senate had made Herod king. His rule extended over all the Holy Land. He was not a Hebrew. He was a great, bad man. **Zacharias** means *Jehovah-remembers*. When a Hebrew baby was to be named, it was common to make a new name by pressing three or four words into one in this way. Such names were intended to be in some way descriptive of the child, and where they failed of this they were often supplemented in later life by nicknames. **The course of Abia.** There were so many priests they could not all find constant service in the temple. King David arranged them in "courses," whose order was determined by lot. **His wife.** The ancient Jews did not teach, as Roman Catholics do, that clergymen should not marry. **Daughters of Aaron.** John was of priestly descent by both parents. **Elizabeth** means *God's oath*.

6. Righteous before God. An honor higher than human popularity. **Blameless.** That is, they were scrupulous in obeying the details of the Mosaic law. It is said there were six hundred and thirteen commandments and ordinances, the slightest deviation from which was regarded as sin. They skipped no requirement. **7. They had no child.** So the Messiah could not be born in that family.

8, 9. These verses might be read in this way: "It so happened that while he served as a priest in the temple, during the official term of his family (according to the custom then in vogue of having the priestly families serve in successive courses), he was chosen to offer incense in the holy of holies." **His lot.** Zacharias had watched the casting of three lots that day with great anxiety. Before daylight the first lot decided that some one else should cleanse the great altar and prepare its fires; some hours later the second lot decided that another priest should offer the sacrifice and cleanse the candle-stick and the altar of incense; and now with beating heart he hears that the third lot has selected him to burn the incense. There were twenty thousand priests in and near Jerusalem, and no one could twice offer incense. **The temple of the Lord** was a series of rectangular courts inside each other, each elevated on a terrace above that which inclosed it; all were open to the air, and divided from each other by marble balustrades, with a magnificent gold and marble shrine towering from the inmost and topmost of the terraces. A priest, approaching from the outside, would enter first the court of foreigners; then, mounting some steps, that

of the women; then, a few steps higher, the court of the priests; and finally the sanctuary itself.

10. The whole multitude. Probably this was on a Sabbath day. **Praying without.** In absolute silence, (1) *In proportion to the earnestness of the layman's prayer is the clearness of spiritual revelation to the minister.*

11. An angel. It was fitting that the advent of the Son of God should be thus heralded by miracles. The angelic apparition, the unlikelihood of so old a woman as Elizabeth having a child, the punishment of Zacharias for disbelief, each was an item of the divine plan to make the incarnation lustrous from the outset with a preternatural halo. **Right side.** This would be regarded as a good omen.

12. Fear fell upon him. The best of men are terror-stricken in the presence of a messenger from God.

13. Fear not. So said all the heralds of the Gospel. (2) *God speaks those words to-day to every timid soul.* **John.** Means, *Jehovah is favorable.*

14. Thou shalt have joy. His parental hopes were all to be fulfilled. (3) *"A wise son maketh a glad father."* **Many shall rejoice.** His career would be so great a blessing. (4) *All good lives are sources of happiness to all about them.*

15. Great in the sight of the Lord. As well as by human measurements, of a witty American writer has said that whenever you talk with a friend six persons may be said to take part in the conversation; your friend as you know him, your friend as he knows himself, and your friend as God knows him, on the one side, and a similar trio of conceptions of yourself. (5) *He only is great who is great in the sight of the Lord.* **Neither wine nor strong drink.** Even so great and good a man as John the Baptist would have been unfit for his mission if he had drunk intoxicating liquors; and the worst intoxicants they had in those days were light and harmless compared with our distilled liquors. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** See Eph. 5, 18. (6) *Even children may experience the fullest divine power.*

16. Many... shall be turn. Our lesson for Feb. 15 will show the abundant fulfillment of this prophecy.

17. Shall go before him. Shall herald his approach; shall swing back the door for the entrance of that incomparable Jew whom all the prophets had foretold, whose personality is so matchless that a mere pronoun is enough to identify him. **In the spirit and power of Elias.** All Jews believed that Elijah would really return to earth, and the Lord Jesus seems to have had difficulty in making Malachi's true meaning plain to his apostles. **To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.** Mal. 4, 5. Thus are the last words of the Old Testament fulfilled by the beginning of the Gospel. **To make ready a people.** There had been wanting a readiness of the people to receive the Lord. (7) *It is not God who needs to be reconciled to us, but we to be reconciled to God.*

CRITICAL NOTES.

BY PROFESSOR MARCUS D. BUELL, BOSTON UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY.

In Luke's modest and concise dedication of his gospel (vers. 1-4) he reveals the method and aim of his work. With a deeper enthusiasm than ever filled a Herodotus, a Von Ranke, or a Bancroft, he has patiently investigated the facts on which the gospel history rests, and seeks, by presenting a systematic narration of those facts, to confirm the faith of Christian believers. But for his diligence we should have lost those deeply interesting details of preliminary history that fill the first two long chapters of his gospel, those precious and unique particulars touching the forerunner, the childhood and youth of Jesus. While the other evangelists, with a cer-

tain abruptness, introduce John the Baptist to us in the full tide of his power, Luke is at pains to trace the influence of Providence in his parentage and birth. The greatness of John certainly justifies this detail. Who was the father of the prophet Elijah? What do we know of the prophet's mother? Where and when was he born? No Old Testament Luke has answered these questions. Peculiarly interesting, then, is this fragment concerning the New Testament Elijah, which the beloved physician possibly found among the Judean hills, preserved in some treasured document.

I. *The Godly Couple*, vers. 5-7. Notice Luke's histor-

ical care in giving date, names, and personal details. Comp. 3. 1, 2. The gospel has to do with fact as well as doctrine.

Verse 5. Course. Division or class, each serving for eight days in the temple. **Abia.** The technical name of the class. Explanations in 1 Chron. 24.

6. Both righteous. The writer would have us ponder the character of this couple. Both of them had been brought up in priestly families; both had had careful religious training; both were fitted to train up children in the nurture of the Lord.

7. Had no child. The brutal and profane Herod (ver. 5) had many children who kept alive his vices and his tyranny after him. Zacharias had relinquished all hope that the Messiah should be born in his home.

11. The Angel. ver. 8-12.

8. Priest's office. The details of the daily temple service, such as preparing animals for sacrifice, killing the same, reciting prayers, performing various ablutions, chanting, keeping order. **In the order.** During a week when the division to which he belonged was on duty.

9. The custom. That of casting lots to decide who should have the honor of burning incense. No priest could take a second turn until every other one of several thousand priests had served. Hence this was a notable day to Zacharias. **Temple.** The Greek word means the sacred building itself, and not merely the temple inclosure, as in 2. 46. **Incense.** Four ingredients (Exod. 30. 34), which in burning emitted a smoke whose rising symbolized prayer, and produced an agreeable perfume. Live coals were brought with much pomp and ceremony from the brazen altar of burnt-offering.

10. Praying. Keeping the regular morning or evening hour of prayer. The multitude are mentioned, because they were soon (ver. 23) to be astonished, and because the vision had to do with their Messianic yearnings.

11. Angel. Known to be such by his dazzling appearance. The two priests who assisted Zacharias had already retired.

12. Was troubled. The natural effect of contemplating the supernatural. The vision might be a harbinger of death or of evil tidings for the people. The aged priest little suspected how joyful a message was to be spoken. Isa. 6. 5; Rev. 1. 17.

111. The Coming Prophet. vers. 13-17.

13. Fear not. The angel has noted the effect of his presence—the terror, paleness, and trembling of the aged priest. He will first calm him. **Prayer.** His special prayer for a son, often uttered in other days. **John.** Meaning, "the favor of Jehovah." The grateful and wondering priest would see at once the propriety of such a name.

14. Joy. In his birth and childhood. It is doubtful if John's parents lived till his public ministry began. **Rejoice.** Will rejoice, when they witness the effect of his work, that such a preacher was ever born.

15. Great. Jesus's estimate of him. 7. 28. Great in devotion to God, in his spiritual privileges, in his influence. The Lord has one standard of greatness: the world another. **No wine.** Shall be a Nazarite. Num. 6. Shall live a life of ascetic devotion. Samson, Judg. 13. 4; Samuel, 1 Sam. 1. 11. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** Shall be given prophetic inspiration. Isa. 11. 2; Joel 2. 28. **Even from.** Should give tokens from earliest childhood of his fitness for his life-work. Gal. 1. 15.

16. Many. "All the country of Judea." Mark 1. 5. **Shall he turn.** By his preaching. Chap. 3. 10-14.

17. Elias. The Elijah of Malachi 4. 5, whom the

Jews expected would return to earth before the Messiah. Another way of saying he should be the promised forerunner. **Turn the hearts of the fathers.** A quotation of Mal. 4. 6. Here the meaning is: Men's hard hearts shall be softened as a result of John's influence. Repentance humbled and chastened Zachaeus, for example, so that even his children must have at once felt the change. The hardheartedness of the Medes in Isa. 13. 18, is proven in that "their eye shall not spare children." **The disobedient.** To God's commandments. **Wisdom.** The spiritual prudence which discovers the loss and sorrow that follow unrighteousness. Saul (Acts 26. 14) was turned to such wisdom. **Make ready;** Remind them of their sins, call them to sincere repentance, refresh their remembrance of Messianic prophecy, and in the name of the Lord announce the immediate coming of the Christ.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. How did John the Baptist fulfill the prophecy of Elijah's coming?

1. By being a second Elijah to the Jewish people, in outward appearance, garb, and mode of life.
2. By coming "in the spirit and power of Elijah;" that is, in the Spirit and power of God. 3. By starting a moral reformation and inaugurating a new religious era. 4. By reproving Herod and Herodias as Elijah had rebuked Ahab and Jezebel, and in suffering thereof. 5. By receiving honor from God. Jesus said there had not arisen among men a greater than John the Baptist: Elijah was taken to heaven without dying.—*Rev. J. C. Jackson, Paterson, N. J.*

He was Elijah-like in that he did a similar work, in a similar spirit, and with similar success. The forerunner was not to be the actual Elijah, but only to resemble him in his power and authority. John was personally a perfect representative of Elijah: 1. In his manner of dress and mode of living. 2. In his stern and uncompromising denunciation of sin. John was to Herod what Elijah had been to Ahab. 3. He came "in the spirit and power of Elijah," to awaken men to repentance. He was "a herald of the kingdom." Had not the eyes of the Pharisees been blinded, they could not have helped seeing that in him God had fulfilled his promise to send Elijah to Israel.—*Rev. J. L. Sooty, Camden, N. J.*

The Messiah was near, but the Jews, in their spiritual degeneracy and wickedness, were unprepared for him. There must be a reformation which would bring them back to righteousness. An Elijah was needed, and John was the Elijah. He had the same spirit, the severe manners, the austere habits, the energetic fervor, the unswerving integrity, the unflinching boldness of the prophet of old. He had no tolerance for sin or Pharisaic hypocrisy or Abrahamic descent without Abrahamic works. He demanded immediate repentance and its proper fruit in righteous living, threatening all wrongdoers with the wrath to come and unquenchable fire.—*D. A. Whedon, D.D., East Greenwich, R. I.*

John was like a new Elijah in abrupt beginning of his public work; in personal appearance, a rugged man in garments of camel's hair with leathern girdle; in ascetic way of life, a man of the wilderness—eating locusts and wild honey as Elijah ate food brought by ravens; in his mission to preach righteousness to a corrupt time; in his peremptory summons to repentance and reformation; in his courage, manifest especially in bold arraignment of royal wickedness—John reproving Herod Antipas resembles Elijah threatening Ahab and rebuking Abaziah.—*Rev. William V. Kelley, D.D., Brooklyn, N. Y.*

Lesson Word-Pictures.

BY REV. E. A. RAND.

O, WHEN will the Day-star arise and shine? When will Shiloh come, to whom the gathering of the people shall be? When shall be heard the voice of Elijah the prophet, a voice ringing, fearless, imperitive, prophesied in Malachi, and some time to be lifted telling of the coming of the Lord? Are there any signs of this forerunner? Who has seen his face or caught the sound of his feet? These thoughts may have been in the mind of Zacharias, the faithful old priest, and now serving in the temple. The mighty forerunner cannot come from his childless home. But in what family will this great Elijah appear? O, who is sufficient for these things, Israel's wonder and the world's hope?

But Zacharias cannot halt longer to dream about these marvels. He must attend to his present duties. He has girt himself in his priestly vestments. He must go now into the temple to burn the holy incense. All things have been made ready at the golden altar. The fire burns with a soft, murmuring sound, and waits only for the casting of the sacred incense. Without is a bowed, hushed throng, rank upon rank of suppliants, their prayers going up as the perfumed incense shall ascend. What stillness, what supplication there! Within the hearts of some may be the stir of a prayer whose wings shall beat up to God, beseeching that Israel's Shiloh may come and Malachi's dream be realized. Zacharias has passed with hushed, reverent foot-fall before the golden altar. He may have cast the incense on the fire. It may be flaming upward, its perfumed breath exhaling, when suddenly, what does Zacharias see? Is it the altar-flame that has leaped down to the altar-foot, grown, sharpened, flinging out to a glorious, dazzling form? Lo, the angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense! Do the people know it? Do they imagine that in that still, secluded place the angelic presence is confronting their ministering servant at God's altar? No; the odor of incense may have been wafted out to them, and they still bow in supplication, praying only that Shiloh may come and sometime the sound of the forerunner's feet be heard. And the old priest within, how startled and confused he is! He cannot speak. He can hardly think. What will he do? What can he say? He, a poor old trembling priest, alone with this great angel shining there in glory at the altar's side! The angel sees it. Pityingly, cheerfully, he cries, "Fear not, Zacharias!" He tells this childless old man he shall have a son. How Zacharias had longed to be called "father!" The angel stirs still more profoundly the fluttering heart of Zacharias by pronouncing the name of his boy:

"And thou shalt call his name John!" How musical the angel's utterance, "John!" It is indeed the gift of Jehovah. And what else does the angel say? for the starting, trembling, bewildered priest can scarcely hear aright.

This John, the old priest's darling son, shall be "great in the sight of the Lord;" he shall be "filled with the Holy Ghost;" "in the spirit and power of Elias" he shall go before the Lord to make ready—What! Zacharias's John to be the forerunner? he the great Elijah whom Malachi in rapt vision saw? What wonder if Zacharias came out before the people dumb!

Primary and Intermediate.

BY MARTHA VAN MARGER.

OPPORTUNITY. It is a great word. It stands for a great good or a great ill. Some of us will no doubt have our last opportunity to teach the lit-

tle ones about Jesus and his love during the year upon which we are just entering. If we could know that this day would be our last, how earnest and winning would be our words! How we should forget self in trying to make our dear Lord known!

Let us go cheerfully, yet thoughtfully, to our work. "The time is short."

LESSON THOUGHT. The coming of the King.

By all means have a map of Palestine before the class. Point out Hebron, at or near which city John was born. Tell who Zacharias was, and what his work was. Show a picture of a priest and tell that Zacharias was now an old man. He had been serving God for many years, and though he had often asked God to send him a child, his prayer had not been granted. Now he was so old that he had given up hoping for it.

The Angel's Visit. Show a picture of the altar of incense. Tell what the incense symbolized. Teach that just as truly as the incense rose toward heaven, so do our little prayers go up to God. He hears every prayer that comes from the heart, and remembers it. Picture the scene when the old priest, while all the people were praying outside, came near the altar of incense, and found an angel standing there.



"Thy prayer is heard." Zacharias had ceased to look for the answer to one of his prayers. But he had not been angry or impatient about it. He had gone on loving and serving God. Now the angel came to tell him this good news. We must never be discouraged about our prayers. God will give us the right thing in the right time.

The Angel's Promise. Just what Zacharias and Elizabeth had so long wanted—a dear little boy—was promised them. And, more than that, this boy was to be the forerunner of Jesus. Explain what a forerunner or messenger was in those days. It was a great honor given Zacharias and his wife to have such a son. When the answer to our prayer is delayed, it may be that God is preparing to give us more and better than we asked.

Make a crown, and tell that Jesus was the coming King. Has he come to our hearts? Are we looking for him?

Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.

THE MESSAGE: CHOSEN OF GOD; FORETOLD IN PROPHECY. THE MESSAGE: REPENT, BE READY. JOHN. THE PEOPLE: WAITING, WONDERING, WATCHING.

EXPLANATION. Great events, great changes, great reformations seldom occur without preliminary work. Years of preparation from small beginnings take place before the great ending comes to pass. Some one must

prepare the ground and sow the seed before the harvest will appear. A great event is about to take place in the world's history, and a messenger is to be sent forth to prepare the way.

BLACKBOARD QUESTIONS. Who is the messenger? By whom chosen? Where is he spoken of in the Bible? What is to be his message? Be ready for what? Were the people expecting the Messiah at this time? Why? Can we be Christ's messengers now? Who is his messenger? Answer: One who learns about Christ and tells about Christ.

DIRECTIONS. To draw letters on the board, provide yourself with a long, straight ruler, about two inches wide; fasten a like piece across the end, so as to make it like a letter T. The object of having it made in this way is to enable you to draw straight lines rapidly, by placing the short or top piece against the side or top of the blackboard, and moving the long piece at will up or down. To draw the letters forming the word JOHN—first draw six lines faintly across the board. Let the first line form the top of the letters, and the lower line the bottom; the two center lines will be the middle of the letters. Next take your ruler, and place the cross-piece on the top of the board, and rule down the sides of the letters in the lines already drawn. Make the letters of the word "John" in yellow, and the words "Repent," etc., in red; the top sentence in white, and the bottom one in green.

Berean Methods. The Teachers' Meeting.

I. Get class to arrange order in which the first eleven facts recorded in Gospel history probably occurred. The first fact was the announcement of John's birth to Zacharias; the last was Joseph's removal to Nazareth. See Matt., chaps. 1, 2; Luke, chaps. 1, 2. II. The temple and its service: 1) Herod's great building, still in process; 2) the custom of casting lots; 3) details of daily worship. . . III. The Jewish priesthood: 1) origin of courses; 2) classes or castes; to what grade Zacharias probably belonged; 3) individual relations of priests to temple service; 4) their places of residence. . . IV. Spiritual condition of Palestine: 1) low moral grade of masses; 2) formalism of ecclesiastical leaders; 3) presence of paganism throughout the land; 4) increasing hope of "the redemption of Israel." Let class make word-picture: the great reverential throng in the outer courts; white-robed priests, each in his allotted station; service at the brazen altar; sound of the great gong; silent march of Zacharias and two helpers to inner temple; the withdrawal of the two assistants; the sudden appearance of the angel. Do not waste time in description; but it is well to remember that the depth of the impression will depend largely on the clearness with which the lesson surroundings are apprehended. . . John's greatness: 1) measured by God's standards; 2) based on temperate habits; 3) developed by the residence of the Holy Ghost in his heart; 4) a source of gladness to his parents; 5) a cause of general blessing. . . John's mission: 1) to turn his countrymen to the Lord; 2) to make the disobedient wise and just; 3) to herald the approach of the Lord; 4) to make ready for him a prepared people.

References. FREEMAN'S HAND-BOOK. Ver. 5: Courses of priests, 717; Wives of priests, 748. Ver. 15: The Nazirite vow, 851. . . FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Poetical, 386, 3629, 3632. Vers. 15, 16: Prose, 9554, 11233, 11234, 11158; Poetical, 2041, 3628. Ver. 17: Prose, 4916, 6943, 7173, 5405, 9128-9162, 4602, 4904-4611, 11117, 11118, 11121.

ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

The Coming Messenger.

I. HIS PARENTAGE.

1. **Godly.** "Righteous before God," v. 6.
"These have I seen righteous." Gen. 7. 1.
2. **Upright.** "Blameless," v. 6.
"Sincere and without offense." Phil. 1. 10.
3. **Prayerful.** "Thy prayer is heard," v. 13.
"Praying always with all prayer." Eph. 6. 18.

II. HIS CHARACTER.

1. **Noble.** "Great in . . . the Lord," v. 15.
"Hath not risen a greater?" Matt. 11. 11.
2. **Temperate.** "Neither wine," v. 15.
"His meat was locusts and wild honey." Matt. 3. 4.
3. **Spiritual.** "Filled with the Holy Ghost," v. 15.
"Be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5. 18.

III. HIS MISSION.

1. **A Reformer.** "Many . . . shall he turn," v. 16.
"Saying, Repent ye," Matt. 3. 2.
2. **A Prophet.** "Spirit . . . of Elias," v. 17.
"A prophet? yea . . . and more," Matt. 11. 9.
3. **A Forerunner.** "To make ready," v. 17.
"I send my messenger." Matt. 11. 10.

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

God's Announcements to Men.

1. *Every new step in God's plan for the redemption of the world has been plainly announced to mankind.* The first promise of a Redeemer was made in Eden. God himself told the earlier patriarchs about the coming Saviour. With this promise nearly every angelic messenger was intrusted. All the ritual of the Mosaic law was prophetic and symbolic in its character. Not a single bell tinkled on the priest's garments, not a single detail was observed even in the sacrifice of a lamb, but it carried a divine promise within it like a kernel. The wonder-workers of Ahab's time, like Elijah and Elisha, and the eloquent exhorters of the later kingdoms, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, were all God's messengers, each charged with a special announcement concerning the advent of Christ. And now that the hour is struck, God sends directly from his throne an angel.

2. *Angels are not God's only messengers.* But this was a supernatural epoch. The conflict of angels with devils seems to have then come nearer the human race than before or since.

3. *Supernatural messengers strike terror into human hearts.*

4. *God's messengers' first words are, "Fear not."* So angels said to the shepherds. So Gabriel told Zacharias. So he said to Mary. And thus has it ever been.

HOME READINGS.

- M. The forerunner announced. Luke 1. 5-17.
Tu. The promise doubted. Luke 1. 18-23.
W. Isaiah's prophecy. Isa. 40. 1-8.
Th. The Lord's messenger. Mal. 3. 1-6.
F. The promise of Elijah. Mal. 4.
S. The service of the altar. Exod. 30. 1-10.
8. The witness. John 1. 1-9.

TIME.—B. C. 6.

PLACE.—The temple at Jerusalem.

RULERS.—Octavianus Augustus, emperor at Rome; Herod the Great, king of Judea.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The fulfillment of prophecy.

LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 324, New Canadian Hymnal.
 *Joy to the world! the Lord is come;
 Let earth receive her King.
- No. 302, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Hark! what mean those holy voices,
 Sweetly sounding through the skies?
- No. 298, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Glory to God in the highest,
 Glory to God! glory to God!

Angel voices breathing ever.
 Jesus, where'er thy children meet.
 Lord, this day thy children meet.
 'Tis the blessed hour of prayer.
 Angel voices ever singing.
 My Sabbath song.
 Sweet Sabbath-school.
 Safely through another week.
 This is the day of light.
 Within God's temple.
 Holy, holy, holy.
 I love thy kingdom, Lord.
 The Church's one foundation.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. **The Priest**, v. 5-10.
 What is meant by the "course of Abia," to which Zacharias belonged?
 What is said of the religious life of Zacharias and his wife?
 What does Paul call himself in describing his condition at a time when he too "walked blameless" in all the commandments? Compare Phil. 3.6, with 1 Tim. 1. 12, 13, 15.
 Describe, so far as you can, the priest's "office" or duty during the entire day.
 Why did the multitude of the people remain without?
2. **The Angel**, v. 11, 12.
 Was any one with Zacharias when he saw the angel?
 Why should a "heavenly apparition" frighten men?
 What authority have we for believing that we are always surrounded by angels? 2 Kings 6. 17; Psa. 34. 7.
3. **The Forerunner**, v. 13-17.
 What were the angel's first words to Zacharias?
 Mention other cases in which the same words were used by angelic messengers.
 Why was an emblematic name given to John?
 What was the great cause for "joy and gladness" given to Zacharias by John's birth?
 By whose measurement was John a great man?
 What connection had the prohibition of wine and strong drink with John's character?
 What divine force possessed John from his birth?
 What was his great work to be?
 What prophet should he most resemble?
 What promise of a prophet was John's coming to fulfill? Mal. 4. 5.

Practical Teachings.

Jewish "righteousness" was strictly legal. But a man may walk "blameless" according to the best law, and yet have no spiritual communion with God.

Twice each day public worship was engaged in by pious Jews. If twice in the day, at least, we do not invoke God's blessing we are worse than the Pharisees.

The prayers of "the multitude without" may have had close connection with the supernatural vision of the priest within. We should always pray for our minister.
 The presence of a pure spirit fresh from the throne-room of God is enough to frighten any man.

The 14th verse, with modifications, is true of every good man. He gives his relatives "joy and gladness," and sends rejoicing to many homes. Every man may be a source of gladness to others, or a curse.

Nothing is really great but what is great before God. The Nazarite's total abstinence was the foundation on which some of the noblest characters in the Old Testament were based. Samson and Samuel and Daniel and John were total abstainers.

It is possible from early childhood to be filled with the Holy Ghost, to have the presence of God consciously in our hearts.

Hints for Home Study.

1. Find out all you can about Herod the Great. Write down a list of the Herods mentioned in the Bible, and their relation to each other.
2. Arrange the first ten facts of gospel history in chronological order: Herod's murder of the infants at Bethlehem; the recognition of Jesus by Simeon and Anna; Joseph's flight into Egypt; the vision of the star in the East; the song of Mary, the "Magnificat"; the announcement of the birth of Jesus; Zacharias's song, the "Benedictus"; the announcement of the birth of John; the announcement to the shepherds.
3. Read the account of the establishment of the "courses of the priesthood," and be able to give a clear explanation of this phrase.
4. Find wherein the Christian era differs from the actual date of Christ's birth, and why.
5. Make an outline of the temple, so that each of the courts will be plainly marked; trace Zacharias's progress from the outer court past the grand altar to the "sanctuary," the only roofed building in the temple inclosure.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. **The Priest**, v. 5-10.
 Who was ruler of Judea at the date of this lesson?
 What priest is here spoken of?
 What was his wife's name?
 To what Jewish tribe did she belong?
 What statement shows that they were good people?
 How many children had they?
 To whom was Zacharias a priest?
 In what place did he serve as priest?
 What duty is named as failing to his lot?
 What were the people doing at this time?
 To whom are the prayers of good people as incense? Rev. 8, 3, 4.
2. **The Angel**, v. 11, 12.
 Who appeared to Zacharias?
 What was the name of this angel? ver. 19.
 Where was the angel standing?
 How was Zacharias affected by the sight?
 Why was he afraid? See Judg. 13, 21, 22.
 To whom is the angel of the Lord a defense? Psa. 34. 7.
3. **The Forerunner**, v. 13-17.
 What did the angel say about Zacharias's prayer?
 What promise did he give the priest?
 To whom would the child cause joy?
 Before whom would he be great?
 What would he not use?
 With what would he be filled from his birth?
 What great work would he do for the Jewish nation?
 To whom would he be a forerunner?
 In whose spirit would he perform his mission?
 What was that mission?
 What prophecy pointed out this forerunner? (GOLD-EN TEXT.)

Teachings of the Lesson.

- Where in this lesson are we taught—
1. That good people obey God's law?
 2. That God hears and answers prayer?
 3. That it is an honor to tell about Jesus?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

Wherein was John the Baptist like the prophet Elijah?
 Had Zacharias often been in the temple before?
 Was this the same John who wrote the gospel?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

- Who was Zacharias? **A priest of the Lord.**
 What was his wife's name? **Elizabeth.**
 What kind of people were they? **Very good people.**
 What more do we know of them? **They were old, and had no child.**
 Where did Zacharias serve in the temple? **At Jerusalem.**
 Who came to him as he was offering incense one day? **An angel.**
 How did Zacharias feel when he saw the angel? **He was afraid.**
 What did the angel say? **"Fear not."**
 What had he come to tell him? **That God had heard his prayer.**
 What was God going to give to him? **A son.**
 What was the son's name to be? **John.**

What was he never to touch? **Wine or strong drink.**

What was his work to be? **To turn hearts to the Lord.**

For whom was he to prepare a way? **For Christ.**
By what name did the prophet call John? **Messenger.**
What name was given him when he became a man? **John the Baptist.**

Words with Little People.

God sends his angels to those who try to please him.
The angel came to Zacharias while he was about his daily duty.

If we want the angels to visit us we must do our work in the way that will please God.

THE LESSON CATECHISM

1. What was the character of the priest Zacharias and of his wife? **Righteous before God.**
2. Whom did Zacharias see on the right side of the altar of incense? **An angel of the Lord.**
3. What did the angel promise to Zacharias and his wife? **A son.**
4. What was to be that son's name? **John.**
5. What was to be his character? **Great in the sight of the Lord.**
6. What was to be his mission? **To prepare the way for Christ.**

CATECHISM QUESTION.

1. Who is the Messiah, the Saviour of mankind? **Jesus, the Son of God, who was sent down from heaven to save sinners.**

B. C. 5.]

LESSON II. THE SONG OF MARY.

[Jan. 12.

GOLDEN TEXT. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Luke 1. 46, 47.

Authorized Version.

Luke 1. 46-55. [*Commit to memory verses 49-51.*]

46 And Ma'ry said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Is'ra-el, in remembrance of his mercy;

55 As he spake to our fathers, to A'bra-ham, and to his seed for ever.

Revised Version.

46 And Ma'ry said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath looked upon the low estate of his hand-maiden:

For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; And holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is unto generations and generations On them that fear him.

51 He hath showed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.

52 He hath put down princes from their thrones, And hath exalted them of low degree.

53 The hungry he hath filled with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen Is'ra-el his servant, That he might remember mercy

55 (As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.

General Statement.

Six months after the announcement of John's birth, made to Zacharias in the temple, the angel Gabriel winged his way to Nazareth and announced to Mary the birth of Jesus. Soon after this marvelous experience, Mary started on a visit to the home of Elisabeth, her kinswoman, the wife of Zacharias. When the two women met, each in Oriental fashion expressed her excited feelings in poetic phraseology. Elisabeth's salutation was brief. Mary's was so lengthy and touching that it has become one of the hymns of the Church. It is known in history as "The Magnificat," because of the Latin word with which it begins, and which we turn into the phrase "My soul doth magnify." It was first used in the Church ritual in A. D. 507. It has been called a mosaic of quotations from the Old Testament, and may be compared with the hymn of Judith, the song of Hannah, Psalms 113 and 126, and part of Psalm 31. This hymn was composed B. C. 5. It should be dated B. C. 1, but when the notation from the birth of Christ was original a mistake of several years was made in the date, and hence 1800 is really 1891 years from Jesus's birth. The calculation which has set the world astray was made by Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century. Zacharias's home was in "a city of Juda" (probably the village of Juttah) in "the hill country." The dumb priest may have heard this song. Mary may have afterward remembered what she said in this climactic hour and reproduced it. There are indications that a large portion of the first chapter of St. Luke came directly from Mary.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Verse 46. *Mary said.* That a rustic girl like Mary should attempt poetry is not so strange in the East as it would be here. Poetry has never been fenced off from prosaic life by high partitions as in Europe and America. It is but slightly dependent upon rhyme, and rhythm is emphasized by few and simple rules, and stock phrases and venerable similes are freely used. There are few great poets or great poems, but diluted poetry is every-where, and improvisations are of daily occurrence. Before the civilization of Japan was modified by European influence, gentlemen and ladies were

expected to make verses on every occasion of social compliment, and the Bedouins in the present day are capable of taking high flights in the poetic atmosphere. *My soul doth magnify.* (1) "A heart devoted to God is the best psalter."

47. Hath rejoiced. Leaps up for joy. *My Saviour.* Even the Virgin Mary needed a Saviour. Mary was looking for salvation in a civil and political and social sense, but doubtless, also, she had her deeper experiences and profounder hopes.

48. He hath regarded. He has looked down on.

The low estate. This is one of several anticipations of the Beatitudes to be found in this hymn.

49. He that is mighty. The Almighty. **Done to me great things.** Mary is not the only one who might utter this thanksgiving. (2) "When one realizes his nothingness, God will make something out of him." **His name.** Hebrews used the word "name" when they shrank from the irreverence of directly mentioning God.

50. Mercy. It is a word indicating sympathy with human wretchedness. (3) "Grace takes away the fault; mercy, the misery."

51. With his arm. What theologians call the "anthropological tendency" was developed remarkably among devout Hebrews. To an old-time Jew, God appeared almost like an Omnipotent Jew, perfectly holy, but with all the national prejudices. Eyes, feet, arms, and hands are used frequently by the psalmist and others to set forth their conceptions of God, **scattered the proud.** We need hardly conjecture to whom these words referred. They were to be equally true "of the emperor at Rome, of Herod in Jerusalem, of the haughty metropolitan citizens who despised her native Galilee, of the Galilean towns which despised Nazareth, and of her fellow-townsmen in Nazareth who despised herself and her betrothed husband." **Imagination.** The image-making power: it refers to their conceptions, their plans, their schemes. (4) *Men often forget that their success and failure are alike dependent on God's attitude.*

52. Exalted them of low degree. How Mary's Nazarene neighbors would have laughed and sneered had they heard her thus sing! An obscure girl, with the Galilean brogue on her tongue, and a peasant's awkward dress and manners, at the best only the betrothed of a poor carpenter, and hereafter to be his wife with a deep stain on her name, certainly her "exaltation" was not so visible as her "low degree." It took a seer's eyes to discern that the poverty-stricken peasants grouped about Jesus from his birth to his death would loom up as the most considerable figures of their century. But how true her foresight was! You never knew a baby baptized Herod, or Calaphas, or Caesar, or Cyrenius; but Marys and Johns and Elizabeths and Josephs are in almost every family. The names were equally foreign to our tongue; and the only reason for the universal rejection of the one set and the adoption of the other is that, by the help of the perspective of centuries, we see that those of low degree in Herod's day were really the most highly exalted of all generations. As Biblical illustrations of this verse read Luke 18, 14; Dan. 4, 30, 31; 1 Sam. 2, 6-10; Psa. 113, 6-8; 1 Cor. 1, 26-29.

53. Hath filled the hungry. This, like the Beatitudes which it resembles, has both its natural and its spiritual meaning. Luke 6, 21. (5) *God's hand is often felt where it is not seen.*

54. Hath holpen. Hath taken by the hand. (6) *God's interests are identical with those of his servants.*

55. As he spake to our fathers. The construction of the sentence is properly this: "To remember his mercy (as he spake unto our forefathers) to Abraham and his seed forever." Mic. 7, 20; Gal. 3, 16; Rom. 9, 7. (7) *God always keeps his promises.*

The Lesson Council.

Question 2. What traits of character do we discern in Mary, the mother of Jesus?

1. Purity; yet not sinlessness of nature, as Romanists teach. 2. Gentleness; the angelic salutation disturbed and frightened her. 3. Faith; accepting the announcement, only prudently asking instruction. 4. Ready

submission, though foreseeing the exposure to scandal. 5. Familiarity with the Scriptures, evident in her hymn. 6. Humility; claiming no merit, declaring God's grace, and never asserting superiority because of relationship to Jesus. 7. Gratitude, as the instrument of God's mercy to his covenant people and the world. 8. Patience; silently and trustfully waiting for God's defense of her perilled reputation. 9. Reticent thoughtfulness, pondering and watching. 10. Carefulness in her child's training.—*Rev. D. A. Whed n. D. D.*

1. Faith, exhibited in her immediate surrender of herself to the divine will, though ignorant of how that will should be accomplished. 2. Humility, shown in her great surprise that God should stoop to one so low as herself. There were others of higher social condition and of more exalted position upon whom the conferring of such an honor would not have been the occasion of such surprise, at least to her. This humility on her part shows itself also in the remarkable manner in which she shuns putting herself forward throughout the whole of her Son's ministry, or even after his death. 3. Happy thankfulness, exhibited in her song.—*Rev. J. L. Song.*

An assemblage of noble qualities: quick comprehension of the divine intention; instant and complete submission as "the handmaid of the Lord" to his will, however strange and mysterious; modesty as perfect as her innocence; humility as deep as her distinction is high, owning her "low estate," with adoring wonder at the condescension which honors her above other mortals; devout reverence, subduing the jubilation of her song to tones of awe; calm dignity and self-control, with wise discretion in speech and action, enabling her to fulfill with absolute propriety her peculiar part in unparalleled events.—*William V. Kelley, D. D.*

With reference to being the mother of Christ, she revealed (vers. 46-50): 1. Thankfulness, magnifying God for his grace. 2. Humility, owning her lowly condition and being without consciousness of an "immaculate conception." 3. Discernment, foreseeing the world's lofty estimate of her, and yet laying no foundation for Mariolatry. Regarding the larger relations of Christ's coming to the Jews and the world (vers. 51-55), she showed: 1. Intelligence, knowing Hebrew history and prophecy respecting the Messiah. 2. Patriotism, rejoicing in the fulfillment of the Jewish national hope for a Redeemer. 3. Inspiration, hymning a prophecy of his spiritual triumphs.—*Rev. J. C. Jackson.*

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT. *God's gift to us.*

Print "Mary" and "Elizabeth." Question about them. How had God honored them? What had been promised to them? Why were they glad and happy?

Describe the visit, and the joy of the meeting when these two good women came together to talk about the Lord's goodness to them. To one he had sent Jesus; to the other, John, the messenger of Jesus. Picture a visit of two little Christians who talk together of God's gifts to them. Has Jesus been sent to them? Yes, Jesus came on purpose to be their Saviour and friend. And the Holy Spirit has been sent, too, to prepare the way for Jesus. God has not passed by these Christian children. He has sent his good gifts to every one.

Mary's song. Mary's heart was so glad that she sang a song of praise. Tell story of two little girls who talked about their Christmas presents. One wished she might have had this and that, and was not grateful for the nice gifts she had received. The other told what

her papa and mamma gave her, and said, "O, they are so kind to me! I love them so much for thinking of the things I want, and trying to get them for me." That was her little song of praise to her earthly parents. Do you want to hear Mary's song? Read it slowly, from a large Bible, explaining simply, having children repeat several times verses 46, 47, and 49.

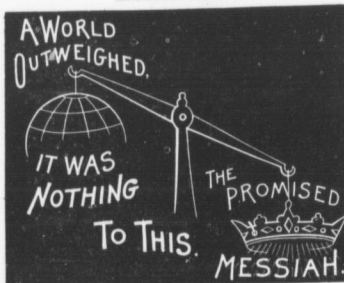


Let children name some of God's good gifts. Print a list on the board. Do not omit the common things, such as sunshine, food, clothes, home, friends, etc. Do you ever think to say "Thank you" to your heavenly Father for these things? Then he gives the greater gifts: Jesus, the Holy

Spirit, the Bible, the holy day. Have you begun to sing songs of praise yet for these good gifts?

Teach that only those who learn the language of praise here will be able to sing it in heaven. How out of place one would be in heaven who had no praise in the heart. Sing "Little Children, Praise the Lord," letting little ones suggest things for which they would like to praise him.

Blackboard.



The song of Mary was from a heart overflowing with praise for a great blessing. The blackboard sets forth why she rejoiced. It represents the world weighed in a balance against a crown, which symbolizes the coming King. The promised Messiah had been looked for since Abraham's day, and now Mary realizes that she is to be blessed above all women. All the world could give was nothing to this, for this gift outweighed the world. No gift so great, no condescension so low, no honor so high, as was this to Mary. Even so is it now. Christ's presence is of greater value than any thing the world can give.

DIRECTIONS. Draw the balances with blue chalk; the world in white; the crown yellow.

Berean Methods.

The Teachers' Meeting.

Gather from the class a clear explanation of the blunder in notation of time by which the birth of Jesus has to be dated B. C. 5.... Call for texts in both Testaments which seem to require or imply Mary's direct descent from David.... By sketch-map on blackboard trace the geographical relations of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Juttah.... Bring out all that is known about the personality of Joseph.... Make plain the circum-

stances which put poetical composition within the reach of Oriental artisans, rustics, and Bedouins.... Call for other passages in the Old Testament besides Hallel's hymn, on which Mary seems to have drawn in the composition of this song.... Reasons for Mary's rejoicing in the Lord: 1) He had just made her, an obscure country girl, the most exalted character of history; 2) By the birth of Christ the loyal faith of successive generations of godly men was at last to be justified; 3) This was the greatest and the gentlest exhibition of divine power ever made; 4) The haughty and strong evil-doers of this world were to be overthrown, and the lowly to be exalted. (The literal fulfillment of verse 52 is one of the most remarkable facts of history; it should be abundantly illustrated and emphasized. 5) God would satisfy the hungry and take from the rich their former satisfaction. (Christ's advent did this, both in a temporal and spiritual sense.) 6) He had fulfilled his oft-repeated promise to glorify Israel before the world.

References. FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Ver. 46: Prose, 4909, 4910, 8849, 1028, 10037, 10039. Vers. 46, 47: Prose, 10236. Ver. 48: Prose, 9118. Ver. 50: Prose, 3899. Ver. 52: Prose, 1885, 4668, 11274. Ver. 53: Prose, 6156. Vers. 54, 55: Prose, 4750, 3708, 3686, 3907-3913.

ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

The God of Mary's Song.

I. A REDEEMING GOD.

God my Saviour. v. 47.

"I have redeemed thee." Isa. 43. 1.

II. A GRACIOUS GOD.

Hath regarded the low estate. v. 48.

"This poor man cried.... Lord heard." Psa. 34. 6.

III. A MIGHTY GOD.

He that is mighty. v. 49.

"I am the Almighty God." Gen. 17. 1.

IV. A HOLY GOD.

Holy is his name. v. 49.

"Holy and reverend is his name." Psa. 111. 9.

V. A MERCIFUL GOD.

His mercy is on them that fear. v. 50.

"From everlasting to everlasting." Psa. 103. 17.

VI. A JUST GOD.

Scattered.... put down.... exalted.... filled. v. 51-53.

"Executeth righteousness and judgment." Psa. 103. 6.

VII. A PROMISE-KEEPING GOD.

Hath holpen.... as he spake. v. 54, 55.

"The promises of God.... are yea." 2 Cor. 1. 20.

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

The First Christian Hymn.

The Magnificat has an interest of its own in being the very first hymnic expression of the Christian heart. Four great strains of emotion run through it, and are expressed with tender poetic sensibility.

1. *God uniformly overthrows the plans of fallen human nature.* His ideals are all different from ours. He loves the lowly; he hates the proud. The activities of his providence and grace through all the centuries work toward the elevation of the down-trodden and the overthrow of the selfish.

2. *God's plans are tenderly merciful.* Neither the publican nor the Pharisee is outside of the range of his loving kindness. It was over Pilate's judgment hall and Caiaphas's palace, and the traders' stalls in the temple, and the whole city—full of reeking iniquity

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and supercilious wickedness—that Jesus stretched his arms and said, How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing. God loved the souls of the oppressors as much as the souls of the oppressed, and planned salvation for all.

3. *God's plans only are permanent.* Men succeed for a few days, or years, or centuries in their selfish designs; but God's will eventually triumphs.

For all this the Christian Church has with full heart thanked the divine Father in every devout season. It is no wonder that the Magnificat very early became a hymn of the Church.

HOME READINGS.

M. The song of Mary. Luke 1. 46-55.

Tu. Magnify the Lord. Psa. 34. 1-8.

W. A faithful God. Neh. 9. 5-10.

Th. Holy is his name. Psa. 100.

F. Enduring mercy. Psa. 100.

S. The mighty debased. Exod. 15. 3-10.

S. A bountiful helper. Psa. 146.

TIME.—B. C. 5.

PLACE.—The "hill country"—possibly the little town of Juttah.

RULERS.—Same as before.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The incarnation of Christ.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 301, New Canadian Hymnal.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glorious to the new-born King."

No. 282, New Canadian Hymnal.

Gracious Saviour, gentle Shepherd,
Little ones are dear to thee.

No. 303, New Canadian Hymnal.

The Gospel bells are ringing,
Over land, from sea to sea.

Waken, Christian children.

All hail the power of Jesus' name.

'Tis known in earth and heaven too.

Sing of Jesus, sing forever.

Beautiful Saviour.

The children's Friend.

O let us be glad.

There is no name so sweet.

How sweet the name.

Sing them over again to me.

The Lord into his garden comes.

Jesus shall reign.

Venite, Exultemus Domino.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. *The Singer*, v. 46.

To what tribe did the mother of our Lord probably belong? Psa. 132. 11.

In what town was Mary's youth probably spent?

To the lineage heir of what throne was Mary betrothed?

In whose home did she sing this song?

2. *The Song*, v. 46-55.

How did it come to pass that a rustic girl should thus attempt poetry?

What other songs preserved in the Bible resemble this? Psa. 120; 1 Sam. 2. 1-10; Psa. 113.

In what did Mary's spirit rejoice?

How did she foresee she would be regarded by future generations?

Notice in this song as many anticipations of the Beatitudes as you can.

What "mighty ones" did the coming of Jesus "put down" from their seats?

What little group of low-born peasants has his coming enshrined in fame and glory?

What grateful recognition that God always keeps his promises is here to be found?

Practical Teachings.

The really devoted soul "magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God his Saviour," but many a one whose name is on church records practically grumbles at his Lord.

When one realizes his nothingness God will make something of him. The coming of Jesus exalts the lowly, puts down the mighty, satisfies the hungry, and empties those who have regarded themselves as spiritually rich.

Hints for Home Study.

1. Familiarize yourself, if possible, with the picturesque surroundings of Nazareth.

2. Find, if you can, the origin of the idolatrous worship of Mary.

3. What can you learn concerning the commonness of the art of poetry in the East? Almost any book presenting oriental customs will give you useful hints.

4. Notice how those who were "mighty" at the time of Jesus's birth, and in his years of young manhood—the Herods and Pilate and Annas, and the more remote Roman emperor—were "put down from their seats" one after another, while the Galilean youth who surrounded the young Messiah are reckoned among the world's greatest men to-day.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. *The Singer*, v. 46.

What was the name of the singer?

Where was her home? ver. 26.

What blessing had been pronounced on her? ver. 45.

What had been told her from the Lord? vers. 31-33.

2. *The Song*, v. 46-55.

Whom did Mary praise in her song?

What was the burden of her song? (Golden Text.)

Why had she this joy?

Who would call her blessed?

Who had done for her great things?

On whom does God's mercy rest?

How had he shown his strength?

Whom had he caused to exchange places?

What blessing had he given to the hungry?

Whom had he denied?

To what people had he been a helper?

To whom had he given promise of mercy?

What was his promise to Abraham? Gen. 12. 1-3.

How long will the Messiah rule?

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That God is the true source of our joys?

2. That God always keeps his promises?

3. That God's best gift to man is a Saviour?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

How does this song show that Mary was a careful Bible student?

What other song, sung under somewhat similar circumstances, does this resemble?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What young woman was visited by an angel? *Mary*.

Where did Mary live? *At Nazareth, in Galilee.*

What kind of a woman was she? *One who loved and served God.*

What did the angel tell her? *That she was to be the mother of Jesus.*

Whom did she afterward go to visit? *Elizabeth, her cousin.*

What did she sing when she met her? *A song of praise.*

What was her song about? *God's goodness and power.*

What did she call God in her song? *Her Saviour.*

For what did she thank him? *For the honor he had shown her.*

How was God about to show his power? *By sending his Son.*

What was the Son of God to do? *To conquer sin.*

How did God send help to his people? *By sending them a Saviour.*

To whom had God promised help? *To Abraham.*

How did he keep his promise? *By sending Jesus.*

Whom did Jesus come to redeem? *All the world.*

How can we show our love and gratitude to God? *By obeying him.*

Words with Little People.

A glad heart is a believing, loving, trusting, obedient heart.

A glad heart sings praises, not only with the lips, but by the life.
Is mine a glad heart?

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. Who sang this song? **The virgin Mary.**
2. About what did she rejoice? **The coming of Jesus.**
3. How did Jesus's coming affect the lowly? **It exalted them.**

4. How did it affect the mighty? **It put them down.**

5. What about the hungry? **It satisfied them.**
6. What about those who regarded themselves as spiritually rich? **It left them empty.**

CATECHISM QUESTION.

3. How did he come into the world?
The Son of God took our human nature, and was born of a woman.
3. What notices were given beforehand of his coming?
Many promises had been given in former ages by the prophets, and more lately by an angel.

B. C. 5.]

LESSON III. THE SONG OF ZACHARIAS.

[Jan. 19.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. Luke 1, 75.

Authorized Version.

Luke 1, 67-80. [Commit to memory verses 76-79.]

- 67 And his father Zach'a-ri-as was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,
68 Blessed be the Lord God of Is'ra-el; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
69 And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant Da'vid;
70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:
71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
73 The oath which he sware to our father A'bra-ham,
74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,
75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.
76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,
78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.
80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Is'ra-el.

Revised Version.

- 67 And his father Zach'a-ri-as was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,
68 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Is'ra-el;
For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,
69 And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, In the house of his servant Da'vid
70 (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began),
71 Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant;
73 The oath which he sware unto A'bra-ham our father,
74 To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies Should serve him without fear,
75 In holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
76 Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High:
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways:
77 To give knowledge of salvation unto the people In the remission of their sins,
78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
79 To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death:
To guide our feet into the way of peace.
80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Is'ra-el.

General Statement.

After a three months' sojourn with Elizabeth, Mary returned to her home in Nazareth. On the eighth day after John's birth he was brought, according to Jewish ceremonies, to be initiated into the Church, and when his father's friends sought to call him Zacharias, in honor of the aged priest, the mother, seeking to fulfill the directions of the angel, said, "Not so; but he shall be called John." The assembled friends expressed their astonishment at this decision; they said, "There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name;" and they asked Zacharias to give his choice, confident that he would be pleased to have the babe named after himself. He asked for a writing-table, and wrote, "His name is John." That moment the dumbness of the priest was suddenly healed, and, "his tongue being loosed," he (either then or shortly afterward) uttered this song. The people went away from the little party with "many strange things laid up in their hearts," and during the months afterward often repeated, "What manner of child shall this be?" The news of the miraculous surroundings of the birth of John spread rapidly, and a holy fear settled down on the inhabitants of all the "hill country" of Judea. They watched with eagerness for the coming of the Messiah.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

67. Filled with the Holy Ghost. His whole being thrilled with holy emotion and the inspiration of truth. **Prophesied.** In the New Testament writings all inspired teaching is called prophesying, whether it relates to the past, the present, or the future. Zacharias's months of silence had taught him some wonderful

things. His hymn is full of Hebrew poetic fancies and allusions; no such production could have originated away from the atmosphere of the temple.

68. Of Israel. That was as far as Zacharias's conception of God's dominion was yet clear, but the dawn of a wider faith is plain in this hymn. **Visited.** For

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about four hundred years the chosen people seemed to have been abandoned and forgotten. (1) *But God never forgets his creatures. Redeemed.* We must remember that such phrases as this grew in their meaning with God's gradual revelation of truth. The development of science and invention has similarly enlarged the significance of many words. Redemption to Zacharias meant infinitely more than redemption to King David, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus which is revealed in its fullness to us is quite as far removed from Zacharias's conception. Probably when we reach the heavenly land our ideas will have grown to a still greater degree. (2) *"God only knows the love of God."*

69. Raised up a horn. This is an awkward phrase to us, but was familiar to those who heard Zacharias's song. The horn had become a common phrase, emblematic of strength. It is a natural image among agricultural people, and was used symbolically in art and literature. **House.** Dynasty. A similar phrase is current now—the Hohenzollern house, the house of Bonaparte. **Of... David.** This is one of the passages that seems to prove that Mary was known to be of the royal line, independent of Joseph. The two genealogies given in the gospels are both of Joseph; but the promise required that Christ should be a descendant of David, and the whole narrative presupposes that the mother of Jesus was of royal blood.

70. His holy prophets. Not one jot or tittle but shall be fulfilled. (3) *When we remember that all God's promises are kept our cares are ended.*

71. That we should be saved. No doubt Zacharias had observed, with the broken heart of a helpless patriot, the degradation of his people, and now rejoiced in the prospect of political regeneration, redemption from Roman tyranny, and, like many another when charged with the Spirit of God, "the meaning of his words very far overran his own conscious intentions." (4) *All who are guided by God build wiser than they know. All that hate us.* The hatred of the Jews, which is even yet characteristic of the lower classes of Christendom, did not originate in religious prejudice. Classical literature shows that the Jews were universally and most vindictively hated through all the Roman empire.

72, 73. Canon Farrar calls attention to the fact that John's name means "Jehovah's mercy;" Zacharias means "Jehovah remembers;" Elizabeth's name means "God's oath." It is hardly possible that Zacharias forgot these meanings when he uttered these words. There are many examples in the early writers of this double use of language.

74. Serve him without fear. Just what the Jews have not been able to do. The Macedonians and Romans had alike hindered the Jews in their holy worship. (5) *The Gospel brings temporal as well as spiritual blessings.*

75. What lofty ideals are here disclosed! Zacharias longs for temporal safety and prosperity that they may become means for developing holiness and righteousness!

76. The prophet of the Highest. The phrase "Highest," or Most High, is used by inspired writers only of God. Here John is called the prophet of the Highest, and it is inconceivable that such a term could have been used by Zacharias in an inspired hour if Christ were not very God of very God, as really as perfect man. *Go before the face of the Lord.* Like an advance courier spurring his rapid way on horseback.

78. Dayspring from on high. This is one of the words that makes one fall in love with his native tongue. The fountain of light, the spring of good cheer and warmth, is a beautiful conception, and thoroughly idiomatic English. Zacharias merely alludes to the sun-rising.

79. Them that sit in darkness. There probably was not at this time a single man living who had an intelligent understanding of the deep things of God. Even Zacharias and Mary, in these early days, and Simeon, and John himself, only saw the dayspring—the early dawn of the Gospel day. *Guide our feet.* The world was traveling drearily over the desert of life, like a lost caravan, and the darkness of superstition and depravity that had settled down was black and baneful as the shadow of death. But now the Sun of righteousness has arisen, and these sinful wanderers will find at length the way of peace.

80. In the twenty-two words of this verse we have the biography of John from his birth until, at the age of thirty, he suddenly appeared as the great prophet in the wilderness. **The child grew.** "The Baptist was no Lamb of God." He was a wrestler with life; he was a God-sent reformer; he was, as the writer of *Eccle Homo* beautifully says, "among the dogs, rather than among the lambs, of the good Shepherd." **Waxed.** Increased. **Strong in spirit.** Nothing is here said of "grace" or "favor"—two beautifully descriptive phrases of the youth of our Lord. John had an awful duty to perform, and "the child was father of the man." **In the deserts.** That is, in the deserted places. Many of the territories called deserts were pasture-lands, but the Arabian desert came, like a great ocean of sand, up to the hill country in which John was born. Perhaps when the old priest died the child fled to the black tent of some kindred sheik of the desert. **Show.** ing. A phrase that clearly denotes the installation of the servant into his office. Jesus and John were not trained near each other, and when, years afterward, they met, he did not know Christ's person; but each knew well that the other was a chosen messenger of the Most High God.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Luke gives Theophilus, the Christian disciple, yet another view of the gospel history as it appeared while still latent in the undeveloped bud. He lets us look at the new dispensation through the eyes of an aged priest who belonged to the old dispensation. John the Baptist is only a little babe eight days old. Jesus has not yet been born, and even the fact that he will soon be born is a secret sacredly treasured in a few hearts. Zacharias believes the Messianic era is about to dawn and that his own son is to become an important figure in it. But neither Jesus's work nor John's has been made known to him in its definite details. The future looms up on his prophetic vision like a mountain land-

scape before sunrise, revealing bold outlines, but concealing details and color. He sees that his son is to be a mighty prophet; that he will have a great influence upon Israel, and bring them back to a purer worship. He knows that this work is to prepare the way for the Messiah. As a man of his own time Zacharias would think of the work of John and Jesus as having political as well as spiritual significance. If any one had told him that the Messiah was to be crucified he would have been as suddenly and sorely scandalized as was Peter afterward.

It is profitable and instructive to sit down at the side of Zacharias three months before Jesus was born, and

with him look out on the world. The wicked dynasty of Herod is on the throne, but God's priest firmly believes the kingdom of heaven is at hand. His joy is the joy of faith. He is among the blessed who, having not seen, yet have believed. His words are largely cast in the form of an ancient Hebrew prayer, known as the "Eighteen Benedictions." They should be thought of as set to music rather than as spoken prose.

Notice the two leading thoughts of Zacharias's poem: 1. Jehovah's work for his people (vers. 68-75); 2. The work of John (vers. 76-7).

Verse 67. It seems best to connect this with verse 64. Verses 68-75 tell what Zacharias said when he blessed God. **Was filled.** All his natural powers of mind and soul were quickened and strengthened. So Stephen habitually. Acts 6. 5. Is not such experience possible now? **Propheesied.** The word here refers to the inspired and lofty manner of speech in which he broke forth, and not merely to the predictions it contains.

68. Blessed be. A form of thanksgiving. **The God of Israel.** A significant mark of the Jewish tone of the prayer. **Visited.** In English the tense would be present, *visits*. The God of Israel comes in the angelic messages to Mary and to Zacharias. **Redemption.** Deliverance from the foes and oppressors of the nation.

69. Horn of salvation. The horn was used by the Hebrews as the symbol of strength. The meaning here is that God was raising up a person who by his greatness should deliver the Jews from their national enemies. That person was to be born of Mary of Nazareth. **David.** The expected Deliverer was thought of as a successor of the most illustrious temporal sovereign the Jews had ever had.

71. Salvation. An explanation of the word "salvation," ver. 69. Their enemies, the Romans, had placed them under the tyrannical rule of a dynasty of their detested neighbors, the Idumæans.

72. Our fathers. As Rachel centuries after was poetically represented as weeping over the slaughtered innocents in Bethlehem, so the ancient Hebrews are depicted as interested in the welfare of their descendants. **Covenant.** Gen. 15. 18, "unto thy seed have I given this land."

73. The oath. Gen. 12. 3, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee." Gen. 17. 4, "Thou shalt be a father of many nations."

74. Delivered. They had been vigorously persecuted under Antiochus Epiphanes. They were frequently annoyed on account of their religion in all parts of the Roman empire. **Without fear.** See the signs of such fear in John 11. 48.

75. Holiness is the negative and **righteousness** the positive side of sanctified character.

76. Thou, child. Zacharias has put the Lord before his forerunner with the same humility which the Baptist himself afterward exhibited. John 3. 30. **Child** is a diminutive in Greek. The father now has faith, and can see great possibilities even in an unconscious babe. See 1. 20. He had pondered the words of the angel (1. 15-17) during all the long months of silence.

Prophet. His prophetic character had already been declared by the angel. 1. 15. See chap. 7. 26-28. Zacharias the priest had never seen a prophet. His child was to do a work which he had never been called to do. He should not minister at the altar, but should preach and instruct the multitudes. The last prophet had died four hundred years before. **Make ready.** As Isaiah (40. 3) and Malachi (3. 1) had declared.

77. Knowledge of salvation. See how he did this. Chap. 3. 7-17.

78. Because. God's tender mercy for men moves him to forgive them their sins. **Whereby.** Tells what form his mercy takes. **Dayspring.** Christ is here compared to the dawn of the sun, or the emergence of a star from behind a cloud at night. Paul has a similar thought. 2 Cor. 4. 6. **Shall visit.** This is undoubtedly the correct reading. When the babe should have become a man and entered upon his preparatory work, the Messiah would come.

79. The words of Isaiah (9. 2) shaped his utterance here. Jesus afterward applied the same figure to himself when he said, "I am the light of the world." The darkness and shadow of death are conditions of the soul, as in Rom. 1. 21. **Way of peace.** Conduct that gives peace of soul.

80. Grew in physical stature and strength. Waxed strong in spirit. Refers to his mental and spiritual development. **In the deserts.** The rugged, volcanic region on the west shore of the Dead Sea. His mother and father doubtless died early. He may have attached himself, as Josephus did, to a stern ascetic teacher. His desert life was appropriate to his prophetic calling. In this as in other things he was a New Testament Elijah.

The Lesson Council.

Question 3. How did John the Baptist prepare the way for the coming of Christ?

By announcing that Christ was near at hand, and in that way turning the thoughts of the people toward and fitting their hearts to receive him. In keeping with the ancient custom of preparing the way for Oriental sovereigns on their travels, John removed the moral obstacles from the path of our Lord. John did this for Jesus in giving the people a "knowledge of salvation," and in exhorting them to repent of their sins. "Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low" was to make an easy highway for the coming of the great King. And that, John showed, was to be done through repentance. That makes every heart easy of access.—*Rev. J. L. Sooy.*

1. His garb, his ascetic life, and separation from Jewish society were a testimony against its prevalent corruption. 2. His preaching was a vigorous, burning denunciation of sin and a continual call to repentance. He told of the coming King, his mercy for the penitent, and his wrath for the impenitent and the hypocrite. 3. His baptism set apart the repentant, a vast multitude, to receive the Christ at his coming. 4. He identified him and publicly pointed him out to his followers. 5. Among them Jesus found his first disciples, but the mass, not finding him what they wanted, apostatized and rejected him.—*D. A. Wheaton, D.D.*

By correcting erroneous ideas as to salvation. The Jews had in many things substituted the outward for the inward, the material for the spiritual; so in their conception Messiah's work was one of political deliverance rather than of moral salvation. The knowledge John gave of salvation taught that it consists in forgiveness of sins and regeneration of heart, and not in emancipation from the Roman yoke; the burden from which Christ came to deliver was that of sin and condemnation before God and not of imperial oppression. Without correct ideas of salvation they were not prepared to understand Christ.—*William V. Kelley, D.D.*

1. The circumstances of John's birth directed the attention of Zacharias, his friends, and devout Jews generally to the approaching birth of Christ. 2. John's appearance in the wilderness fulfilled the prophecies

regarding national morals of spiritual Saviour him into

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regarding the forerunner of the Messiah, and excited the national expectation. 3. John's preaching reformed the morals of people in part, showed them their need of a spiritual regeneration, proclaimed Christ as "he that should come," and prepared some to receive him as the Saviour. 4. John's baptism of Jesus publicly inducted him into his Messianic office.—*Rev. J. C. Jackson.*

Lesson Word-Picture.

THE exultant father is looking at his child, the beloved, the given of God, the forerunner of Israel's Hope, the voice that shall cry "Make ready!" As he looks, his soul swells with emotion. Faith is kindled. Reverence is stimulated. The Holy Ghost comes upon him, touches his eyes, fills his soul, and the old priest becomes the ever young prophet. He looks up and adores the Jehovah of Israel, visiting and redeeming his people. With his rapt and quickened vision, he looks back. He hears waiting, hoping Israel crying, "How long?" He beholds a long line of holy prophets—Daniel and Ezekiel amid the splendid visions of the captivity, Jeremiah at unbelieving Jerusalem, Elijah and Elisha amid many marvels, David with his harp, Samuel at the altar, Moses far away in the wilderness, Jacob dying and talking of Shiloh, and Abraham under the golden stars listening to the promise of a seed as numerous. And lo, the priestly prophet sees in the child before him the shining of the day-star. He bends over him fondly. He breaks out into triumphant assurance. This is the prophet of the Highest, the voice that shall cry, the forerunner who shall prepare. Before that face divine, which the nations soon shall see, Zacharias beholds his son going forth. This child of his loins he hears crying from house to house, in the highways, out amid the fields, summoning to repentance, making ready for the new day that is breaking. And see! Look toward the East! The prophet beholds the light spreading and deepening.

The shadows fly. O, beautiful dayspring from on high! Its light has touched that soul sitting in the darkness of sorrow. It has reached those in the death-shadow of doubt and superstition, and driven it all away. The weary pilgrims, blindly groping in hard, rough paths, it guides into the way of peace.

O blessed light of the new day!, and John this child in the arms of the old priest, is to be the herald of its shining!

The word has been spoken. The ecstasy of prophesy has subsided. There is a holy, triumphant stillness in the face of the old man bending above the young child. The days slip by.

The boy grows. His life is reverent, consecrated, nigh to God. He becomes a young man, still holy, his heart a temple, his life a mission, the shadow of consecration resting upon him. One day he is missed.

It may have been at the breaking of the dawn, or when the stars softly shone, he stole away into the wilderness, to be far from man, to be alone with God, to be getting ready. One other day, men heard a voice breaking forth from the wilderness, a startled cry, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The startled hearers look up from their ways of sin. They see one in rough prophet's garb beckoning men to the Jordan.

"Zacharias's son!" they cry. "John the Baptist!"

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT.—*Getting ready for Jesus.*

REVIEW. Recall Mary's song. She was praising God

for the promise of a Saviour. He had not come yet, but she was sure he would, for God had said so.

INTRODUCTORY. Speak of the angel's visit to Zacharias. Let children tell of the promise made to him. Tell the story of the opening of the lips of Zacharias after the birth of John, and explain that our lesson is the song of praise which he sung then.

Teach that unbelief closes the lips to good and helpful words. As soon as Zacharias showed by his action that he really believed what the angel said, then his lips were opened. Faith opens the heart, and then the mouth is opened, too.

The Glad Song. Zacharias praised God for sending some one to make ready for Jesus. Tell that in Eastern countries the king sometimes travels around to see what is wrong and to make it right.

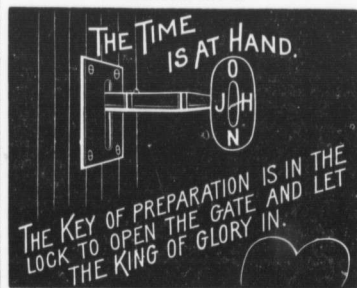
How glad the people must be to hear that he is coming!

When he starts on such a journey, some men go before him to make ready for his coming. The roads must be all smooth and easy, and houses in order to entertain him. Zacharias was full of joy because "the forerunner"—one to make ready for Jesus—had come. Have we praised God for sending his Holy Spirit to us?

Preparing God's Way. God's way is a way of truth, of love, of right-doing. Make with flat crayon a roadway. Make something here and there to indicate obstructions, such as stones, brambles, etc. You may name these various obstructions pride, obstinacy, ugly temper, untruth, etc. Teach that these must all be taken out of the way before Jesus, our King, can stop in our heart-house. Why are we sorry and ashamed when we have been naughty? Show that it is because the Holy Spirit is trying to make a way for Jesus in our hearts. God sends him to show us what is in the way of Jesus's coming to live with us. How glad we ought to be for the Holy Spirit's help! Every time he shows us something wrong in our hearts, let us thank him.

Sing "Praise Him for the Spirit's Light," to the tune of "Little Children Praise the Lord."

Blackboard.



Draw the key and lock with light blue chalk; the letters on the key in white. The diagram is intended to set forth the fact that the fullness of time had come when the Christ would appear. The Jewish nation was waiting as one who waits for another to come at an appointed time. John was to go before the face of the

Lord, and prepare his ways. He was the key that was to unlock the door of the hearts of the people, and let the King come in. His theme was to be, Repent and receive Christ. That is the key that should unlock your heart. Repent, and let your heart be open to let the Saviour in.

Berean Methods. The Teachers' Meeting.

I. THE SONG. 1. Have it carefully read and analyzed: a) A song of thanksgiving, vers. 68-75; b) An ode to Zacharias's new-born son, vers. 75-79... 2. Ask for explanations of its quaint Hebrew figures: a) Redeemed; b) Raised up a horn; c) House of David; d) The double use of three words in the seventy-second and seventy-third verses; e) Going before to prepare the way; f) Layspring from on high; g) Shadow of death... 3. Causes for thanksgiving: a) The visit of God; b) His redemption of Israel; c) Exaltation of David's line; d) Fulfillment of prophecy and covenant; e) Salvation from national enemies; f) Opportunity to serve the Lord. II. THE CHILDHOOD OF JOHN. As the boy is so is the man. Chief characteristic, "waxed strong."... Get class to describe desert life... Elicit meaning of "showing up Israel."

References. FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Poetical, 3633. Ver. 67: Prose, 9554, 9555. Ver. 68: Prose, 11345-11348, 4879-4888, 6613-6622, 7637-7642, 7643. Ver. 69: Poetical, 1480. Ver. 70: Prose, 10019. Ver. 71: Prose, 11594. Ver. 72: Prose, 5593, 5594. Ver. 73: Prose, 4156.

ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

God's Mercies and His Messenger.

I. GOD'S MERCIES.

1. **Salvation.** "Redeemed his people." v. 68, 69. "With the precious blood of Christ." 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19.
2. **Fulfillment.** "Spake by... prophets." v. 70-73. "Promise... God hath fulfilled." Acts 13, 32, 33.
3. **Deliverance.** "Being delivered." v. 74. "With great mercies will I gather." Isa. 54, 7, 8.
4. **Protection.** "Serve... without fear." v. 74, 75. "Free from sin... servants to God." Rom. 6, 22.

II. GOD'S MESSENGER.

1. **Inspired.** "The prophet." v. 70. "The word of God came unto John." Luke 2, 2.
2. **Preaching.** "Knowledge of salvation." v. 77. "Behold the Lamb of God." John 1, 29.
3. **Enlightening.** "To give light." v. 80. "I am the light of the world." John 9, 5.
4. **Fraimed.** "Was in the deserts." v. 80. "A man clothed in soft raiment?" Matt. 11, 8. "Raiment of camel's hair." Matt. 3, 4.

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

The Earliest Christian Thanksgiving Ode.

There is perhaps less of the lyric in Zacharias's song than in Mary's, but it is more formally a thanksgiving ode. In it the priest speaks in his representative capacity. Four thoughts reappear throughout the hymn:

1. *God had visited his people.* A wonderful truth. No longer did the Shekinah blaze in the temple. Perhaps four hundred years had passed since the last angel had been seen. No prophet had spoken since Malachi. The books of inspiration seemed closed; but now, all of a sudden, God had come! No wonder Zacharias breaks forth in thanks!

2. *God had fulfilled his word.* Often God seems tardy in fulfilling his promises. He times himself not by

our watches or almanacs. But now the "fulness of time" was come!

3. *God was preparing his own way.* Zacharias and John, Herod and Augustus Cæsar, the shepherds and the wise men, Pharisees and publicans, were alike to be used to make ready a way for God.

4. *Light in darkness.* Sin enshrouds the soul in night, but the dayspring from on high had dawned.

HOME READINGS.

- M. The song of Zacharias. Luke 1, 67-76.
 Th. Salvation of the Lord. Psa. 118, 19-25.
 W. Praise for deliverance. Psa. 135, 1-13.
 Th. The covenant with Abraham. Gen. 22, 9-18.
 F. A song of thanksgiving. Isa. 12.
 S. Light in darkness. Matt. 4, 12-17.
 S. The blessed nation. Psa. 33, 12-22.

TIME.—B. C. 5.

PLACE.—Same as before.

RULERS.—Same as before.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The divine fidelity.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 14, New Canadian Hymnal.

How swart the name of Jesus sounds
 In a believer's ear!
 It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
 And drives away his fear.

No. 54, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
 There's mercy with the Lo. d.

No. 55, New Canadian Hymnal.

All my doubts I give to Jesus,
 I've his gracious promise heard;
 I shall never be confounded,
 I am trusting in his word.

Jesus, the very thought of thee,

Come, Christian children.

To the name of our salvation,

Saviour, blessed Saviour,

Thou art my Shepherd.

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts,

Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,

Now let my soul, eternal King,

Grace, 'tis a charming sound,

Everlasting love,

The gospel bells,

O come at once to Jesus,

Benedictus.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. **The Promise.** v. 67-75.

In whose house was this song sung?

What is the New Testament meaning of the word

"prophecy?"

In what sense had the Lord God visited his people?

By the mouth of what prophet had he spoken?

From what enemies were they now to be saved?

How was God now showing mercy toward the patri-

archs?

In the hands of what enemies were the Jews at this

time?

What fears had interrupted their worship?

What was the Jewish conception of holiness and

righteousness?

2. **The Prophet.** v. 75-80.

About how old was the child whom Zacharias thus

addressed?

Why was the ministry of the Messiah preceded by

that of a special messenger?

What Eastern custom is alluded to in the phrase, "Go

before the face of the Lord?"

What is the meaning of the phrase, "Dayspring from

on high?"

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Who to-day sit in "darkness and the shadow of death?"

What is the meaning of the old English word "waxed?"

In what desert did John probably spend his youth?

What day is referred to by the last seven words of the 80th verse?

Practical Teachings.

When filled with the Holy Ghost the devout soul seldom lacks utterance.

God's word never fails, though he seem to tarry in its fulfillment.

God saved the Jews from their temporal enemies, and what was far more important, also from their spiritual foes; and his promises to us of temporal prosperity, while they are themselves literally fulfilled, are still more valuable as types and promises of the deeper spiritual blessings.

Hints for Home Study.

1. Read if you can, in Edersheim, the account of the early training of John.

2. Find out all you can about the Oriental method of occasionally, in exalted moments, rising into poetry.

3. Some book of travel or Biblical dictionary will give you an adequate conception of the conditions of life in the Arabian desert in the days of John.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. The Promise, v. 67-75.

Who recited this promise?

What spirit was upon him?

To whom did he offer praise?

For what did he praise the Lord?

Through whom had God given his promise?

What is the real spirit of all prophecy? Rev. 19. 10.

What salvation was promised?

To whom had this mercy been promised?

To whom had the promise first been given?

What was then promised?

2. The Prophet, v. 76-80.

What was the child John to be called?

What great honor was predicted for him? (Golden Text.)

What knowledge would he give the people?

Through whose mercy would this blessing come?

What proof of mercy had come to the people?

To whom would this gift bring light?

What is said of the child's growth?

Where did he live until he was grown?

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That we should praise God for his mercies?

2. That the Old Testament tells about Christ?

3. That God only can give pardon for sin?

B. C. 4.]

LESSON IV. JOY OVER THE CHILD JESUS.

[Jan. 26.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men. Luke 2, 14.

Authorized Version.

Luke 2. 8-20. [Commit to memory verses 10-14.]

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

Home Work for Young Bereans.

How many songs were sung in connection with the birth of Christ?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied? **Zacharias.**

Who was Zacharias? **The father of John the Baptist.**

What happened to him after the angel's visit? **He became dumb.**

When was he able to speak again? **After John's birth.**

What were his first words? **Words of praise.**

For what did he praise God? **For sending a Redeemer.**

Who is our Redeemer? **Jesus Christ.**

From what does he redeem us? **From sin.**

What did Zacharias say John would be called? **The prophet of the Highest.**

Before whom must he go? **Before Jesus Christ.**

What great work was given him to do? **To prepare a way for Jesus.**

How did he prepare a way? **By turning people from sin.**

What did Zacharias call Christ? **The dayspring.**

Why is he like the dayspring, or sunrise? **Because he brings light.**

Into what way will Christ, the Light, lead us? **Into the way of peace.**

Words with Little People.

Jesus asks to come into every heart.

Light let into a dark room will show the dust.

Light let into a dark heart will show the sin.

Jesus is the Light.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. Who sang this song? **Zacharias, father of John the Baptist.**

2. What made him so happy? **The birth of John and the coming of Christ.**

3. What was John to be? **The herald of the Lord.**

4. What was he to do? **To give knowledge of salvation.**

5. What is Christ here called? **The dayspring from on high.**

CATECHISM QUESTION.

4. How did an angel give notice of his coming? **The angel Gabriel first foretold the birth of John the Baptist, his forerunner, and then announced to the mother of Jesus that she should bring forth the Son of God.**

5. Who was the mother of Jesus? **Mary, a virgin of the house of David.**

Revised Version.

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night

9 over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about

10 them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring

you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the

11 people; for there is born to you this day in the city

12 of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And

this is the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped

13 in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men in whom he is

well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away

from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another,

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing

that is come to pass, which the Lord hath

made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Ma'ry and Jo'seph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Ma'ry kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

16 made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Ma'ry and Jo'seph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was 18 spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto 19 them by the shepherds. But Ma'ry kept all these 20 sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

General Statement.

The decree from Caesar Augustus levying a new tax brought Joseph from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem of Judea, because he was of the house and lineage of David. Mary came with him. They sojourned in the stable, there being no room for them in the inn. In the meantime, at night, the low-class shepherds were lounging in the open air in the grazing meadows where the sheep destined for the temple service were cared for.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

8. **In the same country.** Close to Bethlehem, in the same fields in which David had pastured his flocks. **Shepherds.** They are said by tradition to have been natives of the little village Bethzur. On the road from Bethlehem to Jerusalem was a watch-tower known as Migdal Eder. It was here that the shepherds who cared for the flocks destined for sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem gathered. Jews every-where thought the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and that previously he was to be announced from Migdal Eder. These shepherds were doubtless pious men. They were as a class held in contempt by the Jewish authorities, and as their life isolated them from most of the religious ordinances, it had ceased to be expected that they would maintain a strict legal observance. **Abiding in the field.** They may have had tents or booths under which they dwell, but sheep in Palestine are only housed in the coldest weather, and often the shepherds who watched them slept on beds made of grass or tree branches without other covering than their heavy mantles. **Keeping watch.** That is, by turns, one or two at a time. The dangers to be guarded against were "robbers, wolves, and sudden storms." **Their flock.** If they had been sheep-owners, each with a flock of his own, the allusion would have been to their flocks, but these men were hirelings of the temple authorities, and it was a temple flock that they were caring for. This brings a beautiful thought to view—a connecting link between the Old Testament worship and the New. (1) *It is to men busy with their ordinary duties that God's brightest revelations come.*

9. **Came upon them.** Suddenly appeared. So far as we can tell from the New Testament narrative, angels appeared always as young men in white raiment. Wings are described by Isaiah (6. 2), Ezekiel (1. 6), and John (Rev. 4. 8), but they were not on messengers, but on mysterious figures, "living creatures," "beasts," "cherubim and seraphim"—orders which seem to be quite distinct from the "angels of God." **The glory of the Lord.** This was the Shekinah—that cloud of brightness that symbolized the divine presence. **Sore afraid.** The man does not live whose pulse would not flutter if the door of the invisible world suddenly swung open. (2) *But the divine presence is always near us, whether we perceive it or not.*

10. **Fear not.** Already attention has been called to the fact that most of God's direct messages began with this kind exhortation. **Good tidings.** Evangel. Our words "gospel" and "evangelical" both come from this phrase. **Great joy.** Not only a real blessing, but an un-

disguised blessing—one that shall bring its gladness immediately with it. **To all people.** There was nothing narrow or national in the Gospel message. Zacharias, the poor priest of the temple, sang the first missionary hymn.

11. The city of David. A common colloquial name for Bethlehem. **A Saviour.** One of the most striking facts about the Gospel which an intelligent person reading it for the first time would discover is the evident universal feeling that a Saviour was needed. The people then had no such theological conceptions as we. They simply felt that they were hopeless both in their temporal and spiritual surroundings. The Church was depraved; the nation was enslaved; the masses were wretchedly poor; the government was weak and wicked; and men's conceptions of divine truth were vague. Every thoughtful person in that day, pagan and Jewish alike, felt the need of a Saviour! **Christ.** The Jewish technical term for the Anointed One.

12. **A sign.** Not an evidence of the truth of this angelic message, but an index—a guide, a pointer. **Swaddling clothes.** Tight wraps which engirdled the baby from head to foot, and made all free motion of its limbs impossible. They were used in all nations down to the last century. It was Rousseau, who wrote our favorite hymn Greenville, who by his sarcasm abolished this barbarism from Christendom. To the shepherds it must have been strange that Christ should be found in circumstances so like those of other infants. **In a manger.** The only resting-place to be found in the overcrowded caravansary. The poverty of Jesus's family was not accidental. (3) *When God seeks to raise the human race, he begins at the lowest social stratum.*

13. **Suddenly.** Like an electric flash. **Heavenly host.** The armies of God. **Praising God.** That is the permanent employment of the angels in light. They have been praising him through all the centuries of wrong; they have been praising him ever since that glorious vision was seen by the shepherds; they will praise him through all eternity.

14. **In the highest.** This may mean the highest heaven. The Jews believed there were three, one above the other, and the thought would be that the glory of God extended from the highest down to the earth and back again. "Glory to God in the highest" was a familiar doxology of the Jews. **On earth peace,** etc. This should read, "On the earth peace among men." This song may have been sung in fugue, like many of the Hebrew chorals.

15. Let us now go. The sheep were left to care for themselves. (4) "To go and see is always the cure for doubt."

16. Found. Discovered after search. **The babe . . . manger.** More pictures have been made of this scene than of any other that ever occurred on earth.

17. Made known abroad. They had charge of the flocks from which the sacrifices of the temple were taken, and of course would meet many ecclesiastical officials and others. So that the coming of the Messiah was probably proclaimed in the temple as early as in any other place by human instrumentality. The agitation produced in Jerusalem by these stories and by

the visitation of the wise men must have been great.

19. The shepherds shouted the good news, but one woman with a deeper mystery than any, to whom the greatest of all revelations had been made, is quiet; her heart is too full. **Kept all these things.** The word "things" should be "words." And it has been ingeniously suggested that the real meaning of this phrase is "memorized these words;" that is, prepared carefully a succinct statement of all these transactions. There is some ground for the belief that Mary was the authority from whom Luke derived many of the details given in his first two chapters.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Thus far it has been noised abroad in the highlands of Judea that a little babe lately born is to be the Lord's prophet and the future harbinger of the Messiah; but no indication has been given as to when or where the latter is to appear. Perhaps no one would think of asking, since it was commonly believed that, while the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem, yet, when he appeared, no one would recognize his origin. John 7. 42, 27.

One couple among the northern and another among the southern hills could, if they should think best, give information touching Messiah's advent unknown to the learned scribes. They do not think best. With wise self-restraint they resolve to hold their peace, and leave attention fixed upon the future forerunner of the Messiah. They have sufficient reasons for their reticence. Who knows if he not the divine will that his anointed One should remain in total obscurity in the northern province until he has grown to manhood and his hour has come? Who knows whether the Messiah will not in due time be revealed to the great religious leaders of Israel, to be declared by them to the world? Mary and the other three keep all these things in their hearts. But God's thoughts are not as ours. The things that are despised are chosen to bring to nought the things that are mighty. Not professional scholars but the least cultured and the least esteemed class among the people are chosen as the earliest messengers of the heavenly tidings that at last the true Messiah is on earth. The scribes sleep soundly and hear no voice, but the unlettered shepherds, remaining awake, receive a message from on high.

The lesson is naturally divided into two topics: 1. The Angelic Message (8-14); 2. The Confirmation of the Message (15-20).

8. Same country. Judea, ver. 4. **Abiding in the field.** The original word indicates that this was their regular occupation. The Greek is not unlike our English phrase, "Living out of doors." **Keeping watch.** Perhaps taking turns at watching, as the margin of the Rev. Ver. suggests. The depredations of wolves and robbers made such vigilance necessary. John 10. 10-13. **Their flock.** The flocks which furnished sheep for the temple sacrifices were pastured near Bethlehem, according to the Mishnah. Some have seen a symbolical appropriateness in the revelation concerning the Lamb of God being made to the custodians of these sacred flocks.

9. An angel. It is the fitting way to reveal the truth to these unsophisticated souls. They would not appreciate and could not well report abstract theological propositions, but they had eyes and ears; and could readily tell what they saw and heard. They were familiar with nocturnal phenomena. They knew at a glance that the person that appeared was no human being. **Stood by.** The Greek word conveys the mean-

ing of an impressive appearance, as does our word "confronted." **The glory of the Lord.** A luminous brightness like that of the Shekinah. Light throughout the Bible is used as a token of the immediate divine presence. God is said to make light his garment, and dwell in light which no man can approach. **Afraid.** Exo. 33. 20; Judg. 13. 22.

10. Be not afraid. They needed to note carefully what was to be said to them. They could not give close heed when agitated with fear. **Behold.** A summons to attention. **You.** The shepherds. **Of great joy.** Tidings which will produce great joy. **The people.** The Jewish people. In God's providence the tidings would be proclaimed to the Gentiles only after being rejected by the Jews.

11. For. Explain what the good tidings are. **To you.** So that the shepherds could say of the Messiah, He is ours. The poor have the Gospel preached to them. Chap. 7. 22. **City of David.** These words are made prominent in the Greek. Bethlehem was commonly spoken of in this way. John 7. 42. Here it has reference to the Messianic promises. **A Saviour.** This Greek title was applied both to gods and potentates, as *Zeus Soter*, and *Ptolemy Soter*. Its significance for the shepherds would depend upon their spiritual insight. **Christ the Lord.** The divine Messiah.

12. Sign. A peculiar token by which the holy child may be unerringly discovered. **In a manger.** This certainly was a sufficiently explicit token. They would not be likely to find another new-born child in so unusual and rude a resting-place.

13. Suddenly. In direct connection with the angel's declaration of the birth of the Saviour, there comes a confirmation of its divine significance. **Was.** Appeared. **Multitude.** Adding emphasis to the deliverance made by one of their number. Heb. 12. 22; Gen. 32. 2. **Heavenly host.** Angels. 1 Kings 22. 19; Psa. 103. 21; Dan. 7. 10; Matt. 26. 53. **Praising God.** Blessing him for the birth of the Saviour of the world.

14. Glory to God in the highest. That is, those who are in heaven praise him. **Highest.** Highest places, or heaven. **On earth peace.** In other words, there is salvation on earth for men in whom God is well pleased. Rom. 5. I dwell more at large upon this "peace." Jesus himself confirmed this sentiment when he said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." **In whom he is well pleased.** To the wicked there is no such peace. The best Greek manuscripts will not permit the translation "good-will toward men."

15. Let us now go. The Greek word is appropriate to a night journey. They did not postpone the quest until morning. No mention is made of any further defense of

the flock. **And see.** They believed the testimony of the angels.

16. Found. The Greek word is rare in the New Testament, and indicates preliminary search. **Mary.** She is mentioned first as the mother who had the child in her care, and who could satisfy their inquiries. **The babe.... the manger.** The article indicates the correspondence between the prediction of the angel and its fulfillment.

17. When they saw. When they realized that a Messiah had indeed been born. **Made known.** They had been told that the tidings of great joy were for all the people, Ver. 10. **The saying.** As to the identity of the child, and the significance of his birth.

18. Wondered. They could not gainsay their testimony. They satisfied themselves by commenting on its strangeness.

19. But Mary kept. The Greek indicates a careful and a continuing reticence touching the destiny of her child. She, like the people, wondered, but, unlike them, she refrained from talking about the matter. **Pondering.** The Lord's way of making known his anointed to the shepherds was an unexpected incident in this strange, new career of hers. She did the best she could to "put together," as the Greek has it, the various things that had already happened. She could not wholly make out this visit of the shepherds, as she could not that of the Magi, of which Matthew tells us, but she had a child-like trust that God would overrule all.

20. Returned. To their flock. **Glorifying.** Joyously talking over the mercy of God, and breaking forth into hymns of praise. **Even as.** Their joy is explained as occasioned by the confirmation of the message of the angels. Somewhat like the joy of Thomas. John 20, 28.

The Lesson Council.

Question 1. To what extent has the coming of Christ brought peace and good-will to men?

God's good-will manifested and reconciliation provided for all men; soul-peace given to millions now in heaven and millions still on earth; increasing peace-sentiment between nations; frequent peace-conventions; settlement of international disputes by arbitration, as in adjustment of "Alabama Claims" between England and the United States in 1871; signs of growing brotherhood in diminution of cruelty and in relief of suffering; abolition of slavery throughout the civilized world; care even for criminals and convicts; asylums and hospitals for the helpless and the injured; lessening of bigotry and intolerance; recognition of common rights with such watch-words as "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality."—*William V. Kelley.*

Compare Christendom with what the world was before the advent, and we have the answer. The creation of the sentiment of human brotherhood, with all the fruits of charity; the abolition of slavery; the elevation of woman; the humanization of law; the rise of new and peaceful ideals of individual and national greatness; the growth of international comity and the practice of arbitration; the condemnation of aggressive and the amelioration of defensive wars—are all the works of him whose kingdom is peace. The coming of Christ has brought peace and good-will to men just to the extent that they have become Christians.—*Rev. J. C. Jackson.*

Christ brought: 1. Peace in the individual soul. This is the inevitable fruit of sins forgiven. It is the "peace of God which passeth all understanding." It is the peace exhaustless—for it floweth "like a river;" in-

describable—for it is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The soul of a Christian may always be as the heavens were on the night when the shepherds looked up and saw them full of angels as well as stars. The secret of the experience is, God, through Christ, has spoken peace to the soul. 2. Peace between man and man. Christ is not only the Mediator between God and man, but also between man and man. When men cease to war with God they cease to war with each other. The Christian religion means peace. Christianity is all peace; and when the earth is all Christian, then, in all the earth, there shall be no sound of war forever.—*Rev. J. L. Sloop.*

In almost every thing that makes the nineteenth century better than the first. Christ's law of love, illustrated by his own self-sacrifice for the welfare of others, led men to the conceptions of kindly obligation and of friendly and helpful instead of hostile relations. His spirit enters into our personal, social, and public life, and affects our legislation. We dwell safely. Law, not force, settles disputes. Wars are more humane. More, the helpfulness of the age in sympathy with these things, educating the ignorant, reforming the vicious, evangelizing the nations, and elevating the race, results from his coming.—*D. A. Whedon, D.D.*

Lesson Word-Picture.

A NEW SONG!

There have been many songs the world has heard, in many lands, in many tongues, but this shall surpass all. No singers with voices so rich as those in this new song. No theme so exalted as the subject of this anthem. And to hear it how many hearts have wearily waited; for no other song can comfort and strengthen like this! When will the new song be heard? O, when? This very night!

Yes, under the golden starred roof of the sky the notes of the new song shall swell and roll and echo, even this very night.

And yet, somehow, nobody is expecting these singers with their rapturous harmonies and the theme that can so wonderfully affect men, making this earth a new earth since bringing heaven down to it!

Nobody expecting? Why, it will be sung at Jerusalem of course, and they must be listening for it there. It is about One whose throne of love will be set up there, a kingdom to sweep out from the royal city and go every-where. Just now, such a multitude is in Jerusalem. No, this song will be sung out in the fields, down in little Bethlehem, out in a sheep-pasture.

Strange, very strange!

No, not even the drowsy shepherds, amid their stupid, prostrate flocks, know about this song that will soon startle their ears. They lie on their backs and gaze vacantly at the shining stars.

But look!

Has one of those stars dropped to earth and does it burn before them? No, it is an angel!

How startled they are! And he is speaking, too!

His is a little speech, just saluting them and announcing a glorious fact that this song will commemorate, and in Bethlehem they will find the world's Redeemer. And now how suddenly the one star grows to a thousand, all the lights in the firmament crowding before the awe-struck shepherds, the one angel multiplying into thousands! On every side, before the shepherds, above them, are faces, faces, faces, so glorious!

Hark, there are voices also!

It is the new song. O listen! And how the shepherds look up out of their crazy eyes, and with their strained

ears he
clumsy
Such
How
What
And in
gone!
those a
song
since to
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ears hearken! The sheep, too, are getting upon their clumsy legs and staring excitedly.

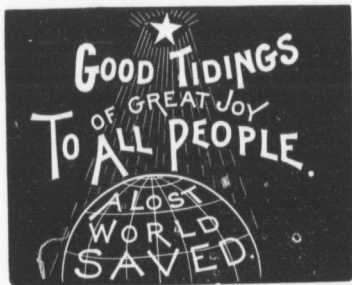
Such a song!

How it rises—the great doxology—to the very heavens! What unutterable, delicious, overpowering melody! And in a moment it is all gone! The singers too are gone! Nothing but empty skies, and dying echoes, and those astonished, bewildered shepherds! The new song is just a memory now, but O, it is a new world since its singing.

"Come!" the shepherds are saying. "Let us go unto Bethlehem."

Deserting their wondering flocks, girding up their robes, grasping their crooks, talking excitedly, more like fugitives than seekers, the shepherds hurry across the fields. They are pressing into a stable, next, they are bending over a manger, looking so eagerly. Does the babe within smile? Has it heard the new song? Did not Joseph and Mary catch one note straying down into the old stable. It was so marvelous! The shepherds tell all about it. They fill every listening heart with wonder, and then they hurry away, so awed themselves, yet breaking out into praise, and so with rejoicing and yet a trembling awe they go back to the fields above which had resounded the new song. There was one who that night said little. It was Mary; but what a deeper treasure-box was her heart, in which she silently, reverently, laid away these wonderful memories and prophesies.

Blackboard.



The blackboard again sets forth the old, yet ever new, story of the birth of Christ, and the good tidings of great joy.

DIRECTIONS. The star of bright yellow, with rays of the same color; make the letters of purple and blue and other bright colors. Tie a piece of white chalk to a string, and hold the end of the string pressed against the lower edge of the board; with the right hand and chalk describe the circle to form the world. Letters inside the world are to be dark red.

Primary and Intermediate.

LESSON THOUGHT. *The Joy that Jesus Brings.*

Make a shepherd's crook on the board, to introduce a little talk about shepherds and their work. Explain that in the East the nights are not cold and damp, but mild and pleasant, so that they can easily spend the night in the open field. Tell how a little company of shepherds were together one night. They were good men, who believed that God would keep the promise he had made to send

a Saviour. Tell how, all at once, a great light shone all around them, and in it they saw a beautiful angel. How frightened they were! Tell what the angel said to them, and what a wonderful angel-choir came singing about them! What was the song? Have the Golden Text printed on the board, and show it now. Let the children sing one of their Christmas hymns, and try and impress upon them the thought that, if they sing with the heart as well as with the lips, they are doing just what the angels did that night.

What Jesus Brought. Print "Joy" in very large letters. Teach that all who knew that Jesus had come, and believed that he was the Messiah, had the joy. Tell the story of a mother's home-coming after a month's absence. The children were all happy but one. That one was in a fit of sulks in a back room, and would not believe that she had come when told. Of course he could not share in the joy. Print "Peace." When the mother came she brought gifts to her children. She did not leave one out, because she loved them all. The naughty boy, shut up by himself, did not see his gift, nor indeed know of it, until he left his dark room and came to his mother's side. Apply the thought. The shepherds who believed right away received the gifts Jesus brought and were happy. Shall we believe and be happy, too?



Print "Good-will." Tell that the good-will Jesus had toward men led him to give his life for them. If we take good-will from him, it will make us give up our life (self-will, self-pleasing) for his sake. Teach that to do this is sure to bring great joy into the life. Sing a joyful Christmas song to close.

Here are Methods.

Teachers' Meeting.

This is a historic scene, and its best spiritual lessons can be brought forth incidentally in the clear presentation of the historic facts. 1. *Geography.* Bring out the characteristics of "the same country;" the relation of Jerusalem to Bethlehem; "the watch-tower of the flock." 2. *Persons.* Many human beings were used as tools by God to bring about appropriate circumstances for the birth of the Lord. Get the class to suggest names—for example, Caesar Augustus, who levied the tax that brought Joseph to Bethlehem. 3. *Customs.* Shepherds watching their flocks by night. The Oriental caravansary. The universal custom of swaddling clothes for infants. Probably the English translators never dreamed that the time would come when that phrase would need explanation. 4. *Angelic appearances.* Recall a few from both Testaments, and get the class to mention characteristics. Many of our conventional ideas are unbiblical. 5. *Meaning of angelic chorus.* Verse 14. Contrast the shepherds' conduct with Mary's and bring out the advantages and disadvantages of both courses.

References. FREEMAN. Ver. 12: "Swaddling clothes," 751. Ver. 16: The manger, 751. Ver. 21: Naming the child, 749... FOSTER'S CYCLOPEDIA. Prose, 1764, 4132. Ver. 8: Poetical, 2392. Ver. 8-14: Poetical, 3101. Ver. 9: Prose, 6490. Ver. 10: Poetical, 2031; Prose, 3363, 6346. Ver. 11: Poetical, 257. Ver. 13: Prose, 2623, 7119, 9823. Ver. 13, 14: Poetical, 423, 3230. Ver. 14: Poetical, 259. Ver. 15: Prose, 3182.

ANALYTICAL AND BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

The Glad Tidings.

I. HEAVENLY TIDINGS.

- The angel of the Lord came.* v. 9.
 "He maketh his angels spirits." Heb. 1. 7.
 "All ministering spirits." Heb. 1. 14.

II. JOYFUL TIDINGS.

- Good tidings of great joy.* v. 10.
 "Joy in God through... Christ." Rom. 5. 11.
 "Believing, ye rejoice." 1 Peter 1. 8.

III. TIDINGS TO ALL MEN.

- Shall be to all people.* v. 10.
 "Go ye... teach all nations." Matt. 28. 19.
 "All the ends of the earth." Isa. 52. 10.

IV. WELCOME TIDINGS.

- Unto you is born... a Saviour.* v. 11.
 "His name shall be... Wonderful." Isa. 9. 6.
 "Shalt call his name Jesus." Matt. 1. 21.

V. WONDERFUL TIDINGS.

- Lying in a manger.* v. 12.
 "Took... form of a servant." Phil. 2. 7.
 "Made like unto his brethren." Heb. 2. 17.

VI. GLORIOUS TIDINGS.

- Glory to God in the highest.* v. 14.
 "Glory in the church by Christ Jesus." Eph. 3. 21.
 "Blessing and honor... unto him." Rev. 5. 13.

VII. TIDINGS BELIEVED.

- Let us now go... and see.* v. 15.
 "We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5. 7.
 "Blessed... not seen... believed." John 20. 29.

VIII. TIDINGS PROCLAIMED.

- They made known abroad.* v. 17.
 "How beautiful... good tidings." Isa. 52. 7.
 "Anointed me to preach." Isa. 61. 1.

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Signs of the Coming Messiah.

1. *A heavenly announcement of his birth.* The angel message is explicit, and, coming after the message to Zacharias and Mary, places the advent of the Son of God beyond all reasonable doubt.
2. *A rejoicing angelic chorus.* No earthly thanksgiving can be gladder or more exultant than this triumphant song of the heavenly host.
3. *A human forerunner.* The last verse of the last lesson brings to our minds the singular fact that already the marvelous life of the ascetic Baptist had begun. Before many years passed, he was to go down to the wilderness, and in solitude to prepare for his life-work as the prophet of the Christ.
4. *Wrapped in swaddling clothes.* Not unmeaning is this fact. It is as if the angel had said, You shall know the babe because he is like any other. When the Hindus imagine the coming of a God to earth—an avatar as they call it—they surround him with marvelous circumstances; but when the real Son of God appears, he appears like any other helpless human infant, and he really is what he appears to be.
5. *Lying in a manger.* The Christ might have come helpless, like the rest of humanity, but on a higher range of society. He never could have been effective as a Saviour, however, if he had not been on a level with the lowest. When men seek to raise a building, they put their machinery to work on the foundation, and not on the spire. When God seeks to elevate a race, he touches the bottom layer.
6. *Those reticent brooding hearts.* If you and I had visited Palestine then, and could have seen into the

hearts of the men and women about us, one of the most marvelous signs of the coming Messiah would have been the number of silent expectant ones waiting for the Messiah.

7. *Eager reporters.* The shepherds were the first missionaries.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Joy over the child Jesus. Luke 2. 8-20.
 Tu. Worship of the wise men. Matt. 2. 1-11.
 W. The Prince of peace. Isa. 9. 1-7.
 Th. Good tidings. Isa. 40. 9-11.
 F. The great gift. John 3. 16-21.
 S. A Saviour. 1 John 4. 9-14.
 S. Song of the redeemed. Rev. 5. 8-14.

TIME.—B. C. 4.

PLACE.—Fields near Jerusalem.

RULES.—Same as before.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—The human nature of Christ.

LESSON HYMNS.

- No. 299, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Angels, from the realms of glory,
 Wing your flight o'er all the earth.
- No. 391, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Hark! the herald angels sing,
 "Glory to the new-born King."
- No. 300, New Canadian Hymnal.
 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
 Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid.

In the field with their flocks,
 Song of the angels.
 Joy to the world.
 While shepherds watched their flocks,
 Hark! the herald angels sing.
 This is the winter morn.
 O little town of Bethlehem.
 Come, said Jesus' sacred voice,
 There is a Friend.
 There's a gentle voice.
 None but Jesus.
 Love divine.
 Gloria in Excelsis.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR STUDENTS.

1. *Joy among the Angels.* v. 8-14.
 What is meant by "the same country?"
 Who probably owned these flocks and employed these shepherds?
 To what social class among the Jews did shepherds belong?
 Collect the instances given in Scripture of fear caused by the appearance of messengers from the heavenly world.
 Why should a messenger from God frighten men?
 In what words did the angel comfort the shepherds?
 By what words did he break down their national prejudices?
 Why was Bethlehem called "the city of David?"
 In what sense did the Jews feel the need of a Saviour?
 Turn the phrase "Christ the Lord" into modern English, so as to get the precise idea that the angels' words conveyed to the shepherds?
 Was it an exception in that day for babies to be wrapped in swaddling clothes?
 Wherein was the significance of that sign?
 What deep significance is contained in the fact that the Son of God was laid in a manger instead of a cradle?
2. *Joy Among Men.* v. 15-20.
 What natural resolution did the shepherds make?
 Was their journey a long one?
 Try to picture this scene to your minds—the tramp in the darkness over the fields, the admission through the

gate into the silent little city, the activity about the caravanary, and their impulsive veneration of the supernatural Child.

What course did the shepherds take, and what was its justification?

What course did Mary take, and what was its justification?

What preparatory effect had the announcement of the birth of Jesus on the people whose salvation he came immediately to secure.

Practical Teachings.

God's revelation comes to men when they are attending to their routine duties. "Picturesque Christians" are not in demand. It is to the priest who is performing his regular tasks, to the shepherds who are caring for their flocks in the usual manner, to the businessman who is attending to his every-day duty, to the mother who is busy with her humdrum household responsibilities, that God's messenger comes.

Guiltily man is surprised when God comes in any way but as an avenger, and God's messengers seldom speak without having to say as a preface, "Fear not."

The multitude of the heavenly hosts did not stop praising God when the shepherds ceased to hear them. They simply went back to heaven, where their chorus of gladness is continued to this hour.

"But with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath that angel's strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man at war with man hears not
The love-song which they bring,
O hush your noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing."

The world is divided into *wonderers and ponderers*. The shepherds started out astonishing every body, because they were astonished themselves. Mary kept all these things in her heart, and pondered them. Both did right. Neither class should condemn the other.

Hints for Home Study.

1. Read carefully the accounts given by Luke and the other apostles of the incidents connected with Jesus' birth up to this hour.
2. Make out a little list of synchronisms: What was Herod probably doing while the shepherds were listening to the angels? Were the wise men already on their journey? What could Mary and Joseph have thought when the shepherds rushed in upon them?

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. **Joy Among the Angels**, vs. 8-14.
What watchmen are mentioned as on duty at night? What were they doing? In what country was this? What unexpected visitor came to the shepherds? How were they affected by the sight? For what purpose had the angel come? What good news did he bring? How would the shepherds know the Saviour? Who suddenly joined the angel? How many are there in God's host? Rev. 5. 11. What song did this company sing? (Golden Text.)
2. **Joy Among Men**, vs. 15-20.
Where did the angels go? What did the shepherds then say? What did they do? What did they find? Why was the babe in a manger? ver. 7. What then did they make known? How were the hearers affected by the story? Where did Mary hide these things? How did the shepherds show their joy?

Teachings of the Lesson.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That the birth of Jesus is good news to us?
2. That the coming of the Saviour brings peace to us?
3. That we should praise God for the gift of a Saviour?

Home Work for Young Bereans.

Find an old Jewish hero whose birth was announced by an angel.

Find how often "Fear not" was spoken by heavenly messengers.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Where was Jesus born? In Bethlehem of Judea. Who were watching their flocks by night? Shepherds.

Who came among them? An angel.
What did he say to them? "Fear not."
What did he bring them? Good news.
What was the good news? That Jesus was born.
Who joined the angel then? A multitude of angels.
What did they sing? A holy song.
For what did they praise God? For sending Jesus.
What does Jesus bring with him? Peace and good-will.

Where did the shepherds go when the song was ended? To Bethlehem.

Whom did they seek there? Jesus.
Where did they find him? In a manger.
Who were with the babe? Mary and Joseph.
What did the shepherds do? Go and tell others about Jesus.

With what were they filled when they went back to their flocks? With joy and praise.

How should we receive the news of Jesus's coming? With gladness.

Words with Little People.

Jesus came as a little child.
He came to bring eternal life to little children.
The child who loves and obeys Jesus has eternal life.
Learn to sing the angels' song here, so that you may sing it in heaven.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. Who frightened the shepherds of Bethlehem? An angel.
2. What did he say? "Fear not: . . . I bring you good tidings."
3. Whom were they to find? "A Saviour, . . . Christ the Lord."
4. How were they to find him? As a babe in a manger.
5. Who joined in a chorus of praise? A multitude of the heavenly host.
6. When the shepherds had found the babe what did they do? They made known abroad the saying.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

6. Who was his supposed father?
Joseph, a carpenter, of Nazareth, was supposed to be the father of Jesus, because he married Mary.
7. What further witness was given to Christ in his infancy?
By angels from heaven, by wise men from the East, and by Simeon in the temple.

That Big Snow-Storm.

BY S. S. W.

"O, DEAR!"

That was her exclamation one Sunday morning when she looked out on a world that seemed to have turned into a big snow-drift. House-roof and barn-roof, yard and road, trees in the orchard and shrubs in the garden, had been powdered with the white flakes of winter, and in some places this powder was very deep.

"O, dear," sighed Margaret again. "How am I going to get to church!"

Hark!

Strong, cheery voices were heard out in the road, and past the house toiled resolutely farmer Garland and his three sons, breaking out with their famous ox-team the road to the white way-side church of God.

A "master hand," farmer Garland was reckoned to be for any job like road-breaking. True, he had a better name for getting to the white church than for getting into it, but his friends hoped to see him a church-goer some time.

"Guess," said he, laughing hoarsely, "my chances are 'bout as good as some of them professors for whom I break out the road, and then they don't go, which is just my case 'zactly."

The broken-out road this Sunday of our story was very satisfactory for its kind.

"It settles one point," said Margaret Winslow. "I think now I can easily get to church. I want to be particular and be at church and Sunday-school every, every Sunday."

Will makes a way, just as Farmer Garland and his big ox team made a road to the village church. That looked like a big white drift standing on end. So Margaret made the venture, and a very sensible kind of short-skirted dress for stormy weather, a pair of rubber boots, and a woman's will inside did the work. As Father Steadfast looked down from his old-fashioned pulpit, he saw in the scattered but appreciative congregation the bright, sweet face of Margaret Winslow. He saw her too in the Sunday-school. She also inspected her surroundings, but when she looked into the nook where her class of boys generally met, she saw only one scholar! This was John Garland, rarely there, and, like his father, classified as a hard nut to crack when any body took the theological hammer to him.

"You here?" said Margaret in surprise.

"That I be, Miss Winslow. Father said all the good boys would be away, and I had better come to fill up."

"Well," said Margaret, in a tone not remarkably hopeful, "we will take up the lesson and see what we can get out of it."

It was not a half-hour of easy instruction, John was so slow in his understanding of Scripture, and as for this particular lesson, he knew no more about it than his father, now sleeping in his rocking-chair behind the kitchen stove, his head tipped back, and a red bandanna flung over it. Indeed, if John's twinkling eyes had made full confession, they would have said, "I came here to-day jest for the fun of it."

By-and-by the lesson was concluded. It was the time when Margaret Winslow might say something to her class upon the subject of personal religion.

"Shall I say any thing to John?" she wondered. "O—I can't."

"Hold on!" said conscience. "Who promised her Saviour she would do what she could in Christian effort?"

"But I don't know how to get at it, he is such a strange being."

"The only way to get at it is to go at it."

There was an interim of anxious thought.

"Ahem!" said Margaret, clearing her throat of a little hoarseness and a good many nerves which suddenly seemed to make their head-quarters there. "Ahem—m—m! We are having some very interesting meetings just now. I wish you would go, John."

"This is the fust meetin' I have been to for some

time. I call this int'restin'," said John with a grin.

Margaret plucked up courage again. "I mean the evening meetings."

John sobered. He drew back as if putting his armor on, conscious that something was coming.

"I don't like 'em," he said, stiffly.

"Your mother used to come."

John hung his head suddenly, as if an arrow had somewhere found "a joint in the harness." No one knew how much he thought of the mother whose grave this storm had covered and protected with its soft, white blanket.

Margaret saw her opportunity. She sent in another arrow. "Your mother was a Christian, John. Isn't it time for you to be one?"

"Pretty hard sleddin' when you've got to do it all alone," he muttered, hanging his head.

She knew what this meant in a home like Farmer Garland's. She had an answer ready. "Since God is in the world, can we say that we do any thing good alone? What company more could we ask?"

John refused to say any thing. His head still drooped, and he looked very much like a warrior who had gone into a fortress and shut every gate and plugged every port-hole.

When Margaret went home, she took a heavy heart with her. "It is of no use!" she sighed. "However, I did what I could. I tried to do my duty."

Yes, and God takes care of duties done. Our only concern is to do them.

The days went on. Margaret Winslow married Father Steadfast's son, who had followed the old preacher into the ministry, and the young clergyman one year was stationed over a church in a far-off western State. The drink-licensing question, going every-where, came at last to his people. A meeting was called for its discussion, and the speakers were timorous. Finally, the minister's wife was startled by a young man's voice. Rising, he said, "I'm not used to talkin', but a woman once wanted me to be a Christian. I said 'twas hard alone. I knew my father and family would fight against it. She said, since God was in the world, could we say we were alone? That fixed me."

Down he sat.

"That ought to fix us," said the pastor. "Who will stand up with God in this drink crusade?"

Almost every one arose.

"Don't I know you?" said Margaret Steadfast to the young man after the meeting.

"Guess so. I know you. Jest come to town. You'd like to know that father follered me. He thought what would people say, and felt lonely, but I told what you said, and now he not only breaks the road to church, but gets inside."

I DISLIKE an eye that twinkles like a star. Those only are beautiful which, like the planets, have a steady, lambent light; are luminous, but sparkling. —Longfellow.

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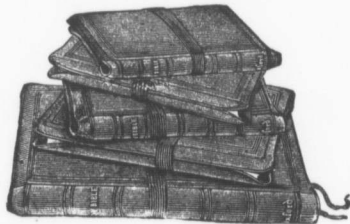
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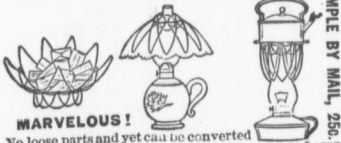
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