

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1880.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson III.—JANUARY 18.

JESUS BAPTIZED BY JOHN.

Matt. iii. 1-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 13-17.

CONNECTION AND PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Between the return from Egypt and the baptism of Jesus twenty eight or twenty-nine years intervened (Luke iii. 23). During this period Jesus dwelt in obscurity at Nazareth. His visit to Jerusalem (Luke ii. 41-52), and his personal occupation as a carpenter (Mark vi. 3), are the only glimpses of his history in these years. The stay in Egypt was probably but for a month or two, yet it may have been six or seven months. John's ministry began about six months before he baptized Jesus. This baptism occurred late in A. D. 26, or early in the next year. Parallel narratives are found in Mark i. 1-11; Luke iii. 1-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matthew iii. 17.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. Jesus Baptized by John, Matt. iii. 1-17.
T. The Beginning of the Gospel, Mark i. 1-11.
W. Luke's Narrative of John, Luke iii. 1-22.
T. John's Work Foretold, Isaiah xl. 1-11.
F. Baptism of the Spirit, Acts ii. 1-12.
S. Repentance and Baptism, Acts ii. 37, 47.
S. Testimony concerning Jesus, John i. 15-34.

PARALLEL TEXTS.

- With vs. 2: 1 Kings viii. 47; Luke xiii. 3, 5; Acts ii. 38; Dan. ii. 44.
With vs. 3: Isa. xl. 3; Luke i. 17.
With vs. 4: 2 Kings i. 8; Mal. iv. 5; Lev. xi. 22; Deut. xxxii. 13.
With vs. 6: Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12; Ps. xxxii. 5; 1 John i. 9.
With vs. 7: Gen. iii. 15; 1 John iii. 10; Rom. v. 9; 1 Thess. i. 10.
With vs. 8: Gal. v. 22, 23; Phil. i. 11.
With vs. 9: Luke xvi. 24; Acts xiii. 26.
With vs. 10: Ps. i. 3; John xv. 2, 6; Heb. vi. 8.
With vs. 11: Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28-30; Acts ii. 24.
With vs. 12: Isa. xli. 16; Mal. iv. 1; Mark ix. 43.
With vs. 15: Ps. xl. 7, 8; Isa. xlii. 21.
With vs. 16: Isa. xi. 2; Isa. xlii. 1.
With vs. 17: Ps. ii. 7; Eph. i. 6; Matt. xvii. 5; 2 Pet. i. 17; John xii. 28.

ENTERING ON THE KINGSHIP.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Heralded by John. Vss. 1-12. II. Consecrated in Baptism. Vss. 13-15. III. Acknowledged of God. Vss. 16, 17.

QUESTIONS.—Why did Joseph flee into Egypt? On his return from Egypt where did he settle? In what year was Jesus baptized? How old was he at that time? (Luke iii. 21-23.) What is the topic of this lesson? What the outline?

I. Vss. 1-12.—Give some account of John the Baptist. Why may he be called a herald? For whom did he fill this position? (John i. 31.) Where did John do his work? Who went out to hear him? What did he say? (Vs. 2.) What did the people hold John to be? (Matt. xxi. 26.) What did Jesus say of him? (Matt. xi. 9-11.) What must the King be whom such a man heralds?

II. Vss. 13-15.—By whose authority did John baptize? (John i. 33.) What confession was made by those he baptized? What confessor did Philip demand? Acts viii. 36, 37. Who were baptized on the day of Pentecost? (Acts ii. 41.) In what order has Jesus placed belief and baptism? (Mark xvi. 16.) Why did John refuse baptism to some? (Vss. 7, 8.) To whom should baptism now be refused? On what ground did Jesus demand it? Does this reason now hold for followers of Jesus? (Mark xvi. 15, 16; Acts ii. 37, 38).

III. Vss. 16, 17.—As Jesus went up out of the water what three events occurred? What did John then begin to say of Jesus? (John i. 29, 30, 35.) What did John then say of Jesus? What did men then confess Jesus to be? What should we confess him to be?

The time had come for Jesus to enter upon his ministry. (Compare Num. iv. 47 with Luke iii. 23.) The Scriptures demand (Isa. xl. 3; Malachi iii. 1; iv. 5) that he shall be heralded by a messenger to prepare the way. Jesus says (Matt. xi. 10) that John the Baptist was this messenger.

I. The Baptist (vss. 1-12.) For account of his birth, see Luke i.

II. The Baptism (vss. 13-15.) Jesus exalts baptism. 1. By commanding it. 2. By submitting to it. 3. By the pains he takes to receive it, walking a weary journey "to be baptized." He who baptized in the Holy Ghost is baptized "in water" (vs. 11), "in the Jordan." John's baptism was "unto repentance;" yet the sinless one there identifies himself with the sinners he came to save. He, too, confesses sins that are laid upon him.

III. The Opened Heavens (vss. 16, 17). Never before were the heavens so opened to man, for there had been no sinless and obedient men before. (Ezek. i. 1 is a vision.)

EXPLANATORY NOTES.—Verse 1.—In those days. John was but six months older than Jesus, and John's active ministry did not commence long before that of Jesus. In those days. Reference to a date supposed to be in the minds of such as would read this narrative. John the Baptist. So called, perhaps, partly to distinguish him from other Johns, but chiefly, no doubt, because baptizing or immersing was a great characteristic feature of his ministry. Preaching. Performing the work of a herald or forerunner, of one who goes in advance of the sovereign in a royal progress. Wilderness of Judaea. A rugged region, sparsely peopled, lying to the west of the Dead Sea.

Verse 2.—Repent. Change of mind. The main thought is amendment of character and life. The kingdom of heaven. Reign of God would give us as clear and true an idea of the meaning as we can get. John was to be a herald forerunning a king.

Verse 3.—John's language was appropriate, since John was the messenger spoken of by Isaiah xl. 3, 4 (compare Mal. iii. 1.) Christ's advent is, accordingly, conceived of here, chiefly as that of a king.

Verse 4.—And the same John. And he, John. Camel's hair. A coarse cloth made of this. 2 Kings i. 8. Locusts, Lev. xi. 22, a name of wide application embracing many varieties. "Locusts for food are ground and pounded, and then mixed with flour and water and made into cakes, or they are salted and then eaten; sometimes smoked, boiled or roasted, stewed or fried in butter." Wild honey was deposited in hollow trees and in rocky crevices. See Ps. lxxxii. 16.

Verses 5, 6.—A singular spectacle, that of whole populations going from a distance to the preacher, instead of waiting to have the preacher come to them. Pharisees. Self-righteous ritualists characterized by hypocrisy. Sadducees. A smaller but select class of conceited moralists, characterized by materialistic rationalism. Matt. xxii. 23-34; Matt. xxiii; Mark vii. 3-13; Luke xii. 1; xvi. 14, 15; xviii. 9-12; Acts xxiii. 8.

Verse 7.—Generation. Brood. What John said, however, would seem to have been spoken to the multitude in general. See Luke iii. 7. It is not entirely clear whether John baptized the men thus fiercely denounced. It hardly seems likely. Luke vii. 30. John i. 19-28.

Verses 8, 9.—Fruits meet for repentance. Act in accordance with your profession. Your descent from Abraham will not avail you. These stones, meaning, no doubt, the Gentiles.

Verses 10, 11, 12.—Thorough-going, radical work is now begun. Nothing will be spared that is not worthy to stand. The wrath to come has then for its immediate reference the impending destruction of Jerusalem. Good fruit, right conduct, this alone will answer the present demand. With water. Accurately, in water. I use water to baptize you in signification of the repentance to which you are called. But I am to be succeeded by one mightier than I, who will give you a different baptism from mine. His will be a baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire.

Verse 12.—The baptism of the Holy Spirit will be given to those who are chosen for salvation; the baptism of fire will be given to those who are condemned as evil. The interpretation of two baptisms, one to salvation, one to destruction, is in harmony with the whole passage.

Verse 13.—Then. Here Jesus emerges at about thirty years of age from the previous almost unbroken obscurity of his life at Nazareth. His coming was with intention to be baptized.

Verse 14.—John's language implied some sense in John of moral superiority on his part over those in general whom he baptized.

Verse 15.—The reply of Jesus did not deprecate John's homage. Fulfil all righteousness. Conform entirely to God's will.

Verses 16, 17.—Out of the water. After the emersion, Jesus went up the river bank, "away from the water."—Jesus instantly resumed his own independent course of conduct. He waited for nothing. He promptly, of his own motion, went up the bank to meet what he did actually meet, an extraordinary demonstration from above. The heavens were opened to him, and the Spirit of God descended and came upon him. To him. To him alone? No, for John the Baptist [John i. 32] testifies, "I saw the Spirit descending."

For the Teacher of the Primary Class.

Jesus was once a little child, but he grew till he became a man. All this time he lived quietly at home, obeying his parents, and none knew that he was a King.

Explain that a messenger used to be sent before a king to tell that he was coming, and to have things in order for him. King Jesus was now about to enter on his work, and a messenger was sent to prepare the hearts of the people. Picture this messenger, his strange dress his food, his manner of life, the crowd who flocked to hear him, above all impress the message he brought.

Let the warning call: "Repent," be sorry for your sins, and turn from them, ring out clearly, for your hearers need this call as well as John's. Speak of the baptism which was a sign of repentance, and explain carefully that the water does not wash sins away, but is the sign of such washing.

Then picture the coming of the King himself; not in state with soldiers, but humbly asking for baptism! Tell of what was done; what was seen; what was heard at that baptism.

Children may have the Holy Spirit come to them, by just asking. Then God will say to them also, "This is my beloved son." But he is only well pleased with those who obey him.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

Youths' Department.

The Snow.

Drift, drift, soft snow, Where wild winds blow O'er fields all brown and bare; And on the town Drop gently down A mantle white and fair.

Oh, clinging snow, The bleak winds blow The sobbing, shaking trees; Wrap close, and trim Each naked limb Bereft of bloom and leaves.

Pale snow, pure snow, Sift soft and slow Where roses buried lie; Over their bed, Oh, kindly spread Thy downy canopy!

But oh! soft snow, Drift smooth below My trees of evergreen; For underneath Their spicy breath My garden-plot is seen.

Oh, gentle snow, Lie soft, lie low Upon my garden-bed; For buried there Are flowers more rare Than roses damask red.

Wrap smooth and neat Thy pure white sheet Above my blossoms dead; And murmur low, Oh, drifting snow, Above their quiet bed!

S. M. WALSH.

When the night is dark and drear, Look up! Look up! One star may still be shining clear, Look up!

When sombre clouds o'erspread the sky, Look up! Look up! Dispersed they'll all be, by-and-by, Look up!

When misfortunes darkly lower, Look up! Look up! To Him who holds the reins of power, Look up!

When temptations thee beset, Look up! Look up! He'll take thy feet out of the net; Look up!

In every time of grief and pain, Look up! Look up! Grace shall be given to sustain; Look up!

Scripture Enigma.

No. 54.

- 1. Things brought by the priests of Jupiter, to do honor to Paul after he healed the cripple.
2. Who came to the door when Peter knocked, after his deliverance from prison.
3. A mount near Jerusalem.
4. The place where the young man sat while Paul preached.
5. A town visited by Paul.
6. A town through which Paul passed on his way to Philippi.
7. The people to whom Paul was sent.
8. A city to which Paul went in chains.
9. An eloquent man, who was mighty in the Scriptures.
10. The sign of the ship in which Paul sailed from Mileta.
11. A tempestuous wind-storm which overtook Paul on his way to Rome.

These words placed in order and the initials read downwards shew a valuable Christian injunction.

CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- No. 25. When Adam introduced himself to Eve what remarkable sentence may he have used, which is formed from four M's, five A's,—two D's and an I, and reads nearly alike backwards or forwards?
26. What was the name given to the two men crucified at the same time as our Lord.

Answer to Enigma.

No. 53.

- 1. L ystra.....Acts xvi. 1, 8.
2. O phrah.....Judges vi. 11.
3. V eniah.....Ezra x. 36.
4. E zri.....1 Chron. xxvii. 26.
5. O reb.....Judges vii. 25.
6. N oah.....Gen. ix. 20.
7. E liezer.....1 Chron. xxiii. 15.
8. A mminadab.....Exodus vi. 23.
9. N ebajoth.....Gen. xxv. 13.
10. O no.....1 Chron. xviii. 12.
11. T ou.....1 Chron. xviii. 9, 10.
12. H erod.....Matt. xiv. 3, 4.
13. E lul.....Neh. vi. 15.
14. R amoth.....Josh. xx. 8.
"LOVE ONE ANOTHER." John xv. 12.

ANSWERS TO CURIOS QUESTIONS.

- No. 23. The word Shibboleth was given to test the children of Ephraim by the Gileadites. All who pronounced it Sibboleth were put to death. By this trial 40,000 men were slain. Judges xii. 1-6.
24. James. Acts xii.

Select Serial.

Florence Walton, OR, A Question of Duty.

BY MAY F. MCKEAN.

CHAPTER I.—FLORENCE AND ETHEL.

"Really, Florence, what a serious matter you do make of such a trifle! Indeed, I think you exceed any one I ever knew in making 'mountains out of molehills.'"

"You are quite mistaken, Ethel. I do not make it a serious matter; it already is such. I could not, and would not if I could, make anything so important as marriage either more serious or more trifling than it really is, but we must do justice to it as we find it."

"How very positively you speak! But I am not engaged to Clifford Walraven; so you see you are, after all, making a 'mountain out of a molehill.'"

"But you encourage his attentions?" "Oh, well, I am polite to him of course, and, being our next neighbor, I am frequently thrown into his society. But then everybody likes Clifford; and oh, Florence, it is such fun to see the girls; they are all so jealous of the attentions he pays me!"

"Then you encourage them?" "Certainly; why not? A girl must have some fun."

"And you do not intend to marry him?"

Ethel colored violently under the clear gaze bent upon her, but answered with dignity, "Cousin Florence, I thought I told you that Mr. Walraven had not asked me to marry him. I am not prepared to state at present what my exact answer would be in case he should do so; time enough to think of that when he does."

"No, it is not," replied Cousin Florence very decidedly. "Unless you feel in your heart that your answer would

conscientiously be 'Yes,' you have no right to encourage the attentions of a man who shows in his every action that he loves you."

"You have met Clifford, then?" "No, but I have heard of him."

"Suppose now, Florence, that I should take your advice, and think over the answer to this imaginary question? I might write it out and learn it by heart, that I might not blunder through it, so that I might answer it very gracefully, you know; then suppose the question should never come, there would be all that time and trouble for nothing. I always imagined you to be a very economical young lady," replied Ethel, trying to laugh.

"Please do be serious now. You are trifling with a human heart. You are raising hopes and expectations that can never be realized."

"And why may they not, pray?" "Clifford Walraven is not a Christian." "No, but then—" Ethel stopped in confusion.

"What do you think Paul meant when he said, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers?'" Florence asked slowly, but very earnestly.

"I don't imagine he referred particularly to marriage," was answered absently, while the fair fingers ruthlessly tore a delicate flower to pieces.

"Well, suppose, he did not refer primarily to marriage, yet can you separate the idea from it? If we are to 'come out and be separate' from unbelievers, if we are to shun them as companions for a day, how much more as companions for a lifetime! No, dear cousin, there is danger lurking in it. If we would serve God truly, we must not place ourselves in positions where we cannot fail to be tempted sometimes from the right way; at least, you should not unless you are sure you can withstand all temptations—that your influence for good will be greater than his for evil."

"Arguing from false premises again," returned Ethel, a little impatiently; "but suppose they were true, what do you think of that other verse of Paul: 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband?'"

"Yes, but you are not the wife of an 'unbelieving husband,'" said Florence. "Which does not say I never will be," interposed her cousin with a little laugh. "Oh, Ethel, how can that ever be, with the command plainly before your eyes?"

"Why do you suppose Paul wrote that other verse—the one I just quoted—if he did not expect the command to be broken?" Ethel asked, looking up into the earnest face of her cousin with an expression which seemed to say she considered this question wholly unanswerable.

"I don't think that verse refers to your case at all; but, since we are quoting Paul, let us take another verse: 'The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.'"

"Look how many, many really good men and women—the first members of our churches—have married unbelievers," urged Ethel a little uneasily. "But even that does not make it right," urged Florence, as determined as ever.

"Well, I don't want to quarrel with you on the first day of your stay with us. But what a little enthusiast you are, anyway! Though I cannot blame you, for when I was your age and had just joined the church I held some very puritanic views myself. I've outgrown them, though, and you will too by the time you've lived in Westtown two years. We shall see quite a change in you then, I think;" and the young girl laughed a little low silvery laugh, with more of mirth than of mirth in it.

Florence's remark was very earnest. "I hope so," she said. How odd it sounded, coming from one who had so recently expressed her views in such decided terms! At least, it struck Ethel as sounding so very odd that she glanced hastily and inquiringly in her cousin's face, and "What do you mean?" escaped her lips unconsciously.

"I mean," replied Florence, very quietly, "that I do not consider that any Christian has a right to stand still. He must go forward; he must run with patience the race set before him; he