

The Sunday-School

FIRST QUARTER,
LESSON II.—Jan. 8.

THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS.

JOHN 1: 19-34.

Commit Vs. 26, 27. Read John 3: 22-36; Mal. 3: 1-3; 4: 5, 6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.—John 1: 29.

HISTORICAL SETTING.—Time.—John the Baptist began to preach in the summer of A. D. 26.

He had been preaching about six months when Jesus came to him to be baptized, and was pointed out by the Baptist the Messiah about January, A. D. 27. The deputation of the Pharisees was six or seven weeks later, in February.

Place.—John preached chiefly in the Wilderness of Judea, a thinly inhabited region west of the lower Jordan and the Dead Sea. Jesus came to him and was pointed out to the people at Bethabara (ford-house or boat-house), beyond Jordan, fourteen miles south of the sea of Galilee, called "Bethany," in the R. V.

Intervening History.—The childhood and youth of Jesus, thirty years; his baptism by John; the temptation.

Jesus.—Thirty years old, just entering upon his ministry.

John the Baptist.—Thirty and one-half years old, having preached six or eight months in the wilderness.

Rulers.—Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of Rome, 15th year from his association with Augustus (Luke 3: 1), but 13th as sole emperor. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea (2nd year). Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee (31st year).

CONNECTION.—In our last lesson we studied the announcement of the coming of the Redeemer. Passing over the birth and childhood of Jesus, the hidden years at Nazareth, the birth and hidden years of John in the wilderness, we enter upon the beginning of Jesus' ministry as the Messiah.

JOHN THE BAPTIST was born six months before Jesus. His parents were Zacharias and Elizabeth, both of priestly descent. John was a relative of Jesus (Luke 1: 36). For thirty years he led a retired life in the wilds of his native land. Doubtless, during these years, he had been in communion with God. Then the Word came upon him and suddenly he appeared "a burning and shining light among the children of Judea." His appearance was like that of the great prophet Elijah. He was clothed in the coarse cloth called "sackcloth," made from the long hair of the camel. This mantle was girdled around him with a girdle of unspun hide. His food consisted of locusts, resembling our grasshoppers, and of wild honey, found in the hollows of old trees or in rocks in Palestine.

His work was to bear witness to Christ, and prepare the way for his mission of redemption. For six months before Jesus began his public ministry and for more than a year contemporary with him, he bore his witness with heroic faithfulness. Then for a year more he bore witness as a prisoner in Herod's castle, and then joined the glorious army of the martyrs.

A hero of the ages. John's life from beginning to end was heroic. His will-

ingness to seem a failure in order to do his work was heroic. Seeming failure is often the greatest success. "A world without failure would be a world without agony, and a world without agony would be a world without hero, saint, or martyr."

Centuries before, the prophets had foretold the Christ, the Redeemer. But two prophets foretold a sign which would bear witness to his coming. Isaiah (40: 3) pictured the work of one who should immediately precede the Messiah, preparing the way before him. And Malachi showed the forerunner coming in the spirit and power of Elijah. John the Baptist did the very things the forerunner was expected to do, and thus bore witness that the promised Messiah was at hand.

THE WITNESS OF JOHN'S PREACHING.

—John's preaching awakened a consciousness of guilt, danger and need. He denounced the sin of men to their faces. He told Herod that he was a criminal, the Pharisees that they were a brood of vipers; he bade the soldiers cease from violence, and the publicans from dishonesty. And just so far as John made them feel their needs, he made effective his witness to the Saviour who could meet their needs.

THE WITNESS TO THE DELEGATION FROM JERUSALEM.—Vs. 19-24.

This is the record (the witness) of John on three successive days. John's appearance and preaching had aroused even the rulers to inquire what it meant. The Jews. Probably the Sanhedrim, as the source of authority, sent priests and Levites, who represented the religious and national hopes, and had expectations of the Messiah. To ask him, Who art thou? Not his name, but whom do you claim to be? He confessed, and denied not. "He was not the Light, but was sent to bear witness of the Light." The Christ. The Anointed one. Art thou Elias? Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah. I am not. Art thou that (the) prophet? The well-known prophet of Deut. 18: 15, whom some thought would be a second Moses, others a second Elijah, others the Messiah. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He was the fulfilment of a prophecy known to them. Make straight the way of the Lord. He prepared the way for Christ, as in the Orient there was anciently a straightening and repairing of the roads when the king was to travel over them.

THE WITNESS OF JOHN'S BAPTISM.—

Vs. 25-28, 31. Why baptisest thou then? If John was not the Messiah, what right had he to call men to repentance, and ask the Jews to join the kingdom of God by a rite used for proselytes?

John's answer: I baptise with water. The sign and symbol of purification. But there standeth one among you. He had been standing on these banks, the one of whom I testified who coming after me is preferred before me, and who is so much greater than I that his shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. As much as a prince was greater than his slave, so much greater was Jesus than John. In Bethabara. Both revisions read "Bethany" (boat-house). Not the Bethany of the Mount of Olives, for it was beyond the Jordan, but a ford on the Jordan, fourteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

WITNESS OF JOHN POINTING OUT JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLES.—Vs. 29-34. Behold

the Lamb of God. John and his hearers were familiar with the representation in Isaiah (53: 7) of the coming one "as a lamb led to the slaughter." Which taketh away the sin of the world. To bear away sin is to remove the guilt and punishment of sin by expiation. Jesus provides redemption enough for all the world. This is he of whom I said. See last lesson. And I knew him not. I, like you, did not at first know him to be the Messiah. But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with (in) water. While John did not know Jesus as the Messiah, until the hour of his baptism, he did not know that his own work was ordained for the purpose of manifesting the Messiah to Israel. And John bare record. Witness. I saw. Forty-two or more days before, when he baptized Jesus. The story is founded in Matt. 3: 16, 17; Mark 1: 9-11. The Spirit descending from heaven. Upon Jesus as soon as he had come upon the bank of the river after his baptism. Like a dove. The Holy Spirit descended, not only in the manner of a dove, but in bodily shape. And it abode upon him. Pointing him out. And I knew him not. Did not recognize fully till this promised sign was given. He that sent me. He was sent by God. The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, this is the Son of God. God's own peculiar only-begotten Son.

THE HEART OF THE LESSON.

We need the witness that Jesus is the Saviour, for the sake of our own religious life and growth.

Facts are the irrefutable evidence of Christianity. The religion of Jesus is not a mere theory; it is provided abundantly by facts. The lives that have been made better, the fact that it does change for good all those who receive it into their hearts, that wherever it enters a community or a nation it elevates them,—these are facts that should convince men.

We should be witnesses to Christ and his gospel. What Jesus has actually done for us is our witness to him.

Consumption is Scourging Canada.

Year by Year the White Plague steadily gains headway, and why? Because careless people let their colds run into catarrh, which in turn becomes consumption. Victims of catarrh needn't be discouraged, for fragrant healing Catarrhazone permanently cures every type of catarrh. The soothing vapor of Catarrhazone immediately kills the germs that cause catarrh and prevents them from again entering your system. Relief will be quick, cure will be certain, absolute freedom from any trace of catarrh follows the use of Catarrhazone. It is a scientific remedy warranted to cure lung trouble, bronchitis, and catarrh. Cure guaranteed with two months' treatment. Price \$1.00; sample size 25c.

Let us do our duty in our shop or our kitchen, the market, the street, the office, the school, the home, just as faithfully as if we stood in the front rank of some great battle, and we knew that victory for mankind depended upon our bravery, strength and skill. When we do that, the humblest of us will be serving in that great army which achieves the welfare of the world.—Theodore Parker.

Pain Is a Punishment.—Pain is a protest of nature against neglect of the bodily health, against carelessness regarding the physical condition. It steals in at the first opportunity and takes up its abode in a man, and it is sometimes difficult to eject it. Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil will drive it out in short order. Pain cannot stay where it is used, but immediately flees away.

Ayer's

You can hardly find a home without its Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. Parents know what it does for children: breaks

Cherry Pectoral

Up a cold in a single night, wards off bronchitis, prevents pneumonia. Physicians advise parents to keep it on hand.

"The best cough medicine money can buy is Ayer's Cherry Pectoral. For the coughs of children nothing could be better."
JACOB SHULL, Saratoga, Ind.

25c., 50c., \$1.00. All drug stores. J. C. AYER CO., Lowell, Mass.

for Throat, Lungs

Ayer's Pills greatly aid the Cherry Pectoral in breaking up a cold.

To be a Christian is stout performance as well as holy exercise; it is belonging to the front rank of society, but marching with the rear rank, and helping to carry the knapsack of those that are tired. Loyalty to Christ means carrying forward in our century the work he began in his; not only keeping up with the rush of the times and the push of necessity ourselves, but helping to keep in trim and in step some poor stragglers that have fallen out, and have no heart and sound legs to keep up with.—Chas. H. Parkhurst, D. D.

They Are a Powerful Nervine.—Dyspepsia causes derangement of the nervous system, and nervous debility once engendered is difficult to deal with. There are many testimonials as to the efficacy of Parnee's Vegetable Pills in treating this disorder, showing that they never fail to produce good results. By giving proper tone to the digestive organs, they restore equilibrium to the nerve centres.

Annihilate not the mercies of God by the oblivion of ingratitude. Let thy diaries stand thick with dutiful mementoes and asterisks of acknowledgement.—Sir Thomas Browns.

Tis a Marvellous Thing.—When the cures affected by Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil are considered, the speedy and permanent relief it has brought to the suffering wherever it has been used, it must be regarded as a marvellous thing that so potent a medicine should result from the six simple ingredients which enter into its composition. A trial will convince the most skeptical of its healing virtues.

The TOILET IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT POND'S EXTRACT

RELIEVES CHAFING, ITCHING OR IRRITATION. COOLS, COMFORTS AND HEALS THE SKIN, AFTER SHAVING.

Avoid dangerous, irritating Witch Hazel preparations represented to be "the same as" Pond's Extract, which easily sours and often contain "wood alcohol," a deadly poison.