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Sunbury, deceased, are requested to hand  
in their accounts duly attested, to me  
within three months from date. All  
persons indebted to the said estate are  
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me.

JOHN HAYWARD  
Administrator  
Lincoln Sun. Co. Nov. 24th 1889.

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## The Sabbath-School.

### INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter-Lesson I.—January 5.

THE FORERUNNER ANNOUNCED.—Luke 1: 5-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.—Mal. 3: 1.

#### EXPLANATORY.

THE PARENTS OF JOHN.—Ver. 5. There was in the days of Herod. This was Herod the Great, the founder of the Herodian family and the father of most of the Herods mentioned in the New Testament after the infancy of Jesus. An active, brave man, he was made governor of Galilee at the early age of 25, and distinguished himself by his campaign against the brigands who infested the mountains. But he was a monster of selfishness and cruelty, murdering many of his own family. He rebuilt the temple in great magnificence in Jerusalem, which is consequently known in history as Herod's Temple, to distinguish it from Solomon's Temple. He died of a terrible disease, in Jericho, April, B. C. 4, at the age of 69, after a long reign of 37 years. King of Judea. Herod was the first foreigner who reigned over Judea. He was not an independent king but was subject to the Roman Empire. A certain priest named Zacharias. Nothing is known of him beyond what is recorded here. Of the course of Abia. Greek for Abijah. The priesthood were divided under David into 24 courses or classes, which took turns in administering the services of the temple. The heads of these courses were the "chief priests." Each course ministered for one week. And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and therefore in the line of the priesthood. The priests could marry outside of their rank and tribe if they wished. But both John's parents were of priestly rank, and therefore among the nobility of the Jews so far as they had any.

THEIR CHARACTER.—Ver. 6. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances. They obeyed all God's laws to the best of their ability; they were both moral and religious. Blameless. Not entirely free from sin, but leading a holy life, struggling against sin and making attainments in holiness.

THE DESIRE OF THEIR HEARTS.—Ver. 7. And they had no child. This seems to have been the one great trouble of their lives. (1) To have no children was a trial deeply felt in Israel; barrenness was regarded by the Jews as a mark of Divine displeasure. (2) Because it cut off all hope of the birth of the Messiah in that family. (3) It is a great misfortune in itself. And they both were now well stricken in years. It is not known how old they were.

THE HOUR OF PRAYER.—Ver. 8-10. While he executed the priest's office. The offering the daily sacrifice, burning incense, and all the ceremonies pertaining to the temple. Before God. In God's presence as manifested in the temple. In the order of his course. In his turn to perform the ceremonies. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was. The work of each priest in each course was determined by lot: who should kill the sacrifice, who sprinkle the blood, who burn the incense, etc. This lot was cast every week. His lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. The golden altar of incense stood within the temple proper, in the Holy Place, before the veil that separated it from the Holy of Holies. The other sacrifices were offered on the great altar in the court of the priests, in front of the temple building. The offering of the incense, permitting the offerer to enter the sacred and awful place, was a great and rare privilege. The priest entered in white robes with unsandaled feet, with two attendants, who retired when they had made everything ready. The people waited outside in the Court of Israel, praying in deep silence till the priest who was sacrificing the evening lamb at the great altar of Burnt Offering in the court gave a signal to his colleague in the shrine. He then threw the incense on the fire of the golden altar, and its fragrant smoke rose with the prayers of the people. The incense was a peculiar and sacred compound of fragrant spices (Ex. 30: 34-38), and was a symbol of prayer. And the whole multitude of people were praying without; i. e., outside of the sanctuary or temple proper, where Zacharias alone was offering the incense.

Zacharias' Prayer. While Zacharias was offering the incense, his own pious heart must have been glowing with silent prayer for the

people. His own personal desires would be almost lost in his desire for the salvation of his people. But the answer to his own desires was enfolded within the answer for them. It would be his child who should lead multitudes to their God. The best blessings come to us when our personal desires are absorbed in the salvation of men.

AN ANGEL BRINGS THE ANSWER.—Vers. 11-14. The answer comes (1) while Zacharias was attending to his duties, (2) while engaged in prayer. There appeared unto him an angel. There was not a vision, but an actual appearance of an angel. This is the first message of God recorded in the Bible for 400 years, since the time of Malachi. Standing on the right side of the altar.

Indicative of favor and blessing. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled. Agitated, disturbed. And fear fell upon him. Not so much alarm or dread of danger, as holy awe. We are often afraid of God's messengers which come to bring his choicest blessings. Fear not, Zacharias. Let fear be changed to rejoicing and love. Thy prayer is heard. He had prayed for two things,—that he might have a son, and that the promised kingdom of God might come. God answered both prayers in one. And thou shalt call his name John "the gracious gift of Jehovah." The name was to express God's work and message to the people through him. Joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. The joy of the parents was not selfish joy, for their son would bring rejoicing to many souls all down the ages.

Delayed Answers to Prayer. That an answer is delayed is no sign that the prayer is unheard. God bestows his answers at the best time, when they will do the most good. But, during the long delay, we are being prepared for the answers, and the answers are being prepared for us. Sometimes we are not at the time of the prayer prepared to receive the gift we ask for. On the other hand, often the blessings themselves are not ripened into their best condition, and to give them prematurely would be like giving unripe fruit to a child.

Answers beyond Expectation. The answer to Zacharias' prayer was beyond his highest expectation. So God loves to give to his people. Almost every blessing God gives us contains other blessings which the eye of the asker had not seen, nor had entered his heart to conceive.

THE FORERUNNER OF THE MESSIAH.—Vers. 15-17. For: giving the reason for the rejoicing foretold in ver. 14. He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. This greatness is evidently that which results from personal holiness and the moral authority accompanying it. John's greatness was not temporal, but spiritual; not of outward authority and splendor, but greatness of character, of unselfish work, greatness as measured by heavenly standards. He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; i. e., he would be a Nazarite (Num. 6: 1-5), an example of holiness, of consecration, of self-control. The Nazarites were eminent in abstinence. They abstained from what was innocent, in order to influence the world to abstain from what was guilty. Paul gives a rule for Christian Nazaritism in 1 Cor. 8: 13. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. Illuminated, sanctified, and guided by his influence. No one is fitted for God's work without the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Only through him can come the light, strength, wisdom, character, guidance necessary for God's work. And many... shall he turn, bring back, convert, to the Lord their God, where they rightly belong. John would lead men back to God, to his worship, to love of him, to trust in him, to a character like his, to abiding in his presence and his spirit. And he shall go before him. The coming of the Messiah was the coming of the Lord. In the spirit and power of Elias. From the last words of Malachi (4: 4-6; 3: 1), the Jews universally believed (as they do to this day) that Elijah would visibly return to earth as a herald of the Messiah. It required the explanation of our Lord to open the eyes of the Apostles on this subject (Matt. 21: 14, 17: 10-13). He came in the "spirit and power of Elias," as a great religious and moral reformer, a stern rebuker of vice. To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. (1) Either literally, to produce domestic concord, the disruption of families being one of the most common signs of the decay of religion in the community, and the beginning of moral chaos; or (2) figuratively, to turn the hearts of the fathers the Israelites, to the Gentiles, the children, apostate, prodigal, outcast, but still children. And the disobedient to (rather into) the wisdom of the just. The mean-

ing is, he shall bring the Gentiles to accept the wisdom of righteousness. To make ready for the Lord (Rev. Ver.) a people. By his denunciation of sin, by showing the dreadful nature and the awful consequences of sin, he awakened the conscience of the people, and made them feel their need of a Saviour. A people prepared for the Lord. That the few who would receive the Messiah might be made ready, it was necessary that John the Baptist should preach repentance, and thus create a sense of spiritual need. It was only those who became "poor in spirit" that would be "prepared" for the coming of "the kingdom of heaven."

#### PRACTICAL HINTS.

Heartfelt obedience to every known command is the gateway to higher experiences and blessings.

It is right to pray for temporal blessings, but the desire for them should be absorbed in the desire for spiritual blessings.

There are peculiar blessings and power in united prayer (Matt. 18: 19, 20).

The best gifts come in answer to prayer; and often in God's house of prayer, we have visions of joy, hope and peace. It was while Jesus was praying that he was transfigured.

God answers our prayers for our selves, while we are praying for others.

The answers to our prayers are never denied, but are often delayed till the best time comes for them to be given.

God's answers are larger and better than our hopes and prayers.

True greatness is divine greatness,—greatness of love, of character, of power used for the good of others.

Christianity has special care and nurture for the children. It brings parents and children near together, making them mutual helps and blessings.

#### MUSICAL INSECTS.

The Notes Produced by the House-Fly, the Bee and the Mosquito.

Poets have frequently alluded to the "busy hum of insect life," and its harmonious murmur adds a dreamy charm to summer's golden days. Naturalists have afforded us much interesting information as to the means whereby these tiny morsels of creation produce distinctive sounds, and musicians have succeeded in transferring to paper the actual notes to which they give utterance. The song of birds has been often utilized by musicians, even Beethoven having so far pandered to a taste for realism as to simulate (and that in masterly fashion) the utterances of the quail, cuckoo and nightingale in his Pastoral Symphony. Mendelssohn, too, has idealized insect life in his "Midsummer Night's Dream" music. From researches recently made it has been discovered that the cricket's chant consists of a perpetually-recurring series of triplets in B natural, whereas the "death watch" a series of B flats in duple rhythm extending over one measure and an eighth. The female indulges in precisely the same musical outbursts one minor third lower. The whirr of the locust is produced by the action of muscles set in motion by the insect when drawing air into its breathing holes, and which contract and relax alternately a pair of drums formed of convex pieces of parchment-like skin lodged in cavities of the body. The male grasshopper is an "animated fiddle." Its long and narrow wings placed obliquely meet at the upper edges and form a roof-like covering. On each side of the body is a deep incision covered with a thin piece of tightly drawn skin, the two forming natural "sounding boards." When the insect desires to exercise its musical functions, it bends the shank of one hind leg behind the thigh, and then draws the leg backward and forward across the edges and veins of the wing cover. The sound produced by the common house-fly is produced by the motion of its wings, the vibrations of which amount, incredible as it may appear, to nearly twenty thousand in the minute. The actual note heard is F. The honey bee, with half the number of vibrations, causes by similar means a sound one octave lower, and the ponderous flight of the May bug originates a note an octave lower than the bee. It is interesting to add that the popular mosquito is responsible for the production of A-natural when wooing her victim in the otherwise silent watches of the summer night.—Boston Musical Herald.

#### DON'T KISS BABY.

It Isn't Your Duty and You Really Should Not Do It.

There isn't a bachelor living that will not be pleased when he reads this, a young mother's contribution to the Philadelphia Press: "A Western paper once suggested that an appropriate placard to hang around baby's neck might read: 'Please don't kiss this baby,' and since my own little one suffered a winter's siege with whooping cough contracted through a careless kiss, I have been disposed to advance the idea or its equivalent. There seems to be a general notion that babies, and in fact all small children, are public property, to be kissed at will by friends or strangers, and while some affectionate natures may respond willingly, there are many others who would much prefer being let alone in this respect. "I know it is the case with my two little girls, one of whom possesses an exceedingly loving disposition; but outside of the immediate family she will not suffer her lips to be touched, though she will allow a kiss upon cheek or forehead from favorite friends. Her more reticent sister showed also a strong aversion to being kissed, and if forced to submit did so with such a bad grace that I was obliged to take matters into my own hands and beg visitors to excuse her. She would shake hands quite readily, and though I am called 'cranky' I still think my plan a good one, and that indiscriminate kissing can scarcely be too strongly condemned. A foul breath is as repugnant to a child as to a grown person; sore throats are often contagious, and many diseases are contracted by contact with the lips."

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