

The Fourfold Gospel

**Parts I, II, III: Introductions
to the First Passover**

Workbook Based on *The Fourfold Gospel*

By: J.W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton

Electronic Edition

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Introduction

This lesson workbook is based on an electronic edition of *The Fourfold Gospel* by Ernie Stefanik. I have corrected some errors that existed in the electronic edition mostly consisting of punctuation and spelling errors as well as minor omissions.

Each lesson is divided into three sections. In this Bible Class edition, I have taken the commentary and extracted the Biblical text and placed it in a separate section labeled "Bible Text Only" allowing easier reading of the Bible text. Below the Bible text, there is a section labeled "Bible Text and Commentary" which contains the original work set forth in *The Fourfold Gospel*. Lastly, there are some study questions appropriate for individual study or class discussion.

Allan McNabb

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INTRODUCTION

We feel in placing this work before the public we should accompany it with some words of explanation. It is unique, presenting a combination of features never before collected in one work. Harmonies and Fourfold Gospels are plentiful, and we have examined a large number of them, beginning with the pioneer work of Tatian. We have sought to utilize all the good features employed by others, and to introduce several new and helpful inventions of our own.

PRESERVING THE TEXT.

Believing fully and firmly that the Scriptures are the word of God, we have sought to preserve all that is contained in them, and have, in combining them, regarded it as wrong to take liberties with them. To carry out this reverential idea we have introduced the variant readings of each Gospel, enclosing them in braces, so that they will not confuse the reader. By doing this we have, according to our count, except in the cases of a few redundant pronouns, only omitted five words of the text, which, if we remember correctly, are three "ands," and "but" and one "with." To accomplish this almost absolute conservation of the word of the text without involving the reader in hopeless confusion, has been no easy task, especially in cases where all four Gospels are combined in a single section.

TO DISTINGUISH THE GOSPELS.

Then, to enable the reader to discriminate as he reads, we have indicated the particular Gospel from which our word or words are taken, by the several superior letters; namely: a, b, c, and d, which stand respectively for the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We have followed the punctuation of each Gospel as we have used its words, also giving the punctuation mark which followed the last word taken.

COMBINATION ILLUSTRATED.

To illustrate our method of combination, let us take Section 36, which is a fitting together of the following passages, namely:

9 And as Jesus passed by from thence, he saw a man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.--Matt. ix. 9.

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.--Mark ii. 13, 14.

27 And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow me. 28 And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him.--Luke v. 27, 28.

Which three passages are combined as follows:

°27 And after these things he went forth, ^bagain by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14 And as he ^aJesus passed by from thence, he saw ^cand

beheld ^aa man, ^ca publican, named {^acalled} Matthew, ^cLevi, ^bthe son of Alphaeus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith {^csaid} unto him, Follow me. 28 And he forsook all, ^band he arose {^crose up} and followed him.

Now, in this passage we have retained the redundant pronoun "he" in the phrase he Jesus. Where Luke has the phrase **named Matthew**, Matthew has the variant reading **called Matthew**. Where Mark says **saith**, Luke gives the variant **said**, and where Mark says **arose**, Luke says **rose up**. By variant reading we mean one which can not be combined with the other texts so that the combined text will read smoothly.

LESSER AND FULLER FORMS.

Moreover, we have endeavored to use the fullest form, including the words of those Gospels which have the lesser forms of sentences, except where the sentence ends in a period, in which case have given the least form, so that the larger form of the other Gospels might be made apparent; as, for instance, this sentence, taken from Matt. xii. 47; Mark iii. 32; Luke viii. 20: **20 And it was told him, ^aBehold, thy mother and thy brethren ^bseek for thee. ^cstand without desiring to see thee. ^aseeking to speak to thee.** Here Mark has the short form, Luke a longer form, and Matthew a trifle the longest form; all of which is indicated by the order in which each part is placed, and the several periods which close the thought of each evangelist.

But in compiling the work we have bound ourselves by no inflexible rule; for to do so would, in many instances, make the reading very complex, whereas our first study has been to make the work simple, and to avoid confusing the mind of the reader

SECTIONS AND SUBDIVISIONS.

We have divided the work into sections for analytical purposes, and in order to aid in the work of indexing and giving cross references. We have arranged the sections in what we believe to be the best chronological order, but have not attempted to justify our chronology, because space would not permit. We have also given the time and place of each section, where these things could be ascertained with any degree of accuracy. In this matter, however, we are liable to disappoint many of our readers, because we have been conservative. The dates and places given in similar works are too often more arbitrary assumptions: there being so little ground of reason back of them that they do not even justify one in calling them speculative. Unless we have had some reason for fixing a date or assigning a locality, we have refrained from doing either, though we have found them freely and positively asserted in such places in similar works.

FOUR POINTS OF ECONOMY.

By the use of pronounced black letter type we enable to reader to follow the Scripture text, omitting the comments if he chooses. But by thus combining the four Gospels and interjecting the comment into the text, we have produced the most labor-saving, time-saving, condensed commentary ever placed before the people. Those familiar with commentaries can best realize what this means. Incidents told in one

Gospel are repeated in other Gospels, and when a commentator has given his annotations on Matthew, and comes to the same facts recorded in Mark, or Luke, or John, he wastes his space by printing the duplicate text, and he wastes his reader's time by referring him to his comments in the volume on Matthew by combining the Gospels for commentary purposes we have saved this space and time.

Again, in most commentaries a fifth or sixth of the space is taken up in drawing distinctions between the texts of the four Gospels, while in this work these distinctions are placed before the reader's eye, where he can see them for himself at a glance. Moreover, in other commentaries, which give the text, another sixth or seventh of the work is taken up in reprinting in the notes that portion of the text concerning which the commentator wishes to speak. Our interjected method avoids all this needless repetition, and makes it possible for us to present the comment with the least preliminary verbiage or introductory setting. Time is also saved because the reader does not have to look back and forth from the text at the top of the comment at the bottom of the page. Again, other commentaries lose a large amount of space by using the King James text. Those which preceded the revision waste space correcting the translation and modernizing its English: those published since the revision suffer a similar waste by drawing endless comparisons between the two texts. By choosing the American revision as the basis for our work, we have a text which needs but little explanation or apology, and we are thereby enabled to employ the reader's time and strength to his best advantage.

CARE IN PREPARING THIS WORK.

In preparing this work there has been no sparing of time, labor, or expense. While we have carefully avoided all conceits, quibblings, and useless refinements, and have studied to present only that which was useful, helpful, and practical, we have endeavored to put into the work the results of careful investigation and studious research. Besides theological treatises and works of reference, a full line of commentaries has been used. In some few cases, where the sections have been simple, from thirty to fifty commentaries have been consulted; but in the vast majority of sections between eighty and one hundred commentaries have been searched and sifted. To these painstaking labors of the junior editor, there has been added the results of the wider researches of the senior editor, effected during a half century of continuous Bible study and teaching. We have not aimed to produce a commentary for the textual critic, the theologian, or the professor; but a plain and simple work for all reader's of God's word.

AN OBJECT IN VIEW.

Moreover, having in view the preparation of a new series of Sunday-school lessons, we have prepared this work as a basis of such series. As the present International Series handles mere scraps of the Bible, it is practicable to print the text in quarterlies; but with a series which deals with the whole Bible, larger portions must be assigned for the lessons, and such printing of the text in the quarterlies becomes impossible. In such a series the pupil must be referred to the Bible itself, and in order that he may have a Bible with comments, we have prepared the present work, intending to follow it with similar volumes until the entire Bible is given to the public in this annotated form, if God permit.

**ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC EDITION (Ernie Stefanik)
OF THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL.**

The electronic edition has been transcribed from a copy of the *The Fourfold Gospel* by J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Company, 1914).

I have attempted to transmit the printed text as accurately and faithfully as possible. There has been no concern for normalizing the spelling, capitalization, and abbreviations. I have let stand, for instance, the authors' use of variants such as "offense" and "offence"; *i. e.* and "that is"; "viz." and "namely"; "comp." and "compare"; "synoptists" and "Synoptists." Pagination has been represented by enclosing the page number within brackets following the last complete word on the page of the printed text.

I have offered corrections in some 173 places. These emendations are for (1) Scripture reference errors (e. g., Num. xxxii. for Num. xxx. 2; John iii. 9, 10 for III. John 9, 10); (2) missing element of paired punctuation (parentheses, brackets, and quotation marks); spelling when the word affects meaning (e. g. "beside" and "besides"); non-standard English ("an rule" rather than "a rule") typesetting or printing errors (e.g., "drachm" for "drachma"; "on thees ey" for "on the eyes"). These emendations are detailed in the critical apparatus.

This electronic edition of Philip Y. Pendleton's and J. W. McGarvey's *The Fourfold Gospel* is in the public domain and may be distributed freely and used for personal, non-commercial, or commercial purposes. Although no permission is required for use of this work, the editor does appreciate hearing about how it is being used to promote Bible study and to honor our Soon-Coming King. The commentary was first published online with Dr. Hans Rollmann's Restoration Movement Texts at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Addenda and corrigenda are earnestly solicited.

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The Fourfold Gospel

P A R T F I R S T.

THE PERIOD OF CHRIST'S LIFE PRIOR TO HIS MINISTRY.

I.

LUKE'S PREFACE AND DEDICATION.

°LUKE I. 1-4.*

Bible Text:

°1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, 2 even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, 3 it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.

Bible Text with Commentary:

°1 Forasmuch as many [of whom we know nothing and have even no tradition] **have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled** [completed, or accomplished according to the divine will] **among us, 2 even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses** [the apostles were necessarily such and there were some few others--Acts i. 21-23] **and ministers of the word** [the apostles were ministers, and not ecclesiastical dignitaries], **3 it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first** [and being therefore thoroughly fitted to write the gospel], **to write unto thee in order** [not in chronological, but in topical order], **most excellent Theophilus** [Luke also dedicated the Book of Acts to this man. Nothing is known of Theophilus, but he is supposed to have been a Greek of high official rank]; **4 that thou mightest know the certainty** [might have a fixed written record, and not trust to a floating, variable tradition or a treacherous memory] **concerning the things** [the gospel facts] **wherein thou wast instructed.**

*NOTE.--The four Gospels are respectively represented in this volume by the superior letters a, b, c, and d; and variations in the readings of the four Gospels are inserted in braces, thus: { }.

Study Questions:

1. Who were Luke and Theophilus?
2. What was Luke's objective in writing an account of the gospel?
3. Compare Luke's gospel to the other three gospels.

II.

JOHN'S INTRODUCTION.

^dJOHN I. 1-18.

Bible Text:

^d**1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. 6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but *came* that he might bear witness of the light. 9 There was the true light, *even the light* which lighteth every man, coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. 15 John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me. 16 For of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.**

Bible Text with Commentary:

^d**1 In the beginning was the Word** [a title for Jesus peculiar to the apostle John], **and the Word was with God** [not going before nor coming after God, but with Him at the beginning], **and the Word was God.** [Not more, not less.] **2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him** [the New Testament often speaks of Christ as the Creator--see ver. 10; I. Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 13, 17; Heb. i. 2]; **and without him was not anything made that hath been made.** [This shows that Jesus himself is not a creature.] **4 In him was life** [As in the Father (chap. v. 26). As this life animates the living, so can it reanimate the dead--John xi. 25]; **and the life was the light of men.** [The life of Jesus is the light of men, because from that life we get our intellect and understanding, and because that life formed and governs the creation around us by which we become enlightened as to the existence and power of God--Rom. i. 18-21; Acts xiv. 16, 17.] **5 And the light shineth in the darkness** [an ignorant, benighted world]; **and the darkness apprehended it not.** [Did not receive or admit it. Jesus, the Light of the world, was despised and rejected by men.] **6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light** [that he might tell men that Jesus was the Messiah], **that all** [who heard his testimony] **might believe** [in Jesus] **through him. 8 He was not the light** ["He was the lamp that burneth and shineth" (chap. v. 35); but not the Sun of righteousness--Mal. iv. 2], **but *came* that he might bear witness of the light. 9 There was the true**

light [as opposed to the imperfect, incomplete, and transitory lights], **even the light which lighteth every man** [all men are enlightened in some degree and enlightened of Christ: some by nature, some by conscience, and some by Bible revelation], **coming into the world. 10 He was in the world.** [invisibly present, renewing and sustaining his creation], **and the world was made through him, and the world knew him not.** [Though it might and should have known him--Rom. i. 18-21; Acts xiv. 16, 17.] **11 He came** [visibly in the flesh] **unto his own** [his own land or possessions--Hos. ix. 3; Jer. ii. 7; Zech. ii. 12], **and they that were his own** [the children of Israel--Ex. xix. 5; Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2] **received him not. 12 But as many as received him** [whether Jew or Gentile], **to them gave he the right to become children of God** [comp. Rom. iii. 14-17; Gal. iii. 26; iv. 6, 7; I. John iii. 1, 2], **even to them that believe on his name: 13 who were born, not of blood** [descent from Abraham, David or any other godly person does not make a man a child of God--Luke iii. 8; Matt. iii. 9; ch. viii. 39, 40; Gal. iii. 6, 7, 29], **nor of the will of the flesh** [the efforts and exertions of our own human hearts and natures may reform, but can not regenerate, the life--ch. iii. 6], **nor of the will of man** [we are not begotten of God by the acts and deeds of our fellow-men, however much they may aid us in leading right lives], **but of God.** [Ch. iii. 5; I. John iv. 7; v. 1.] **14 And the Word became flesh** [by being born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary], **and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory** [in his miracles, and especially in his transfiguration--ch. ii. 11; II. Pet. i. 16-18], **glory as of the only begotten from the Father)** [such glory as was suitable to the Son of God], **full of grace and truth.** [The glory of Christ was not in pomp and worldly grandeur, but in the holiness, grace, and truth of his daily life.] **15 John** [the Baptist] **beareth witness of him** [the words of John the Baptist still witness to unbelieving Jews and Gentiles], **and crieth, saying, This was he of whom I said** [John had preached about Jesus before Jesus appeared; he now points to Jesus as the one about whom he had preached], **He that cometh after me** [He for whom I as a forerunner have prepared the way--Matt. iii. 3] **is become before me** [is worthy of more honor and reverence than am I]: **for he was before me.** [Though born into the world six months later than John, Jesus, as the Word, had existed from eternity. (In verse 16 the words are the apostle John's, and not John the Baptist's.)] **16 For of his fulness** [Jesus was full of grace and truth--and all the attributes of God--Eph. i. 23; iii. 19; iv. 13; Col. i. 19; ii. 9] **we all received** [by union with him all his perfection and righteousness became ours--Phil. i. 10, 11; iii. 8, 9; I. Cor. i. 30], **and grace for grace.** [This may mean that we receive a grace kindred to or like each several grace that is in Christ (Rom. viii. 29; xii. 2; Eph. iv. 11-13). But it more probably means fullness of grace, or fresh grace daily added to the grace already bestowed.] **17 For the law** [the Old Dispensation with its condemnation (Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 21) and its types and shadows--Col. ii. 16, 17; Heb. viii. 4, 5; x. 1] **was given through Moses** [by angels at Mt. Sinai--Heb. ii. 2]; **grace and truth** [the New Dispensation with its justification (Rom. iii. 21-26) and its realities--Heb. ix. 1-15] **came through Jesus Christ.** [Heb. i. 1, 2; ii. 3.] **18 No man hath seen God at any time** [I. John iv. 12, 20; ch. i. 18; I. Tim. vi. 16]; **the only begotten Son** [the word "only begotten" indicates that none other bears with Christ a like relationship to God], **who is in the bosom of the Father)** [who bears the closest and tenderest relationship and fellowship as to the Father], **he hath declared him.** [Ch. iii. 2; ch. xv. 9; Col. i. 15.]

Study Questions:

1. Explain John's reference to Jesus as the "Word" and "Light."
2. Why is Jesus divine (i.e., God)?
3. What was John the Baptist's role in the kingdom?

4. Who did not receive Jesus?
5. What is given to those who received Jesus? Explain their birth.
6. What did Jesus have to do to become flesh? How was He full of grace and truth?
7. How did Jesus declare God?

III.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

^aMATT. I. 1-17.

Bible Text:

^a1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; 3 and Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar; and Perez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; 4 and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; 5 and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6 and Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Uriah; 7 and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; 8 and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Uzziah; 9 and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; 10 and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; 11 and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon. 12 And after the carrying away to Babylon Jechoniah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; 13 and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14 and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15 and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17 So all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^a1 The book of the generation [or genealogy] of Jesus Christ, the son of David [the Messiah was promised to David--II. Sam. vii. 16; John vii. 42], the son of Abraham. [Messiah was also promised to Abraham--Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 16.] 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren [mentioned here because they were the heads of the tribes for whom especially Matthew wrote his Gospel]; 3 and Judah begat Perez and Zerah [these two were twins] of Tamar [she was the incestuous daughter-in-law of Judah]; and Perez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; 4 and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; 5 and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab [she had been a heathen and a harlot of Jericho]; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth [she was a heathen Moabitess]; and Obed begat Jesse; 6 and Jesse begat David the king. [These fourteen were patriarchs. The second fourteen were all kings.] And David [we may count David twice, first as a patriarch, second as one of the kings; and thus make up the full number of the second fourteen] begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* [the adulteress Bathsheba] of Uriah; 7 and Solomon [a wise but sinful king] begat Rehoboam [a foolish king, from whose kingdom of twelve tribes God cut off ten tribes]; and Rehoboam begat Abijah [a sinful king, like his father Rehoboam]; and Abijah begat Asa [a godly king who reformed his kingdom of Judah]; 8 and Asa begat Jehoshaphat [a good king, much like his father Asa; but he displeased God somewhat by being

too friendly with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel]; **and Jehoshaphat begat Joram** [Joram married Athaliah, the wicked daughter of Ahab, and followed Ahab in all his ungodly practices]; **and Joram** [Joram begat Ahaziah, and Ahaziah begat Joash, and Joash begat Amaziah; and Amaziah begat Uzziah. The names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah were probably omitted for the sake of symmetry, but may have been dropped because they were wicked descendants of Ahab unto the fourth generation--Ex. xx. 4, 5] **begat Uzziah** [he was a good king, but smitten with leprosy for presumptuously entering the temple]; **9 and Uzziah begat Jotham** [a good king like Uzziah, his father]; **and Jotham begat Ahaz** [one of Judah's worst kings]; **and Ahaz begat Hezekiah** [a royal, godly king, like David]; **10 and Hezekiah begat Manasseh** [an evil king, like Ahaz, but, being punished of God, he repented]; **and Manasseh begat Amon** [an evil king like his father Manasseh; who waxed worse and worse till his people conspired against him and slew him]; **and Amon begat Josiah** [a good king, much like Hezekiah]; **11 and Josiah begat** [Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim begat] **Jechoniah and his brethren** [So far as is known, Jechoniah had no literal brothers. We may, therefore, take the word "brethren" as meaning his royal kindred; viz.: his father Jehoiakim, and his uncles, Jehoahaz and Zedekiah, the three sons of Josiah], **at the time** [probably about B.C. 599] **of the carrying away** [into captivity] **to Babylon. 12 And after the carrying away to Babylon Jechoniah** [If we do not count David twice, as above indicated (as a patriarch and a king), we must count Jechoniah twice (as a king who became a citizen). But if we count Jehoiakim as properly included in the phrase "his brethren" at verse 11, we need count no one twice] **begat Shealtiel** [Luke calls Shealtiel the son of Neri Jechoniah may have been the natural, and Neri the legal, father of Shealtiel--Deut. xxv. 5-10; Matt. xxii. 24. Or Luke's Shealtiel and Zerubbabel may have been different persons from the Shealtiel and Zerubbabel of Matthew]; **and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel** [the governor of Jerusalem, who rebuilt the temple, as told by Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah]; **13 and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14 and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15 and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; 16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus** [the name Jesus means Saviour], **who is called Christ.** [The word "Christ" is a title. It means the anointed One. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed; Jesus was all three.] **17 So all the generations, from Abraham to David, are fourteen generations; and from David unto the carrying away to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon unto the Christ fourteen generations.** [The Jews, to whom Matthew wrote his Gospel, were extremely fond of such groupings and divisions as this.]

Study Questions:

1. What is the significance of the genealogy of Christ recorded in Matthew's gospel from a Jewish perspective?
2. What is the significance of the genealogy being in three groups of fourteen?
3. List and explain the significance of some of the more notable people in the genealogy.

IV.

GENEALOGY ACCORDING TO LUKE.

☞LUKE III. 23-38.

Bible Text:

☞**23** And Jesus himself, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, **24** the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, **25** the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, **26** the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, **27** the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, **28** the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosan, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, **29** the son of Jesus, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, **30** the son of Symeon, the son of Judas, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, **31** the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, **32** the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, **33** the son of Amminadab, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, **34** the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, **35** the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, **36** the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, **37** the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, **38** the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Bible Text with Commentary:

☞**23** And Jesus himself [Luke has been speaking about John the Baptist, he now turns to speak of Jesus himself], when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age [the age when a Levite entered upon God's service--Num. iv. 46, 47], being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son [this may mean that Jesus was grandson of Heli, or that Joseph was counted as a son of Heli because he was his son-in-law] of Heli, **24** the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, **25** the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, **26** the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, **27** the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri [Matthew calls Shealtiel the son of Jechoniah. Jechoniah may have been the natural, and Neri the legal, father of Shealtiel--Deut. xxv. 5-10; Matt. xxii. 24], **28** the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosan, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, **29** the son of Jesus, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, **30** the son of Symeon, the son of Judas, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, **31** the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, **32** the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon [he was probably one of the two spies who were sent to Jericho by Joshua--Josh ii. 1-24], the son of Nahshon [he was prince of the tribe of Judah during the wanderings in the wilderness--Num. i. 4-7; x. 14], **33** the son of Amminadab, the son of Arni, the son

of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber [it is thought that the name "Hebrew" comes from this man--Gen. x. 21; xl. 15; Ex. ii. 6], **the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah** [the hero of the flood], **the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah** [who lived to be the oldest man on record, dying when 969 years old], **the son of Enoch** [whom God translated], **the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enos, the son of Seth** [the third son of Adam], **the son of Adam, the son of God** [Adam was the son of God, being not merely a creature, but a creature made in God's image and likeness--Gen. i. 26, 27.]

Study Questions:

1. What are the major differences between the genealogy of Christ recorded by Matthew and the genealogy of Christ recorded by Luke?
2. What is the significance of the genealogy in Luke's gospel from both a Jewish and Gentile perspective?
3. List and explain the significance of some of the more notable people in the genealogy.

V.

ANNUNCIATION TO ZACHARIAS OF THE BIRTH
OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(At Jerusalem. Probably B. C. 6.)

°LUKE I. 5-25.

Bible Text:

°5 **There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years. 8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9 according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw *him*, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God. 17 And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient *to walk* in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared *for him*. 18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. 20 And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: and he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb. 23 And it came to pass, when the days of his ministration were fulfilled, he departed unto his house. 24 And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, 25 Thus hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon *me*, to take away my reproach among men.**

Bible Text with Commentary:

°5 **There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa** [a Jewish proselyte, an Idumæan or Edomite by birth, founder of the Herodian family, king of Judæa from B.C. 40 to A.D. 4, made such by the Roman Senate on the recommendation of Mark Antony and Octavius Cæsar], **a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course** [David divided the priests into twenty-four bodies or courses, each course

serving in rotation one week in the temple (I Chron. xxiv. 3-19). Of these courses that of Abijah was the eighth] **of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron** [The Baptist was of the priestly race by both parents, a family distinction much esteemed among the Jews. He who was thus doubly a priest proclaimed Him who changed the priesthood], **and her name was Elisabeth.** [She was named after her ancestress Elisheba, the wife of Aaron.] **6 And they were both righteous before God** [that is, truly righteous, or righteous in God's judgment, and not in mere appearance--Gen. vii. 1], **walking in all the commandments and ordinances** [Strictly construed, commandments would refer to moral, and ordinances to ceremonial laws. The two words include all the positive and negative precepts] **of the Lord blameless.** **7 And they had no child** [this fact was a reproach and shame to her, barrenness being considered even a punishment for sin by many], **because that Elisabeth was barren** [the births of Isaac, Samson, Samuel and the Baptist were all contrary to nature, and were faint foreshadowings of the greater miracle which took place in the birth of our Lord], **and they both were now well stricken in years.** **8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course** [that is, when it came the turn of his course to minister in the temple], **9 according to the custom** [there were many duties in the temple service, and the priests in each course daily drew lots for these duties] **of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the temple** [not that group of buildings, courts, and enclosures which was all called the temple; but the real sanctuary itself, the small but holy building which took the place of the tabernacle of the wilderness] **of the Lord and burn incense.** [Made of a mixture of sweet spices. The temple incense was made of stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense, in equal parts, beaten very small--Ex. xxx. 7, 8, 34-38.] **10 And the whole multitude** [the presence of the multitude indicates that it was a sabbath or a feast day] **of the people were praying** [Incense is a symbol of prayer (Ps. cxli. 1, 2; Rev. viii. 3). Each of the multitude prayed in silence] **without** [outside the sanctuary, in the temple courts, particularly the court of the women] **at the hour of incense.** [Incense was offered evening and morning (Ex. xxx. 1-8). Probably at 9 A.M. and at 3 P.M. Compare Acts iii. 1. The text favors the idea that Zacharias' vision came in the morning.] **11 And there appeared unto him** [one of God's invisible messengers who came visibly--II. Kings vi. 17; Ps. xxxiv. 7] **an angel of the Lord** [Luke frequently tells of the ministration of angels (ch. i. 26; ii. 9, 13, 21; xii. 8; xv. 10; xvi. 22; xxii. 43; xxiv. 4, 23). They are also often mentioned in the Book of Acts. There had been no appearance of an angel for about four hundred years] **standing on the right side** [the place of honor and dignity--Acts vii. 56] **of the altar of incense.** [The altar on which Zacharias was burning incense. It stood in the Holy Place in front of the veil which hung between the holy and the most holy places. It was a small table twenty-two inches in breadth and length and forty-four inches in height. It was made of acacia wood, and overlaid with gold--Ex. xxxvii. 25.] **12 And Zacharias was troubled** [as men always are at the sight of heavenly beings --Gen. iii. 9, 10; Dan. x. 7-12; Rev. i. 17, 18] **when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.** **13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not** [These are the first words of the gospel which began at that hour to unfold itself], **Zacharias: because thy supplication is heard, and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.** [This name means "the Lord is gracious," or "the Lord is merciful."] **14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness** [thou shalt feel as Abraham did when he named his new-born son Isaac; that is, "Laughter"]; **and many** [but not all] **shall rejoice at his birth.** **15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord** [compare verse 6], **and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink.** [Strong drink is any other fermented liquor. Wycliffe's version calls it "syder," and the Anglo-Saxon version calls it "beor," of which palm wine was the most common kind. As to the temperance of the Baptist, compare the history of Samson (Judg. xiii. 3-5) and the law of the Nazarite--Num. vi. 2-4]; **and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit** [the stimulation of the Spirit is

elsewhere thus contrasted with alcoholic stimulants--Acts ii. 15-18; Eph. v. 18], **even from his mother's womb.** [See verse 41.] **16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.** [These words were quoted from Mal. iv. 6, and resumed the thread of prophecy which had been broken nearly four centuries before. Roman rule had brought in the vices and profligacy of Italy and Greece, and the nation needed to turn back to its former godly life.] **17 And he shall go before his face** [the face of Messiah, who is also the Lord God--Mal. iii. 1] **in the spirit and power of Elijah** [And thus in fulfillment of the prophecy that Elijah should come again (Mal. iv. 6; Matt. xvii. 9-13). The Jews still expect Elijah as the forerunner of Messiah. John showed the spirit of Elijah in his ascetic dress and life (II. Kings i. 8; Matt. iii. 4) and in his message of repentance--I. Kings xviii. 21-40], **to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.** ["These are the last words of the Old Testament, there used by a prophet; here expounded by an angel; there concluding the law; here beginning the gospel." The phrase may mean: 1. John will restore unity to the families of Israel, now divided into political factions, as Herodians or friends of Rome, and zealots or patriots; and into religious factions, as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.; or more likely it may mean, 2. That John would restore the broken relationship between the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their degenerate descendants--Isa. xxix. 22, 23; lxiii. 16; John viii. 37-40], **and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.** [As in the East the "friend," or go-between, prepares the bride to understand and appreciate her bridegroom--John iii. 28, 29.] **18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this?** [In asking for a sign Zacharias showed his unbelief (Matt. xii. 38, 39). His question in the original is in four words. Four faithless words cost him forty weeks of silence.] **for I am an old man** [So said Abraham (Gen. xvii. 17). The law which retired Levites from service at the age of fifty years (Num. viii. 25, 26) did not apply to priests. They served to extreme old age], **and my wife well stricken in years.** **19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel** [This name means "hero, or mighty one, of God." Gabriel announced to Daniel the time of Christ's birth and death, and the overthrow and final restoration of the Jewish nation (Dan. vii.-xii.). He also announced the birth of Jesus to Mary (verse 26). The Bible gives the name of but one other angel; viz.: Michael, meaning "Who is like God?" Since Gabriel was the messenger who announced God's merciful and gracious purposes, and Michael the one who executed his decrees and punishments, the Jews had a beautiful saying that "Gabriel flew with two wings, and Michael with only one." The very ancient book of Enoch (Jude 14) gives us the name of two other archangels; viz.: Uriel, meaning "God is light"; and Raphael, meaning "healer of God"], **that stand in the presence of God** [Seven angels are spoken of as standing in the presence of God (Rev. viii. 2) and may probably be called angels of the presence (Isa. lxiii. 9). But to see the face of God is no doubt accorded to all angels (Matt. xviii. 10). One who stands in the presence of God should be believed by men without approving signs]; **and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings.** [Our word "gospel" means good tidings.] **20 And behold, thou shalt be silent** [it was a sign; and also a punishment for having sought a sign] **and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass, because thou believedst not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.** **21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried** [The Jews considered slow service as irreverent and displeasing to God. The punishment attached to displeasing service made them fearful-- Lev. xvi. 13] **in the temple.** **22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them** [Could not dismiss them with the usual blessing (Num. vi. 23-26). Disbelief is always powerless to bless]; **and they perceived** [probably by his excited manner] **that he had seen a vision** [the most vivid and objective of all spiritual phenomena--ch. xxiv. 23; Acts xxvi. 19; II. Cor. xii. 1; Dan. ix. 23] **in the temple: and he continued making signs unto them, and remained dumb.** **23 And it came to pass, when the**

days of his ministration [They are said to have lasted from the evening of one Sabbath (Friday at sundown) to the morning of the next. Though doubtless chagrined at the punishment which had come upon him, the old priest remained at his post, and dwelt in the temple until his week was finished] **were fulfilled, he departed unto his house.** [Some guess that he lived at Hebron, others at Jutta, five miles south of Hebron, others at Ain Karim, four miles west of Jerusalem, but no one knows.] **24 And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself** [probably through mingled feelings of modesty, humility, devotion, and joy] **five months** [at the end of which time her seclusion was interrupted by the visit of Mary], **saying, 25 Thus** [graciously and mercifully] **hath the Lord done unto me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach** [the reproach of being childless--Gen. xxx. 23] **among men.**

Study Questions:

1. Who were Zacharias and Elisabeth? What was their relationship with God?
2. What did Gabriel tell Zacharias about Elisabeth and John?
3. What happened to Zacharias as a result of his unbelief?
4. How would John be like Elijah?

VI.

ANNUNCIATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

(At Nazareth, B. C. 5.)

°LUKE I. 26-38.

Bible Text:

°26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord *is* with thee. 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. 31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. 37 For no word from God shall be void of power. 38 And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Bible Text with Commentary:

°26 Now in the sixth month [this is the passage from which we learn that John was six months older than Jesus] the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth [Luke alone tells us where Mary lived before the birth of Jesus. That Nazareth was an unimportant town is shown by the fact that it is mentioned nowhere in the Old Testament, nor in the Talmud, nor in Josephus, who mentions two hundred four towns and cities of Galilee. The way in which Luke introduces Galilee and Nazareth shows that he wrote to those unfamiliar with Palestine. Compare the conversation at John i. 45, 46. Galilee comprised the lands of Zebulun, Naphtali, Issachar and Asher. It was rich in trees and pastures. Its people were hardy and warlike], 27 to a virgin betrothed [In the East, the betrothal or engagement was entered into with much ceremony, and usually took place a year before the marriage. It was so sacred that the parties entering into it could not be separated save by a bill of divorcement--Matt. i. 19] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David [that is, Joseph was of the house of David]; and the virgin's name was Mary. [The same as Miriam--Ex. xv. 20.] 28 And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord *is* with thee. 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. [Whether it meant a present sorrow or joy, for God's salutations all mean joy, but usually is in the distant future--Heb. xii. 11; II. Cor. iv. 17, 18.] 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not [the gospel is full of "Fear not"; it teaches us that perfect love which casts out fear--I. John iv. 18], Mary: for thou hast

found favor with God. 31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. [The same as Hoshea (Num. xiii. 8), Joshua, and Jeshua (Zech. iii. 1). It means the "salvation of Jehovah." It was one of the most common Jewish names, but was given to Jesus by divine direction because of its fitness--Matt. i. 21.] **32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High** [A common Hebrew way of saying "He shall be." Even the evil spirits called Jesus by this name--Mark v. 7]: **and the Lord God shall give unto him** [he shall not receive his kingdom as a bribe from Satan (Matt. iv. 9), nor win it by force of arms (John xviii. 10, 11, 36; Matt. xxvi. 53), but as the gift of God--Acts ii. 32-36; Phil. ii. 9-11; Matt. xxviii. 18] **the throne** [see Ps. cxxxii. 11] **of his father David** [this must refer to Mary's descent from David, for she is expressly told in verse 35 that her son would have no earthly father]: **33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob** [That is, over the family or descendants of Jacob; but the expression includes his spiritual, rather than his carnal, descendants (Gal. iii. 7, 28, 29). This name therefore includes the Gentiles as the name of a river includes the rivers which flow into it] **forever** [Dan. ii. 44; vii. 13, 14, 27; Mic. iv. 7; Ps. xlv. 6; Heb. i. 8; Rev. xi. 15]; **and of his kingdom there shall be no end.** [Isa. vii. 9. Christ shall resign his mediatorial kingdom to the Father at the close of this dispensation (I. Cor. xv. 24-28); but as being one with his Father he shall rule forever.] **34 And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be** [Her question indicates surprise, not disbelief. Unlike Zacharias, she asked no sign. The youthful village maiden, amid her humble daily duties, shows a more ready faith in the far more startling message than the aged priest in the holy place of the temple in the atmosphere of the sacred incense], **seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow** [the Spirit of God is thus spoken of as "brooding over" or overshadowing creation to develop it--Gen. i. 2] **thee** [This indicates that the Holy Spirit himself created the body of Christ (Heb. x. 5). The spirit, or divine nature, of Christ was from the beginning, and was unbegotten--that is, in the sense of being created]: **wherefore also the holy thing.** [the body of Jesus--Heb. vii. 26; I. Pet. ii. 22] **which is begotten** [Gal. iv. 4] **shall be called the Son of God.** [As the Evangelist is here talking about the bodily and human nature of Jesus, it is possible that he may here speak of Jesus as the Son of God in the same sense in which he called Adam the son of God (ch. iii. 38); that is, his body and human nature were the direct and miraculous production of the divine power. If so, we find Jesus called the Son of God in three several senses: 1. Here, because he was born into the world in a supernatural manner. 2. Elsewhere, because by his resurrection he was begotten from the dead (Rom. i. 4; Acts xiii. 33; Ps. ii. 7). 3. Also elsewhere, because of the eternal, immutable, and unparalleled relationship which he sustains to the Father--John i. 1, 14, 18.] **36 And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren.** [The angel tells of Elisabeth's condition, that it may encourage the faith of Mary, and lead her to trust in Him with whom nothing is impossible--Jer. xxxii. 17, 27; Gen. xviii. 14; Matt. xix. 26.] **37 For no word from God shall be void of power.** [Isa. lv. 11.] **38 And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid** [Literally, "slave" or "bondservant." It is the feminine form of the word which Paul so often applies to himself (Rom. i. 1; Tit. i. 1). Mary uses it to indicate her submissive and obedient spirit] **of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.** [In great faith she not only believes the promise, but prays for its fulfillment. She bowed to the will of God like Eli (I. Sam. iii. 18), and became the mother of Him who prayed, "Not my will, but thine, be done"--Luke xxii. 42.] **And the angel departed from her.**

Study Questions:

1. When was Gabriel sent to Mary? Where was Mary living at the time Gabriel appeared to her?
2. What was Mary's relationship to Joseph?
3. What did Gabriel tell Mary? What was Mary's reaction?
4. What did Gabriel say about the person and work of Jesus?
5. What did Gabriel tell Mary about Elisabeth? Why might this information have been meaningful to Mary?
6. How could Mary know that the things told her by Gabriel would come true?

VII.

MARY, FUTURE MOTHER OF JESUS, VISITS
ELISABETH, FUTURE MOTHER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(In the Hill Country of Judæa, B. C. 5.)

°LUKE I. 39-56.

Bible Text:

°39 And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; 40 and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit; 42 And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? 44 For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed *is* she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord. 46 And Mary 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 handmaid: 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 given help to Israel his servant, That he might remember mercy 55 (As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham and his seed for ever. 56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned unto her house.

Bible Text with Commentary:

°39 And Mary arose in these days [within a week or two after the angel appeared to her] and went into the hill country [the district of Judah lying south of Jerusalem, of which the city of Hebron was the center] with haste [she fled to those whom God had inspired, so that they could understand her condition and know her innocence--to those who were as Joseph needed to be inspired, that he might understand--Matt. i. 18-25], into a city of Judah [where Zacharias dwelt--see verse 23]; 40 and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb [see verse 15]; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit [sufficiently to have a supernatural knowledge of things and to utter prophecy]; 42 And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry [Indicating intense, ecstatic joy. What joy must have filled the hearts of these two women as they realized that one was to be the mother of the long-expected Messiah, and the other of his Elijah-like forerunner!], and said, Blessed [see verse 28] *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me [why am I thus honored?--Matt. viii. 7, 8], that the mother of my Lord [This word imported sometimes divinity, and sometimes mere superiority. The Jews employed this term in connection with the Messiah; but in which

sense can not now be determined. Inspired writers employ it in the higher sense when applying it to Jesus (Matt. xxii. 41-45), and in that sense it is no doubt used here] **should come unto me? 44 For behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she that believed** [Elisabeth may have here remembered how her own husband failed to believe]; **for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord. 46 And Mary said** [She speaks in poetic strain. Her song closely resembles that of Hannah--I. Sam. ii. 1-10], **My soul doth magnify** [Mary's song is called "The Magnificat" from this word] **the Lord, 47 and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath looked upon the low estate** [this refers to the contrast between her present condition and that of the former glories of David's house, from which she sprang] **of his handmaid: For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.** [Here ends the first section of her song. In it she speaks of herself, and her adoration toward God for his condescending blessing. Mary was blessed in her motherhood, Abraham in his covenant and promises, Paul in his apostleship, etc., but none of these human beings are to be worshiped because of the blessings which they received. Rather should we bestow the more worship on God, from whom these their blessings flow--Jas. i. 17.] **49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; And holy is his name.** [Ex. xx. 7.] **50 And his mercy is unto generations and generations** [that is, it is unceasing--Ex. xx. 6] **On them that fear him.** [Here ends the second division of her song. In it Mary glorifies God for his power, holiness and mercy.] **51 He hath showed strength with his arm.** ["God's efficacy is represented by his finger (Ex. viii. 19); his great power by his hand (Ex. iii. 20); and his omnipotence by his arm--Ex. xv. 16"]; **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.** [These expressions are hyperboles for the disappointment of the proud, the princely, and the rich, in whose families the Messiah was expected. God has passed these by, and exalted a lowly one. Here ends the third section or verse of the hymn. It speaks of the changes which the Messiah should work as if he had already worked them.] **54 He hath given help to Israel his servant, That he might remember mercy 55 (As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham** [Mic. vii. 20; Gal. iii. 16] **and his seed for ever.** [The hymn closes with an expression of gratitude to God for his faithfulness in keeping his covenants.] **56 And Mary abode wither about three months** [or until John was born], **and returned** [a favorite word with Luke, used twenty-one times in his Gospel] **unto her house.**

Study Questions:

1. Why might Mary have stayed with Elisabeth three months?
2. What happened when Mary spoke to Elisabeth?
3. Why was Mary blessed?
4. How did Elisabeth refer to Mary in respect of being the mother of Jesus?
5. What did Elisabeth say in respect to Mary's faith?
6. How did Mary magnify the Lord?
7. Upon whom does the Lord have mercy?
8. What had God done to the proud, the princes, and the rich? How?
9. What had God done to the people of low degree and the hungry people? How?
10. How had God been merciful to Israel?

VIII.

THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

(Hill Country of Judæa, B. C. 5.)

☞LUKE I. 57-80.

Bible Text:

57 Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. **58** And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her. **59** And it came to pass on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. **60** And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. **61** And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. **62** And they made signs to his father, what he would have him called. **63** And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. **64** And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, blessing God. **65** And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa. **66** And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. **67** And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, **68** Blessed *be* the Lord, the God of Israel; 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 David **70** (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old), **71** Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; **72** To show mercy towards our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant; **73** The oath which he sware unto Abraham 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 his 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 Israel.

Bible Text with Commentary:

57 Now Elisabeth's time was fulfilled that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. **58** And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her [mercy in granting a child; great mercy in granting so illustrious a child]; and they rejoiced with her. **59** And it came to pass on the eighth day [See Gen. xvii. 12; Lev. xii. 3; Phil. iii. 5. Male children were named at their circumcision, probably because at that time the names of Abram and Sarai had been changed (Gen. xvii. 5, 15). Females were named when they were weaned], that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. **60** And his mother answered and said, Not so [Zacharias had evidently written, and thus communicated

to his wife all that the angel had told him, and how the child was to be named John]; **but he shall be called John.** **61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred** [Family names were even more thought of, and honored, among the Jews than among us. They had no taste for romantic and eccentric names] **that is called by this name.** **62 And they made signs** [this seems to indicate that Zacharias was deaf as well as dumb] **to his father, what he would have him called.** **63 And he asked for a writing tablet** [tablets were sometimes made of lead, but were usually small wooden boards, either smeared with wax, or having sand sprinkled over them, on which words were written with an iron stylus or pencil], **and wrote, saying, His name is John.** **And they marvelled all.** [Being surprised that both parents should thus unite upon an unexpected name.] **64 And his mouth was opened immediately** [See verse 20. The angel's words were now completely fulfilled, therefore the punishment for disbelief was removed], **and his tongue loosed, and he spake, blessing God.** [Probably the words recorded in verses 68-79.] **65 And fear came** [The miraculous phenomena attending the birth of John made the people so conscious of the presence of God as to fill them with awe. The influence of this fear spread far and wide until the chills and tremors of expected changes and revolutions were felt even by the citizens of Rome, as their poets and historians testify] **on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa.** **66 And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, What thenshall this child be?** [We probably find an echo of this question thirty years later when John entered upon his ministry--John i. 19.] **For the hand of the Lord was with him.** **67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied** [This his prophecy is the last of the old dispensation, and the first of the new, or Christian, era. It also is poetry, and is a hymn of thanksgiving for the time of Messiah's advent], **saying, 68 Blessed** [the hymn gets its name from this word, and is called the Benedictus] **be the Lord, the God of Israel; For he hath visited** [Come back, in the person of his Spirit, to his people. After some four hundred years of absence the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of prophecy, had again returned to God's people. Malachi, the last of the prophets, had been dead about four centuries] **and wrought redemption for his people, 69 And hath raised up a horn** [the horn is a symbol of power--Dan. vii. 7, 8; viii. 21] **of salvation for us In the house of his servant David** [this also indicates that Mary was of the house of David] **70 (As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old)** [Gen. iii. 15; xxii. 18; xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17; II. Pet. i. 21; Heb. i. 1], **71 Salvation from our enemies** [not only Rome, the enemy of Israelitish prosperity, but also those evil agencies which wage ceaseless warfare against the souls of men--Eph. vi. 12], **and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To show mercy towards our fathers, And to remember his holy covenant** [contract or agreement]; **73 The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father** [see Gen. xii. 3; xvii. 4; xxii. 16, 17], **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** [holiness is good conduct toward God, righteousness is good conduct toward men] **before him all our days. 76 Yea and thou, child** [the rest of the psalm is addressed to the infant John], **shalt be called the prophet** [see Matt. xi. 9; Luke xx. 6] **of the Most High: For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord** [the Lord Jesus Christ] **to make ready his ways** [Isa. xl. 3; Matt. iii. 3]; **77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people** [Israel had a false idea that the Messiah's salvation would be from political evil. John was needed to tell them that it was from sin that God proposed to deliver them. Perdition does not consist in political wrongs, but in divine condemnation] **In the remission of their sins** [through Christ's work--Acts v. 31], **78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, Whereby the dayspring from on high** [One of the many names for Jesus or his kingdom. The prophets loved to picture Messiah's advent as a sunrise (Isa. ix. 2; lx. 1-3; Mal. iv. 2; Matt. iv. 16; John i. 4, 5). Christ's coming was the dawn of a new day for Israel and for mankind] **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. [Travelers in the Judæan mountains often waited patiently for the morning light, lest they should lose their lives by a false step taken in the darkness--Isa. lix. 8.] **80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit** [I. Sam. ii. 26; Luke ii. 40, 52], **and was in the deserts** [The thinly settled region west of the Dead Sea. In I. Sam. xxiii. 19 it is called Jeshimon, or "the Horror"] **till the day of his showing unto Israel.** [The day when he commenced his ministry and declared his commission as Messiah's forerunner.]

Study Questions:

1. How had the Lord magnified his mercy toward Elisabeth?
2. Why did Elisabeth and Zacharias name their son, John? What happened after Zacharias verified that his name was to be John?
3. What did people wonder about John? Why?
4. How had God blessed Israel with the birth of John?
5. Why was John the prophet of the Most High?
6. What is God's tender mercy toward us?
7. What do we know about John's childhood?

IX.

ANNUNCIATION TO JOSEPH OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

(At Nazareth, B. C. 5.)

^aMATT. I. 18-25.

Bible Text:

^a18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. 20 But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us. 24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife; 25 and knew her not till she had brought forth a son: and he called his name JESUS.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^a18 Now the birth [The birth of Jesus is to be handled with reverential awe. We are not to probe into its mysteries with presumptuous curiosity. The birth of common persons is mysterious enough (Eccl. ix. 5; Ps. cxxxix. 13-16), and we do not well, therefore, if we seek to be wise above what is written as to the birth of the Son of God] **of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed** [The Jews were usually betrothed ten or twelve months prior to the marriage. So sacred was this relationship that unfaithfulness to it was deemed adultery, and was punishable by death--death by stoning (Deut. xxii. 23-28; Lev. xx. 10; Ezek. xvi. 38; John viii. 5). Those betrothed were regarded as husband and wife, and could only be separated by divorcement. Hebrew betrothals set the world a good example. Hasty marriage is too often followed by hasty repentance. "No woman of Israel was married unless she had been first espoused"] **to Joseph, before they came together** [Before Joseph brought his bride to his own home. An espoused maiden lived in her father's house until the marriage, as is our own custom] **she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.** [The two evangelists (Matthew and Luke) which give the earthly genealogy of Jesus are each careful to mention his miraculous conception through the Holy Spirit (comp. Luke i. 35). All New Testament writers recognize Jesus as at once both human and divine. Christ's *physical* nature was begotten of the Holy Spirit, but the Christian's *spiritual* nature is begotten of him (John i. 13). The act of the Holy Spirit in this case indicates that he is a personality, and not a mere influence, as some are disposed to imagine. Influences do not create physical bodies.] **19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man** [As a righteous man he could not complete his marriage, and thus stain his family name. As a merciful man he did not wish to openly disgrace the one to whom he was so fondly attached. He wished to act justly toward his own reputation, and mercifully toward the reputation of Mary], **and not willing to make her a public example** [he did not wish to expose her to the shame

of a public trial before the court, nor to punish her as the law permitted], **was minded to put her away privily**. [The law of Moses gave the husband the power of divorce (Deut. xxiv. 1). The bill or writing certifying the divorce usually stated the cause, and was handed to the wife in the presence of witnesses. Joseph evidently intended to omit stating any cause in the bill, that there might be no record to convict her of shame. The law of divorce applied to betrothed as well as to married persons. In his kindness Joseph anticipates the special teaching of Christ (Matt. xix. 8) and the general instruction of Paul (Gal. vi. 1). How different the conduct of the innocent Joseph from that of guilty Judah (Gen. xxxviii. 24). Judah needed some one to point out his unfitness--John viii. 7.] **20 But when he thought on these things** [God guides the thoughtful, not the unthinking], **behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him** [The Lord looks after the good name of those who honor his name, and he serves those who serve him (I. Sam. ii. 30; John xii. 26). The sufferings of both Mary and Joseph must have been very extreme at this time--one being forced to suspect the chief object of his affections, and the other being compelled to rest under the unjust suspicions of loved ones, because of a condition which God alone could explain. But God does explain where we can not understand without his revelation, and where we absolutely need to know] **in a dream** [A mode of communication frequently used by God (Gen. xx. 3; xxxi. 11, 24; xxxvii. 5; xli. 1; I. Kings iii. 5; Dan. vii. 1; Job iv. 13-15). It is difficult to say how men determined between ordinary and divine dreams, but doubtless the latter came with a glory and vividness which gave assurance of their supernatural nature. Matthew mentions four divine dreams, viz.: this one; the second one given to Joseph (Matt. ii. 13); the dream of the Magi (Matt. ii. 12); the dream of Pilate's wife--ch. xxvii. 19], **saying, Joseph** [We are known to angels, and they address us by name (Acts x. 3, 13; xxvii. 24). Much more does the Lord know our names--John x. 3; Luke xix. 5], **thou son of David** [the name of David was calculated to waken the memories of God's promises, and helped to prepare Joseph to receive the wonderful news that Messiah was about to be born, for Messiah was the promised heir of David], **fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife** [Have no fear as to Mary's virtue and purity. Fear no disgrace in taking her. Joseph feared as a son of David that this marriage would sully his genealogy. But it was that which gave point and purpose to an otherwise barren and uninteresting record. He feared as a man lest he should share Mary's apparent disgrace; but he had infinitely more reason to fear his unworthiness to share with her the exalted responsibilities of parentage to our Lord]: **for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she shall bring forth a son** [the angel does not say "shall bear thee a son," as he said to Zacharias--Luke i. 13]; **and thou shalt call his name JESUS** [Joseph was to take the position of a legal father to the child and name it. The name means "Salvation of Jehovah" or "Jehovah is the Saviour." Would we could all bear our names, such as Christian, pastor, magistrate, father, mother, child, etc., as Jesus bore that wonderful and responsible name of Saviour]; **for it is he that shall save his people from their sins** [Thus from before his very birth-hour the nature of Christ's salvation is fully set forth. He came to save from the guilt, power and punishment of sin. He saves from the guilt of sin by having shed his blood, that sins may be remitted or washed clean. He saves from the power of sin by bestowing the gift of the Spirit, who regenerates, comforts and strengthens, and ultimately he saves from the punishment of sin by giving us a resurrection from the dead, and an abundant entrance into the home of glory. That is no salvation at all which fails to free us from this triple bondage of sin.] **22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord** [It was not fulfilled because predicted, but was rather predicted because sure to take place. Prophecies are fulfilled in four ways; namely, 1. When a thing clearly predicted comes to pass. 2. When that which has been pictured in type and shadow is at last shown forth in substance and reality. 3. When an event which has been described in language more elevated and elaborate than it demands is followed by another similar event to which the said language is more perfectly

suited. 4. When parabolic or figurative language may be applied to some subsequent event. The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled after this third fashion, which was spoken by the Lord. In innumerable passages the divine origin and inspiration of the Scriptures are clearly and unmistakably set forth. The same Spirit which foretold through the lips of the prophet now interprets the foretelling through the lips of the angel] **through the prophet** [Isa. vii. 14. Isaiah's name is not given. The ancients were studious readers, and had few books, so that there was little need to cite authors by name], **saying** [About the year 740 B.C. While Ahaz was king of Judah, his land was threatened with an invasion by the united armies of Syria and Israel. Isaiah came to frightened Ahaz, promised divine aid, and told Ahaz to seek from God a sign confirming this promise. This, Ahaz refused to do; whereupon Isaiah replied that God would grant a sign anyway. The sign was that a virgin should have a son, and before the son reached the age of discretion, the kingdoms of Syria and Israel should be destroyed. The sign given Ahaz was one of deliverance, and prefigured the birth of Christ, the great Deliverer, in four ways: 1. A virgin bearing a child. 2. A male child (Rev. xii. 5). 3. The divinely ordered naming of the child. 4. The significance of the name given. Jesus fulfilled in his ministry many predictions; but many more such as this one were fulfilled upon him without his volition], **23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child** [The Sonship of Jesus demands a miraculous birth. If we doubt the miracle of his conception, we can never solve the perplexing problem of his marvelous life and death], **and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name** [rather, title; under the head of "name" the titles of Jesus are also set forth at Isa. ix. 6] **Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us** [Nature shows God above us; the Law shows God against us; but the Gospel shows God with us, and for us. The blessing of the church militant is Christ, God with us: that of the church triumphant is Christ, us with God. In this world Jesus walked "with us" in human form (John i. 14); and because he did so, we, in the world to come, shall walk "with him" in divine form (I. John iii. 2; I. Cor. xv. 49). In a personal sense Jesus may fitly be called "God with us," for he was God and man united in one body.] **24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.** [he followed the instructions, though contrary to his first inclination. Blessed are they who permit God to guide them. As Joseph appears to have acted at once upon the angel's instruction, the marriage must have taken place several months prior to the birth of Jesus], **and took unto him his wife** [thus becoming the legally recognized father of Jesus, and though he bestowed upon Jesus but a humble name (Luke iv. 22; Matt. xiii. 55), he nevertheless rescued him from the reproach of an illegitimate birth]; **25 and knew her not till she had brought forth a son** [Romish teachers contend for the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, that she may be regarded as an object of worship. This doctrine can not be proved by Scripture. But there are weightier reasons than this which forbid us to worship her; namely, it can not be proven from Scripture either that she was *divine* or that she was *sinless*. Moreover, the fact that she entered the marital state at all, shows that she was perfectly human, and comported herself as such]: **and he called his name JESUS.** [Two Old Testament heroes bore the name Jesus under the form of Joshua. One was captain of Israel for the conquest of Canaan, the other was high priest of Israel for rebuilding the Temple (Zech. vi. 11, 12). Christ was both the Captain of our salvation and the High Priest of our profession.]

Study Questions:

1. What was the relationship between Mary and Joseph before Mary's conception of Jesus?
2. Why was Joseph going to put Mary away? How had he decided to put her away?
3. Why didn't Joseph put Mary away?
4. How did Mary conceive Jesus?

5. In what way were the conception and birth of Jesus a fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy?
6. What do the names "Jesus" and "Immanuel" mean? In what way do these names accurately describe Jesus?
7. Did Joseph take Mary to be his wife before Jesus was born? Did she remain a virgin until after Jesus was born?
8. Did Mary give birth to other children after Jesus was born?

X.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

(At Bethlehem of Judæa, B. C. 5.)

☞LUKE II. 1-7.

Bible Text:

1 Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. 2 This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, unto Judæa, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; 5 to enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child. 6 And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Bible Text with Commentary:

1 Now it came to pass in those days [the days of the birth of John the Baptist], **there went out a decree** [a law] **from Cæsar Augustus** [Octavius, or Augustus, Cæsar was the nephew of and successor to Julius Cæsar. He took the name Augustus in compliment to his own greatness; and our month August is named for him; its old name being Sextilis], **that all the world should be enrolled.** [This enrollment or census was the first step in the process of taxation.] **2 This was the first enrollment.** [Publius Sulpicius Quirinius was governor of Syria, A.D. 6-11, and made a census of his province at that time, as Luke well knew (Acts v. 37). We have no other record showing either his governorship or a census made by him *at the time of the birth of Christ*. But he was held in high favor by the Emperor, and was, about the time of the birth of Christ, carrying on a war just north of Syria, in Cilicia, and it is therefore easy for us to accept Luke's statement that as imperial commissioner or as governor of Syria he made such a census. Quirinius was doubtless twice governor of Syria, his first term being about B.C. 5-1. The Greek word *hegemon*, which Luke uses for governor, would be used for either of the Roman titles, viz.: Proprætor, or senatorial governor; or Quæstor, or imperial commissioner. Quirinius may have commenced the enrollment as Quæstor and finished it ten years later as Proprætor. He was a well-known character in that age. Harsh and avaricious as a governor, but an able and loyal soldier, earning a Roman triumph for successes in Cilicia, and being honored by a public funeral in A.D. 21] **made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.** [A Roman province including all Palestine, and a tract four or five times as large lying to the northeast of Palestine.] **3 And all went to enroll themselves** [The enrollment may have had no reference to taxation. It was more probably to ascertain the military strength of the various provinces. The Romans enrolled each person at the place where he was then residing; but permitted the Jews to thus return to their ancestral or tribal cities and enroll themselves as citizens of these cities], **every one to his own city.** [The city where his ancestors had been settled by Joshua when he divided the land--Josh. xiii.-xviii.] **4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth** [see ch. i. 26], **unto Judæa, to the city of David** [after the lapse of ten centuries the name of David still cast its fragrance over the place of his

birth--I. Sam. xvii. 12], **which is called Bethlehem** [Meaning "house of bread." It was the later or Jewish name for the old Canaanitish village of Ephrath, the Ephrath near which Rachel died (Gen. xxxv. 19). It was marked by Micah as the birthplace of Messiah--Mic. v. 2; Matt. ii. 5, 6], **because he was of the house and family of David; 5 to enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him** [see Matt. i. 25], **being great with child. 6 And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered.** [The early Christians made no record of the date of Christ's birth; we find no mention of December 25 earlier than the fourth century. The Eastern church celebrated Christ's birth by a feast called Epiphany, which means manifestation. They chose January 6 as the date for this feast, for they reasoned that if the first Adam was born on the sixth day of creation, the second Adam must have been born on the sixth day of the year. The Western church celebrated Christ's birth on the 25th of December by a feast called Natalis, which means Nativity. But Pope Julius I. (A.D. 337-352) designated December 25 as the proper day, and the Eastern churches soon united with the Western churches in observing this day; and the custom has become universal. We do not observe this day because of the Pope's decree, but because of the tradition on which the Pope's decree was founded.] **7 And she brought forth her firstborn** [This word in no way implies that the Virgin subsequently had other children. Jesus, the only begotten, is also called the firstborn--Heb. i. 6] **son; and she wrapped** [having none to help her, she swathed him in bands with her own hands] **him in swaddling clothes** [the new-born Jewish child was washed in water, rubbed with salt, and then wrapped in bands or blankets, which confined the limbs closely--Ezek. xvi. 4], **and laid him in a manger** [Justin Martyr, who born about the beginning of the second century and suffered martyrdom A.D. 165, first tells us the tradition that the stable in which Jesus was born was a cavern. Caves, however, were never used for stables except when opened on the sides of hills. The one at Bethlehem is a cellar fourteen feet under the level surface. Justin must, therefore, be mistaken], **because there was no room for them in the inn.** [Eastern inns had landlords like our own. The inn was full at this time because of the number who had come to be enrolled. Inns contained rooms for persons and stalls for animals: there was no room in the former, but there was in the latter.]

Study Questions:

1. Why did Joseph and Mary have to go to Bethlehem to enroll? Where were they living before going to Bethlehem?
2. What was Mary's condition at the time of the enrollment?
3. In what city was Jesus born? Where in the city was He born?
4. Why is Jesus called Mary's firstborn son?
5. What did Mary do with Jesus after His birth?

XI.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS PROCLAIMED BY ANGELS
TO THE SHEPHERDS.

(Near Bethlehem, B. C. 5.)

LUKE II. 8-20.

Bible Text:

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. 9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 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 people: 11 for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and 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 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 both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about the child. 18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. 20 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.

Bible Text with Commentary:

8 And there were shepherds in the same country [they were in the same fields from which David had been called to tend God's Israel, or flock] **abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.** [When the flock is too far from the village to lead it to the fold at night, these shepherds still so abide with it in the field, even in the dead of winter.] **9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them** [He stood upon the earth at their side, and did not float above them in the heavens, as he is usually pictured. His standing upon the earth shows a fuller fellowship and sympathy with men--comp. Acts i. 10], **and the glory of the Lord shone round about them** [The Shechinah, or bright cloud, which symbolizes the divine presence (Ex. xxiv. 16; I. Kings viii. 10; Isa. vi. 1-3; Rom. ix. 4). It was seen by the three apostles upon the mount of transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5), by Stephen (Acts vii. 55), and by Paul--Acts xxii. 6-11]: **and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy** [Christianity is a religion of present joys, and leads onward to joy eternal] **which shall be to all the people: 11 for there is born to you** [born as a gift to us--John iii. 16] **this day in the city of David a Saviour** [the angel omits the name of Jesus, but gives the meaning of his name], **who is Christ** [Messiah is the Hebrew and Christ is the Greek for our English word "anointed." Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed. Jesus held all these three offices for all our race for all eternity] **the Lord. 12 And this is the sign** [The token by which to identify the child. A babe in a manger was not ordinary

sight] **unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.** ["What fearful odds! What a strange contrast! Idolatry on the throne (in the person of Augustus Cæsar), and the founder of a new religion and a new empire lying in a manger!"] **13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude** [The event was too important to be heralded by any one angel. All heaven was interested in the departure of its Prince, and marveled at the grace of the Father who sent him--I. Pet. i. 12] **of the heavenly host** [God's army (I. Kings xxii. 19; Ps. ciii. 20, 21). The Deity is called "God of Sabaoth"; that is, God of hosts or multitude (Rom. ix. 29; Jas. v. 4; Dan. vii. 10; Rev. v. 11, 12); but at this time God's army appeared to announce the coming of eternal peace] **praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest** [in the highest heavens--Job xvi. 19; Ps. cxlviii. 1], **And on earth peace among men** [The angels invoke blessing on God and peace upon man. Peace between God and man, and ultimately peace between man and man] **in whom he is well pleased.** [The love of God is shed abroad upon all, even the vilest of sinners (Rom. v. 8; I. Tim. i. 15); but his peace comes upon those who have accepted his Son, and in whom he is therefore especially well pleased (Rom. ix. 11). Peace is the unfailing apostolic salutation toward Christians (Rom. i. 7; I. Cor. i. 3; II. Cor. i. 2, etc.), and is attainable in the highest degree by Christians only--John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Col. iii. 15; Phil. iv. 7.] **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 both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about the child.** [They were the first evangelists. Among the heralds of Christ we note one great prophet, John the Baptist, and one learned Pharisee, Paul; the rest are shepherds, fishermen, and publicans, yet their gospel has triumphed over the wisdom of men (I. Cor. i. 26-29; II. Cor. iv. 7). The shepherds were moved to publish by the same spirit which actuated the lepers at Samaria--II. Kings vii. 9.] **18 And all that heard it wondered** [the gospel story excites wonder; the more we ponder it the more wonderful it becomes] **at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these sayings** [The silence of Mary contrasts with the talkativeness of the shepherds. But is the duty of Christians both to ponder and to publish], **pondering them in her heart.** [Only Mary could know the fact here stated; and the statement indicates that Luke got the opening parts of his Gospel from the mother of our Lord. She had much to think about. The angelic messages to Zacharias, to herself, and to the shepherds were full of significance, and her mind would search diligently to comprehend the fullness of their meaning. In her quiet thoughtfulness the beauty of the Virgin's character shines forth--I. Pet. iii. 4.] **20 And the shepherds returned** [they did not make this glorious occasion an excuse for neglecting their humble duties], **glorifying** [because of the greatness of that which had been revealed] **and praising God** [because of the goodness of that which he revealed] **for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.** [Jesus came in exactly the manner in which his coming had been spoken of or described by the angels a few hours before; and also just as his coming had been spoken of or described by the prophets centuries and centuries before. God's word holds good for eternity as truly as for one day. The shepherds doubtless passed to their reward during the thirty years which Jesus spent in seclusion prior to his entering upon his ministry. But the rest of their commonplace life was now filled with music of praise, and their night watches lit by the glory of God, which could never entirely fade away.]

Study Questions:

1. Where were the shepherds and what were they doing when the angels proclaimed Jesus' birth?
2. Where was the angel when he talked to the shepherds? What is the significance of the light that shone around them?
3. What was the shepherd's initial reaction to seeing the angel?
4. What did the angel say to the shepherds? What was the significance of Jesus' birth? What was the sign given to them?
5. What did the multitude of heavenly hosts do and say?
6. What did the shepherds do after the angels departed?
7. What did the shepherds say after finding Mary, Joseph, and Jesus? What was the reaction of the people who heard them?
8. What did the shepherds do after finding Mary, Joseph, and Jesus?

XII.

CIRCUMCISION, TEMPLE SERVICE,
AND NAMING OF JESUS.

(The Temple at Jerusalem, B. C. 4.)

☞LUKE II. 21-39.

Bible Text:

☞21 And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising him, his name was called JESUS, which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. 22 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. 25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, 28 then he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, According to thy word, in peace; 30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; 32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of thy people Israel. 33 And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him; 34 and Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; 35 yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed. 36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, 37 and she had been a widow even unto fourscore and four years), who departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day. 38 And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 And when they had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord, they returned.

Bible Text with Commentary:

☞21 And when eight days [Gen. xvii. 12] were fulfilled for circumcising him [The rite was doubtless performed by Joseph. By this rite Jesus was "made like unto his brethren" (Heb. ii. 16, 17); that is, he became a member of the covenant nation, and became a debtor to the law--Gal. v. 3], his name was called JESUS [see Luke i. 59], which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. [Luke i. 31.] 22 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled [Purification took place on the fortieth day after the nativity in the case of males, and eighty days in the case of females (Lev. xii. 1-5). Until it was performed the mother was not permitted to go to

the temple, take part in any public service, or even to leave her house. It seems that the members of her family were also ceremonially unclean, because they came in daily contact with her], **they brought him up to Jerusalem** [to the temple], **to present him to the Lord** [When God slew the firstborn of Egypt he spared the firstborn of Israel. For this reason all the firstborn of Israel were regarded as being peculiarly the Lord's (Ex. xii. 29, 30; xiii. 2); and the firstborn male child of each family had to be redeemed with money (Ex. xiii. 11-15; Num. xviii. 15, 16). Originally the firstborn or eldest son was priest of the household after his father's death; but God chose the Levites to serve in his sanctuary in the place of these firstborn or household priests (Num. iii. 11-13; viii. 14-19); but this choosing did not annul the statute which required the payment of redemption money. The redemption money for a male was five shekels of the sanctuary, or about \$3.75--Lev. xxvii. 6] **23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord** [for additional passages see Ex. xxii. 29; xxxiv. 19, 20], **Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), 24 and to offer a sacrifice** [By redemption money and sacrifice the life of Jesus was ceremonially redeemed from God the Father, that his consecration of it to the will of the Father might be perfect. We likewise are redeemed by the blood of Christ, but are expected nevertheless to be more consecrated than ever] **according to that which is said in the law of the Lord** [Lev. xii. 6-8; v. 11], **A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.** [The required offering was a yearling lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon for a sin-offering. But the law allowed a poor mother to substitute doves or pigeons for the lamb. We see here an early trace of the poverty of Him who had not where to lay his head. Knowing the greatness of the child, Joseph and Mary would never have used the lesser sacrifice if they could have afforded the regular and more costly one. Poverty is not dishonorable in God's sight; for Mary was honored of him above all women.] **25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon** [the name means "Hearing." Some think that it was Rabbi Simeon, the son of the great teacher Hillel; but the context forbids such an idea]; **and this man was righteous and devout** [Right in outward and devout in his inward life. The first prophet to tell the world that its Messiah had come was a thoroughly good man], **looking for** [Waiting like Jacob (Gen. xlix. 18), and Joseph of Arimathæa (Mark xv. 43), he realized the truth of God's promise (Isa. xlix. 23). The Jews waited for a coming Prince, local, carnal, finite, temporal; we wait for a KING universal, spiritual, infinite, eternal, the Son of God. Hence the magnitude of our expected consolation is to theirs as an ocean is to a drop of water] **the consolation of Israel** [A common name for the era of the Messiah, which was so called because the advent of the Christ would bring comfort (Isa. xl. 1) to his people. Jews swore by the consolation of Israel, and the phrase, "May I see the consolation of Israel," was common among them. A prayer for the coming of the Messiah was daily used by them]; **and the Holy Spirit was upon him.** [Luke i. 68.] **26 And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit** [probably in a dream], **that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.** [A remarkable favor, a notable blessing--Luke x. 23, 24.] **27 And he came in the Spirit** [moved by the impulses of inspiration--Matt. xxii. 14; Rev. i. 10] **into the temple** [those who go to church perfunctorily see little; those who go in the Spirit--according to the measure in which He is given them--see and hear much]: **and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, 28 then he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 Now lettest thou thy servant depart** [This hymn of Simeon is called the "*Nunc Dimittis*" from the two words with which the Latin translation of it begins. Simeon regards his death as now near, since he had seen that for which God had kept him alive. He represents as a sentinel who, seeing the rising of the day-star which is the signal that his watch is relieved, knows his weary waiting is at an end], **Lord, According to thy word** [God keeps his word, and never disappoints], **in peace** [to the living the Jews said, "Go in peace" (Leshalom), as Jethro said to Moses; to the dying they said, "Go in peace"

(Beshalom)--Gen. xv. 15]; **30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation** [Only the eye which sees Christ is satisfied with seeing (Eccl. i. 18). To one who has Christ in his arms and salvation before his eyes the world looks poor indeed, and the loss of it appears gain--Phil. i. 21], **31 Which thou hast prepared** [God prepared the gospel in his counsels before Christ came into the world (Acts ii. 23), and foretold it by the prophets--Acts iii. 18] **before the face of all peoples** [The Jewish Scriptures were then scattered among all nations, and all people were acquainted with the Hebrew expectations of a Messiah. Simeon saw in the Babe the initial step of God toward fulfilling all these prophecies]; **32 A light for revelation** [A reference to Isa. xlix. 6. Christ's light has revealed the Father to the Gentiles. That Simeon should prophesy this is an evidence of the large spiritual knowledge given him, since even the apostles were slow to grasp the fullness of Christ's world-wide mission--see Ps. xcvi. 2, 3; Isa. lii. 10; xlii. 6] **to the Gentiles, And the glory** [Isa. xlv. 25. Israel is doubly glorified in Jesus, in that God chose this people to receive the Word, or divine Son, in that Jesus, as a Jew, presented to the world the picture of the perfect manhood. In his divinity and his humanity Jesus glorified Israel] **of thy people Israel.** [The Gentiles and Israel are here contrasted. The Gentiles refused the knowledge of God (Rom. i. 28), and Israel abused it--Rom. iii. 1-9.] **33 And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him** [Not because they heard anything which was really new, but because the words caused them to see the truth in a new way. They were also doubtless surprised to find that an utter stranger should speak thus about the child. Such manifestations of inspiration were no more common then than now]; **34 and Simeon blessed them** [While blessing the parents, he refrained from blessing the child, lest it might appear that he did it as a superior. He could bless God in the heavens (see verse 28) without fear of being misunderstood; but to bless this little Babe might seem to be presumptuous], **and said unto Mary his mother** [thus distinguishing between Mary the real parent, and Joseph the supposed one], **Behold, this child is set** [either as a stone of stumbling (Isa. viii. 14; Rom. ix. 32, 33; I. Cor. i. 23), or a precious cornerstone (I. Pet. ii. 7, 8; Acts iv. 11; I. Cor. iii. 11). Jesus is the cornerstone of true religion. Those who reject him fall over him and are broken; those who accept him, build upon him, and are lifted up and edified] **for the falling and the rising of many in Israel** [Jesus has always wrought changes which were like fallings and risings. In his own early lifetime Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, Nazarenes, Gadarenes, etc., sank down before his example and teaching; while fishermen, publicans and outcasts were elevated and encouraged by his sympathy. In the ecclesiastical field Jesus has brought down the powers of superstition and priestcraft, and exalted the common worshiper, giving him liberty of conscience. In the political field Jesus has brought down the pride of kings and lifted up the common people, and given them sovereign powers. In the spiritual realm this work of Jesus is most clearly displayed. Not only did he bring down the pride of Judah and lift up the despised Gentiles (Rom. ix. 25); but he has worked a leveling and a lifting work in the life of each of his followers. Those proud of their manhood, he has made as children, that they might become truly men (Matt. xviii. 3); those wise in their own conceit, he approaches with the foolishness of preaching, that they may become instructed in the true learning (I. Cor. i. 26-31); those strong in self-confidence, he makes weak, that he may fill them with the divine power (II. Cor. xii. 10; Phil. iv. 13). Like Paul, we fall and rise in Christ--Acts ix. 4-6]; **and for a sign** [Something which challenges attention, and is full of significant meaning. Signs were intended to allay controversy, and to exclude contradiction, but Jesus provoked both. When he was thus first in the temple, opposition was prophesied; when he was last there it was fully realized--Matt. xxiii. 38] **which is spoken against** [during his earthly lifetime Jesus was called "deceiver," "Samaritan," "demoniac," etc., and subsequently his followers were abused (Acts xxviii. 22); later the Jews wrote of him as "the deceiver," "that man," and "the hung." Early Christians were charged by the pagans with committing cannibalism, incest, and every conceivable atrocity,

and in this day "Christian" is--after Jew--the most stinging term of reproach known to the Eastern tongue]; **35 yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul** [Simeon had read and understood the prophecies which told of the suffering Messiah (Isa. xlii. 14-xliii. 12). Hence, to prepare the soul of Mary he touches this minor chord. By as much as the prophecies and annunciations concerning Jesus, led Mary to expect honor, and glory for her son; by so much did the rejection, persecution and cruel death of Jesus overwhelm her with piercing anguish and disappointment. It is also probable that at the time of the crucifixion Mary shared with the apostles the doubts as to the mission of Jesus, and these doubts must have been unspeakably bitter to her]; **that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.** [The word here translated "thoughts" is generally used to signify bad or evil thoughts. Jesus often revealed such (John ix. 16); but the context shows that Simeon had in mind the evil thoughts which were revealed by the sufferings inflicted on Christ. The human heart is desperately wicked (Jer. xvii. 9); but its wickedness was never more manifest than when it chose a murderer and crucified its Creator (Acts iii. 14, 15). Men are still revealed by their attitude toward Christ, the sincere being drawn to him, and the hypocrites being repelled from him. But at the judgment he shall shine forth as the perfect revealer of all thoughts and actions--Matt. x. 26.] **36 And there was one Anna** [the same name as Hannah (I. Sam. i. 20), meaning "He was gracious"], **a prophetess** [like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah--II. Chron. xxxiv. 22], **the daughter of Phanuel** [the same as Peniel, meaning "Face of God"--Gen. xxxii. 30], **of the tribe of Asher** [Asher was the second son of Jacob and Zilpah (Gen. xxx. 12, 13). The name means "happy." Though the ten tribes were lost and scattered, many individuals belonging to them remained in Judah--Acts xxvi. 7; Jas. i. 1] (**she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, 37 and she had been a widow even unto fourscore and four years**) [She had been married seven years, and was now eight-four years old. Her long widowhood is mentioned, because young widows who did not remarry were held in especial honor. Anna was about twenty-four years old when Jerusalem was conquered by Pompey, and came under the power of Rome], **who departed not from the temple** [This may simply mean that she was unusually assiduous in her attendance at all the temple services (Acts ii. 46); or it may be taken literally, in which case we may suppose that her prophetic talents had secured for her the right of living in one of the temple chambers. Those who patiently frequent God's house will sooner or later obtain a blessing], **worshipping with fastings** [Moses appointed one yearly fast, viz.: that on the day of Atonement; but the Pharisees introduced the custom of fasting twice a week to commemorate the days when Moses was supposed to have ascended and descended Mt. Sinai; viz.: on Monday and Thursday. They had also otherwise multiplied the fasts--Luke v. 33] **and supplications night and day.** [In Hebrew idiom night is mentioned before day, following the example of Moses (Gen. i. 5). The Hebrew theory that "God made the world in six days and seven nights," may have given birth to this idiom. For instances of this idiom, see Acts xxvi. 7; I. Tim. v. 5. There were probably night services of sacred music held in the temple, at which priests sung anthems--Ps. cxxxiv. 1, 2; cxix. 62.] **38 And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks unto God, and spake of him [Jesus] to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.** **39 And when they [the parents of Jesus] had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord, they returned.** [Luke here adds the words "into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth." We have omitted these words from the text here, and carried them forward to Section XV., where they rightfully belong. Luke omits to tell that Jesus returned to Nazareth by way of Bethlehem and Egypt. Such omissions are common in all biographies, and this one is paralleled by Luke himself in his life of Paul. Compare Acts ix. 19-26 with Gal. i. 17, 18.]

Study Questions:

1. What is the significance of Jesus being circumcised?
2. Why did Joseph and Mary take Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord?
3. What is the significance of the sacrifice they offered?
4. Who were Simeon and Anna? What is significant about what they said?
5. What did Joseph and Mary do after accomplishing everything commanded in the Law?

XIII.

EASTERN WISE-MEN, OR MAGI, VISIT JESUS,
THE NEW-BORN KING.

(Jerusalem and Bethlehem, B. C. 4.)

^aMATT. II. 1-12.

Bible Text:

^a1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 2 Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him. 3 And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written through the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel. 7 Then Herod privily called the Wise-men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him. 9 And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. 10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11 And they came into the house, and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned *of God* in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^a1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem [It lies five miles south by west of Jerusalem, a little to the east of the road to Hebron. It occupies part of the summit and sides of a narrow limestone ridge which shoots out eastward from the central chain of the Judæan mountains, and breaks down abruptly into deep valleys on the north, south, and east. Its old name, Ephrath, meant "the fruitful." Bethlehem means "house of bread." Its modern name, Beitlahm, means "house of meat." It was the home of Boaz and Ruth, of Jesse and David. The modern town contains about five hundred houses, occupied by Greek-church Christians. Over the rock-hewn cave which monks point out as the stable where Christ was born, there stands a church built by the Empress Helena, A.D. 325-327, which is the oldest monument to Christ known to men. Bethlehem was a suitable birthplace for a spiritual king; as suitable as Rome would have been for a temporal king. We do not know when the town received its name, nor by whom the name was given, but as God had chosen it as the birthplace of Jesus for many centuries before the incarnation, he may have caused it to be named Bethlehem, or "house of bread," with prophetic reference to Him who is the "Bread of Life"] **of Judæa** [called thus to distinguish it from Bethlehem of Zebulon--Josh. xix. 15] **in the days** [it is difficult to determine the exact year of Christ's birth. Dionysius the Small, an abbot at Rome in A.D. 526, published an Easter cycle, in which he fixed the birth of Christ in the year 754 of the city of Rome (A.U.C.).

This date has been followed ever since. But Jesus was born before the death of Herod, and Josephus and Dion Cassius fix the death of Herod in the year 750 A.U.C. Herod died that year, just before the Passover, and shortly after an eclipse of the moon, which took place on the night between the 12th and 13th of March. Jesus was born several months previous to the death of Herod, either toward the end of the year 749 A.U.C. (B.C. 5) or at the beginning of the year 750--B.C. 4] **of Herod** [This man was born at Ascalon, B.C. 71, and died at Jericho, A.D. 4. His father was an Edomite, and his mother an Ishmaelite. He was a man of fine executive ability and dauntless courage, but was full of suspicion and duplicity, and his reign was stained by acts of inhuman cruelty. He enlarged and beautified the temple at Jerusalem, and blessed his kingdom by many other important public works] **the king** [The life of Herod will be found in Josephus' Antiquities, Books 14-17. He was not an independent monarch, but a king subject to the Roman Empire.], **behold, Wise-men** [This word designates an order, or caste, of priests and philosophers (called magi), which existed in the countries east of the Euphrates, from a very remote period. We first find the word in Scripture at Jer. xxxix. 13, in the name rab-mag, which signifies chief magi. This class is frequently referred to in the Book of Daniel, where its members are called magicians, and it is probable that Daniel himself was a rab-mag (Dan. v. 11). The order is believed to have arisen among the Chaldeans and to have come down through the Assyrian, Medean and Persian kingdoms. The magi were, in many ways, the Levites of the East; they performed all public religious rites, claimed exclusive mediatorship between God and man, were the authority on all doctrinal points, constituted the supreme council of the realm, and had charge of the education of the royal family. They practiced divination, interpreted auguries and dreams, and professed to foretell the destinies of men. They were particularly famous for their skill in astronomy, and had kept a record of the more important celestial phenomena, which dated back several centuries prior to the reign of Alexander the Great. They were probably originally honest seekers after truth, but degenerated into mere imposters, as the Bible record shows (Acts viii. 9-11 and xiii. 8). Nothing is said as to the number who came nor as to the country from whence they came. The number and quality of the gifts has become the foundation for a tradition that they were three kings from Arabia, and during the Middle Ages it was professed that their bodies were found and removed to the cathedral at Cologne. Their shrine is still shown there to credulous travelers, and their names are given as Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar] **from the east** [Probably from Persia, the chief seat of the Median religion. Jews dwelling in Persian provinces among the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites (Acts ii. 9) may have so prepared the minds of the magi as to set them looking for the star of Bethlehem. But in addition to the knowledge carried by captive Israelites, the men of the East had other light. The great Chinese sage, Confucius (B.C. 551-479), foretold a coming Teacher in the West, and Zoroaster, the founder of the Persian religion, who is thought to have been a contemporary of Abraham, had predicted the coming of a great, supernaturally begotten Prophet. To these Balaam had added his prophecy (Num. xxiv. 17). Moreover, the Septuagint translation made at Alexandria about 280 B.C. had rendered the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek, the language of commerce, and had carried the knowledge of Hebrew prophecy into all lands, and had wakened a slight but world-wide expectation of a Messiah. The Roman writers, Suetonius (70-123, A.D.) and Tacitus (75-125, A.D.) bear witness to this expectation that a great world-ruling king would come out of Judæa. But all this put together can not account for the visit of the magi. They were guided directly by God, and nothing else may have even influenced them] **came to Jerusalem** [They naturally sought for the ruler of the state at the state's capital. They came to Jerusalem after Jesus had been presented in the temple, and taken back to Bethlehem, and, therefore, when the infant Jesus was more than forty days old. They must have come at least forty days before the death of Herod, for he spent the last forty days of his life at Jericho and the baths of Callirrhoe; but the wise men found him still at Jerusalem. Jesus must, therefore, have been

at least eighty days old when Herod died], **saying, 2 Where is he** [They seem to have expected to find all Jerusalem knowing and worshipping this new-born King. Their disappointment is shared by many modern converts from heathendom who visit so-called Christian countries, and are filled with astonishment and sadness at the ignorance and unbelief which they discover] **that is born King of the Jews?** [These words were calculated to startle Herod, who was by birth neither king nor Jew. This title was accorded to Jesus by Pilate, who wrote it in his inscription, and caused it to be placed over the head of Christ upon the cross. None has borne the title since; so Jesus has stood before the world for nearly two thousand years as the last and only king of the Jews. The king of the Jews was the prophetically announced ruler of all men] **for we saw** [Those in the pagan darkness of the East rejoiced in the star. It was as a light that shineth in a dark place (II. Pet. i. 19). But those in Jerusalem appear not to have seen it, and certainly ignored it] **his star** [The great astronomer Kepler, ascertaining that there was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in 747 A.U.C., to which conjunction the planet Mars was also added in the year 748, suggested that this grouping of stars may have formed the so-called star of Bethlehem. But this theory is highly improbable; for these planets never appeared as one star, for they were never nearer to each other than double the apparent diameter of the moon. Moreover, the magi used the word "*aster*," star, not "*astron*," a group of stars. Again, the action of the star of Bethlehem forbids us to think that it was any one of the ordinary heavenly bodies. It was a specially prepared luminous orb moving toward Bethlehem as a guiding sign, and resting over the house of Joseph as an identifying index] **in the east** [the magi were in the east; the star was in the west], **and are come** [if the reign of Edomite Herod began to fulfill the first part of Jacob's prophecy by showing the departure of the scepter from Judah (Gen. xlix. 10), the coming of the Gentile magi began the fulfillment of the second part by becoming the firstfruits of the gathering of the people] **to worship him.** [Was their worship a religious service or a mere expression of reverence for an earthly king? More likely the former. If so, the boldness with which they declared their purpose to worship proved them worthy of the benediction of Him who afterwards said, "And blessed is he whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."] **3 And when Herod the king heard it** [his evil heart, full of suspicions of all kinds, caused him to keep Jerusalem full of spies; so that knowledge of the magi soon reached his ears], **he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.** [Herod was troubled because his succession to the throne was threatened, and Jerusalem was troubled because it dreaded a conflict between rival claimants for the throne. A short time before this, certain Pharisees had predicted that "God had decreed that Herod's government should cease, and his posterity should be deprived of it." In consequence, six thousand Pharisees had refused to take the oath of allegiance to Herod, and a great commotion had ensued (Josephus xvii. 2, 4). Herod was determined to maintain his rule at any cost. To secure himself against the claims of the house of the Maccabees, he had slain five of its princes and princesses, including his favored wife Mariamne, thus extirpating that line of pretenders. Of course, prophecy predicted that Messiah should have the kingdom; but Herod's sinful heart hoped that these prophecies would not be fulfilled in his own time. Modern Herods know concerning Christ's second coming, but hope that it will be postponed till their own career is finished. Modern Jerusalemites prefer their Herods with peace to Messiah with revolution. Multitudes rest under the dominion of Satan, because they fear the revolutionary conflict and struggle necessary to enthrone the Christ in his stead. Christ is the peace of the righteous, the trouble of the wicked. Imperfect knowledge of him troubles, but perfect knowledge and love cast out fear--I. John iv. 18.] **4 And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people** [This is one of several expressions which designate the whole of or a portion of the Sanhedrin or Jewish court. This body consisted of seventy-one or seventy-two members, divided into three classes; namely, chief priest, scribes, or lawyers, and elders, or men of age and reputation among the people. The Sanhedrin was

probably formed in imitation of the body of elders appointed to assist Moses (Num. xi. 16). It is thought to have been instituted after the Babylonian captivity. As the scribes transcribed the Scriptures, they were familiar with their contents, and well skilled in their interpretation], **he inquired of them** [Herod shows that common but strange mixture of regard and contempt for the word of God which makes men anxious to know its predictions, that they may form their plans to defeat him. The first inquirers for Jesus were shepherds, the second were wise men, the third was a king, the fourth were scribes and priests. He wakens inquiry among all classes; but each uses a different means of research. The shepherds are directed by angels; the wise men by a star; the scribes by Scriptures; the king by counselors] **where the Christ** [the fact that these foreigners came thus wondrously guided, coupled with the fact that the King they sought was one by birth (David's line having been so long apparently extinct), led Herod to the conclusion that this coming King could be none other than the Messiah] **should be born.** [Thus, by light from different sources, king and priests and people were informed of the fact that Messiah was newly born into the world, and the very time and place of his birth were brought to notice. God gave them the fact, and left them to make such use of it as they would.] **5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem** [It was generally known that Christ should be born in Bethlehem (John vii. 42). The very body or court which officially announced the birthplace of Jesus subsequently condemned him to death as an imposter] **of Judæa: for thus it is written** [The quotation which follows in the sixth verse is taken from Mic. v. 2-4, but is freely translated. The translation sets the words of Micah in the language of the times of Herod, and therefore resembles some of our modern attempts at Biblical revision. The use which the scribes made of this prophecy is very important, for it shows that the Jews originally regarded this passage of Scripture as fixing the birthplace of Messiah, and condemns as a fruit of bigotry and prejudice the modern effort of certain rabbis to explain away this natural interpretation] **through the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, Art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel. 7 Then Herod privily** [Herod did not wish to give the infant claimant the honor and prestige of an open and avowed concern about him. Moreover, had he openly professed a desire to worship the new King, all Jerusalem would have been conscious of his hypocrisy, and some would have found it hard to keep silent] **called the Wise-men, and learned of them** [Though Herod sought Christ from improper motives, yet he used the best methods. He asked aid of those versed in the Scriptures, and also of those proficient in science] **exactly what time the star appeared.** [That he might ascertain, if possible, exactly on what night Christ had been born.] **8 And he sent them to Bethlehem** [thus answering their question asked in verse 2], **and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him.** [His meaning was, That I may come with my Judas kiss to betray and to destroy. Duplicity was a well-known characteristic of Herod. He had Aristobulus, the high priest, drowned by his companions while bathing, though they seemed to be only ducking him in sport. In this case Herod concealed fraud beneath an appearance of piety. Religion is one of the favorite masks of the devil (II. Cor. xi. 13-15). It is as hard for the ambitious to avoid hypocrisy as it is for the rich to shun avarice.] **9 And they, having heard the king, went their way** [No scribes were with them. The scribes were content with the *theory* as to the place of Christ's birth, but desired no practical knowledge of the Babe himself]; **and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them** [guiding them], **till it came and stood** [thus stopping them] **over where the young child was.** [A real or ordinary star would have stood indiscriminately over every house in Bethlehem, and would have been no aid whatever toward finding the right child. For planets to stand over any place, they must be in the zenith and have an altitude of ninety degrees. This star, therefore, could not have been a conjunction of planets, for their altitude at Bethlehem is fifty-seven degrees, and seen

at this angle they would have led the magi on down into Africa. The magi were undoubtedly favored with a special revelation as to the Babe and the star. It was probably given in a dream similar to that spoken of in verse 12. The star, as one of the temporary incidentals of Christianity, faded away; but the Sun of righteousness which took its place in the spiritual firmament shines on, and shall shine on forever.] **10 And when they saw the star, they rejoiced** [a comfort restored is a comfort multiplied] **with exceeding great joy.** [The return of the star assured them that God would lead them safely and surely to the object of their desires. Their joy was such as comes to those who come from seasons of dark doubt to the glories of light and faith. The star enabled them to find Jesus without asking questions, and bringing such public attention to him as would aid Herod in preventing his escape. Since the magi were guided by a star, they were forced to enter Bethlehem by night, and this contributed to the privacy of their coming and the safety of Jesus.] **11 And they came into the house** [the humble home of the carpenter might have shook their faith in the royalty of the son, but the miraculous honors accorded him in the star and the Scripture raised him in their estimation above all the humiliation of external circumstances], **and saw the young child with Mary his mother** [she was the only attendant in this King's retinue--the retinue of him who became poor that we, out of his poverty, might be made rich]; **and they fell down** [The usual Oriental method of showing either reverence or worship] **and worshipped him** [It is safe to think that the manner in which they had been led to Jesus caused them to worship him as divine. Their long journey and their exuberant joy at its success indicate that they sought more than the great king of a foreign nation. The God who led them by a star, would hardly deny them full knowledge as to the object of their quest. Had their worship been mere reverence, Mary would, no doubt, have been included in it. We should note their faith. They had known Christ but one day; he had performed no miracles; he had none other to do him homage; he was but a helpless Babe, yet they fell down and worshiped him. Their faith is told for a memorial of them. They worshiped him not as one who must win his honors; but as one already invested with them. When we come to Christ, let us come to worship, not to patronize, not to employ him for sectarian uses, not to use him as an axiom on which to base some vapid theological speculation]; **and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts** [Oriental custom requires that an inferior shall approach his superior with a gift. These gifts probably contributed to the sustenance of the parents and the child while in Egypt], **gold and frankincense** [A white resin or gum obtained by slitting the bark of the *Arbor thuris*. The best is said to come from Persia. It is also a product of Arabia. It is very fragrant when burned] **and myrrh.** [It is also obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. The tree is similar to the acacia. It grows from eight to ten feet high, and is thorny. It is found in Egypt, Arabia and Abyssinia. Myrrh means bitterness. The gum was chiefly used in embalming dead bodies, as it prevented putrefaction. It was also used in ointments, and for perfume; and as an anodyne it was sometimes added to wine.] **12 And being warned of God in a dream** [this suggests that as they came by night, so they were aroused and caused to depart by night, that their coming and going might, in no way, betray the whereabouts of the infant King] **that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.** [They took the road from Bethlehem to Jericho, and thus passed eastward without returning to Jerusalem.]

Study Questions:

1. Where did the Wise-men come from? How many were there?
2. Why did the wise men go to Jerusalem?

3. What was Herod's reaction to hearing about the Wise-men's inquiry? What did he do?
4. What did Herod learn from the chief priests and scribes?
5. What did Herod want to know from the Wise-men? Why might Herod of met with them in private?
6. What did Herod command the Wise-men to do after finding Jesus? What was Herod's reason for wanting to see Jesus?
7. How did the Wise-men find Jesus?
8. What did the Wise-men do when they saw Jesus?
9. Did the Wise-men report the location of Jesus to Herod? Why?

XIV. FLIGHT INTO EGYPT AND SLAUGHTER OF THE BETHLEHEM CHILDREN.

(Bethlehem and Road thence to Egypt, B. C. 4.)

^aMATT. II. 13-18.

Bible Text:

^a13 Now when they were departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14 And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; 15 and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son. 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the Wise-men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise-men. 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 18 A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she would not be comforted, because they are not.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^a13 Now when they were departed [The text favors the idea that the arrival and departure of the magi and the departure of Joseph for Egypt, all occurred in one night. If so, the people of Bethlehem knew nothing of these matters], **behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise** [this command calls for immediate departure] **and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt** [This land was ever the refuge of Israel when fleeing from famine and oppression. One hundred miles in a direct line from Bethlehem would carry Joseph well over the border of Egypt. Two hundred miles would bring him to the river Nile. In Egypt he would find friends, possibly acquaintances. There were at that time about one million Jews in the Nile valley. In Alexandria, a city of 300,000, from one-fifth to two-fifths of the population were Jews, two of the five wards being given over to them; and the Talmud describes how, in its great synagogue, all the men of like craft or trade sat together. Thus Joseph might there find fellow-craftsmen, as did Paul in Corinth--Acts xviii. 3], **and be thou there until I tell thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.** [Thus joy at the honor of the magi's visit and worship gives place to terror at the wrath of Herod. The quiet days at Bethlehem are followed by a night of fear and flight. The parents of Jesus were experiencing those conflicting joys and sorrows which characterize the lives of all who have to do with Christ-- Mark x. 30; II. Tim. iii. 12.] **14 And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt** [What a criticism upon Israel when Egypt, the house of bondage, the seat of tyranny, the land of the immemorial enemies of God's people, was regarded as a place of refuge from its ruler. Jesus was saved by flight. God invariably prefers the ordinary to the extraordinary means]; **15 and was there until the death of Herod** [as Herod died soon after the flight into Egypt, the sojourn of the family of Jesus in that land must have been brief, for they returned after

his death]: **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord** [the message is the Lord's, the words and voice are the prophet's] **through the prophet** [see Hos. xi. 1], **saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.** [This prophecy, no doubt, had a primary reference to the Exodus, and was an echo of the words of Moses at Ex. iv. 22, 23. In their type and antitype relationship the Old and New Testaments may be likened to the shell and kernel of a nut. Israel was Israel, and God's Son, because it included in itself the yet unformed and unborn body which was later to be inhabited by the spirit of the Word or Son of God. The seed of Abraham was called out of Egypt, that the promised seed enveloped within it might have a body and nature prepared in the land of liberty, and not in that of bondage. Israel was the outer shell, and Christ the kernel, hence the double significance of the prophecy--the twice repeated movement of the nation and the Man.] **16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked** [the magi, no doubt, intended to return to Herod, and would have done so but for the dream, but when they failed to return, they seemed to Herod to have taken pleasure in deceiving him, and the very honesty of their conduct passed for the lowest depth of cunning] **of the Wise-men, was exceeding wroth** [wroth at being made sport of, and doubly wroth because of the serious matter as to which they presumed to jest], **and sent forth** [murderers, suddenly], **and slew** [Thus early did persecution attend those associated with Christ (Matt. x. 24, 25). This brutality was in keeping with Herod's character. Jealousy as to his authority led him to murder two high priests, his uncle Joseph, his wife, and three of his own sons, besides many other innocent persons. Fearing lest the people should rejoice at his departure, he summoned the leading citizens of all the cities of his realm, and, shutting them up in the circus grounds at Jericho, ordered his sister Salome and her husband to have them all put to death at the moment when he died, that the land might mourn at his death] **all the male children that were in Bethlehem** [As Bethlehem was not a large place, the number of martyrs could not have been large. It is variously estimated that from twelve to fifty were slain. Had the parents of Bethlehem known that Jesus was on the way to Egypt, they might have saved their own children by giving information as to the whereabouts of the right child; that is, if we may assume that they were told why their children were being butchered], **and in all the borders** [Adjacent places; settlements or houses around Bethlehem. The present population of the town is fully five thousand; it was probably even larger in Christ's time] **thereof, from two years old and under** [According to Jewish reckoning this would mean all children from birth up to between twelve and thirteen months old, all past one year old being counted as two years old], **according to the time which he had exactly learned of the Wise-men.** [That is, he used their date as a basis for his calculations. It is likely that six months had elapsed since the star appeared, and that Herod doubled the months to make doubly sure of destroying the rival claimant. Not knowing whether the child was born before or after the appearing of the star, he included all the children of that full year in which the star came.] **17 Then was fulfilled** [Verses 6, 15 and 18 give us three different kinds of prophecy. The first is direct, and relates wholly to an event which was yet future; the second is a case where an *act* described is symbolic of another later and larger act; the last is a case where *words* describing one act may be taken as fitly and vividly describing another later act, though the acts themselves may bear small resemblance. Matthew does not mean that Jeremiah predicted the slaughter at Bethlehem; but that his words, though spoken as to another occasion, were so chosen of the Spirit that they might be fitly applied to this latter occasion] **that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet** [Jer. xxxi. 15], **saying, 18 A voice was heard in Ramah** [This word means "highland" or "hill." The town lies six miles north of Jerusalem. It was the birthplace and burial-place of the prophet Samuel. It is also supposed to be the Aramathea of the New Testament. See Matt. xxvii. 57], **Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children** [Why these tearful mothers in Bethlehem? Because that which Christ escaped remained for his brethren, their children, to suffer. If he would escape death, all his brethren must die. But

he died that all his brethren might live]; **And she would not be comforted, because they are not.** [The words here quoted were originally written concerning the Babylonish captivity (Jer. xxxi. 15). Ramah was a town of Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 25). Jeremiah was carried thither in chains with the other captives, but was there released by the order of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xl. 1; xxxix. 11, 12). Here he saw the captives depart for Babylon, and heard the weeping of the poor who were left in the land (xxxix. 10); hence the mention of Ramah as the place of lamentation. He represents Rachel as weeping, because the Benjamites were descendants of Rachel, and, perhaps, because the tomb of Rachel was "in the border of Benjamin," and not far away (I. Sam. x. 2). The image of the ancient mother of the tribe rising from her tomb to weep, and refusing to be comforted because her children were not around her, is inimitably beautiful; and this image so strikingly portrayed the weeping in Bethlehem that Matthew adopts the words of the prophet, and says that they were here fulfilled. It was the fulfillment, not of a prediction, properly speaking, but of certain *words* spoken by the prophet.]

Study Questions:

1. When did Joseph take Mary and Jesus and depart for Egypt? How long did they stay?
2. How did Joseph taking Mary and Jesus to Egypt fulfill prophesy?
3. How had the Wise-men mocked Herod?
4. What did Herod do after being mocked by the Wise-men?
5. How did Herod determine which babies to kill?
6. Why might Herod have killed the babies?
7. How did the killing of babies in Bethlehem fulfill prophesy?

XV.

THE CHILD JESUS BROUGHT
FROM EGYPT TO NAZARETH.

(Egypt and Nazareth, B. C. 4.)

^aMATT. II. 19-23; ^cLUKE II. 39.

Bible Text:

^a19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, 20 Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead that sought the young child's life. 21 And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judæa in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream, {“they returned”} ^ahe withdrew into the parts of Galilee, 23 and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; ^ctheir own city ^athat it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^a19 But when Herod was dead [He died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign and the seventieth of his life. A frightful inward burning consumed him, and the stench of his sickness was such that his attendants could not stay near him. So horrible was his condition that he even endeavored to end it by suicide], **behold, an angel of the Lord** [word did not come by the infant Jesus; he was "made like unto his brethren" (Heb. ii. 17), and being a child, "he spake as a child" (I. Cor. xiii. 11), and not as an oracle] **appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt** [Joseph had obeyed the command given at verse 13, and God kept the promise contained therein. God ever keeps covenant with the obedient], **saying, 20 Arise** [Happy Joseph! his path was ordered of God. Let us also seek such ordering. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths--Prov. iii. 6] **and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel** [The phrase "land of Israel" originally meant all Palestine, but during the period of the kingdom of the ten tribes it was restricted to their portion of the country. After the captivities and the return of Judah from Babylon the phrase resumed its original meaning, and hence it is here used to include all Palestine. As Jesus "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24), it was fitting that he return thither from Egypt]; **for they** ["They" is doubtless the plural of majesty; though it may include others unknown to us, who were employed by him or advised him] **are dead** [How prophetic the words! Christ's enemies die, but he lives on. How innumerable this host of opposers! Persecutors, oppressors, infidels, critics, literatures, organizations, principalities and powers, a vast and motley array of forces, have sought the life of Jesus, have made a great noise in the world, and died away in silence. Pharoahs, Neros, Diocletians, many a Charles, Torquemada and Bloody Mary have come up and gone down, but the king of Israel lives on] **that sought the young child's life. 21 And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came** [The length of his sojourn in Egypt is uncertain. It is variously estimated at from two weeks to more than seven months] **into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard** [Joseph heard this on entering Palestine. As he knew of Herod's death by revelation, and hence before any one else in Egypt, there was no one there to tell him who succeeded Herod] **that Archelaus** [By his

last will and testament Herod divided his kingdom among three of his sons, and Augustus Cæsar consented to the provision of this will. Archelaus, under the title of Ethnarch, received Judæa, Idumæa, and Samaria; Antipas, under the title of Tetrarch, received Galilee and Peræa; and Philip, under the title of Tetrarch, received Trachonitis (with Ituræa), Batanæa, and Auranitis. Each of these sons bore the name of Herod, like their father. Augustus withheld from Archelaus the title of king, promising it to him "if he governed that part virtuously." But in the very beginning of his reign he massacred three thousand Jews at once, in the temple, at the time of the Passover, because they called for justice upon the agents who performed the barbarities of his father's reign. Not long after this a solemn embassy of the Jews went to Rome, and petitioned Augustus to remove Archelaus, and make his kingdom a Roman province. After a reign of nine years, Archelaus was banished to Vienne, in Gaul, where he died in A.D. 6. After him Judæa had no more native kings, and the scepter was clean departed from Judah. The land became a Roman province, and its governors were successively Quirinius, Coponius, Ambivius, Annius Rufus, Valerius Gratus, and Pontius Pilate] **was reigning over Judæa in the room of his father Herod** [These words sound like an echo of those employed by the embassy just referred to, for it said to Augustus concerning this man, "He seemed to be so afraid lest he should not be deemed Herod's own son, that he took special care to prove it"], **he was afraid to go thither** [As Matthew has spoken of Joseph residing at Bethlehem (and he did reside there for quite awhile after the birth of Jesus), the use of word "thither" implies that Joseph planned to return to that town. Mary had kindred somewhere in the neighborhood (Luke i. 36, 39, 40), and doubtless both parents thought that David's city was the most fitting place for the nurture of David's heir]; **and being warned of God in a dream** [God permitted Joseph to follow the bent of his fear. Joseph's obedience shows him a fit person for the momentous charge entrusted to him], **{they returned} he withdrew** [From the territory of Archelaus to that of Antipas, who was a man of much milder disposition. As the brothers were on no good terms, Joseph felt sure that in no case would Antipas deliver him and his to Archelaus] **into the parts of Galilee** [It means "circuit." It is the northern of the three divisions of the Holy Land. Its population was very dense, and was a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Hence all Galilæans were despised by the purer Jews of Judæa], **23 and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; their own city** [This town lies on a hillside, girt in by fifteen higher hills. It is a secluded nook. Here Jesus grew up in obscurity till he reached his thirtieth year. Here he spent about nine-tenths of his earthly life. Sweet humility! Lowliness is as rare and precious a virtue as pride is a plentiful and repugnant vice] **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets** [Matthew uses the plural, "prophets," because this prophecy is not the actual words of any prophet, but is the general sense of many of them. We have noted three kinds of prophecy; this is the fourth kind, viz.: one where the very trend or general scope of Scripture is itself a prophecy], **that he should be called a Nazarene.** [The Hebrew word *netzer* means "branch" or "sprout." It is used figuratively for that which is lowly or despised (Isa. xvii. 9; Ezek. xv. 1-6; Mal. iv. 1). See also John xv. 6; Rom. xi. 21. Now, Nazareth, if derived from *netzer*, answered to its name, and was a despised place (John i. 45, 46), and Jesus, though in truth a Bethlehemite, bore the name Nazarene because it fitly expressed the contempt of those who despised and rejected him.]

Study Questions:

1. Why was it safe for Joseph to return from Egypt with Mary and Jesus?
2. When leaving Egypt, where did Joseph first take Mary and Jesus? Why didn't they stay there?
3. Where did Joseph take Mary and Jesus after leaving the land of Israel? How did this fulfill prophecy?

XVI. JESUS LIVING AT NAZARETH AND VISITING JERUSALEM IN HIS TWELFTH YEAR.

(Nazareth and Jerusalem, A. D. 7 or 8.)

^cLUKE II. 40-52.

Bible Text:

^c**40 And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. 41 And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; 43 and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; 44 but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: 45 and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. 46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions: 47 and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. 49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart. 52 And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**

Bible Text with Commentary:

^c**40 And the child grew** [This verse contains the history of thirty years. It describes the growth of our Lord as a natural, human growth (compare Luke i. 80); for, though Jesus was truly divine, he was also perfectly man. To try to distinguish between the divine and human in Jesus, is to waste time upon an impracticable mystery which is too subtle for our dull and finite minds], **and waxed strong** [His life expanded like other human lives. He learned as other boys; he obeyed as other children. As he used means and waited patiently for growth, so must each individual Christian, and so must the church. Though the latter is a mystical body, and animated by the Holy Spirit, it must nevertheless make increase of itself before coming to the perfect man--Eph. iv. 16], **filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.** [These words describe briefly the life of Christ during the preparatory period at Nazareth. It was a quiet life, but its sinless purity made the Baptist feel his own unworthiness compared to it (Matt. iii. 14), and its sweet reasonableness inspired in Mary, the mother, that confidence which led her to sanction, without reserve, any request or command which Jesus might utter--John ii. 5.] **41 And his parents** [Males were required to attend the Passover (Ex. xiii. 7); but women were not. The great rabbi, Hillel (born about B.C. 110, died A.D. 10), recommended that they should do so, and the practice was esteemed an act of admirable piety] **went every year** [regular attendance upon worship is likewise enjoined upon us--Heb. x. 25] **to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover.** [The Passover, one of the three great Jewish feasts, commemorated the mercy of God in causing his angel to "pass over" the houses in Israel on the night that

he slew all the firstborn of Egypt. It took place at the full moon which occurred next after the vernal equinox. At it the firstfruits of the harvest were offered (Lev. xxiii. 10-15). The second feast, Pentecost, occurred fifty days later, and commemorated the giving of the law. At it the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, in the form of bread (Lev. xxiii. 17), were offered. The third feast, or Tabernacles, occurred near the end of September, or beginning of October, and commemorated the days when Israel dwelt in tents in the wilderness. It was observed as a thanksgiving for the blessings of the year. Every adult male Jews dwelling in Judæa was required to attend these three feasts. Josephus tells us that the numbers assembled at them in Jerusalem often exceeded two millions.] **42 And when he was twelve years old** [The incident which Luke here reports is the only one given in the period between the return from Egypt and Jesus' thirtieth year. It shows that Jesus did not attend the school of the rabbis in Jerusalem (Mark vi. 2; John vi. 42; vii. 15). But we learn that he could write (John viii. 6), and there is little doubt but that he spoke both Hebrew and Greek], **they went up** [the altitude of Jerusalem is higher than that of Nazareth, and the distance between the two places is about seventy miles] **after the custom of the feast** [the custom was that the feast was celebrated annually in Jerusalem]; **43 and when they had fulfilled the days** [eight days in all; one day for killing the passover, and seven for observing the feast of unleavened bread which followed it--Ex. xii. 15; Lev. xxiii. 5, 6], **as they were returning, the boy Jesus** [Luke narrates something about every stage of Christ's life. He speaks of him as a babe (ii. 16), as a little child (ii. 40), here as a boy, and afterwards as a man] **tarried behind in Jerusalem** [to take advantage of the opportunity to hear the great teachers in the schools]; **and his parents knew it not** [As vast crowds attended the Passover, it was easy to lose sight of a boy amid the festal throng. Indeed, the incident is often repeated even to this day during the feast seasons at Jerusalem]; **44 but supposing him to be in the company** [We see here the confidence of the parents, and the independence of the child. The sinlessness of Jesus was not due to any exceptional care on the part of his parents. Jews going to and from their festivals traveled in caravans for pleasure and safety. In the daytime the young folks mingled freely among the travelers, and sought out whatever companionship they wished. But in the evening, when the camp was formed, and the tents were pitched, the members of each family came together], **they went a day's journey** [They probably returned by the way of Jericho to avoid passing through Samaria, because of the hatred existing between Jews and Samaritans. In more modern times the first day's journey is a short one, and it was probably so then. It was made so in order that the travelers might return to the city whence they had departed, should they discover that they had forgotten anything--should they find that they had forgotten a sack of meal, a blanket or a child]; **and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance** [those with whom he was most likely to have traveled during the day]: **45 and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him.** [Parents who have temporarily suffered the loss of their children can easily imagine their feelings. Christ, though a divine gift to them, was lost. So may we also lose him, though he be God's gift to us.] **46 And it came to pass, after three days** [Each part of a day was reckoned as a day when at the beginning and ending of a series. The parents missed Jesus on the evening of the first day, returned to Jerusalem and sought for him on the second day, and probably found him on the morning of the third day. The disciples of Jesus also lost him in the grave for part of one day, and all of the next, and found him resurrected on the morning of the third day--Luke xxiv. 21] **they found him in the temple** [Probably in one of the many chambers which tradition says were built against the walls of the temple and its enclosures, and opened upon the temple courts. The sacred secret which they knew concerning the child should have sent them at once to the temple to seek for him], **sitting** [Jewish scholars sat upon the ground at the feet of their teachers] **in the midst** [the teachers sat on semi-circular benches and thus partially surrounded by their scholars] **of the teachers** [these teachers had schools in which they taught for the fees

of their pupils, and are not to be confounded with the scribes, who were mere copyists], **both hearing them, and asking them questions** [He was not teaching: the God of order does not expect childhood to teach. He was among them as a modest scholar, and not as a forward child. The rabbinical method of instruction was to state cases, or problems, bearing upon the interpretation or application of the law, which cases or problems were to be solved by the pupils. For typical problems see Matt. xxii. 15-46]: **47 and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when they** [his parents] **saw him, they were astonished** [Mary and Joseph stood as much in awe of these renowned national teachers as peasants do of kings, and were therefore astonished that their youthful son presumed to speak to them]; **and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?** [Her language implies that Jesus had been fully instructed as to the time when his parents and their caravan would depart for Galilee, and that he was expected to depart with them. Obedience to his higher duties constrained him to appear disobedient to his parents] **behold, thy father** [As legal father of Jesus, this expression would necessarily have to be used when speaking of Joseph. But Jesus does not accept Joseph as his father, as we see by his answer] **and I sought thee sorrowing.** [Because they thought him lost.] **49 And he said unto them** [What follows are the first recorded words of Jesus; he here speaks of the same being--the Father--to whom he commended his spirit in his last words upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 46). His last recorded words on earth are found at Acts i. 7, 8; his last recorded words in heaven are found in Rev. xxii. 10-20, but these last words are spoken through the medium of an angel], **How is it that ye sought me?** [Mary, knowing all that had been divinely revealed to her concerning Jesus, should have expected to find him in the temple] **knew ye not that I must** [In this oft-repeated phrase, "I must," Jesus sets forth that devotion (John iv. 34) to the will of the Father by which his whole life was directed] **be in my Father's** [Literally "the Father of me." Jesus invariably used the article in speaking of himself, and said "the Father of me," and invariably omitted the article, and said, "Father of you," when speaking of his disciples. His relationship to the Father differed from ours, and God, not Joseph, was his father] **house?** [See John ii. 16, 17; viii. 35.] **50 And they understood not** [It may seem strange that Mary, knowing all that she did concerning the birth of Jesus, etc., did not grasp the meaning of his words, but we are all slow to grasp great truths; and failure to be understood was therefore a matter of daily occurrence with Jesus. (Luke ix. 45; xviii. 34; Mark ix. 32; John x. 6.) Christ spoke plainly, but human ears were slow to comprehend his wonderful sayings. We need to be watchful lest our ears be censured for a like slowness] **the saying which he spake unto them. 51 And he went down with them** [Jerusalem was among the mountains, Nazareth among the hills], **and came to Nazareth** [A beautiful and healthful town, but so lacking in piety and learning as to form the "dry ground" out of which it was prophetically predicted that the glorious and fruitful life of Jesus would spring. Here Christ rose above all times and schools and revealed to man that "life more abundant" than all kings, lawgivers or sages had ever discovered. His character, like the New Jerusalem, descended from God out of heaven, and no education obtained in Nazareth will explain it. The struggle of self-made men with their early environment is noticeable to the last, but it is not so with him. The discourses of Jesus are the outpourings of divine knowledge, and not the result of study or self-culture]; **and he was subject** [Our example in all things, he here set before us that pattern of obedience which children should observe toward their parents. In these years Jesus learned the trade of his supposed father (Mark vi. 3). Christ was a laborer, and thereby sanctified labor, and showed that dignity and glory belong to inward and not to outward conditions] **unto them** [His parents, Joseph and Mary. We find no mention of Joseph after this, and the probability is that he soon died]: **and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.** [She had many treasured sayings of angels, shepherds, wise men and prophets. She now began to add to these the sayings of Christ himself.] **52 And Jesus advanced**

in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. [He did not *literally* grow in favor with God. This is a phenomenal expression. The favor of God and man kept company for quite awhile; but the favor of God abode with Jesus when man's good will was utterly withdrawn. Men admire holiness until it becomes aggressive, and then they fell an antagonism against it as great, or intense, as their previous admiration.]

Study Questions:

1. How does Luke describe Jesus' growth and development as a child?
2. What do we learn about Joseph and Mary by the fact that they went to the feast of the passover every year?
3. What did Jesus do while His parents started their journey home?
4. When did Joseph and Mary find Jesus missing? What did they do?
5. Where did Joseph and Mary find Jesus? What was He doing?
6. Why might the people who heard Jesus in the temple have been amazed?
7. What did Mary ask Jesus? What was His answer?
8. Did Mary and Joseph understand Jesus' answer? Why might they not have understood?
9. What did Jesus do after His parents found Him?

P A R T S E C O N D.

BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE FORERUNNER.

XVII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S PERSON AND PREACHING.

(In the wilderness of Judæa, and on the banks of the Jordan,
occupying several months, probably A. D. 25 or 26.)

^aMATT. III. 1-12; ^bMARK I. 1-8; ^cLUKE III. 1-18.

Bible Text:

^b1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. ^c1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. ^a1 And in those days cometh John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, 2 Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, ^c3 And he came into all the region round about the Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins ^beven ^c4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ^asaying, ^bBehold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; ^cThe voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, And every mountain and hill shall be brought low; And the crooked shall become straight, And the rough way smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. ^b4 John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. ^a4 Now John himself had his raiment of ^b6 And was clothed with ^acamel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was {^band did eat} ^alocusts and wild honey. ^b5 And there ^a5 Then went out unto him ^ball the country of Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem; ^aall the region round about the Jordan 6 and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said {^ctherefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him} ^aunto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance: 9 and think not {^cbegin not} ^ato say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10 And even now the axe ^calso ^alieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ^c10 And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? 11 And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. 12 And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do? 13 And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. 14 And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we

do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse *any one* wrongfully; and be content with your wages. 15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; 16 John answered, saying unto them all, ^{b7} And he preached, saying, ^{a11} I indeed baptize {^bbaptized} ^ayou in {^cwith} water unto repentance: ^cBut there {^ahe that} ^bcometh after me he that is mightier than I I am not worthy to bear: ^bthe latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. ^che shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and *in fire*: 17 whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to {^aand he will thoroughly} ^ccleanse his threshing-floor, and to {^aand he will} ^cgather the {^ahis} ^cwheat into his {^athe} ^cgarner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire. 18 With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^{b1} **The beginning of the gospel** [John begins his Gospel from eternity, where the Word is found coexistent with God. Matthew begins with Jesus, the humanly generated son of Abraham and David, born in the days of Herod the king. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist, the Messiah's herald; and Mark begins with the ministry of John the Baptist. While the three other evangelists take a brief survey of the *preparation* of the gospel, Mark looks particularly to the period when it began to be *preached*. Gospel means good news, and news is not news until it is proclaimed. The gospel began to be preached or proclaimed with the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke xvi. 16). His ministry was the dawn of that gospel of which Christ's preaching was the sunrise] **of Jesus** [Our Lord's *name* as a human being; it means "Saviour"] **Christ** [Though this is also sometimes used as a name, it is in reality our Lord's *title*. It means "the Anointed," and is equivalent to saying that Jesus is our Prophet, Priest and King] **the Son of God**. [This indicates our Lord's eternal *nature*; it was divine. Mark's gospel was written to establish that fact, which is the foundation of the church (Matt. xvi. 18). John's Gospel was written for a like purpose (John xx. 31). John uses the phrase "Son of God" twenty-nine times, and Mark seven times. As these two evangelists wrote chiefly for Gentile readers, they emphasized the divinity of Jesus, and paid less attention to his Jewish ancestry. But Matthew, writing for Hebrews, prefers the title "Son of David," which he applies to Jesus some nine times, that he may identify him as the Messiah promised in the seed of David--II. Sam. vii. 12; Ps. lxxii. 1-17; lxxxix. 3, 4; cxxxii. 11, 12.] ^{c1} **Now in the fifteenth year of the reign** [Tiberius Cæsar, stepson of and successor to Augustus, began to reign as joint ruler with Augustus in August, A.U.C. 765 (A.D. 11). On Aug. 19, 767, Augustus died and Tiberius became sole ruler. Luke counts from the beginning of the joint rule, and his fifteen years bring us to 779. In August, 779, Tiberius began his fifteenth year, and about December of that year Jesus would have completed his thirtieth year] **of Tiberius Cæsar** [He was born B.C. 41, died March 16, A.D. 37. As a citizen he distinguished himself as orator, soldier and public official. But as emperor he was slothful, self-indulgent, indescribably licentious, vindictive and cruel. He was a master of dissimulation and cunning, and was a veritable scourge to his people. But he still found flatterers even in Palestine, Cæsarea Philippi, and the town Tiberias being named for him], **Pontius Pilate** [see mention of him in account of our Lord's trial] **being governor of Judæa** [The province of Judæa was subdued by Pompey and brought under Roman control in B.C. 63. Its history from that date till the governorship of Pilate can be found in Josephus], **and Herod** [Also called Antipas. The ruler who murdered John the Baptist and who assisted at the trial of Jesus] **being tetrarch** [this word means properly the ruler of a fourth part of a country, but was used loosely for any petty tributary prince] **of Galilee** [This province lay north of Samaria, and measured about twenty-five miles from north to south,

and twenty-seven miles from east to west. It was a rich and fertile country], **and his brother** [half-brother] **Philip** [He was distinguished by justice and moderation, the one decent man in the Herodian family. He married Salome, who obtained John the Baptist's head for a dance. He built Cæsarea Philippi, and transformed Bethsaida Julius from a village to a city, and died there A.D. 44. After his death his domains became part of the Roman province of Syria] **tetrarch of the region of Ituræa** [A district thirty miles long by twenty-five broad, lying north of Batanæa, east of Mt. Hermon, west of Trachonitis. It received its name from Jetur, son of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 15). Its Ishmaelite inhabitants were conquered by Aristobulus, king of Judæa, B.C. 100, and forced by him to accept the Jewish faith. They were marauders, and famous for the use of the bow] **and Trachonitis** [A district about twenty-two miles from north to south by fourteen from east to west. Its name means "rough" or "stony," and it amply deserves it. It lies between Ituræa and the desert, and has been infested with robbers from the earliest ages. It is called the Argob in the Old Testament, "an ocean of basaltic rock and boulders, tossed about in the wildest confusion, and intermingled with fissures and crevices in every direction"], **and Lysanias** [Profane history gives us no account of this man. It tells of a Lysanias, king of Chalcis, under Mt. Lebanon, who was put to death by Mark Antony, B.C. 36, or sixty-odd years before this, and another who was tetrarch of Abilene in the reigns of Caligula and Claudius twenty years after this. He probably was son of the first and father of the second] **tetrarch of Abilene** [The city of Abila (which comes from the Hebrew word "abel," meaning "meadow") is eighteen miles from Damascus and thirty-eight from Baalbec. The province lying about it is mentioned because it subsequently formed part of the Jewish territory, being given to Herod Agrippa I. by Emperor Claudius about A.D. 41], **2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas** [Annas had been high priest 7-14 A.D., when he was deposed by the procurator, Gratus. Caiaphas was son-in-law of and successor to Annas. Luke gives both names, one as the rightful and the other as the acting high priest. Compare Acts iv. 6. Gentile innovations had made sad havoc with the Jewish law as to this office. In the last one hundred and seven years of the temple's existence there were no less than twenty-eight high priests. Luke is the only one who fixes the time when Jesus began his ministry. He locates it by emperor and governor, tetrarch and high priest, as an event of world-wide importance, and of concern to all the kingdoms of men. He conceives of it as Paul did--Acts xxvi. 26], **the word of God** [The divine commission which bade John enter his career as a prophet (Jer. i. 2; Ezek. vi. 1). Prophets gave temporary and limited manifestations of God's will (Heb. i. 1, 2). Jesus is the everlasting and unlimited manifestation of the divine purpose and of the very Godhead--John xiv. 9; xii. 45; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3; II. Cor. iv. 6] **came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.** [The wilderness of Judæa is that almost uninhabitable mass of barren ridges extending the whole length of the Dead Sea, and a few miles further north. It is from five to ten miles wide.] **1 And in those days** [Some take this expression as referring to the years when Jesus dwelt at Nazareth. But it is better to regard it as a Hebraism equivalent to "that age" or "that era" (Ex. ii. 11). It contrasts the era when the Baptist lived with the era when Matthew wrote his Gospel, just as we say "in these days of enlightenment" when we wish to contrast the present time with the days of the American Revolution] **cometh John** [he was cousin to Jesus] **the Baptist** [So called because God first gave through him the ordinance of baptism. It has been erroneously thought by some that John borrowed this ordinance from the Jewish practice of proselyte baptism. This could not be, for John baptized his converts, but Jewish proselytes baptized themselves. The law required such self-baptism of all persons who were unclean (Lev. xiv. 9; Num. xix. 19; viii. 7; Lev. xv., xvi.). More than twenty distinct cases are specified in which the law required bathing or self-baptism, and it is to these Paul refers when he states that the law consisted in part "of divers baptisms" (Heb. ix. 10). But the law did not require this of proselytes, and proselyte baptism was a human appendage to the divinely given Jewish ritual, just as infant baptism is to the true Christian ritual.

Proselyte baptism is not mentioned in history till the third century of the Christian era. Neither Josephus, nor Philo, nor the Apocrypha, nor the Targums say anything about it, though they all mention proselytes. In fact, the oldest mention of it in Jewish writings is in the Babylonian Gemara, which was completed about five hundred years after Christ. The New Testament implies the non-existence of proselyte baptism (Matt. xxi. 25; John i. 25, 33). John could hardly have been called the *Baptist*, had he used an old-time rite in the accustomed manner. The Baptist was a link between the Old and New Testament. Belonging to the Old, he announced the New], **preaching** [Not sermonizing, but crying out a message as a king's herald making a proclamation, or a policeman crying "Fire!" in a slumbering town. His discourse was brief and unembellished. Its force lay in the importance of the truth announced. It promised to the Hebrew the fulfillment of two thousand years of longing. It demanded repentance, but for a new reason. The old call to repentance had wooed with the promise of earthly blessings, and warned with the threat of earthly judgments; but John's repentance had to do with the kingdom of heaven and things eternal. It suggested the Holy Spirit as a reward, and unquenchable fire as the punishment] **in the wilderness of Judæa** [that part of the wilderness which John chose for the scene of his ministry is a desert plain lying along the western bank of the Jordan, between Jericho and the Dead Sea], **saying, 2 Repent ye** [to repent is to change the *will* in reference to *sin*, resolving to sin no more] **for** [John sets forth the motive for repentance. Repentance is the duty, and the approach of the kingdom is the motive inciting to it. Only by repentance could the people be prepared for the kingdom. Those who are indifferent to the obligations of an old revelation would be ill-prepared to receive a new one] **the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** [Dan. ii. 44. "Kingdom of heaven" is peculiar to Matthew, who uses it thirty-one times. He also joins with the other evangelists in calling it the kingdom of God. We know not why he preferred the expression, "kingdom of heaven."] **3 For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, 3 And he came** [he made his public appearance, and, like that of Elijah, it was a sudden one--I. Kings xvii. 1] **into all the region round about the Jordan** [The Jordan valley is called in the old Testament the Arabah, and by the modern Arabs the Ghor. It is the deepest valley in the world, its lowest part being about thirteen hundred feet below the level of the ocean] **preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins** [as a change leading to remission or forgiveness of sins] **even 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet** [Isaiah flourished from about 759 to 699 B.C.], **saying, 5 Behold** [The clause beginning with "Behold," and ending with "way," is taken from Mal. iii. 1. The Revised Version makes Mark quote this passage as if it were from Isaiah, the reading being "written in Isaiah the prophet," but the King James' version gives the reading "written in the prophets." Following the reasoning of Canon Cook, we hold that the latter was the original reading--see Speaker's Commentary, note at the end of Mark i.] **I send my messenger** [John the Baptist was that messenger] **before thy face** [Malachi says, "my face." "Thy" and "my" are used interchangeably, because of the unity of the Deity--John x. 30], **who shall prepare thy way** [Mark says little about the prophets, but at the outset of his Gospel he calls attention to the fact that the entire pathway of Jesus was the subject of prophetic prediction]; **6 The voice** [Isaiah xl. 3, 4, quoted from the LXX. The words were God's, the voice was John's. So Paul also spake (I. Thess. ii. 1-13). It was prophesied before he was born that John should be a preparing messenger for Christ--Luke i. 17] **of one crying in the wilderness** [This prophecy of Isaiah's could relate to none but John, for no other prophet ever made the wilderness the scene of his preaching. But John always preached there, and instead of going to the people, he compelled the people to come out to him. John was the second Elijah. The claims of all who in these days profess to be reincarnations of Elijah may be tested and condemned by this prophecy, for none of them frequent the wilderness], **Make ye ready the way** [See also Isa. xxxv. 8-10. Isaiah's language is highly figurative. It represents a band of engineers and workmen

preparing the road for their king through a rough, mountainous district. The figure was familiar to the people of the East, and nearly every generation there witnessed such road-making. The haughty Semiramis leveled the mountains before her. Josephus, describing the march of Vespasian, says that there went before him such as were to make the road even and straight, and if it were anywhere rough and hard, to smooth it over, to plane it, and to cut down woods that hindered the march, that the army might not be tired. Some have thought that Isaiah's prophecy referred primarily to the return of the Jewish captives from Babylon. But it refers far more directly to the ministry of the Baptist; for it is not said that the way was to be prepared for the people, but for Jehovah himself. It is a beautiful figure, but the real preparation was the more beautiful transformation of repentance. By inducing repentance, John was to prepare the people to receive Jesus and his apostles, and to hearken to their preaching] **of the Lord, Make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, And every mountain and hill shall be brought low; And the crooked shall become straight, And the rough way smooth** [The literal meaning of this passage is expressed at Isa. ii. 12-17. See also Zech. iv. 7. Commentators give detailed application of this prophecy, and, following their example, we may regard the Pharisees and Sadducees as mountains of self-righteousness, needing to be thrown down, and thereby brought to meekness and humility; the outcasts and harlots as valleys of humiliation, needing to be exalted and filled with hope; and the publicans and soldiers as crooked and rough byways, needing to be straightened and smoothed with proper ideals of righteousness. But the application is general, and not to be limited to such details. However, civil tyranny, and ecclesiastical pride must each be leveled, and the rights of the common people must be exalted before for kingdom of God can enter in]; **6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.** [This last clause of the prophecy is added by Luke alone. He loves to dwell upon the universality of Christ's gospel.] **^b4 John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins.** [Pardoning mercy was to be found in Christ, and all rites then looked forward to the cleansing effected by the shedding of his blood, as all rites now look back to it. But in popular estimation John's baptism was no doubt regarded as consummating an immediate forgiveness] **^a4 Now John himself** [Himself indicates that John's manner of life differed from that of his disciples. He did not oblige them to practice the full measure of his abstinence] **had his raiment of** [John's dress and food preached in harmony with his voice. His clothing and fare rendered him independent of the rich and great, so that he could more freely and plainly rebuke their sins. Calling others to repentance, he himself set an example of austere self-denial. So much so that the Pharisees said he had a demon--Matt. xi. 18] **^b6 And was clothed with ^acamel's hair** [Camels were plentiful in the East. Their finer hair was woven into elegant cloths; but that which was coarser and shaggier was made into a fabric like our druggets, and used for the coats of shepherds and camel-drivers, and for the covering of tents. Prophets often wore such cloth (Zech. xiii. 4), and no doubt it was the habitual garb of John's prototype (Mal. iv. 5), the prophet Elijah (II. Kings i. 8). In Elijah's day there was demand for protest against the sad havoc which Phoenician luxury and licentiousness were making with the purer morals of Israel; and in John's day a like protest was needed against a like contamination wrought by Greek manners and customs. Both prophets, by their austerity, rebuked such apostasy, and Jezebel answered the rebuke by attempting Elijah's life, while Herodias actually took the life of John. As a herald John was suited to the King whose appearing he was to announce, for Jesus was meek and lowly (Zech. ix. 9), and had no form nor comeliness that he should be desired--Isa. liii. 2], **and a leathern girdle about his loins** [The loose skirts worn in the East required a girdle to bind them to the body. This was usually made of linen or silk, but was frequently more costly, being wrought with silver and gold. John's girdle was plain, undressed leather]; **and his food was ^band did eat ^alocusts** [Locusts, like Western grasshoppers, were extremely plentiful (Joel i. 4; Isa. xxxiii. 4, 5). The law declared them clean, and thus permitted the people

to eat them for food (Lev. xi. 22). Arabs still eat them, and in some Oriental cities they are found for sale in the market. But they are regarded as fit only for the poor. They are frequently seasoned with camel's milk and honey] **and wild honey.** [Canaan was promised as a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. ii. 8-17; xiii. 15; I. Sam. xiv. 26). Many of the trees in the plains of Jericho, such as the palm, fig, manna, ash and tamarisk, exuded sweet gums, which went by the name of tree honey, but there is no need to suppose, as some do, that this was what John ate. The country once abounded in wild bees, and their honey was very plentiful. We have on the record an instance of the speed with which they could fill the place which they selected for their hives (Judg. xiv. 5-9). The diet of the Baptist was very light, and Jesus so speaks of it (Matt. xi. 18). He probably had no set time for his meals, and all days were more or less fast-days. Thus John gave himself wholly to his ministry, and became a voice--all voice. John took the wilderness for a church, and filled it. He courted no honors, but no Jew of his time received more of them, and by some he was even regarded as Messiah--Luke iii. 15.] **^b5 And there ^a5 Then went out unto him ^ball** [A hyperbole common with Hebrew writers and such as we use when we say, "the whole town turned out," "everybody was there," etc. Both Matthew and Luke show that some did not accept John's baptism (Matt. xxi. 23-25; Luke vii. 30). But from the language of the evangelist we might infer that, first and last, something like a million people may have attended John's ministry] **the country of Judæa, and all they of Jerusalem; ^aall the region round about the Jordan** [The last phrase includes the entire river valley. On both sides of the river between the lake of Galilee and Jericho, there were many important cities, any one of which would be more apt to send its citizens to John's baptism than the proud capital of Jerusalem]; **6 and they were baptized of him** [Literally, immersed by him. In every stage of the Greek language this has been the unquestioned meaning of the verb *baptizo*, and it still retains this meaning in modern Greek. In accordance with this meaning, the Greek Church, in all its branches, has uniformly practiced immersion from the earliest period to the present time. Greek Christians never speak of other denominations as "baptizing by sprinkling," but they say, "they baptize *instead* of baptizing." John's baptism was instituted of God (John i. 33), just as Christian baptism was instituted by Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19). The Pharisees recognized John's rite as so important as to require divine authority, and even then they underestimated it, regarding it as a mere purification--Josephus Ant. xviii. 5, 2] **in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.** [As John's baptism was for the remission of sins, it was very proper that it should be preceded by a confession. The context indicates that the confession was public and general. There is no hint of such auricular confession as is practiced by the Catholics. See also Acts xix. 18. John, writing to baptized Christians, bids them to confess their sins, that Jesus may forgive them (I. John i. 9). Christian baptism being also for the remission of sins (Acts ii. 38), the ordinance itself is a very potent confession that the one baptized has sins to be remitted, and it seems to be a sufficient public expression of confession as to sins; for while John's baptism called for a confession of sins, Christian baptism calls only for a confession of faith in Christ--Acts xxii. 16; Rom. x. 9, 10; Mark xvi. 16.] **7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees** [Josephus tells us that these two leading sects of the Jews started about the same time in the days of Jonathan, the high priest, or B.C. 159-144. But the sentiments which at that time divided the people into two rival parties entered the minds and hearts of the Jews immediately after the return from the Babylonian captivity. These returned Jews differed as to the attitude and policy which Israel should manifest toward the neighboring heathen. Some contended for a strict separation between the Jews and all pagan peoples. These eventually formed the Pharisee party, and the name Pharisee means "the separate." Originally these men were genuine patriots and reformers, but afterwards the majority of them became mere formalists. As theologians the Pharisees represented the orthodox party, and were followed by the vast majority of the people. They believed (1) in the resurrection of the dead; (2) a future state with

rewards and punishments; (3) angels and spirits; and (4) a special providence of God carried out by angels and spirits. As a sect they are said to have numbered six thousand at the time of Herod's death. They were the patriotic party, and the zealots were their extreme section. They covered an extremely selfish spirit with a pious formalism, and by parading their virtues they obtained an almost unbounded influence over the people. By exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus sought to destroy their power over the multitude, and incurred that bitter enmity with which they pursued him to his death. But certain other of the captives who returned from Babylon desired a freer intercourse with the pagans, and sought to break away from every restraint which debarred therefrom. These became Sadducees. They consented to no other restraint than the Scriptures themselves imposed, and they interpreted these as laxly as possible. Some take their name to mean "the party of righteousness," but more think it comes from their founder, Zadok, and is a corruption of the word Zadokite. Zadok flourished 260 B.C. His teacher, Antigonus Sochæus, taught him to serve God disinterestedly--that is, without hope of reward or punishment. From his teaching Zadok inferred that there was no future state of rewards or punishment, and on this belief founded his sect. From this fundamental doctrine sprang the other tenets of the Sadducees. They denied all the four points held by the Pharisees, asserting that there was no resurrection; no rewards and punishments hereafter; no angels, no spirits. They believed there was a God, but denied that he had any special supervision of human affairs (Matt. xxii. 23; Acts xxiii. 8). They were the materialists of that day. Considering all God's promises as referring to this world, they looked upon poverty and distress as evidence of God's curse. Hence to relieve the poor was to sin against God in interfering with his mode of government. Far fewer than the Pharisees, they were their rivals in power; for they were the aristocratic party, and held the high-priesthood, with all its glories. Their high political position, their great wealth, and the Roman favor which they courted by consenting to foreign rule and pagan customs, made them a body to be respected and feared] **coming to his baptism, he said** {**therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him**} **unto them** [John spoke principally to the leaders, but his denunciation indirectly included the multitude who followed their leadership], **Ye offspring of vipers** [A metaphor for their *likeness* to vipers--as like them as if they had been begotten of them. The viper was a species of serpent from two to five feet in length, and about one inch thick. Its head is flat, and its body a yellowish color, speckled with long brown spots. It is extremely poisonous (Acts xxviii. 6). John here uses the word figuratively, and probably borrows the figure from Isa. lix. 5. It means that the Jewish rulers were full of guile and malice, cunning and venom. With these words John gave them a vigorous shaking, for only thus could he hope to waken their slumbering consciences. But only one who has had a vision of "the King in his beauty," should presume thus to address his fellow-men. The serpent is an emblem of the devil (Gen. iii. 1; Rev. xii. 9, 14, 15), and Jesus not only repeated John's words (Matt. xii. 35; xxiii. 23, 33), but he interpreted the words, and told them plainly that they were "the children of the devil" (John viii. 44). The Jewish rulers well deserved this name, for they poisoned the religious principles of the nation, and accomplished the crucifixion of the Son of God], **who warned you to flee** [John's baptism, like that of Moses at the Red Sea (I. Cor. x. 2), was a way of escape from destruction, of rightly used. Christian baptism is also such a way, and whosoever will may enter thereby into the safety of the kingdom of Christ, but baptism can not be used as an easy bit of ritual to charm away evil. It must be accompanied by all the spiritual changes which the ordinance implies] **from the wrath to come?** [Prophecy foretold that Messiah's times would be accompanied with wrath (Isa. lxiii. 3-6; Dan. vii. 10-26); but the Jews were all of the opinion that this wrath would be meted out upon the Gentiles and were not prepared to hear John apply the prophecy to themselves. To all his hearers John preached the coming kingdom; to the impenitent, he preached the coming wrath. Thus he prepared the way for the first coming of the Messiah, and those who would prepare the people for his second coming

would do well to follow his example. The Bible has a voice of warning and denunciation, as well as words of invitation and love. Whosoever omits the warning of the judgment, speaks but half the message which God would have him deliver. God's wrath is his resentment against sin--Matt. xviii. 34; xxii. 7; Mark iii. 5.] **8 Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance** [John had demanded repentance, he now demands the fruits of it. By "fruit" or "fruits," as Luke has it, he means the manner of life which shows a real repentance]: **9 and think not {begin not}** [John nips their self-excuse in the bud] **to say within yourselves** [speaking to your conscience to quiet it], **We have Abraham to our father** [The Jews thought that Messiah would rule over them as a nation, and that all Jews would, therefore, be by birthright citizens of his kingdom. They thought that descent from Abraham was all that would be necessary to bring them into that kingdom. John's words must have been very surprising to them. The Talmud is full of expressions showing the extravagant value which Jews of a later age attached to Abrahamic descent. "Abraham," it says, "sits next the gates of hell, and doth not permit any wicked Israelite to go down into it." Again, it represents God as saying to Abraham, "If thy children were like dead bodies without sinews or bones, thy merit would avail for them." Again, "A single Israelite is worth more before God than all the people who have been or shall be." Again, "The world was made for their [Israel's] sake." This pride was the more inexcusable because the Jews were clearly warned by their prophets that their privileges were not exclusive, and that they would by no means escape just punishment for their sins (Jer. vii. 3, 4; Mic. iii. 11; Isa. xlvi. 2). John repeated this message, and Jesus reiterated it (Matt. viii. 11, 12; Luke xvi. 23). We should note that in this preparation for the gospel a blow was struck at confidence and trust in carnal descent. Birth gives no man any privileges in the kingdom of God, for all are born outside of it, and all must be born again into it (John i. 13; iii. 3); yet many still claim peculiar rights from Christian parentage, and infant baptism rests on this false conception. The New Testament teaches us that we are children of Abraham by faith, and not by blood; by spiritual and not carnal descent (Rom. iv. 12-16; Gal. iii. 26; vi. 15; John viii. 39). It had been better for the Jews never to have heard of Abraham, than to have thus falsely viewed the rights which they inherited from him]: **for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.** [John meant that their being children of Abraham by natural descent gave them no more merit than children of Abraham made out of stone would have. He pointed to the stones along the bank of Jordan as he spoke.] **10 And even now the axe** ^{also} **lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down** [The threatened cutting down means the end of the probation of each hearer, when, if found fruitless, he would be cast into the fire mentioned below], **and cast into the fire.** [Used as fuel.] **10 And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do?** [This is the cry of the awakened conscience (Acts ii. 37; xvi. 30; xxii. 10). John answered it by recommending them to do the very reverse of what they were doing, which, in their case, was true fruit of repentance.] **11 And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats** [By coat is meant the tunic, or inner garment, worn next to the skin. It reached to the knees, and sometimes to the ankles, and generally had sleeves. Two tunics were a luxury in a land where thousands were too poor to own even one. Wrath was coming, and he that would obtain mercy from it must show mercy--Matt. v. 7], **let him impart to him that hath none** [For a like precept given to Christians, see II. Cor. viii. 13-15; Jas. ii. 15-17; I. John iii. 17]; **and he that hath food, let him do likewise.** **12 And there came also publicans** [The Roman Government did not collect its own taxes. Instead of doing so, it divided the empire into districts, and sold the privilege of collecting the taxes in these districts to certain capitalists and men of rank. The capitalists employed agents to do the actual collecting. These agents were usually natives of the districts in which they lived, and those in Palestine were called publicans. Their masters urged and encouraged them to make the most fraudulent and vexatious exactions. They

systematically overcharged the people and often brought false accusation to obtain money by blackmail. These publicans were justly regarded by the Jews as apostates and traitors, and were classed with the lowest and most abandoned characters. The system was bad, but its practitioners were worse. The Greeks regarded the word "publican" as synonymous with "plunderer." Suidas pictures the life of a publican as "unrestrained plunder, unblushing greed, unreasonable pettifogging, shameless business." The Turks to-day collect by this Roman method. Being publicly condemned, and therefore continually kept conscious of their sin, the publicans repented more readily than the self-righteous Pharisees. Conscience is one of God's greatest gifts, and he that destroys it must answer for it] **to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher** [The publicans, though lowest down, gave John the highest title. Self-abnegation is full of the virtue of reverence, but self-righteousness utterly lacks it], **what must we do? 13 And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you.** [Such was their habitual, universal sin. No man should make his calling an excuse for evil-doing.] **14 And soldiers** [These soldiers were probably Jewish troops in the employ of Herod. Had they been Romans, John would doubtless have told them to worship God] **also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence** [The soldiers, poorly paid, often found it convenient to extort money by intimidation. Strong in their organization, they terrified the weak and enforced gratuities by acts of violence], **neither accuse any one wrongfully** [John here condemns the custom of blackmailing the rich by acting as informers and false accusers against them]; **and be content with your wages.** [The term wages included rations and money. The soldiers were not to add to their receipts by pillage or extortion. Soldiers' wages were about three cents a day, so they were exposed to strong temptation. Yet John did not bid them abandon their profession, and become ascetics like himself. His teachings was practical. He allowed war as an act of government. Whether Christianity sanctions it or not, is another question.] **15 And as the people were in expectation** [Expecting the Christ--see John i. 19-28], **and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ** [Prophecy induced a Messianic expectation. The scepter had departed from Judah, and Cæsar's deputies ruled. Tetrarchs and procurators held the whole civil government. In their hands lay the power of life and death from which only Roman citizens could appeal (Acts xxv. 11). The power of the Jewish courts was limited to excommunication or scourging. The seventy weeks of Daniel were now expiring, and other prophecies indicated the fullness of time. But distress, rather than prophecy, enhanced their expectation. Tiberius, the most infamous of men, governed the world. Pontius Pilate, insolent, cruel, was making life irksome and maddening the people. Herod Antipas, by a course of reckless apostasy and unbridled lust, grieved even the religious sense of the hypocrite. Annas and Caiaphas, impersonators of materialism, sat in the chief seat of spiritual power. Men might well look for a deliverer, and hasten with joy to hear of a coming King. But, nevertheless, we could have no more forceful statement of the deep impression made by John's ministry than that the people were disposed to take him for the Christ]; **16 John answered, saying unto them all, ^b7 And he preached, saying, ^a11 I indeed baptize {^bbaptized} ^ayou in {^cwith} water unto repentance** [That is, unto the completion of your repentance. Repentance had to begin before the baptism was administered. After the sinner repented, baptism consummated his repentance, being the symbolic washing away of that from which he had repented and the bringing of the candidate into the blessings granted to the repentant--Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3]: **'But there {^ahe that}** [John preached repentance because of a coming King; he now announces who the King is. He pictures this King as, first, administering a different baptism from his own; second, as a judge who would separate the righteous from the wicked, just as a husbandman sifts the wheat from the chaff] **^bcometh after me** [Subsequent to me in ministry. But John indicates that the coming of Christ would be closely coupled with his own appearing. One event was

to immediately follow the other. So Malachi binds together in one time the appearing of both forerunner and judge--Mal. iii. 1-3] **he that is mightier than I** [mightier both to save and to punish], **whose shoes** [The sandal then worn was a piece of wood or leather bound to the sole of the foot to protect it from the burning sand or the sharp stones. It was the forerunner of our modern shoe] **I am not worthy to bear** [To untie or carry away the shoe of the master or his guest was the work of the lowest slave of the household. As a figure of speech, the shoe is always associated with subjugation and slavery (Ps. lx. 8). John means, "I am not worthy to be his servant." John was simply the forerunner of Jesus; the higher office and honor of being Jesus' attendants was reserved for others--Matt. xi. 11]: **the latchet** [the lace or strap] **of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.** **he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit** [That which is here referred to was foretold by the prophets (Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28). In the early church there was an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God (Tit. iii. 5, 6; Acts ii. 3, 4, 17; x. 44). This prophecy began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts i. 5; ii. 4). In the choice of the word "baptize" God indicated through his prophet how full this flooding of the Spirit would be] **and in fire** [Many learned commentators regard the expression "in fire" as a mere amplification of the spiritual baptism added to express the purging and purifying effects of that baptism, but the context forbids this, for, in verse 10, casting the unfruitful trees into the fire represents the punishment of the wicked, and, in verse 12, the burning of the chaff with fire does the same, and consequently the baptizing in fire of the intervening verse must, according to the force of the context, have the same reference. True, the expression "he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire," does not separate the persons addressed into two parties, and, if the context is disregarded, might be understood as meaning that the same persons were to be baptized in both; yet the context must not be disregarded, and it clearly separates them]: **17 whose fan** [Winnowing shovel. In the days of John the Baptist, and in that country at the present day, wheat and other grain was not threshed by machinery. It was beaten out by flails, or trodden out by oxen on some smooth, hard plat of ground called the threshing-floor. These threshing-floors were usually on elevations where the wind blew freely. When the grain was trodden out, it was winnowed or separated from the chaff by being tossed into the air with a fan or winnowing shovel. When so tossed, the wind blew the chaff away, and the clean grain fell upon the threshing-floor] **is in his hand** [Ready for immediate work. Both John and Malachi, who foretold John, are disposed to picture Jesus as the judge (Mal. iii. 2-5). Of all the pictures of God which the Bible gives, that of a judge is the most common and frequent], **thoroughly to {and he will thoroughly} cleanse his threshing-floor** [Removing the chaff is called purging the floor. Humanity is a mixture of good and bad, and to separate this mixture, save the good and destroy the bad, is the work of Christ. He partially purges the floor in this present time by gathering his saints into the church and leaving the unrepentant in the world. But hereafter on the day of judgment he will make a complete and final separation between the just and the unjust by sending the evil from his presence and gathering his own into the garner of heaven (Matt. xxv. 32, 33). He shall also winnow our individual characters, and remove all evil from us--Luke xxii. 31, 32; Rom. vii. 21-25], **and to {and he will} gather the {his} wheat into his {the} garner** [Eastern garners or granaries were usually subterranean vaults or caves. Garnered grain rested in safety. It was removed from peril of birds, storms, blight and mildew. Christians are now on God's threshing-floor; hereafter they will be gathered into the security of his garner]; **but the chaff** [when the Bible wishes to show the worthlessness and the doom of the ungodly, chaff is one of its favorite figures--Job xxi. 18; Ps. i. 4; Isa. xvii. 13; Jer. xv. 7 Hos xiii. 3; Mal. iv. 1] **he will burn up** [To prevent chaff from being blown back and mixed again with the wheat, it was burned up. All the chaff in the church shall be consumed on the day of judgment (I. Cor. iii. 12, 13), and there shall be no mixing of good and bad after death--Luke xvi. 26] **with unquenchable fire.** [In this and in other places (II. Thess. i. 8, 9;

Mark ix. 48; Matt. xxv. 41), the future suffering of the wicked is taught in the Bible. He shows no kindness to his neighbor, no friendship toward mankind, who conceals the terrors of the Lord. These terrors are set forth in no uncertain terms. Many believe that God will restore the wicked and eventually save all the human race. Others hold that God will annihilate the wicked, and thus end their torment. This passage and the one cited in Mark would be hard to reconcile with either of these views; they indicate that there will be no arrest of judgment nor stay of punishment when once God begins to execute his condemnation. God purged the world with water at the time of the flood; he will again purge it with fire on the day of judgment--II. Pet. iii. 7-10.] **18 With many other exhortations** [The sermon here given is in the nature of a summary. It embodies the substance of John's preaching. Afterwards John preached Christ more directly--John i. 29-36] **therefore preached he good tidings unto the people.** [but, like the good tidings of the angel at Bethlehem, it was good only to those who, by repentance, made themselves well pleasing to God.]

Study Questions:

1. What was the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
2. Who was the governor of Judea and the tetrarch of Galilee? What role did they play in the crucifixion of Jesus?
3. Who were the high priests? Why were there two high priests? What part did they play in the crucifixion of Jesus?
4. What did John the Baptist preach? How did John's preaching fulfill Isaiah's prophecy?
5. What does "repent" mean?
6. Explain John's baptism (baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins).
7. What was John's dress and diet?
8. What did John say to the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism? Why did he call them offspring of vipers?
9. Why did John tell them not to say, "We have Abraham to our father?"
10. What did John tell the people to do?
11. Why might the people think that John was the Christ?
12. What lines of distinction did John draw between himself and the Christ?

PART THIRD.

BEGINNING OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

XVIII.

JESUS BAPTIZED BY JOHN IN THE JORDAN.

(Jordan east of Jericho, Spring of A. D. 27.)

^aMATT. III. 13-17; ^bMARK I. 9-11; ^cLUKE III. 21-23.

Bible Text:

^b9 And {^a13 Then} ^bit came to pass in those days, that Jesus came {^acometh} ^bfrom Nazareth of Galilee, ^ato the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. ^band was baptized of John in the Jordan. ^a14 But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? ¹⁵ But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him. ^c21 Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been {^a16 And Jesus, when he was} ^bbaptized, and praying, ^b10 And straightway coming up out of {^awent up straightway from} ^bthe water, ^aand lo, ^bhe saw the heavens rent asunder, ^athe heavens were {^cheaven was} ^aopened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; ^c22 and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, ^a17 and lo, a voice ^ccame ^aout of the heavens, {^cheaven}, ^asaying, This is {^bthou art} ^amy beloved Son, in whom {^cin thee} ^aI am well pleased. ^c23 And Jesus himself, when he began *to teach*, was about thirty years of age.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^b9 And {^a13 Then} ^bit came to pass in those days, that Jesus came {^acometh} ^bfrom Nazareth of Galilee, ^ato the Jordan [Tradition fixes upon a ford of Jordan east of Jericho as the place where Jesus was baptized. It is the same section of the river which opened for the passage of Israel under Joshua, and later for Elijah and Elisha. This ford is seventy or eighty miles from Nazareth] **unto John, to be baptized of him.** [He set out from Nazareth, intending to be baptized. Such was his intention before he heard John preach, and he was therefore not persuaded to do it by the preaching. His righteousness was not the result of human persuasion.] ^band was baptized of John in [Greek "into." The body of Jesus was immersed or plunged into the river] **the Jordan.** ^a14 **But John would have hindered him** [It seemed to John too great an honor for him to baptize Jesus, and too great a humiliation for Jesus to be baptized. There is some dispute as to how John came to know this righteousness of Christ, which prompted his protest. The one natural explanation is, that the intimacy of the two families indicated at the beginning of Luke's account had been kept up, and John knew the history of his kinsman], **saying, I have need to be baptized of thee** [those are most fit to administer an ordinance who have themselves deeply experienced the need of it], **and comest thou to me?** [John felt that he needed Jesus' baptism, but could not think that Jesus needed his. The words "I," "thee," "thou," and "me," show that John contrasted the baptizers as well as the baptisms. As a human being he marveled that the Son of God should come to him to be immersed. The comings of Jesus and the purposes for which he comes are still the greatest marvels which confront the minds of men.]

Moreover, it should be noted that this protest of John's needed to be made, for it saved Jesus from being baptized without explanation, as if he were a sinner. Baptism without such explanation might have compromised our Lord's claims as the sinless one.] **15 But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now** [Permit me for this moment to appear as your inferior. The future will make plain and clear the difference between us, both as to our missions and our natures. The words show a Messianic consciousness on the part of Jesus]: **for thus it becometh us** [Some take the word "us" as referring to Jesus and John, but the clause "to fulfil all righteousness" shows that "us" refers to Jesus, and he uses the plural to show that it also becometh all of us] **to fulfil all righteousness.** [Jesus came not only to fulfill all the requirements of the law, but also all that wider range of righteousness of which the law was only a part. 1. Though John's baptism was no part of the Mosaic ritual, it was, nevertheless, a precept of God, given by his prophet (John i. 33). Had Jesus neglected or refused to obey this precept he would have lacked a portion of the full armor of righteousness, and the Pharisees would have hastened to strike him at this loose joint of his harness (Matt. xxi. 23-27). 2. It was the divinely appointed method by which the Messiahship of Jesus was to be revealed to the witness John (John i. 33, 34). We should note here that those who fail to obey God's ordinance of baptism fail (1) to follow the example of Jesus in fulfilling the divine will and precepts; (2) to obey one of the positive commands of almighty God spoken by his own Son.] **Then he suffereth him.** [John's humility caused him to shrink from this duty, but did not make him willfully persist in declining it. Humility ceases to be a virtue when it keeps us from performing our allotted tasks.] **21 Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized** [This may mean that, on the day of his baptism, Jesus was the last candidate, and hence his baptism was the most conspicuous of all; but it more probably means that Jesus was baptized in the midst of John's work--at the period when his baptism was in greatest favor], **that, Jesus also having been** ^a**16 And Jesus, when he was** ^b**baptized, and praying** [All divine ordinances should be accompanied with prayer. Luke frequently notes the times when Jesus prayed. Here, at the entrance of his ministry, he prayed, and at the last moment of it he also prayed (Luke xxiii. 46). In his highest exultation at the transfiguration (Luke ix. 29), and in the lowest depths of the humiliation in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 41), he prayed. He prayed for his apostles whom he chose (Luke vi. 12), and for his murderers by whom he was rejected (Luke xxiii. 34). He prayed before Peter confessed him (Luke ix. 18), and also before Peter denied him--Luke xxii. 32], ^b**10 And straightway coming up out of** ^a**{went up straightway from}** ^b**the water** [the two prepositions, "out of" and "from," show that Jesus was not yet fully out of the river, and that the vision and the voice were immediately associated with his baptism], ^a**and lo,** ^b**he saw** [The statement that *he* saw the Spirit descending, which is also the language of Matthew, has been taken by some as implying that the Spirit was invisible to the multitude. But we know from John's narrative that it was also seen by John the Baptist (John i. 33, 34), and if it was visible to him and to Jesus, and if it descended, as Luke affirms, in a bodily shape like a dove (Luke iii. 22), it would have required a miracle to hide it from the multitude. Moreover, the object of the Spirit's visible appearance was to point Jesus out, not to himself, but to others; and to point him out as the person concerning whom the voice from heaven was uttered. No doubt, then, the Spirit was visible and the voice audible to all who were present *] **the heavens rent asunder** [for], ^a**the heavens were** ^b**{heaven was}** ^a**opened unto him** [The heavens open at the beginning of Jesus' ministry to honor him, and at the end of it to receive him. Christ is the opener of heaven for all men], **and he saw the Spirit of God descending** [the Spirit came upon Jesus to give him the miraculous power which he afterward exerted--Luke iv. 14] **as a dove** [That is, like a dove. All four evangelists are careful to inform us that it was not an actual dove], **and coming upon him;** **22 and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form** [Lightfoot suggests that the Spirit thus descended that he might be revealed to be a personal substance and

not merely an operation of the Godhead, and might thus make a sensible demonstration as to his proper place in the Trinity], **as a dove** [The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus was in accordance with prophecy (Isa. xi. 2; lxi. 1). The dove shape suggests purity, gentleness, peace, etc. Jesus makes the dove a symbol of harmlessness (Matt. x. 15). In fact, the nature of this bird makes it a fit emblem of the Spirit, for it comports well with the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). The nations of the earth emblazon eagles upon their banners and lions upon their shields, but He who shall gather all nations into his kingdom, appeared as a Lamb, and his Spirit appeared under the symbol of a dove. Verily his kingdom is not of this world. It is a kingdom of peace and love, not of bloodshed and ambition. Noah's dove bore the olive branch, the symbol of peace, and the Holy Spirit manifested Jesus, God's olive branch of peace sent into this world--Ps. lxxii. 7; Luke ii. 14; John xiv. 27; Eph. ii. 11-18], **upon him, ^a17 and lo, a voice ^ccame ^aout of the heavens, {^bheaven}** [Voices from heaven acknowledged the person of Christ at his birth, his baptism, his transfiguration and during the concluding days of his ministry. At his baptism Jesus was honored by the attestation of both the Spirit and the Father. But the ordinance itself was honored by the sensible manifestation of each several personality of the Deity--that the three into whose name we ourselves are also baptized], **^asaying, This is {^bthou art}** [The "this is," etc. of Matthew are probably the words as John the Baptist reported them; the "thou art," etc., of Mark and Luke are the words as Jesus actually heard them. The testimony of the Father is in unreserved support of the fundamental proposition of Christianity on which the church of Christ is founded (Matt. xvi. 15-18). On this point no witness in the universe was so well qualified to speak as the Father, and no other fact was so well worthy the honor of being sanctioned by his audible utterance as this. The testimony of Christ's life, of his works, of the Baptist and of the Scriptures might have been sufficient; but when the Father himself speaks, who shall doubt the adequacy of the proof?] **^amy beloved Son** [See also Matt. xvii. 5. The Father himself states that relationship of which the apostle John so often spoke (John i. 1). Adam was made (Gen. i. 26), but Jesus was begotten (Ps. ii. 7). Both were sons of God, but in far different senses. The baptism of Jesus bears many marked relationships to our own: 1. At his baptism Jesus was manifested as the Son of God. At our baptism we are likewise manifested as God's children, for we are baptized into the name of the Father, and are thereby permitted to take upon ourselves his name. 2. At his baptism Jesus was fully commissioned as the Christ. Not anointed with material oil, but divinely consecrated and qualified by the Spirit and accredited by the Father. At baptism we also received the Spirit (John iii. 5; Acts ii. 38; xix. 1-6), who commissions and empowers us to Christian ministry--Acts i. 8; I. John iii. 24], **in whom {^cin thee}** [Some make the phrases "in whom" and "in thee" to mean more than simply a declaration that God is pleased *with* Jesus. They see in it also the statement that the Father will be pleased with all who are *'in* Christ Jesus"--Eph. i. 6] **^aI am well pleased.** [It is no slight condemnation to be well pleasing to God (Job iv. 18). It is the Christian's joy that his Saviour had this commendation of the Father at the entrance upon his ministry.] **^c23 And Jesus himself, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age.** [The age when a Levite entered on God's service (Num. iv. 3, 47); at which Joseph stood before Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 46); at which David began to reign (II. Sam. v. 4). Canon Cook fixes the date of Christ's baptism in the spring A.U.C. 780. Wiseler in the summer of that year, and Ellicott in the winter of that year.]

* Recognizing the weight of Bro. McGarvey's argument, I nevertheless contend that the multitude only shared partially in such a vision, if they shared it at all; for 1. There is no Scripture which even hints that the vision was seen by more than the two *inspired* parties, Jesus and John; and, on the contrary, the words of Jesus at John v. 37, though not addressed to the specific audience present at his baptism, were addressed to the Jews generally. 2. Jesus was to be manifested by his character and teaching rather than by heavenly sights and sounds (Matt. xii. 39), and the mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. xiii. 11), and the opened heavens (John i. 50, 51), with many other manifestations, were reserved

for believers (John xii. 28-30; Matt. xvii. 1, 2, 9; Acts i. 9; vii. 55, 59; x. 40, 41), and are still so reserved (I. Cor. ii. 14). As to the arguments given above, we suggest that "bodily shape" does not insure universal sight. Baalam did not see what the ass saw (Num. xxii. 21-31). Again, it may be true that Jesus did not need to see the vision to "point him out to himself," but he must have needed it for some purpose, for it is twice asserted that he saw it, and the temptations which immediately follow show that assurances of his divinity at this particular time were by no means misplaced.

Study Questions:

1. Where was Jesus baptized? What city did he leave when he went to be baptized?
2. Who baptized Jesus?
3. Why was Jesus baptized? Are we baptized for the same reason? Explain.
4. Why might John have hindered Jesus from being baptized?
5. What did Jesus do after being baptized?
6. What happened when the heavens were rent asunder?
7. What was the significance of the Spirit descending in a bodily form as a dove?
8. What was the significance of the voice from heaven?
9. What did Jesus begin doing after His baptism? How old was He?

XIX.

JESUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

^aMATT. IV. 1-11; ^bMARK I. 12, 13; ^cLUKE IV. 1-13.

Bible Text:

^c1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, ^b12 And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth ^cand ^a1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ^b13 And he was ^cled in the Spirit in the wilderness 2 during forty days, being tempted of ^bSatan; ^cthe devil, ^band he was with the wild beasts; ^cAnd he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, ^a2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. 3 And the tempter came ^c3 And the devil said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it {^acommand that these stones} become bread. 4 But he {^c4 And Jesus} ^aanswered and said, ^cunto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. ^abut by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5 Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; ^c9 And he led him to Jerusalem, ^aand he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and saith {^asaid} ^aunto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: ^cfrom hence: 10 for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee: 11 and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, ^aagain it is written {^csaid,}, ^aThou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God. 8 Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, ^c5 And he led him up, ^aand showeth {^cshowed} ^ahim all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ^cin a moment of time. ^a9 and he ^cthe devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority {^aAll these things will I give thee,}, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt ^afall down and worship ^cbefore me, it shall all be thine. 8 And ^a10 Then ^cJesus answered and said {^asaith} ^cunto him, ^aGet thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. ^c13 And when the devil had completed every temptation, ^a11 Then the devil leaveth {^che departeth from} him for a season. ^aand behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^c1 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, ^b12 And straightway the Spirit driveth him forth ^cand ^a1 Then [Just after his baptism, with the glow of the descended Spirit still upon him, and the commending voice of the Father still ringing in his ears, Jesus is rushed into the suffering of temptation. Thus abrupt and violent are the changes of life. The spiritually exalted may expect these sharp contrasts. After being in the third heaven, Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him--II. Cor. xii. 7] **was Jesus led up** [The two expressions "driveth" and "led up" show that Jesus was drawn to the wilderness by an irresistible impulse, and did not go hither of his own volition (Ezek. xl. 2). He was brought into temptation, but did not seek it. He was led of God into temptation, but was not tempted of God. God may bring us into temptation (Matt. vi. 13; xxvi. 41; Job i. 12; ii. 6), and may make temptation a blessing unto us, tempering it to our strength, and making us stronger by the victory over it (I. Cor. x. 13; Jas. i. 2, 12), but God himself never tempts us--Jas. i. 13] **of the Spirit into the wilderness** [The wilderness sets in

back of Jericho and extends thence along the whole western shore of the Dead Sea. The northern end of this region is in full view from the Jordan as one looks westward, and a more desolate and forbidding landscape it would be hard to find. It is vain to locate the temptation in any particular part of it. Jesus may have wandered about over nearly all of it] **to be tempted of the devil.** [As a second David, Jesus went forth to meet that Goliath who had so long vaunted himself against all who sought to serve God, and had as yet found none to vanquish him. The account of the temptation must have been given to the disciples by Jesus himself, and as it pleased him to give it to us as an actual history of real facts, it behooves us to accept it without being presumptuously inquisitive. Of course, it has supernatural features, but the supernatural confronts us all through the life of Jesus, so there is nothing strange about it here. Jesus had taken upon him our flesh, and hence he could be tempted, with a possibility of falling. But his divinity insured his victory over temptation. He became like us in ability to fall, that he might make us like unto himself in power to resist. It behooved him to be tempted, that thus sharing our nature with its weakness and temptation he might bring us to share his nature with its strength and sinlessness (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15, 16). Sinlessness does not preclude temptation, else Adam could not have been tempted, nor could Satan himself have fallen. Moreover, temptation is in so sense sin. It is the yielding of the will to temptation which constitutes sin. The spiritual history of humanity revolves around two persons; namely, the first and the second Adam. The temptation of Christ was as real as that of Adam. He had taken upon himself our temptable nature (Phil. ii. 7, 8), and he was tempted not as a private soldier, but as the second Adam, the Captain of our salvation (Heb. ii. 10-18). The failure of the first Adam brought sorrow, darkness and death; the success of the second Adam brought joy, light and immortality. One of the tenets of modern infidelity is the denial of the personality of the devil. It is asserted that the idea of a devil was not known to the early Hebrews, but was borrow from Persian dualism. The Persians held that there were two contending deities--a good one and a bad one; and the Hebrews, according to these critics, learned this doctrine from the Persians during the days of their Babylonian captivity, and modified it so that the god of evil became the devil. But such a theory is based upon the absurd notion that all the books of the Old Testament were written after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Their theory requires this notion, for the books of Genesis and Job, which were written centuries before the captivity, both show a knowledge of this being, and the first connects him and his work with the very beginning of human history. Those who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures must also believe in the personality of the devil, for they plainly teach it. The devil is a fallen angel (Jude 6; II. Pet. ii. 4). This doctrine need startle no one, for as there are good and bad spirits in the body, so there are good and bad spirits out of the body. Since God permits sinful spirits in the body, why should he not also permit them out of the body? If there can be a Herod, a Nero, a Judas, among men, why may there not be a Satan among evil spirits? Being but an angel, Satan is neither omnipresent, omniscient nor omnipotent. He is only a tolerated rebel, as we are tolerated rebels. He was the first sinner (I. John iii. 8), and was the originator of sin (John viii. 44). He is the perpetual tempter of mankind (Rev. xx. 2, 8), but he shall be conquered by the Redeemer (John xii. 31; Rev. xii. 9), and may be conquered by us also through the grace of Christ (I. Pet. v. 8, 9; Jas. iv. 7); but is, nevertheless, dangerous (Rev. ii. 10; iii. 9). Jesus, therefore, teaches us to pray for deliverance from him (Matt. vi. 13, R.V.). Jesus will destroy the works of Satan (I. John iii. 8), and Satan himself shall suffer eternal punishment (Rev. xx. 10). There is but one devil in the spirit world. The word which our King James Version translates "devils" should be translated "demons." The word "devil" means false accuser or slanderer, and the word in the plural is twice applied, metaphorically, to men and women (II. Tim. iii. 3; I. Tim. iii. 11). The devil is called slanderer because he speaks against men (Rev. xii. 10-12) and against God (Gen. iii. 1-5). The word "devil" is Greek. The word "Satan" is Hebrew, and means adversary (Job

ii. 1). Satan is referred to under many other terms, such as Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 24); serpent (Rev. xii. 9); prince of the powers of the air (Eph. ii. 2); Abaddon (Hebrew) and Apollyon (Greek), meaning destroyer (Rev. ix. 11); Belial, meaning good for nothing (II. Cor. vi. 15); murderer and liar (John viii. 44); prince of this world (John xii. 31); god of this world (II. Cor. iv. 4); and the dragon (Rev. xii. 7). These terms are always used in the Bible to designate an actual person; they are never used merely to personify evil. The devil may have appeared to Jesus in bodily form, or he may have come insensibly as he does to us. Our Lord's temptation makes the personality of the tempter essential, else Christ's own heart must have suggested evil to him, which is incompatible with his perfect holiness.] **^b13 And he was ^cled in the Spirit [that is, under the power of the Spirit] in the wilderness [Isolation from humanity is no security from temptation. In fact, our present passage of Scripture shows that it is highly favorable to temptation. The experience of all hermits shows that loneliness is the mother of a multitude of evil desires] **2 during forty days [Matthew speaks of the temptation as coming "after" forty days. Evidently Mark and Luke regard the long fast as part of the process of temptation, seeing that without it the first temptation would have been without force. There is no evidence of any other specific temptations before the three], being tempted of ^bSatan; ^cthe devil, ^band he was with the wild beasts [A graphic touch, showing the dreariness and desolation of the wilderness, and indicating its peril. Lions, wolves, leopards and serpents have been found in the Judæan wilderness]; ^cAnd he did eat nothing [It used to be thought that a forty days' absolute fast was a practical impossibility, and Luke's words were therefore modified to mean that he ate very little. But as a forty days' fast has been safely accomplished in modern times, and as it was Jesus who fasted, we see no reason why we should not take Luke's statement literally, as indicating an absolute fast] in those days: and when they were completed, ^a2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights [A forty days' fast was accomplished by Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 28; Deut. ix. 18), and by Elijah (I. Kings xix. 8), and it is a significant fact in this connection that these two men appeared with Christ at his transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 3). Those who share Christ's sufferings shall also share his glorification (Rom. viii. 17; II. Tim. ii. 11, 12). The forty days' fast became a basis for the temptation. We are told that temptation results from the excitement of desire (Jas. i. 14), and, as a rule, the greater the desire the greater the temptation. Viewed from this standpoint the temptation of the second Adam greatly exceeded in strength that of the first, for Adam abstained as to a particular fruit, but Christ fasted as to all things edible], he afterward hungered. [Here, for the first time, our Lord is shown as sharing our physical needs. We should note for our comfort that one may lack bread and suffer want, and still be infinitely beloved in heaven.] **3 And the tempter came [Satan is pre-eminently the tempter, for other tempters are his agents. He may possibly have appeared as an angel of light (II. Cor. xi. 14), but the purpose of his coming is more important than the manner of it. He came to produce sin in Jesus, for sin would render him forever incapable of becoming our Saviour--a sacrifice for the sins of others] ^c3 And the devil said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it {^acommand that these stones} become bread. [The devil's "if" strikes at the faith of Christ, and faith is the bond of union and accord between man and God. The main sin of this temptation was therefore distrust, though it had other sinful phases. The Father's voice had just declared the Sonship of Jesus, and Satan here boldly questions the truth of God's words, just as he did in the beginning (Gen. iii. 3-5). The temptation smacks of curiosity, and curiosity is the mother of many sins. Though Satan so glibly questioned the divinity of Christ, his kingdom soon began to feel the power of that divinity (Luke iv. 34-41), and shall continue to feel it until his kingdom is destroyed (Heb. ii. 14; I. John iii. 8). This temptation appealed to the present appetite, the impulse of the moment, as many of our temptations do. It has been quaintly said of the tempter that "he had sped so successfully to his own mind by a temptation about a matter of eating with the first Adam, that he practiced the old manner of trading******

with the second." This first temptation is still Satan's favorite with the poor. He suggests to them that if they were really the beloved objects of God's care, their condition would be otherwise. We should note that Jesus wrought no selfish miracle. Such an act would have been contrary to all Scripture precedent. Paul did not heal himself (I. Cor. xii. 7-9; Gal. iv. 13; Col. iv. 14), nor Epaphroditus, (Phil. ii. 25-27), nor Trophimus (II. Tim. iv. 20). Denying himself the right to make bread in the wilderness, Christ freely used his miraculous power to feed others in the desert (Matt. xiv. 15-21), and merited as just praise those words which were meant as a bitter taunt--Matt. xxvii. 42.] **4 But he {4 And Jesus} answered and said, unto him, It is written** [Jesus quotes Deut. viii. 3. It is a saying relative to the times when Israel was sustained by manna in the wilderness. The case of Jesus was now similar to that of Israel. He was in a foodless wilderness, but he trusted that as God had provided for Israel in its helplessness, so would he now provide for him. Israel sinned by doubt and murmuring, and proposing to obtain bread in its own way--that is, by returning to Egypt (Ex. xvi. 1-9). Jesus avoided a like sin. We should note the use which our Lord made of Scripture: in his hour of trial he did not look to visions and voices and special revelation for guidance, but used the written Word as the lamp for his feet (Ps. cxix. 105); in the conflict of temptation he did not defend himself by his own divine wisdom, but used that wisdom which God had revealed to all Israel through his prophets. Jesus fought as a man (Phil. ii. 6, 7), and used that weapon which, as God, he had given to man (Eph. vi. 17). Jesus used the Scripture as of final, argument-ending authority. Eve also started with "God hath said" (Gen. iii. 3); but she was not constant in her adherence to God's word. Jesus permitted Satan neither to question nor pervert the Scripture], **Man** [In using the word "man" Jesus takes his stand with us as a human being] **shall not live by bread alone.** [Called out of Egypt as God's Son (Matt. ii. 15), Jesus could well expect that he would be fed with manna after his forty days' fast. He trusted that God could furnish a table in the wilderness (Ps. lxxviii. 19). We, too, have abundant reason for a like trust. God gave us our lives, and gave his Son to redeem them from sin. He may let us suffer, but we can not perish if we trust him. Let us live by his word rather than by bread. It is better to die for righteousness than to live by sin. God fed Israel with supernatural bread, to show the people that they lived thus, and not by what they were pleased to call natural means. The stomach is a useful agent, but it is not the source of life, nor even the life sustainer. Those who think that the securing of bread is the first essential to the sustaining of life, will fail to seek any diviner food, and so will eventually starve with hunger--soul hunger.] **but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** [To satisfy our sense of duty is often more pleasant than to appease the pangs of hunger (John iv. 32-34; Job xxiii. 12; Jer. xv. 16). The trust of Jesus that God would speak in his behalf and save him, was like that of Job (Job xiii. 15). God can sustain our lives without food if he chooses. We shall live if God wills it, bread or no bread; and we shall likewise die at his word (Matt. vi. 25; John vi. 47-58; Acts xvii. 28). God can support our lives independent of our body--Matt. x. 28.] **5 Then the devil taketh him** [Matthew emphasizes the compulsory companionship of Satan. Jesus was in the hands of Satan as was Job (Job ii. 5, 6); but in Jesus' case Satan had the power of life and death, and he eventually took Jesus to the cross and slew him there] **into the holy city** [A common name for Jerusalem. The inscription on Jewish coins was "Jerusalem the Holy." Arabs to-day call it "el Kuds," "the Holy." The Holy City did not exclude the tempter nor temptations. The church may be the scene of man's sorest trial to resist wrong. But in the Holy City which is to come there will be no temptation]; **9 And he led him to Jerusalem, and he set him** [the two verbs "taking" and "setting" imply that Satan exercised a control over the bodily person of our Lord] **on the pinnacle of the temple** [It is not known exactly what spot is indicated by the word "pinnacle." Hence three places have been contended for as the proper locality: 1. The apex of the temple structure itself. 2. The top of Solomon's porch. 3. The top of Herod's royal portico. As to the temple itself, Josephus tells us that

its roof was covered with spikes of gold, to prevent even birds from alighting upon it, and, if so, men could not stand upon it. Solomon's porch, or the eastern portico, faced the Mount of Olives, and has been fixed upon by tradition as the place from which James, the Lord's brother, was hurled. The royal portico of Herod was at the southeast corner of the temple enclosure, and overlooked the valley of Kidron. Here was then, and is yet, the greatest height about the temple, and it was, therefore, the most suitable place for Satan's proposal], **6 and saith {said} unto him, If** [Godly life rests on faith. The life the devil would have us lead rests on ifs and uncertainties, on doubt and skepticism. We should note that foolish men doubt the divinity of Jesus, but the temptations of our Lord show how positively Satan was convinced of it. The opening scenes of Christ's ministry are redolent with his divinity. The Baptist asserted his purity and might, the Spirit visibly acknowledged his worthiness, the Father audibly testified to his Sonship, and the devil twice assaulted him as the divine champion] **thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down** [The first temptation was to under-confidence; the second to over-trust and presumption--two very dangerous conditions of the soul. Men begin by disparagingly doubting that Jesus can save them from their sins, and end by recklessly presuming that he will save them in their sins. Comparing this with Eve's temptation, we find that she was vainly curious to see if she might be like God (Gen. iii. 5), but Christ resisted such curiously. It is urged by some as to this temptation that there is no hint of vainglory or display, because nothing is said about casting himself down in the presence of the people, and that Jesus was merely taken to the temple because the sacred locality would tend to heighten his trust in the protecting promise which Satan quoted. But this ground is not well taken, for 1. The temple presumes a crowd. 2. We have a right to presume that this temptation would be like others to which Jesus was subjected. He was frequently invited to work miracles to satisfy curiosity, and he invariably refused to do so]: **'from hence: 10 for it is written** [This quotation is taken from Ps. xci. 11, 12, and applies to man generally. Note 1. The devil's head is full of Scripture, but to no profit, for his heart is empty of it. 2. By quoting it he shows a sense of its power which modern rationalism would do well to consider. 3. Satan's abuse of Scripture did not discourage Christ's use of it], **He shall give his angels charge concerning thee** [Regarding Satan's words as a quotation, we are struck with the fact that his knowledge of this particular passage was based upon his personal experience. He had been confronted by the presence of the guardian angels and had fretted at it (Job i. 10; II. Kings vi. 8, 17; Ps. xxxiv. 7; Jude 9). As a temptation, Satan's words appeal to Jesus to be more religious; to put more trust and reliance upon the promises of the Father; and he puts him in the place--the temple--where he might argue that God could least afford to let his promise fail], **to guard thee: 11 and, On their hands they shall bear thee up** [All who love pomp, display of artistic taste, gaieties of fashion, intoxication of fame, etc., fall by this temptation. Those who truly rest on God's promises, stand on a sure foundation, but those who rise on bubbles must come down when they burst], **Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus answering said unto him, again it is written {said,}** ["Written," "said;" the writings of Scripture are in general the sayings of God. But the Bible is not made up of isolated texts. To get a right understanding we must compare Scripture with Scripture. We could have no higher indorsement of the Old Testament than this use of it by Christ. It was sufficient for him in his temptations, and with the addition of the New Testament, it is sufficient for us in all things--II. Tim. iii. 16, 17; Col. iii. 3-16], **"Thou shalt not make trial** [Make experiment upon God, set traps for him, put one's self in dangerous situations, hoping thereby to draw forth some show of loving deliverance. Had Jesus cast himself down, he would have demanded of the Father a needless miracle to prove his Sonship, and would thereby have put the love of God to an unnecessary trial. All who jeopardize themselves without any command of God or call of duty, make trial of his love] **of the Lord thy God. 8 Again, the devil taketh him** [whether naturally or supernaturally, "whether in the body or out of the body"]

(II. Cor. xii. 2-4), we cannot tell. But it was a real, practical trial and temptation] **unto an exceeding high mountain** [it is immaterial which mountain this was; for from no mountain could one see the whole earth with the natural eye], **“5 And he led him up, and showeth {showed} him** [It is not said by either evangelist that Jesus saw the kingdoms from the mountain-top, but that Satan *showed* them to him. From any high Judæan mountain it would be easy for him to locate Rome, Greece, Egypt, Persia and Assyria, and as he pointed out their locality a few brief words of description would picture them to the imagination of Jesus, and cause their glories to move before his eyes. But it is very likely that to this description some sort of supernatural vision was added. It tempted the eye of Jesus as the luscious fruit did the eye of Eve--Gen. iii. 6] **all the kingdoms of the world** [It tempted Jesus to realize the dreams which the Jewish nation entertained. It was an appeal to him to reveal himself in the fullness of his power and authority as above generals, princes, kings and all beings of all ages. An appeal to obtain by physical rather than by spiritual power; by the short-cut path of policy rather than by the long road of suffering and martyrdom. Jesus came to obtain the kingdoms of the world. He was born King of the Jews, and confessed himself to be a King before Pilate. All authority is now given to him, and he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet, and until all the kingdoms of the world become his kingdom. Satan's way to obtain this kingdom differed from God's way. He might obtain it by doing Satan's will and becoming his worshiper, or by worshiping God and doing his will. Satan would give the speedier possession, but God the more lasting. We also strive for a kingdom; but let us obtain ours as Christ did his], **and the glory of them** [That is, all their resources as well as their magnificence. Their cities, lands and people, their armies, treasures and temples, etc. Many parents, in encouraging their children to seek earthly glory and distinction, unconsciously assist Satan in urging this temptation]; **“in a moment of time.** [These words strongly indicate that the prospect must have been supernaturally presented. The suddenness of the vision added greatly to the power of the temptation] **“9 and he the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority {All these things will I give thee,}** [From the standpoint of Christ's humanity, how overwhelming the temptation! It was the world's honors to one who had for thirty years led the life of a village carpenter; it was the world's riches to him who had not where to lay his head. From the standpoint of Jesus' divinity the temptation was repulsive. It was a large offer in the sight of Satan, but a small one in the sight of him who made all the worlds. Such offers are large to the children of the world, but small to those who are by faith joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17; Phil. iii. 7, 8). But the temptation was, nevertheless, very specious and plausible. The power of Jesus linked with that of Satan, and operating through Jewish fanaticism and pagan expectation would, in a few months, have brought the whole earth into one temporal kingdom, with Jesus as its head. But the kingdom of Christ rested upon a surer promise (Ps. ii. 8) than that here given by the "father of lies." God had promised, and, despite the pretensions of Satan, God had not yet retired from the government of the world. It was true that Satan and his emissaries had, by usurpation, gained an apparent possession of the world, but Jesus had right to it as the heir of God (Matt. xxi. 33-43). Being stronger than Satan, he had come to regain his kingdom, not by treaty, but by conquest (Luke xi. 19-22). Moreover, he would obtain it as a spiritual and not as a carnal kingdom. Servants of Christ should remember this. Every attempt to establish Messiah's kingdom as an outward, worldly dominion is an effort to convert the kingdom of heaven into the kingdom of the devil. God's kingdom can not be secularized. It should be noted also that Satan omits the words "if thou be the Son of God" in this instance, for their presence would have marred the force of the temptation. Note also that this was the only temptation wherein Satan evinced any show of generosity. He is slow to give anything, and most of us sell out to him for nothing--Isa. lii. 3], **and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me** [Satan does not claim an absolute but a derivative right, and his claim is not wholly unfounded (John

xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11). But the kingdom has been delivered unto him by men rather than by God (Eph. ii. 2). How much more quickly Jesus would have obtained power, had he received it from men by consenting to co-operate with them in their sinful practices as does Satan]; **and to whomsoever I will** [Not so Jesus. His giving is according to the Father's will--Matt. ix. 23] **I give it.** [The Emperor Tiberius then held it in the fullest sense ambition ever realized. Yet he was the most miserable and degraded of men. Satan knows how to take full toll for all that he gives.] **7 If** [In the temptations Satan uses three "ifs." The first "if" is one of despairing doubt; the second, one of vainglorious speculation; the third, one of moral and spiritual compromise] **thou therefore wilt^a fall down and worship^a before me** [Satan and God each seek the worship of man, but from very different motives. God is holiness and goodness, and we are invited to worship him that we may thereby be induced to grow like him. But Satan seeks worship for vanity's sake. How vast the vanity which would give so great a reward for one act of worship! Verily the devil is fond of it. He gives nothing unless he obtains it, and all his generosity is selfishness. Worshiping before Satan is the bending of the soul rather than of the body. He holds before each of us some crown of success, and says: "Bend just a little; slightly compromise your conscience. Accept the help of Pharisee and Sadducee, and keep silent as to their sins. Mix a little diplomacy with your righteousness. Stoop just a little. If you do, I will aid you and insure your success. If you do not, I will defeat you and laugh at your failures." It is Satan's sin to make such suggestions, but it is not our sin until we comply with them. We may more quickly obtain by his wrong way, but more surely by God's right way. Let no Christian be humiliated or discouraged by gross temptation, since even the Son of God was tempted to worship the devil. What Jesus would not do, the Beast has done, and has received the kingdoms for a season (Rev. xiii. 1-9). Note, too, that it is all one whether we worship Satan, or mammon, the gift which he offers--Matt. vi. 24], **it shall all be thine. 8 And^a 10 Then^a Jesus answered and said {^asaith} ^aunto him, ^aGet thee hence** [The passionate utterance of an aroused soul. Indignation is as divine as patience (Eph. iv. 26). Satan's sweetest temptation was most disgusting to Christ, for its sin was so grossly apparent. It ran counter to the very first of the ten commandments. Jesus would give it no room in his thoughts; he spurned it, as being as heinous as the law describes it (Deut. v. 6-11). Temptation must be peremptorily rejected. Jesus did not stop to weigh the worthiness of Satan; it was sufficient that God only is to be worshiped. As God, Jesus was himself an object of worship; but as man he worshiped the Father privately and publicly. Satan sought to command Jesus, but was commanded of him. Step by step Satan has obeyed this command, and foot after foot, earth's spiritual world has been yielded by his departing presence], **Satan** [The first and second temptations were so subtle and covert, and their sin so skillfully disguised, as to suggest that Satan himself was disguised. If so, his pride and vanity, revealed in this last temptation, betrayed him so that Jesus tore off his mask and called him by his right name. When he tempted him in a somewhat similar matter, Jesus called Simon Peter by this name (Matt. xvi. 23), but he laid a different command upon each of them. To Satan he spoke as an enemy, saying, "Get thee hence." He ordered Satan from his presence, for he had no proper place there. To Peter he spoke as to a presumptuous disciple, saying, "Get thee behind me." The disciple is a follower of his master, and his proper place is in the rear]: **for it is written** [Jesus gives a free translation of Deut. vi. 13. He substitutes the word "worship" for the word "fears." Fear prohibits false and induces true worship, and loving worship is the source of all acceptable service. The three Scripture quotations used by Jesus are all from the Book of Deuteronomy. He struck Satan with that very part of the Spirit's sword which modern critical infidelity, in the name of religion, and often aided by so-called religious organizations, seeks to persuade us to cast away], **Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.** [By serving God, Jesus obtained all the earthly authority which the devil offered him, and heavenly authority in addition thereto (Matt. xxviii. 18). So much better are the

rewards of God than Satan's.] **13 And when the devil had completed every temptation, 11 Then the devil leaveth {he departeth from} him for a season.** [See Jas. iv. 7. But Satan left to return many times. Here was the first being endowed with human nature who had defeated Satan under all circumstances for thirty years. This was Satan's first defeat under Christ's ministry. His last is yet to come, and it shall come by this same Christ Jesus. Temptations are battles. They leave the victor stronger and the vanquished weaker. Hence Satan when resisted is represented as fleeing. But he only flees for a season. He never despairs of the conflict so long as man is on the earth. Christ was constantly tempted by the returning devil (Luke xxii. 28). As Jesus hung upon the cross, all these three temptations with their accompanying "ifs" were spread out before him--Matt. xxvii. 39-43] **and behold, angels came** [They had probably witnessed the contest. Compare I. Cor. iv. 9; I. Tim. iii. 16. Angels do not appear again visibly ministering unto Jesus until we find him in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 43). When Satan finally departs from us, we, too, shall find ourselves in the presence of angels--Luke xvi. 22] **and ministered unto him.** [Jesus was probably fed by the angels, as was Elijah by one of them (I. Kings xix. 4-7). Satan and suffering first, then angels, refreshment and rest. God had indeed given his angels charge, and they came to him who refused to put the Father to the test. But they did not succor Jesus during his temptation, for that was to be resisted by himself alone--Isa. lxiii. 3.]

Study Questions:

1. When do the Scriptures tell us that Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit?
2. Where did the Spirit lead Jesus? For what reason?
3. How long was Jesus in the wilderness? What were the conditions in the wilderness?
4. What is the symbolism in Jesus fasting forty days and forty nights?
5. List and explain the three temptations of Jesus. What do we learn from each temptation?
6. What did Satan do after Jesus resisted his third temptation? What will Satan do if we resist him?

XX.

JOHN'S FIRST TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

(Bethany beyond Jordan, February, A. D. 27.)

^dJOHN I. 19-34.

Bible Text:

^d19 And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent unto him from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. 22 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet. 24 And they had been sent from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize in water: in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, 27 *even* he that cometh after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water. 32 And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit. 34 And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^d19 And this is the witness of John [John had been sent to testify, "and" this is the matter of his testimony], when the Jews [The term "Jews" is used seventy times by John to describe the ruling classes of Judæa] sent unto him [In thus sending an embassy they honored John more than they ever honored Christ. They looked upon John as a priest and Judæan, but upon Jesus as a carpenter and Galilæan. It is probable that the sending of this investigating committee marks the period when the feelings of the rulers toward John changed from friendliness to hostility. At the first, probably led on by the prophecies of Daniel, these Jews found joy in John's coming (John v. 33-35). When they attended his ministry in person he denounced their wickedness and incurred their hatred] from Jerusalem priests and Levites [they were commissioned to teach (II. Chron. xv. 3; Neh. viii. 7-9), and it was probably because of their wisdom as teachers that they were sent to question John about his baptism] to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; and he confessed [The repetition here suggests John's firmness under repeated temptation. As the questioners ran down the scale from "Christ" to "that prophet," John felt himself diminishing in their estimation, but firmly declined to take honors which did not belong to him], I am not [in this entire section (vs. 20-24) John places emphasis upon the pronoun "I," that he may contrast

himself with Christ] **the Christ**. [When the apostle John wrote this Gospel it had become fashionable with many of the Baptist's disciples to assert that the Baptist was the Christ. (Recognitions of Clement 1. 50, 60; Olshausen, Hengstenberg, Godet.) In giving this testimony of the Baptist, John corrects this error; but his more direct purpose is to show forth John's full testimony, and give the basis for the words of Jesus found at John v. 33. The fact that the Jews were disposed to look upon John as the Messiah gave all the greater weight to his testimony; for the more exalted the person of the witness, the weightier are his words. John's own experience doubtless caused him to feel the influence of the Baptist's testimony.] **21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah?** [Malachi had declared that Elijah should precede the Messiah (Mal. iv. 5). The Jews interpreted this prophecy literally, and looked for the return of the veritable Elijah who was translated (Matt. xvii. 10). This literal Elijah did return, and was seen upon the Mount of Transfiguration before the crucifixion of our Lord. But the prophecy of Malachi referred to a spiritual Elijah—one who should come "in the spirit and power of Elijah," and in this sense John fulfilled Malachi's prediction--Luke i. 17; Matt. xi. 14; xvii. 12.] **And he saith, I am not.** [He answered their question according to the sense in which they had asked it. He was not the Elijah who had been translated about nine hundred years before this time.] **Art thou the prophet?** [Moses had foretold a prophet who should come (Deut. xviii. 15-18), but the Jews appear to have had no fixed opinion concerning him, for some thought he would be a second Moses, others a second Elijah, others the Messiah. The Scriptures show us how uncertain they were about him (Matt. xvi. 14; John vi. 14; vii. 40, 41). As to Jeremiah being that prophet, see II. Macc. ii. 7. Even Christians disagree as to whether Moses refers to Christ or to a line of prophets. Though divided in opinion as to who this prophet would be, the Jews were fairly unanimous as to what he would do. Finding in their Scriptures two pictures of the Christ, one representing him as a great Conqueror, and the other of his priesthood, setting him forth as a great Sufferer, they took the pictures to refer to *two* personages, one denoting a king--the Messiah--and the other a prophet. The Jews to this day thus divide the Christ of prophecy, and seek to make him two personages.] **And he answered, No.** [He was not the prophet, either as he or they understood that term. John gives us a beautiful example of humility. Like Paul, he would not be overvalued--Acts xiv. 13-15; I. Cor. i. 12, 13.] **22 They said therefore unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?** [Unable to guess his office, they asked him to state it plainly.] **23 He said, I am the voice** [It is as though John answered, "You ask who I am. My personality is nothing; my message everything. I shall pass away as a sound passes into silence; but the truth which I have uttered shall abide." In his answer John shows himself to be the spiritual Elijah, for he declares that he came to do the work of Elijah; viz.: to prepare the people for the advent of Messiah. There are many echoes in the world; but few voices] **of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord** [prepare the minds and hearts of the people that Christ may freely enter in], **as said Isaiah the prophet.** [Isa. xl. 3.] **24 And they had been sent from the Pharisees.** [Of all the Jewish sects the Pharisees were most attentive to external rites and ceremonies, and hence would notice John's baptism more than would others. It is interesting to notice that the Pharisees, who were Christ's most bitter opponents, were warned of John about the presence of Messiah from the very beginning.] **25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why then baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, neither Elijah, neither the prophet?** [If you are no more important personage, who do you presume to introduce any other ordinance than those provided for by the law of Moses? The question shows that to them John's baptism was a new rite. Even if proselyte baptism existed at this time (of which there is certainly no sufficient evidence), it differed in two marked ways from John's baptism: 1. John baptized his converts, while proselytes baptized themselves. 2. John baptized Jews and not Gentiles.] **26 John answered them, saying, I baptize in water: in the**

midst of you standeth one whom ye know not, 27 even he that cometh after me [that is, follows in that way which I as forerunner am preparing for him], **the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose.** [The words "standeth" and "shoe" showed that the person of whom the Baptist spoke had a visible, bodily form. To loose the latchet was a peculiarly servile office. The Talmud says, "Every office a servant will do for his master, a scholar should perform for his teacher, except loosing his sandal-thong." The greatest prophet felt unworthy to render Christ this humble service, but unconverted sinners often presume to serve Christ according to their own will, and fully expect to have their service honored and rewarded. Taken as a whole, the answer of John appears indirect and insufficient. What was there in all this to authorize him to baptize? This appears to be his meaning: "You demand my authority for baptism. It rests in him for whom I prepare the way. It is a small matter to introduce baptism in water for one so worthy. If you accept him, my baptism will need no explanation; and if you reject him, my rite and its authority are both wholly immaterial."] **28 These things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan** [Owing to variation in the manuscripts, we may read "Bethany" or "Bethabara," or even possibly "Bethabara in Bathania." Tradition fixes upon the Jericho ford, which is about five miles on an air line north of the Dead Sea, as the site of Jesus' baptism. But this spot is eighty miles from Cana of Galilee, and hence Jesus, leaving it on foot, could not well have attended the wedding in Cana on "the third day" (John ii. 1). We must therefore look for Bethany or Bethabara farther up the river. John the Baptist was a roving preacher (Luke iii. 3), and during the forty days of Jesus' temptation seems to have moved up the river Jordan. Fifty miles above the Jericho ford, and ten miles south of the Sea of Galilee, Lieutenant Conder found a ford named 'Abarah (meaning "ferry"), which answers to Bethabara (meaning "house of the ferry"). It was in the land of Bashan, which in the time of Christ was called Bathania (meaning "soft soil"). This spot is only twenty-two miles from Cana. Being *beyond* the Jordan, it is not in Galilee, as Dr. Thomson asserts. Conder says: "We have collected the names of over forty fords, and no other is called 'Abarah; nor does the word occur again in all nine thousand names collected by the survey party."], **where John was baptizing. 29 On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him** [Jesus had just returned from the temptation in the wilderness. This is his first appearance in John's Gospel. The fact that John leaves out all the early history of Jesus shows that he wrote many years after the other evangelists, when all these facts were so well known as to need no mention by him], **and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God** [Lambs were commonly used for sin-offerings (Lev. iv. 32), and three of them were sacrificed in the cleansing of a leper (Lev. xiv. 10). A lamb was also the victim of the morning (9 A.M.) and evening (3 P.M.) sacrifice (Ex. xxix. 38)--the hours when Jesus was nailed to the cross and when he expired. A lamb was also the victim at the paschal supper. The great prophecy of Isaiah, setting forth the vicarious sacrifice of Christ (Isa. liii. 1-12) depicts him as a lamb, and in terms which answer closely to the words here used by John. The Jews to whom John spoke readily understood his allusion as being to sacrificial lambs; but they could not understand his meaning, for they had no thought of the sacrifice of a person. Jesus is called the Lamb of God because he is the lamb or sacrifice which God provided and accepted as the true and only sin-offering--Heb. x. 4-14; I. Pet. i. 19], **that taketh away the sin of the world!** [The present tense, "taketh," is used because the expiatory effect of Christ's sacrifice is perpetual, and the fountain of his forgiveness never fails. Expiated sin is this spoken of as being taken away (Lev. x. 17; Ex. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 18). Some, seeking to avoid the vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice, claim that the Baptist means that Jesus would gradually lift the world out of sin by his teaching. But lambs do not teach, and sin is not removed by teaching, but by sacrifice (Heb. ix. 22; Rev. v. 9). Jesus was sacrificed for the world, that is, for the entire human family in all ages. All are bought, but all do not acknowledge the purchase (II. Pet. ii. 1). He gives liberty to all, but all do not receive it, and some having received it return again to bondage

(Gal. iv. 9). The Baptist had baptized for the remission of sins. He now points his converts to him who would make this promise good unto their souls. A Christian looks upon Christ as one who has taken away his past sin (I. Pet. ii. 24), and who will forgive his present sin--I. John i. 9.] **30 This is he of whom I said** [for this saying see John i. 15, 27], **After me cometh a man who is become before me: for he was before me.** [As a man John was six months older than Jesus, but Jesus was the eternal Word. The Baptist therefore asserts here the pre-existence of our Lord.] **31 And I knew him not** [had no such certain knowledge of him as would fit me to testify concerning him]; **but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing in water.** [John baptized not only that he himself might know Christ by the spiritual sign, but also that through that knowledge duly published all Israel might know him.] **32 And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him.** [The descent of the Spirit served at least two purposes: 1. It enabled John to identify the Messiah. 2. It was, so to speak, an official recognition of Jesus as Messiah similar to the anointing or crowning of a king. It is asserted by some that it was of no benefit to Jesus, since his own divine powers permitted of no addition; but the language of Scripture indicates otherwise--Isa. xi. 2, 3; Luke iv. 17-19; John iii. 34.] **33 And I knew him not** [John's assertions that he did not know Jesus are assertions that he did not know him to be the Messiah. He *believed* it, as appears from his reluctance to baptize him, but he did not know it. His language to the people shows this (John i. 26). Many of the people must have known Jesus, but none of them knew him to be the Messiah. Moreover, when John denied that he knew Jesus as Messiah we must not take it that he was ignorant of the past history of Jesus. No doubt he knew in a general way who Jesus was; but as the official forerunner and announcer of Jesus, and as the heaven-sent witness (John i. 6, 7), it was necessary that the Baptist should receive, by personal revelation from God, as here stated, an indubitable, absolute knowledge of the Messiahship of Jesus. Without this, John would not have been truly qualified as a witness. That Jesus is the Son of God must not rest on hearsay evidence. John kept silent till he could testify of his own knowledge]: **but he that sent me** [thus humbly does John claim his divine commission as a prophet] **to baptize in water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him** [John seems to emphasize the abiding of the Spirit. The Spirit of God was also bestowed upon the prophets and the apostles, but in them his power was intermittent, and not constant; visions came to them intermittently, but with Christ the fellowship of the Spirit was continuous], **the same is he that baptizeth in the Holy Spirit.** [Christ bestows the Spirit upon his own. If he himself received the Spirit at the time of his baptism, why should it be thought strange that he bestows the Spirit upon his disciples at the time of their baptism?--See Acts ii. 38; xix. 1-7; Tit. iii. 5.] **34 And I have seen** [that is, I have seen the promised sign], **and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.** [This is the climax of John's testimony. It was twofold, embracing the results of the two senses of sight and hearing. 1. John *saw* the dove-like apparition of the Spirit, which convinced him that Jesus was the one to baptize in the Spirit. 2. He *heard* the voice of the Father, which convinced him that Jesus was the Son of God. As to each of these two facts he had a separate revelation, appealing to a different sense, and each given by the personage of the Deity more nearly concerned in the matter revealed. John was not only to prepare the people to receive Christ by calling them to repentance, and baptizing them for the remission of their sins; there was another work equally great and important to be performed. Their *heads* as well as their *hearts* needed his preparatory services. His testimony ran counter to and corrected popular opinion concerning Christ. We see that John corrected four errors: 1. The Jews looked for a Messiah of no greater spiritual worthiness than John himself, but the Baptist disclaimed even the right to unlace the Lord's shoe, that he might emphasize the difference between himself and the Messiah in point of spiritual excellency. 2. The Jews looked for one

who would come after Moses, David, and the prophets, and lost sight of the fact that he would be before them, both in point of time and of honor (Matt. xxii. 41-46). 3. The Jews looked for a liberator from earthly bondage--a glorious king; John pointed them to a liberator from spiritual bondage, a perfect sacrifice acceptable to God. 4. The Jews looked for a human Messiah, a son of David. John enlarged their idea, by pointing them to a Messiah who was also the Son of God. When the Jews accept John's guidance as a prophet, they will believe in the Messiahship of Jesus.]

Study Questions:

1. Whom did the Pharisees send from Jerusalem to question John? What did they want to know?
2. Why did John say that he was not Elijah when Jesus said that he was Elijah?
3. What did John the Baptist's answer in John 1:23 tell them?
4. How did John contrast himself with Jesus in John 1:27? How does John contrast his baptism with Jesus' baptism in John 1:33?
5. How did John assert the deity of Jesus?
6. How did John know that Jesus was the Lamb of God and Son of God?
7. What is significant about Jesus being called the Lamb of God?

XXI.

JESUS MAKES HIS FIRST DISCIPLES.

(Bethany beyond Jordan, Spring A. D. 27.)

^dJOHN I. 35-51.

Bible Text:

^d**35 Again on the morrow** John was standing, and two of his disciples; **36 and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God!** **37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.** **38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher), where abidest thou?** **39 He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.** **40 One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** **41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).** **42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).** **43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip: and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.** **44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.** **45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** **46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.** **47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!** **48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** **49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.** **50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.** **51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.**

Bible Text with Commentary:

^d**35 Again on the morrow** [John's direct testimony bore fruit on the second day] **John was standing, and two of his disciples** [An audience of two. A small field; but a large harvest]; **36 and he looked** [Gazed intently. The word is used at Mark xiv. 67; Luke xxii. 61 Mark x. 21, 27. John looked searchingly at that face, which, so far as any record shows, he was never to see on earth again. The more intently we look upon Jesus, the more powerfully we proclaim him] **upon Jesus as he walked** [This detail seems to be introduced to show that the Baptist did not stop Jesus and enter into familiar conversation with him. The witness of John was wholly that of an inspired, unbiased prophet, and not that of a friend or a familiar acquaintance], **and saith, Behold the Lamb of God!** [John repeats this testimony. He might have chosen another message, but preferred this one. Paul also had but one theme--I. Cor. ii. 2; Gal. vi. 14.] **37 And the two disciples** [Andrew and probably John, the writer of this Gospel. The following are indications that it was John: 1. From this time on he speaks as an eye-witness. 2. We have no other account in his Gospel

of his call to discipleship. 3. On seven other occasions in this Gospel he withholds his name--John xiii. 23; xix. 26, 35; xx. 2; xxi. 7, 20, 24] **heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.** [Here is the fountainhead of Christianity, for Christianity is following Jesus.] **38 And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?** [They doubtless felt such awe and reverence for the person of Jesus as would make them hesitate to address him. Hence Jesus himself opens the way for intercourse with himself.] **And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher)** [By the way in which John explains Jewish words and customs, it becomes apparent that his Gospel was written for Gentiles as well as for Jews. Some take these explanations as evidence that John's Gospel was written after the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. They are indeed a slight evidence of this, for it is more expedient to explain a custom which has ceased to exist than one which survives to explain itself], **where abidest thou?** **39 He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see.** [The fitting invitation of him who says: "Seek, and ye shall find."] **They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day: it was about the tenth hour.** [It being a crisis in his life, John remembered the very hour. If John reckoned time according to the Jewish method, it was about 4 P.M. If according to the Roman method, it was 10 A.M. We are inclined to accept the latter as correct.] **40 One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.** **41 He findeth first** [before he did anything else] **his own brother Simon** [The word "own" is here coupled with "brother" to show that Simon was not a mere relative (as the word "brother" might mean), but it was literally Andrew's brother] **and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ).** ["Messiah" is Hebrew, "Christ" is Greek, "Anointed" is English. Jesus is the anointed of God. In finding him, Andrew had made the greatest discovery which it is possible for a man to make.] **42 He brought him unto Jesus.** [Thus Andrew had in a sense the honor of being the first Christian evangelist.] **Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon [this name means "hearing"] the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).** [Cephas is Hebrew, Peter is Greek, stone is English. It means a mass of rock detached from the bed-rock or strata on which the earth rests. The future tense, "thou shalt be," indicates that Peter was to win his name. It is given prophetically to describe the stability to which the then weak and vacillating Simon should attain.] **43 On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip** [In the synoptists, Philip is a mere name in the apostolic list. Through John we gain some true acquaintance with him--vi. 5; xii. 21; xiv. 8]: **and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.** [The Lord's usual invitation to discipleship--Matt. viii. 22; ix. 9; xix. 21; Mark ii. 14; x. 21; Luke v. 27; ix. 59; John xxi. 19.] **44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida** [Bethsaida of Galilee, on the northwestern shore of the Lake of Galilee. It was a wicked place--Matt. xi. 21], **of the city of Andrew and Peter.** [It appears that Peter afterward removed to Capernaum--Mark i. 29.] **45 Philip findeth Nathanael** [Nathanael is commonly identified with Bartholomew for the following reasons: 1. The name Bartholomew is only a patronymic, and hence its bearer would be likely to have an additional name. (Compare Matt. xvi. 17; Acts iv. 36.) 2. John never mentions Bartholomew, and the Synoptists never mention Nathanael, though John mentions him among apostles at the beginning and at the close of Christ's ministry. 3. The Synoptists, in their list of apostles, invariably place Philip next to Bartholomew, and show a tendency to place brothers and friends together. 4. All the other disciples mentioned in this chapter become apostles, and none are so highly commended as Nathanael. 5. Bartholomew is connected with Matthew in the list at Acts i. 13, and the names Matthew and Nathanael both mean the same, and are equal to the Greek name Theodore, which means "gift of God." But even so the identification is not perfect], **and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote** [The whole law is full of symbolism which refers to Christ. The following references may be taken as more specific: Gen. xlix. 10;

Num. xxiv. 17-19; Deut. xviii. 15. The passages in the prophets are too numerous to mention. For samples see Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6; lii. 13; liii. 1-12; Ezek. xxxiv. 23-31. In brief, Moses wrote of him as a Prophet, David as Lord, Isaiah as the Son of the virgin and suffering Servant, Jeremiah as the Branch, Ezekiel as the Shepherd, Malachi as the Messenger of the Covenant, Daniel as the Messiah. Christ is the hero and subject-matter of both Testaments--I. Pet. i. 11; John v. 39], **Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** [Philip knew no better at this time, and John did not change the words of Philip to suit his later knowledge of Christ's parentage. John has already declared the divine origin of Jesus (ver. 14), thereby agreeing with the detailed account of Matthew and Luke.] **46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?** [Because of their want of culture, their rude dialect, and their contact with Gentiles, the Galileans were lightly esteemed by the inhabitants of Judæa (John vii. 52). But here Nathanael, a Galilean himself, speaks slightly of Nazareth. Some think that Nazareth was no worse than the rest of Galilee, and that Nathanael speaks thus disparagingly because he dwelt in the neighboring town of Cana, and felt that jealousy which often exists between rival villages. But the guileless Nathanael had no such jealousy, and the persistency with which the enemies of Jesus called him the Nazarene indicates that there was more than a local odium attached to the name Nazareth. Moreover, it was the first city to offer violence to Christ, and was ready on one day's acquaintance with his preaching to put him to death.] **Philip saith unto him, Come and see.** [So said afterward the woman of Samaria (John iv. 29). Investigation removes prejudice.] **47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed** [An Israelite in spirit as well as in flesh (Rom. ii. 28, 29; ix. 16). Such a character contrasted sharply with the prevalent formalism and hypocrisy of that day], **in whom is no guile!** [Some see in the word guile a reference to Jacob. He was a man full of all subtlety and guile in his early years, but his experience at Peniel (Gen. xxxii. 22-31) changed his nature and his name, and he became Israel, the spiritual father of all true Israelites.] **48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?** [Nathanael's surprise clearly indicates that the knowledge which Jesus exhibited was miraculous. **Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** [The fig-tree affords the densest shade in Palestine--a shade where no sunspot can be seen. This fact has made it immemorially a resting-place and a refuge from the fierce Syrian sunlight. Under such a cover Jesus saw Nathanael when he was alone. Such superhuman knowledge wrought faith in Nathanael, as it did afterward in the woman of Samaria.--See Prov. xv. 3.] **49 Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.** [Psalm ii. and Isa. ix. 6 prophetically announce Jesus as the Son of God. These and other prophecies had just been more clearly announced by the Baptist (ver. 34). It is clear, therefore, where Nathanael got his words; but it is not so clear how well he understood them. This is the first recorded uninspired confession of the divinity of Jesus, but Matt. xvi. 16, 17 indicates that it was but partially comprehended, else Peter might have been instructed by Nathanael. The expression "King of Israel" probably expressed the hope which Nathanael then entertained that Jesus would restore the ancient Jewish kingdom of David--Acts i. 6.] **50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.** [Nathanael regarded the revelation of his character and whereabouts as a great thing, but he was destined to see yet greater miracles. Opportunities improved lead to larger privileges, and for those who believe, the evidences are increased.] **51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily** [This word means "in truth." John twenty-five times represents the Saviour as thus using the double "verily." Matthew quotes the single "verily" thirty times, Mark fourteen times, and Luke seven times. The word is used to mark the importance of the truth about to be uttered], **I say unto you** ["you" is plural and includes all present as well as Nathanael], **Ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God**

ascending and descending upon the Son of man. [Jesus having referred to Nathanael as a true Israelite, promises to him--and to those like him--a blessing answering to Jacob's vision of the ladder; that is, that the ascent and descent of ministering angels shall be by means of Christ. Jesus calls himself the Son of man upwards of eighty times. The expression is found in all four Gospels, but is there invariably used by Christ himself. Stephen (Acts vii. 56) and John (Rev. i. 13) also use this title, to indicate that the glorious being whom they saw was like Jesus--like him in his human estate. In this chapter Jesus has been called by others "The Lamb of God," "the Son of God," "the Messiah," and "the King of Israel." Jesus chooses yet another title, "Son of man," for himself. At this earliest dawning of their expectations, while their minds were thus full of his titles of glory, Jesus introduces to his disciples this one which speaks of his humanity and humility. The expression may have been suggested by Dan. vii. 13, 14.]

Study Questions:

1. Who were John's two disciples in John 1:35? What did they do when John said that Jesus was the Lamb of God?
2. What did Jesus ask the two men who followed Him? What was their response?
3. Why might they have wanted to know where Jesus was staying?
4. What did Andrew do after learning where Jesus was staying?
5. What did Jesus tell Peter?
6. What is the meaning of "Cephas?" What is symbolic about Simon being called Cephas (Peter)?
7. Where did Jesus find Philip? What did Jesus command him to do?
8. Who did Philip take to Jesus? What did Philip tell him?
9. What was Nathanael's response to Philip? Why might he have responded that way? How did Philip respond back to Nathanael?
10. What was the first thing Jesus said to Nathanael?
11. What was Nathanael's response to Jesus' statement? What was Jesus' answer to his question?
12. How did Nathanael know that Jesus was the Son of God and King of Israel?
13. What would Nathanael see since he had believed? What does this mean?

XXII.
JESUS WORKS HIS FIRST MIRACLE
AT CANA IN GALILEE.

^dJOHN II. 1-11.

Bible Text:

^d1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2 and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3 And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4 And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. 5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. 6 Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. 9 And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, 10 and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11 This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^d1 And the third day [From the calling of Philip (John i. 43). The days enumerated in John's first two chapters constitute a week, and may perhaps be intended as a contrast to the last week of Christ's ministry (John xii. 1). It took two days to journey from the Jordan to Cana] **there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee** [In Palestine the marriage ceremony usually began at twilight. The feast after the marriage was at the home of the bridegroom, and was sometimes prolonged for several days (Gen. xxix. 27; Judg. xiv. 12); but in this case it seems likely that poverty limited the wedding feast to one day. The site of Cana is disputed. From the eighth century a place called Kefr-Kenna (village of Cana), lying a little over three miles northeast of Nazareth, has been regarded as John's Cana of Galilee. But recently some ruins called Khurbet-Cana, twelve miles north of Nazareth, which doubtfully are said to have retained the name of Kana-el-Jilil (Cana of Galilee), have been preferred by some as the true site. In our judgment Kefr-Kenna has the stronger claim. It is situated on a westward slope of a hill, with a copious and unfailing spring adjoining it on the southwest]; **and the mother of Jesus was there** [John never called our Lord's mother by her name. He assumes that she is known to his readers. This is one of the many points tending to show the supplemental character of John's Gospel. He avoids repeating what is found in the first three Gospels]: **2 and Jesus also was bidden** [being the Creator of woman, and the author of matrimony, it was fitting that the Son of God should grace a marriage feast with his presence], **and his disciples, to the marriage.** [This is the earliest use of the term "disciples" in the ministry of Jesus. His disciples were Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and probably John and James.] **3 And when the wine failed** [Probably the arrival of Christ and his disciples helped to exhaust the supply. Shortage of provision when guests are invited is considered a sore humiliation the world over], **the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.**

[The interest which Mary took in the feast and the way in which she addressed the servants at verse 5, suggests that she was a close friend of the bridegroom's family. Though she merely states the unfortunate condition to Jesus, her statement is a covert petition to him that he would remedy it, as our Lord's answer shows. She practically requested him to work a miracle, nor is it strange that she should do this. Remembering the many early sayings about him which she had treasured in her heart (Luke ii. 19, 51), and doubtless being informed of what had occurred at his baptism, and of the proclamation which John the Baptist had made concerning him, and seeing a group of disciples gathered about him, it was very reasonable for her to expect him to do something which would reveal the high purposes for which he had been born.] **4 And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?** [Jesus did not call her "mother," but "woman," a term of courteous respect, but indicating no spirit of obedience. "As much as to say," says Augustine, "thou art not the mother of that in me which worketh miracles." Moses recognized that parental duties were subordinate to divine (Deut. xxxiii. 9); and Jesus emphasized the principles (Matt. x. 37). Jesus taught that relationship to him was spiritual, and not fleshly (Matt. xii. 46-50), and Paul coveted such relationship (II. Cor. v. 16, 17). The expression, "What have I," etc., is used frequently in the Scriptures and invariably indicates a mild rebuke (Judg. xi. 12; II. Sam. xvi. 10; I. Kings xvii. 18; II. Kings iii. 13; Matt. viii. 29; Mark i. 24; Luke viii. 28). It means, "leave me to act as I please," and Jesus uses it to assert that he is independent of all human relationships in the exercise of his Messiahship. It corrects two errors taught by the Catholic Church: 1. Catholicism says that our Lord's mother was immaculate, but if this were true she could not have incurred our Lord's rebuke. 2. Catholicism teaches that Mary's intercession is recognized by Christ. But this is the only instance on record of such intercession, and though it was addressed to Christ while in the flesh and was concerning a purely temporal matter, it was promptly rebuked.] **mine hour is not yet come.** [Our Lord's answer indicates that Mary's request had in it more than a desire for the gift of wine. What she principally wanted was to have Jesus manifest himself as Messiah. Now, Jesus gave many secondary, but only one supreme, manifestation of his glory or Messiahship. His miracles were secondary manifestations, but his Passion was the supreme manifestation (John viii. 28; ii. 18, 19; Matt. xii. 38-40). Jesus called this supreme sign his "hour" (John xii. 23, 27; xvii. 1; Matt. xxvi. 45; Luke xxii. 53; see also John vii. 30; viii. 20). His mother sought for a supreme sign, but at that time only a secondary sign could be fittingly given. The triumph at Pentecost was not to be achieved at Cana.] **5 His mother saith unto the servants** [though he had spoken words of rebuke, his mother was neither offended nor discouraged because of them], **Whatever he saith unto you, do it.** [She commands unlimited obedience. Though her words are not addressed to us, they will prove of untold profit to us if we obey them.] **6 Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying** [The details of the account suggest that John was an eye-witness. The Jews regarded themselves as ceremonially unclean if they did not wash their hands before eating--Matt. xv. 2; Mark vii. 3, 4], **containing two or three firkins apiece.** [At Kefr-Kenna an old, one-story house near the lower edge of the village is regarded by the Greeks as the one in which this wedding feast was held. The room is a rude chapel, and at one side stand two old stone mortars, one holding about eight gallons and the other about ten, now used for immersing infants, but said by the attending priest to be two of the identical waterpots here mentioned. The simple-minded old man was not aware that the six waterpots held each two or three firkins apiece--between eighteen and twenty-seven gallons, a firkin being nine gallons--or double the quantity of his mortars. If he had known this, he might have chiseled out his mortars a little deeper!] **7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water.** [The jars had been partially emptied by the ablutions of the company.] **And they filled them up to the brim.** [This statement serves two purposes. 1. It emphasizes the great quantity. 2. It shows there was no room to add anything

whatever to the contents of the jars. As to the quantity, it was between 106 and 162 gallons. As we do not know the number of guests nor the duration of the feast, we can not accurately measure the Lord's bounty. But as twelve basketfuls were left after feeding the five thousand, there was doubtless here a like sufficiency, and the surplus would serve as an acceptable gift to the married couple.] **8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now** [the word "now" seems to indicate the turning-point when the water became wine], **and bear unto the ruler of the feast.** [According to the custom of that age, one of the guests was usually chosen to preside over such festivities, and he was called the ruler. Our modern toastmaster is probably a relic of this ancient custom.] **And they bare it. 9 And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, 10 and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first** [when the taste is sharpest, and most critical] **the good wine** [the adjective "good" refers rather to flavor than to strength]; **and when men have drunk freely** [The ruler was no disciple of Jesus, and he speaks in the merry spirit of the world. He gives his own experience as to the habits of feasts, and his words give no indication that those present indulged to excess], **then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now.** [It is part of Christ's system to reserve the best until the last. Sin's first cup is always the sweetest, but with God that which follows is ever superior to that which has preceded it. As to the bearing of this miracle upon the question of temperance, the New Testament elsewhere clearly condemns the immoderate use of wine, and as these condemnations proceed from Christ we may rightly conceive of him, as in this instance, doing nothing contrary thereto. The liquors of this land in the strength of their intoxicating properties differ so widely from the light wines of Palestine that even the most moderate use of them seems immoderate in comparison. In creating wine Jesus did no more than as Creator and Renewer of the earth he had always done. From the beginning God has always so created or replenished the earth as to allow the possibility of excess.] **11 This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory** [This was the beginning or first of the miracles, and John's statement brands as false all the Catholic traditions which tell of miracles performed by Christ in his childhood. We should note also that it was a sign. The value of the miracle was in what it signified, not in what it wrought. It manifested the glory of Christ, part of which glory is his power to change the worse into the better, the simpler into the richer. It is the glory of Christ that he can transform sinners into his own likeness--I. John iii. 2; I. Cor. xv. 42-44; Phil. iii. 20, 21]; **and his disciples believed on him.** [In this chapter John as a disciple three times gives us a disciple's point of view as to Christ's miracles; here, and at verse 17 and at verse 22. They implanted faith in those whose hearts were right before God (John v. 38). The miracles of Christ created widespread excitement. There had been none of a notorious nature since Daniel had been cast to the lions, and had read the writing on Belshazzar's wall some five hundred and eighty years before.]

Study Questions:

1. How long after calling Philip to be a disciple, did Jesus attend the wedding in Cana?
2. Why might Mary have told Jesus that they have no wine?
3. What was Jesus' response to Mary? Explain.
4. What did Mary say to the servants? What do we learn from her statement?
5. Explain, in detail, the miracle Jesus performed.
6. What did the ruler of the feast say to the bridegroom after tasting the wine? What do we learn from the statement?
7. Was this the first sign (miracle) performed by Jesus? What human religious doctrines are disproved

by this fact?

8. What resulted from the disciples witnessing this miracle?

XXIII.

JESUS' FIRST RESIDENCE AT CAPERNAUM.

^dJOHN II. 12.

Bible Text:

^d12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and there they abode not many days.

Bible Text with Commentary:

^d12 After this he went down to Capernaum [The site of Capernaum is generally conceded to be marked by the ruins now called Tel-Hum. Jesus is said to have gone "down" because Cana is among the hills, and Capernaum was by the Lake of Galilee, about six hundred feet below sea level], **he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples** [There is much dispute as to what the New Testament writers mean by the phrase "brethren of the Lord." This phrase, found in any other than a Jewish book, would be taken to mean either the full or half brothers of Jesus, and it has probably that meaning here. The Catholic Church, contending for the perpetual virginity of our Lord's mother, has argued that his brethren were either the sons of Joseph by a former marriage, or that they were sons of Alphæus (also called Clopas) and a sister of our Lord's mother, who, like her, was also called Mary (John xix. 25). This latter view is based upon the fact that two of the sons of Alphæus bear the same names as those borne by two of our Lord's brethren, which is far more conclusive, since the names James and Judas were extremely common. Moreover, we learn from John vii. 5, that the Lord's brethren did not believe on him, and harmonists place the time of this unbelief late in our Lord's ministry, when the sons of Alphæus were not only believers, but some of them even apostles. Our Lord's brethren are mentioned nine times in the New Testament, and a study of these references will give us some light. Three of them, viz.: John vii. 3, 5, 10; I. Cor. ix. 5; Gal. i. 19, are rather noncommittal. The other six (Matt. xii. 46; xiii. 55; Mark iii. 32; vi. 3; Luke viii. 19, 20; John ii. 12) speak of his brethren in connection with his mother, and strongly indicate that Jesus was the first-born son of Mary, and that she had at least four other sons, besides daughters. These brethren of Jesus are constantly represented as attending his mother, without a hint that they were not her children. Against this conclusion there is but one argument which has any force; namely, that our Lord committed his mother into the keeping of the apostle John, rather than to his brethren (John xix. 25-27), but this fact may be easily accounted for. Many mothers are but scantily and grudgingly supported by their sons]; **and there they abode not many days.** [Because the passover was at hand, and he went up to Jerusalem. This notice of the brief sojourn of Jesus at Capernaum throws light on several things: 1. It shows where Jesus spent most of his time between his baptism and the first passover. 2. It helps to explain how the nobleman, who afterwards sought him at Cana, became acquainted with him. 3. It prepares us to look for his first visit to Nazareth at a later period. 4. It also explains why Jesus sought Capernaum as his place of residence after leaving Nazareth. Moreover, it shows that the natural ties of kindred were not immediately snapped by Christ. Until he went up to the first passover, he abode with his mother and his brethren.]

Study Questions:

1. Where did Jesus go after the wedding feast in Cana? Who went with Him?
2. Why might Jesus have gone to Capernaum?
3. What human religious doctrine is disproved by the fact that Jesus had brothers and sisters?
4. Why didn't they stay in Capernaum very long?