

DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON

Lifted From the Mire.

"Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."—Ps. 68:12.

I suppose you know what the Israelites did down in Egyptian slavery. They made bricks. Amid the utensils of cookery—the kettles, the pots, the pans, with which they prepared their daily food; and when these poor slaves, tired of the day's work, lay down to rest, they lay down among the implements of cookery and the implements of hard work. When they arose in the morning they found their garments covered with the clay and the smoke and the dust, and

RESMIRCHED AND BEGRIMED with the utensils of cookery. But after a while the Lord broke up that slavery, and He took these poor slaves into a land where they had better garb, brighter and cleaner and beautiful apparel. No more bricks for them to make. Let Pharaoh make his own bricks. Let David, in my text, come to describe the transition of these poor brick-kilns into the glorious emancipation for which God had prepared them, he says: "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Miss Whately, the author of a celebrated book, "Life in Egypt," said she sometimes saw people in the East cooking their food on the tops of houses, and that she had often seen, just before sundown, pigeons and doves, which had, during the heat of the day, been hiding among the kettles and the pans, with which the food was prepared, picking up the crumbs that they might find: just about the hour of sunset they would spread their wings and fly heavenward, entirely unsold by the region in which they had moved, for the pigeon is a very cleanly bird. And as the pigeons flew away the setting sun would throw silver on their wings and gold on their breasts. So you see it was not a far-fetched simile, or an unnatural comparison, when David in my text says to these emancipated Israelites, and says to all those who are brought out of any kind of trouble into any kind of spiritual joy: "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Sin is the hardest of all taskmasters. Worse than Pharaoh, it keeps us drudging, drudging in

A MOST DEGRADING SERVICE; but after a while Christ comes, and He says: "Let my people go," and we pass out from among the brick-kilns of sin into the glorious liberty of the Gospel; we put on the clean robes of a Christian profession, and when, at last, we soar away to the warm nest which God has provided for us in heaven, we shall go farther than a dove, its wings covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold.

I am going to preach something which some of you do not believe, and that is, that the grandest possible adornment is the religion of Jesus Christ. There are a great many people who suppose that religion is a very different thing from what it really is. The reason men condemn the Bible is because they do not understand the Bible; they have not properly examined it. Dr. Johnson said that Hume told a minister in the bishopric of Durham, that he had never particularly examined the New Testament, yet all his life warred against it. Halley the astronomer, announced his scepticism to Sir Isaac Newton, and Sir Isaac Newton said: "Now, sir, I have examined the subject and you have not; and I am ashamed that you, professing to be a philosopher, consent to condemn a thing you never have examined." And so men reject the religion of Jesus Christ because they really have never investigated it. They think it something undesirable, something that will not work, something Pecksniffian, something hypocritical, something repulsive, when it is so bright and so beautiful you might compare it to a robin-redbreast, you might compare it to a dove, its wings covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold.

WASTED PITY. But how is it if a young man becomes a Christian? All through the club-rooms where he associates, all through the business circles where he is known, there is commiseration. They say: "What a pity that a young man who had such bright prospects should so have been despoiled by those Christians, giving up all his worldly prospects for something which is of no particular present worth!" Here is a young man who becomes a Christian; her voice, her face, her manners the charm of the drawing-room. Now all through the fashionable circles the whisper goes: "What a pity that such a bright light should have been extinguished, that such a graceful girl should be crippled, that such worldly prospects should be obliterated!" Ah, my friends, it can be shown that religion's ways are peace; that religion, instead of being dark and doleful and lachrymose and repulsive, is bright and beautiful, fairer than a dove, its wings covered with silver and its feathers with yellow gold.

See, in the first place, what religion will do for a man's heart. I care not how cheerful a man may naturally be before conversion,

CONVERSION BRINGS HIM UP to a higher standard of cheerfulness. I do not say he will laugh any louder; I do not say but he may stand back from some of his hilarity in which he once indulged; but there comes into his soul an immense satisfaction. A young man not a Christian depends upon worldly successes to keep his spirits up. Now he is prosperous, now he has a large salary, now he has a beautiful wardrobe, now he has pleasant friends, now he has more money than he knows how to spend; everything goes bright and well with him. But trouble comes—there are many young men in the house this morning who can testify out of their own experience that sometimes

to young men trouble does come—his friends are gone, his salary is gone, his health is gone; he goes down, down. He becomes sour, cross, queer, misanthropic, blames the world, blames society, blames the Church, blames everything, rushes perhaps to the intoxicating cup to drown his trouble, but, instead of drowning his trouble, he drowns his body and drowns his soul.

But here is a Christian young man. Trouble comes to him. Does he give up? No! He throws himself back on the resources of heaven. He says: "God is my Father. Out of all these disasters I shall pluck advantage for my soul. All the promises are mine, Christ is mine, Christian companionship is mine, heaven is mine. What though my apparel be worn out? Christ gives me a robe of righteousness. What though my money be gone? I have

A TITLE DEED TO THE WHOLE UNIVERSE in the promise, "All are yours." What though my worldly friends fall away? Ministering angels are my bodyguard. What though my fare be poor, and my bread be scant? I sit at the King's banquet!"

Oh, what a poor, shallow stream is worldly enjoyment compared with the deep, broad, overflowing river of God's peace, rolling midway in the Christian heart! Sometimes you have gone out on the iron-bound beach of the sea when there has been a storm on the ocean, and you have seen the waves dash into white foam at your feet. They did not do you any harm. While there, you thought of the chapter written by the Psalmist, and perhaps you recited it to yourself while the storm was making commentary upon the passage: "God is our

REFUGE AND STRENGTH, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will I not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Oh, how independent the religion of Christ makes a man of worldly success and worldly circumstances! Nelson, the night before his last battle, said: "Tomorrow I shall win either a peerage, or a grave in Westminster Abbey." And it does not make much difference to the Christian whether he rises or falls in worldly matters; he has everlasting renown anyway. Other plumage may be torn in the blast, but that soul adorned with Christian grace, is fairer than the dove, its wings covered with silver, and its feathers with gold.

You and I have found out that people who pretend to be happy are not really happy. Look at that young man caricaturing the Christian religion, scoffing at everything good, going into roistering drunkenness, dashing the champagne bottle to the floor, rolling the glasses from the bar-room counter, laughing, shouting, stamping the floor. Is he happy? I will go to

HIS MIDNIGHT PILLOW. I will see him turn the gas off. I will ask myself if the pillow on which he sleeps is as soft as the pillow on which that pure young man sleeps. Ah! no. When he opens his eyes in the morning, will the world be as bright to him as to that young man who retired at night saying his prayers, invoking God's blessing upon his own soul and the souls of his comrades, and father and mother and brother and sister far away? No, no! His laughter will ring out from the saloon so that you hear it as you pass by, but it is hollow laughter; in it is the snapping of heart-strings and the rattle of prison gates. Happy! that young man happy?

Let him fill high the bowl; he cannot drown an upbraiding conscience. Let the balls roll through the bowling alley, the deep rumble and the sharp crack cannot overpower the voices of condemnation. Let him whirl in the dance of sin and temptation and death. All the brilliancy of the scene cannot make him forget the last look of his mother as he left home, when she said to him: "Now, my son, you will do right; I am sure you will do right; you will, won't you?" That young man happy? Why, across every night there fit shadows of eternal darkness; there are adverbs coiled up in every cup; there are vultures of despair striking their iron beak into his heart; there are skeleton fingers of grief pinching at the throat. I come in amid the clinking of the glasses and under the flashing of the chandeliers, and I cry: "Woe! woe! The way of the ungodly shall perish. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. The way of transgressors is hard." Oh, my friends, there is more joy in one drop of Christian satisfaction than in whole rivers of sinful delight. Other wings may be drenched of the storm and splashed of the tempest, but the dove that comes in through the window of this heavenly ark has wings like the dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

Again I remark, religion is an adornment in the style of usefulness into which it inducts a man. Here are

TWO YOUNG MEN. The one has fine culture, exquisite wardrobe, plenty of friends, great worldly success, but he lives for himself. His chief care is for his own comfort. He lives uselessly. He dies unregretted. Here is another young man. His apparel may not be so good, his education may not be so thorough. He lives for others. His happiness is to make others happy. He is as self-denying as that dying soldier falling in the ranks, when he said: "Colonel, there is no need of those boys tiring themselves by carrying me to the hospital; let me die just where I am." So this young man of whom I speak loves God, wants all the world to love Him, is not ashamed to carry a bundle of clothes up that dark alley to the poor. Which of these young men do you admire the better? The one a sham, the other

A PRINCE IMPERIAL. Oh, do you know of anything, my hearer, that is more beautiful than to see a young man start out for Christ? Here is some one falling; he lifts him up. Here is a vagabond boy; he introduces him to a mission school. Here is a family freezing to death; he carries them a scuffle of coal. There are eight hundred millions perishing in midnight heathen darkness; by all possible means he tries to send to them the Gospel.

He may be laughed at, and he may be sneered at, and he may be caricatured, but he is not ashamed to go every-where, saying: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." Such a young man can go through everything. There is no force on earth or in hell that can resist him. I show you

THREE SPECTACLES. Spectacle the first: Napoleon passes by with the host that went down with him to Egypt, and up with him through Russia, and crossed the continent on the bleeding heart of which he set his iron heel, and across the quivering flesh of his gun-carriage—in his dying moment asking his attendants to put on his military boots for him.

Spectacle the second: Voltaire, bright and learned and witty and eloquent, with tongue and voice and stratagem infernal, warring against God and poisoning whole kingdoms with his infidelity, yet applauded by the clapping hands of thrones and empires and continents—his last words, in delirium supposing Christ standing by the bedside—his last words: "Crush that wretch!"

Spectacle the third: Paul—Paul, insignificant in person, thrust out from all refined association, scourged, spat on, hounded like a wild beast from city to city, yet trying to make the world good and heaven full!

ANNOUNCING RESURRECTION to those who mourned at the barred gates of the dead; speaking consolations which light up the eyes of widowhood and orphanage and want with gold of certain and eternal release; undaunted before those who could take his life, his cheek flushed with transport, and his eye on heaven; with one hand shaking defiance at all the foes of earth and all the principalities of hell, and with the other hand beckoning messenger angels to come and bear him away, as he says: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me."

Which of the three spectacles do you most admire? When

THE WIND OF DEATH struck the conqueror and the infidel, they were tossed like sea-gulls in a tempest, drenched of the wave and torn of the hurricane, their dismal voices heard through the everlasting storm; but when the wave and the wind of death struck Paul, like an albatross he made a throne of the tempest, and one day floated away into the calm, clear summer of heaven, brighter than the dove, its wings covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold. Oh, are you not in love with such a religion—a religion that can do so much for a man while he lives, and so much for a man when he comes to die?

I suppose you may have noticed the contrast between the departure of a Christian and the departure of an infidel. Diodorus, dying in chains, because he could not compose a joke equal to the joke uttered at the other end of his table; Zeuxis, dying in a fit of laughter at the sketch of an aged woman—a sketch made by his own hand; Mazarin, dying playing cards, his friends holding his hands because he was unable to hold them himself. All that on one side, compared with the departure of the Scotch minister, who said to his friends: "I have no interest as to whether I live or die; if I die, I shall be with the Lord; and if I live, the Lord shall be with me." Or the last words of Washington: "It is well." Or the last words of McIntosh, the learned and the great: "Happy!" Or the last word of Hannah More, the Christian poetess: "Joy!" Or those thousands of Christians who have gone saying: "Lord, Jesus, come quickly!" "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

BEHOLD THE CONTRAST. Behold the charm of the one, behold the darkness of the other. Now, I know it is very popular in this city for young men to think there is something more charming in scepticism than in religion. They are ashamed of the old-fashioned religion of the cross, and they pride themselves on their free-thinking on all these subjects. My young friends, I want to tell you what I know from observation: that while scepticism is a beautiful land at the start, it is the great Sahara Desert at the last.

Years ago a minister's son went off from home to college. At college he formed the acquaintance of a young man whom I shall call Ellison. Ellison was an infidel. Ellison scoffed at religion, and the minister's son soon learned from him the infidelity, and when he went home on his vacation broke his father's heart by his denunciations of Christianity. Time passed on and vacation came, and the minister's son went off to spend the vacation, and was on a journey, and came to a hotel. The hotel-keeper said: "I am sorry that tonight I shall have to put you in a room adjoining one where there is a very sick and dying man. I can give you no other accommodation." "Oh," said the young college student and minister's son, "that will make no difference to me except the matter of sympathy with anybody that is suffering." The young man retired to his room, but could not sleep. All night long he heard the groaning of the sick man, or the step of the watchers, and his soul trembled. He thought to himself: "Now there is only a thin wall between me and a departing spirit. How if Ellison should know how I feel? How if Ellison should find out how my heart flutters? What if Ellison knew?"

MY SCEPTICISM GAVE WAY? He slept not. In the morning, coming down, he said to the hotel-keeper: "How is the sick man?" "Oh," said the hotel-keeper, "he is dead, poor fellow! the doctors told us he could not last through the night." "Well," said the young man, "what was the sick one's name; where is he from?" "Well," said the hotel-keeper, "he is from Providence College." "Providence College? what is his name?" "Ellison." "Ellison!" Oh, how the young man was stunned! It was his old college-mate—dead without any hope. It was many hours before the young

man could leave that hotel. He got on his horse and started homeward, and all the way he heard something say to him: "DEAD! LOST! DEAD!"

Lost! He came to no satisfaction until he entered the Christian life, until he became one of the most eminent missionaries of the Cross, the greatest Baptist missionary the world has ever seen since the days of Paul—no superior to Adoniram Judson. Mighty on earth, mighty in heaven—Adoniram Judson. Which do you like the best, Judson's scepticism or Judson's Christian life, Judson's offering for Christ's sake, Judson's almost martyrdom? Oh, young man, take your choice between these two kinds of lives. Your own heart tells you this morning that the Christian life is more admirable, more peaceful, more comfortable, and more beautiful.

Oh, if religion does so much for a man on earth, what will it do for him in heaven? That is the thought that comes to me now. If a soldier can afford to shout "Huzza!" when he goes into battle, how much more jubilantly he can afford to shout "Huzza!" when HE HAS GAINED THE VICTORY! If religion is so good a thing to have here, how bright a thing it will be in heaven! I want to see that young man when the glories of heaven have robed and crowned him. I want to hear him sing when all huskiness of earthly colds is gone, and he rises up with the great doxology. I want to know what standard he will carry when marching under arches of pearl in the army of banners. I want to know what company he will keep in a land where they are all kings and queens forever and ever. If I have induced one of you this morning to begin a better life, then I want to know it. I may not in this world clasp hands with you in friendship, I may not hear from your own lips the story of temptation and sorrow, but I will clasp hands with you when the sea is passed and the gates are entered.

That I might woo you to a better life, and that I might show you the glories with which God clothes His dear children in heaven, I wish I could this morning swing back one of the twelve gates, that there might dash upon your ear one shout of the triumph, that there might flame upon your eyes one blaze of the splendor. Oh, when I speak of that good land, you involuntarily think of some one there that you loved—father, mother, brother, sister, or dear little child garnered already. You want to know what they are doing this morning. I will tell you what they are doing. Singing! You want to know what they wear. I will tell you what they wear. Coronets of triumph! You wonder why oft they look to the gate of the temple, and watch and wait. I will tell you

WHY THEY WATCH AND WAIT and look to the gate of the temple. For your coming! I shout upward the news to-day, for I am sure some of you will repent and start for heaven: "Oh, ye bright ones before the throne, your earthly friends are coming. Angels, posing mid-air, cry up the name! Gate-keeper of heaven, send forward the celestial Watchman on the battlements celestial, throw the signal!" "Oh," you say, "religion I am going to have; it is only a question of time." My brother, I am afraid that you may lose heaven the way Louis Philippe lost his empire. The Parisian mob came around the Tuilleries. The National Guard stood in defence of the palace, and the commander said to Louis Philippe: "Shall I fire now? Shall I order the troops to fire? With one volley we can clear the place." "No," said Louis Philippe, "not yet." A few minutes passed on, and then Louis Philippe, seeing the case was hopeless, said to the general: "Now is the time to fire." "No," said the general, "it is too late now; don't you see that the soldiers are exchanging arms with the citizens? It is too late." Down went the throne of Louis Philippe. Away from the earth went the House of Orleans, and all because the king said: "Not yet! not yet!" May God forbid that any of you should adjourn this great subject of religion, and should postpone assailing your spiritual foes until it is too late, too late—you losing a throne in heaven the way that Louis Philippe lost a throne on earth.

"When the Lodge descends in might, Clothed in majesty and light; When the earth shall quake with fear, Where, oh where, wilt thou appear?"

A Deceptive Problem in Multiplication. A problem that at a glance seems easy enough to tempt a school-boy to spend a portion of his Christmas vacation in an endeavor to solve it, appeared recently in a Maine journal, and is as follows: "Take the number 15. Multiply it by itself and you have 225. Now multiply 225 by itself. Then multiply that product by itself, and so on until 15 products have been multiplied by themselves in turn." The question aroused considerable interest among lawyers in Portland, and their best mathematician after struggling with the problem long enough to see how much labor was entailed in the solution, made the following discouraging report upon it: "The final product called for contains 35,539 figures (the first of which are 1412). Allowing three figures to the inch the answer would be over 1070 feet long. To perform the operation would require about 500,000,000 figures. If they can be made at the rate of 100 a minute, a person working 10 hours a day for 300 days in each year would be 28 years about it. If, in multiplying, he should make a row of ciphers, as he does in other figures, the number of figures used would be more than 523,939,228. That would be the precise number of figures used if the product of the left-hand figure in each multiplicand by each figure of the multiplier was always a single figure; but, as it is most frequently, and yet not always, two figures, the method employed to obtain the foregoing result cannot be accurately applied. Assuming that the cipher is used on an average once in ten times, 475,000,000 figures is a close approximation to the actual number."

Farmers with an abundance of corn and other feed which they propose to utilize by tending and feeding cattle will do well to continue feeding corn.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

SUNDAY JANUARY 6, 1890.

The Mission of John the Baptist.

LESSON TEXT.

Mark 1: 1-11; Memory verses, 6-8.

LESSON PLAN.

TOPIC OF THE QUARTER: Jesus the Mighty Worker.

GOLDEN TEXT FOR THE QUARTER: Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake.—John 14: 11.

LESSON TOPIC: The Divine Introduction of Jesus.

Lesson 1. By the Prophets, vs. 1-5. Outline: 2. By the Herald, vs. 4-5. 3. By the Voice, vs. 9-11.

GOLDEN TEXT: The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.—Mark 1: 3.

DAILY HOME READINGS:

M.—Mark 1: 1-11. The divine introduction of Jesus.

T.—Mal. 3: 1-12. The voice of prophecy.

W.—Matt. 3: 1-17. Matthew's parallel narrative.

T.—Matt. 11: 1-15. Prophecy fulfilled in Jesus.

F.—Luke 3: 1-22. Luke's parallel narrative.

S.—John 1: 6-34. John's testimony of Jesus.

S.—John 1: 35-51. Jesus accepted of men.

LESSON ANALYSIS.

I. INTRODUCED BY THE PROPHETS.

I. The Gospel's Beginning:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ (1).

From that time began Jesus to preach (Matt. 4: 17).

From the beginning were eyewitnesses (Luke 1: 2).

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana (John 2: 11).

Ye have been with me from the beginning (John 15: 27).

II. The Prophetic Writings:

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet (2).

The spirit of the Lord spake by me (2 Sam. 23: 2).

He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets (Luke 1: 70).

The Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David (Acts 1: 16).

Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1: 21).

III. The Messianic Prediction:

Make ye ready the way of the Lord (3).

Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee (Isa. 2: 7).

And shall call his name Immanuel (Isa. 7: 14).

Out of thee shall one come... that is to be ruler (Micah. 5: 2).

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19: 10).

1. "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (1)

His human title; (2) His official title; (3) His divine title.

2. "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face." (1) The face of the Son; (2) The messenger of God; (3) The mission of the Messiah; (4) The mission of the herald.

3. "Make ye ready the way of the Lord." (1) The coming Lord; (2) The obstructed way; (3) The demanded preparation.

II. INTRODUCED BY THE HERALD.

I. The Herald:

John came, who baptized... and preached (4).

In those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching (Matt. 3: 1).

The word of God came unto John (Luke 3: 2).

A man, sent from God, whose name was John (John 1: 6).

There is none greater than John (Luke 7: 28).

II. The Hearers:

There went out unto him all the country of Judea (5).

Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea (Matt. 3: 5).

He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming (Matt. 3: 7).

Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee? (Luke 3: 7).

The Jews sent unto him... priests and Levites (John 1: 19).

III. The Announcement:

There cometh after me he that is mightier than I (7).

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost (Matt. 3: 11).

He shall baptize you... with fire (Luke 3: 16).

This is the Son of God (John 1: 34).

Behold the Lamb of God (John 1: 36).

1. "John came, who baptized... and preached." John's ministrations: (1) Preaching the kingdom; (2) Heralding the King; (3) Baptizing the subjects.

2. "There cometh after me he that is mightier than I." (1) John's profound humility; (2) Jesus' exalted greatness.

3. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (1) The divine administrator; (2) The human recipients; (3) The vitalizing baptism.

III. INTRODUCED BY THE VOICE.

I. The Heavens Opened:

He saw the heavens rent asunder (10).

The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God (Ezek. 1: 1).

Lo, the heavens were opened unto him (Matt. 3: 16).

Jesus... baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened (Luke 3: 21).

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing (Acts 7: 56).

II. The Spirit Descending:

The Spirit as a dove descending (10).

He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove (Matt. 3: 16).

The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form (Luke 3: 22).

I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove (John 1: 32).

There appeared unto them tongues... like as of fire (Acts 2: 3).

III. The Voice Approving:

A voice came... Thou art my beloved Son (11).

And lo, a voice out of the heavens (Matt. 3: 17).

A voice came... Thou art my beloved Son (Luke 3: 22).

A voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son (Luke 9: 35).

There came therefore a voice out of heaven (John 12: 28).

1. "Jesus came... and was baptized of John in the Jordan." (1) The holy applicant; (2) The sacred rite; (3) The noble administrator; (4) The honored stream.

2. "He saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit... descending; and a voice came." (1) The rending heavens; (2) The descending Spirit; (3) The approving voice.—(1) God the Father; (2) God the Son; (3) God the Holy Spirit,—participants in the Lord's baptism.

3. "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." (1) The Son's relation to the Father; (2) The Father's pleasure in the Son.

LESSON BIBLE READING.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Of priestly descent (Luke 1: 5, 8, 9).

Of godly parentage (Luke 1: 6).

Obtained to be a Nazirite (Luke 1: 13-15).

Trained in the wilderness (Luke 1: 80; Matt. 3: 1-4).

Did no miracles (John 10: 41).

Was exceedingly popular (Matt. 3: 5; Luke 3: 10, 12, 14).

Refused baptism to many (Matt. 3: 7-10; Luke 3: 7, 8).

Testified to Jesus as Messiah (John 1: 29-34).

Joyfully declined before Jesus (John 3: 26-30).

Suffered imprisonment (Matt. 14: 3-5; Luke 3: 19, 20).

Experienced gloom (Matt. 11: 2, 3; Luke 7: 18, 19).

Suffered martyrdom (Matt. 14: 6-12).

Honored of Jesus (Mat. 3: 13-15; 11: 7-11).

LESSON SURROUNDINGS.

The Gospel story begins in Luke with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. More than thirty years after, "John came" as preacher. The first and second chapters of Matthew and of Luke tell all that is known of the history of our Lord and his forerunner during these years. The latter "was in the desert till the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke 1: 80). Meanwhile our Lord had grown to full manhood at Nazareth, subject unto his earthly parents and "in favor with God and men" (Luke 2: 52).

The place where John was baptizing was, according to John's Gospel (John 1: 28), "Bethabara beyond Jordan." The Revised Version, following the most ancient manuscripts, reads "Bethany beyond Jordan." The former reading existed, however, before the days of Origen (185-255 A. D.); and the discovery by the Palestine Exploration Fund of a ford called "Abarah" ("Beth-Abarah" is the "Place of Abara," or "Place of Crossing Over"), within two days' easy journey of Cana in Galilee (see John 2: 1), points to Bethabara as the