

Day School Lesson for January 1.

JESUS AND JOHN.

Matt. III; 7-17.

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The author will publish an examination containing one hundred questions on the lessons of this quarter. The examination will be mailed to any address in any quantity at 2 cents per copy and may be used in oral or written review in a class or by an individual. Orders should be sent to Dr. J. E. Gilbert, Washington, D. C., not later than February 1, that the mailing list may be prepared.

INTRODUCTION.—Four books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—bearing the names of their authors, treat the life of Christ. The first presents Him as the Messiah of the Jews; the second, as the servant of God; the third, as the Saviour of men; the fourth, as the Son of God. For six months our studies will be in the first Gospel, Matthew. One of the twelve, called also Levi (Mark II, 14), was a tax gatherer before he became a follower of Christ. In that position he must have gained extended knowledge of the business world, acquiring many qualities valuable to the administration of the church. To him was assigned the task of making the connection between the two covenants, by showing that Jesus was the long expected one of whom the prophets had written. Hence the genealogical table (chapter I), and the numerous quotations (Ch. II, 17). Our lesson is important to the Jewish-Christian literature because it shows how Jesus was introduced.

REBUKE.—John the Baptist exercised his ministry in the wilderness, that is the rural sections of Judea. (Verse 1). Two motives may have influenced the choice of a place. He desired to be free from all alliance with the hierarchy, then intolerant and worldly, yet near enough to influence the national capital. Vast crowds were attracted to him by his preaching. (Verse 5). The Pharisees and Sadducees, the two rival sects, sent representatives. The former were rigid followers of the Mosaic ritual (Acts xxv, 13-27). These men, who had not been seeking to substitute philosophical speculation for the letter of scripture, stood for a return to the old law. With incompatible boldness he denounced them all as a generation of vipers. (Verse 7). They, who had divided the nation into factions, were urged to change their lives. (Verse 8). Such a stinging rebuke was never before administered to the public teachers of religion.

DESCENT.—John did not pause with a denunciation of unrighteousness and a call to holy living. He proceeded to show by these officials of the church were inferior to the claims of God upon them, revealing a national secret. The Jews were descendants of Abraham. They were proud of their origin. As children of the covenant they considered themselves the favorites of heaven, and despised the rest of mankind as dogs. (Matt. xv, 23). To them blood was everything. As a consequence they sought to maintain these distinctions whose outward observance distinguished them from other people. The rite of circumcision, the keeping of the Sabbath and such like matters were retained as monuments of an early day and marks of superior dignity. All this time their hearts were impure and their lives immoral. (Matt. xxiii, 25). So John announces that they

SOME WONDERFUL CLOCKS. World's Marvels of Astronomical and Chronometric Mechanism. From Tit-bits. Of course every Briton has heard at one time or other of the famous clock tower adjoining the houses of Parliament. No doubt he imagines it to be a very fine structure, and, as a matter of fact, it is regarded as the best specimen in our country; but there are many more wonderful clocks in existence today, perhaps not in size, but certainly in their skillful mechanism. The most wonderful clock in the world is exhibited at St. Petersburg. Its magnificence may be imagined from the fact of this colossal timepiece having no fewer than ninety-five faces. It indicates simultaneously the time of

must no longer regard their descent (verse 9), for God was able to raise up a new people, an adoption repeated by the Saviour Himself. (Matt. xxi, 43).

JUDGMENT.—John saw what the public men of his time could not see because of their spiritual blindness, that the divine patience toward the Jewish nation was well-nigh exhausted. All through the centuries, even from the time of the Exiles, they had been a stiff-necked religious people. (Ex. xxxiii, 3). He had sent unto them prophets who had taught and entreated and warned (Jer. vii, 25), but they had disregarded the voice of these holy men. Now the judgments of God were impending. The axe was laid at the root of the tree, ready to be used when the proper moment came. (Verse 10). Every person and institution that does not bring forth righteousness shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. The prophet is a Lord who delivers his vineyard of worthless bushes. The same mode of illustration was employed by the Saviour (Luke xiii, 7), more than once. (John xv, 6). There is unbroken reference to that terrible day when the army of Titus destroyed Jerusalem and broke up the Jewish state. A. D. 70.

PREDICTION.—Having thus rebuked and warned his hearers the great preacher opens to them a vision of one who would succeed him. First, in power, dignity and authority he was so much superior to the Reformer that the latter was not worthy to perform the lowest menial service for him. (John I, 29). Second, he would render a more important service, not like John baptizing with water as a symbol of forgiveness or cleansing after repentance, but with the Holy Ghost, the symbol and agent of a new life imparted to the soul (Acts I, 5), not an outward application, but an inward energy. Third, the method of his administration would be new and exacting. As the husbandman purifies the threshing-floor, so the great Reformer would cleanse the church and require holiness of its members. (Matt. xxi, 42). It is plain to us, and must have been to those who heard it, that the Spirit's influence, John recognized for the moment his illustrious visitor, and hesitated to administer the ordinance. (Verse 18). "Comest thou to me?" he said, abashedly humbled by a sense of unworthiness which never forsok him. (John I, 29). Believing upon his own need of spiritual strength and of the ability of Jesus to impart that strength, he said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee." For once

HUMILITY.—The foregoing is a summary of what the Baptist said, probably many times to those who gathered at the Jordan to hear him. It was a faithful dealing with the sins of the people, seeking to lead them to repentance, and as faithful lifting up of the thought and the awakening of hope that He whom the nation had long expected was about to appear. Six months of such ministry passed. One day Jesus came, probably foot and alone from Galilee, seeking to be baptized as other men had been. (Verse 15). The two cousins stood face to face, probably strangers. (John I, 21). But by some mysterious influence, perhaps by intuition, possibly by the Spirit's influence, John recognized for the moment his illustrious visitor, and hesitated to administer the ordinance. (Verse 18). "Comest thou to me?" he said, abashedly humbled by a sense of unworthiness which never forsok him. (John I, 29). Believing upon his own need of spiritual strength and of the ability of Jesus to impart that strength, he said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee." For once

day at thirty points on the earth's surface, besides the movement of the earth around the sun, the phases of the moon, the signs of the zodiac, the passage over the meridian of more than fifty stars of the northern hemisphere, and the date, according to the Gregorian, Greek, Mussulman, and Hebrew calendars. The works took two years to put together after the clock had been sent in detached pieces from Switzerland to Russia. A certain watchmaker constructed a clock whose mechanism represents, every fifteen minutes, all the activities of a miniature railway station. The telegraph operator needs a despatch, the doors of the station open, the station master and his assistant appear on the steps, the clerks open the windows and distribute the tickets; several travel-

ers rush toward the train that comes in at full speed. In short, until the train has gone the usual stir of such stations is exactly reproduced. As the train leaves each automaton returns to its place, and for a quarter of an hour everything is peaceful. The clock's dimensions are not known, but it is said to have had six years' labor expended upon it.

Another remarkable clock is that made by Villinger, the clockmaker of the Black Forest, Germany. It shows the seconds, minutes, quarter hours, hours, days, weeks, months, seasons, years and leap years to the last second of the year 9999, besides a host of other astronomical, geographical, and historical facts. There is a celebrated clock tower at Berne, in Switzerland. The approach

TESTIMONY.—The great purpose of the baptism was attained. The nature and character of Jesus were attested by striking phenomena as He came up from the water. (Verses 16 and 17). The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, the emblem of purity and gentleness, descended and lighted on Him, visible to both Jesus and John. (John I, 32). At the same time a voice from heaven declared: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," the form of the sentence indicating its source. The descending spirit was seen but once in the life time of Jesus, because it remained with him. But the voice uttering the same thing was heard several times afterward. (Luke ix, 35). Here were the two Messianic predictions fulfilled: the gift of the Spirit as an abiding presence (Isa. li, 2), and the acknowledged Sonship, the deepest mystery of the Old Testament (Psalm ii, 7), and the sublimest truth of the New Testament. (I Tim. iii, 16). After such heavenly testimony John was able to stand as a herald to his generation and fulfill his mission in declaring that the Christ had actually come.

REFLECTIONS.—Two prominent points deserve final emphasis. Every man must be measured by his relation to Christ. While living he is classed as friend or foe. (Matt. xii, 30). After death judgment will be pronounced according as he is recognized as known by Christ. (Matt. vii, 23). Multitudes of men accounted great, have lived, struggled and died, to be forgotten. But he who preaches righteousness and proclaimed Messiah was greater than all who preceded him. (Matt. xii, 42). The life devoted to Christ is one of immortal honor. 2. See here the interdependence of persons and events. The Lord Jesus did not begin His career without reference to others. He did not undertake His mission independently, but He identified Himself with the foremost preacher and reformer of the age. Thus introduced He afterward gained disciples from among the disciples of John. (John I, 25-27). This is not evolution but continuity. The kingdom of heaven sweeps on through the centuries, one worker beginning where another ends. (John iv, 38).

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of the hour is announced by the crowing of a cock. At the same time may be seen at the very top of the tower a man clad in a coat of mail striking the hours with his sword on a large bell. As the hours are striking a troupe of bears make their appearance and parade around the tower, then make their exit. Long strings of carriages draw up every hour for the occupants to witness this interesting spectacle. A gigantic clock, made of cycle parts, was shown at a recent exhibition held in Paris. The hour figures are composed of brightly plated cranks. All the smaller wheels revolve by means of gear chains, but this was only for attraction. The clock kept excellent time, and struck hours, half and quarter hours, the real mechanism being concealed in the base. At the time of the coronation of the Empress of Russia at Moscow in 1724 she was presented with a watch as wonderful in every particular as the famous Strasbourg clock. On the opposite side of the time-keeping part there was an exact counterpart of the holy sepulchre, with a carved image of the Roman saint, the scene being viewed through the glass in the case. Upon opening the case the imitation stones would roll away from the mouth of the miniature sepulchre, the guard knobs, arranged in a row, would appear at the opening, and at this time the music would begin to play. In soft, sweet strains, the Easter songs so well known to all Russians. The watch only weighed seven ounces. The maker of this wonderful piece of mechanism is said to have worked upon it almost uninterruptedly for a period of nine years.

romantic of historic Capt. John Smith's experiences. Love, he says, saved him from death at the hands of cannibals. This is the story: Pettitt is a mining prospector. With Fred Bruner and a Mexican named Perez he sought mineral wealth on Tiburon Island, in the Gulf of California, landing there in June, 1896. While prospecting the trio were ambushed by a body of fierce Indians, and Perez was killed. Pettitt and Bruner were imprisoned in separate huts. A week later Pettitt learned that Bruner had furnished their captors a report. Pettitt marvelled at the delay of his own slaughter until he learned that he had found favor in the eyes of a daughter of an influential Seri. She taught him a smattering of the native tongue, and, though the tribal executioner was whetting his knife to make steaks out of Pettitt's body, the girl finally succeeded in securing the American's release on condition that he marry her and live on the island.

Last October Pettitt learned that the Seris intended to kill him because they suspected he was planning an escape. With the assistance of his wife and father-in-law he obtained a canoe and made his way at the Mexican coast, whence he came here. His wife pledged him to return at the earliest possible moment with a force sufficient to subdue the natives and establish himself as ruler. But he will remain here.

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