

What Saith the Scripture?

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE HISTORY

BEING A SIMPLE AND ATTRACTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT EVENTS MENTIONED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. COMPRISING ALSO THE LIVES OF THE PATRIARCHS, OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE REMARKABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN MENTIONED IN THE SACRED VOLUME.

EACH SECTION CLOSING WITH APPROPRIATE MORAL REFLECTIONS.

ALSO AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING INSTRUCTIVE TABLES AND OTHER VALUABLE MATTER.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR,
REV. ALVAN BOND, D.D.,
[1793-1882]

(Note from WStS: There is no name given as to the identity of the author.
Rev. Bond is the only name associated with any of the writings in this book.)

ILLUSTRATED WITH NUMEROUS ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS BY THE MOST EMINENT ARTISTS;
ACCOMPANIED WITH FOUR ACCURATE MAPS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE BIBLE.

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THE NEW TESTAMENT

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234. THE COMING OF CHRIST.

MORE than four thousand years had passed away, since Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden; and now the time was come for Jesus Christ to be born into the world,

and to live, and suffer, and die there.

Who was the Lord Jesus Christ? The eternal Son of God. When Isaiah prophesied of Him, he said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Isaiah ix. 6. Jesus, who was born a helpless child, and who lived as a poor man all his life on earth, was the great God, without beginning and without end; who knows all things, and sees all things, and can do all things.

But why did Jesus Christ come into the world? Why did He leave His Father's throne, and the glory and happiness of Heaven, to live among sinful men, and to suffer, and bleed, and die? To save sinners. Man had sinned, and the punishment of sin is death. But God, in mercy, found out a way of escape for sinners; and that way is by Jesus Christ. We had sinned, and God must punish sin; Jesus promised to suffer in our place. God could accept only a perfect sacrifice, and perfect obedience; the sacrifice of Christ was perfect; for he was "without blemish and without spot;" he "did not sin." Therefore, God accepted him, and promised that those who truly believed, should have their sins washed away in the blood of His dear Son; and that they should be eternally saved. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

235. THE JEWS.

THE Jews were still living in their own land. They had a king to rule over them, named Herod; but they and their king were under the power of the emperor of Rome. The Romans were a very ambitious and powerful people; and they were now masters of almost all the world.

The Jews kept their feasts, and their sacrifices; but most of them served God only outwardly; they had no love, no faith, in their hearts. Some of these Jews were called Pharisees.

The Pharisees kept the law of Moses, and attended to all the Ceremonies which he had commanded; and because they did this, they thought themselves very good, and boasted of their goodness, and stood in the street making long prayers, "to be seen of men." But they had no real love to God. They trusted in their own righteousness for salvation, not in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and therefore they could not be accepted by God. Jesus told his disciples, that if their righteousness was not greater than the righteousness of the Pharisees, they could not enter Heaven; our own goodness will never take us there.

Others of Jews were called Sadducees. They were wicked men. They disbelieved many things which are written in the Bible, saying that there is no resurrection; neither angel nor spirit; but that, when we die, we shall pass quite away, and never live again.

But there were a few of the Jews who truly loved God, and read his word, and believed in it. They read there that Christ the Messiah should come; they knew that the time was now very near, and they were waiting and wishing for his appearance.

We, who are living now in a Christian country, have much more knowledge than the Jews had before Christ came. We have more of the Scriptures to read; we have the New Testament, which tells us so much of Jesus, and of the way to Heaven. But if we only read of Christ, and do not love Him; if we only say we are the people of God, and do not serve Him with our hearts, then we are not better than the Pharisees. God looks at the heart; and if that is not renewed by the Holy Spirit, we cannot be ready for Heaven.

236. ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH.

THE prophets had foretold, that before the coming of Christ, a messenger should be sent to make ready the way before Him. Who was this messenger? We are now going to read about Him.

There were living at this time in Judea, two old people, a man and his wife, named Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were among the few Jews who truly served God, and were waiting and hoping for the coming of the Saviour. Zacharias was a priest, a Levite; one of those whose duty it was to offer sacrifices, and to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. Zacharias and Elizabeth had no son nor daughter to comfort them in their old age; yet they did not feel sorrowful nor desolate, for they had one friend who would never leave them, nor forsake them-- that kind God who has said to his people, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Isaiah xlvi. 4.

How pleasant it is to have God to comfort us when no earthly friends are near! Do you wish to have God for the friend of your old age? Then seek Him now. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" and He will not forget you in your old age.

One day, when Zacharias was burning incense in the holy place in the temple, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. He saw the angel standing on the right side of the altar of incense, close to him; and Zacharias was troubled, and very much afraid. But the angel spoke to him, and said, "Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall have a son, and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. And many of the children of Israel shall

he turn to the Lord their God."

This was joyful news for Zacharias; but it was so wonderful, that he could not at first believe it; and he asked, "How shall I know this?" Was it right of Zacharias to doubt the truth of what the angel said? No; it was weakness of faith which made him doubt. He ought to have remembered, that "with God all things are possible," and that nothing is too hard for Him.

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand before God, and He has sent me to tell thee this good news. And now thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, till the day when these things shall be done, because thou believest not my words." So the angel departed, and Zacharias, was struck dumb to punish him for his unbelief.

Was Zacharias alone when he saw the angel? Yes, all the people were outside praying, while the incense was offered within; and now they began to wonder why the priest stayed so long. At last he came out; but he could not speak to them; he was dumb; and he made signs to them, that he had seen a vision in the temple. When he went home he could not speak to Elizabeth; but he told her, by signs and writing, all he had seen and heard; and the great honor God had promised them.

Many days passed, before Zacharias was able to speak again. This was a great trouble to him; but Zacharias was a good man; and, therefore, we may believe that he bore his punishment patiently and meekly, and asked pardon for his want of faith, and prayed that he might never again disbelieve what God said.

God sends many messages to us, not by angels and visions, but by His word. All His promises and threatenings are messages to us. Some of them are very wonderful, too wonderful for us to understand, and we cannot tell how these things can be. But if we do not understand, we must believe and trust, or we shall displease God as Zacharias did. When we read the Bible, we should read it in humility and faith. All God has said, must come to pass; for "He is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Num. xxiii. 19.

237. THE VIRGIN MARY.

SOON after the angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias in the temple, he was sent with a message of mercy to another of God's faithful servants. The holy angels in Heaven delight to carry messages of love to those on earth. Their greatest happiness is to obey the commands of God, and to do His will. We should pray to be enabled to do God's will here

on earth, as it is done in Heaven; that, when we die, we may be taken to dwell with God, and His holy, happy angels, for ever.

Where was Gabriel sent now? To Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary. It was joyful and wonderful news which the angel brought to Mary. As soon as he came to her, he said, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." But why was Mary so blessed, and so highly favored? She did not know at first; and she felt troubled at what the angel said. But he, soon comforted her, and told her in what a wonderful way she was going to be honored by God. Gabriel said, "Thou shalt have a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary wondered very much when she heard this; she did not disbelieve what God had promised; but she asked the angel to tell her more; so he explained to her, that this child would be the son of God, God as well as man; and then Gabriel told her, that Elizabeth, who was Mary's cousin, would also soon have a son; -that messenger of the Lord who should prepare the way before Him. Mary was thankful to hear these promises; and she humbly said, "Be it unto me according to thy word;" so the angel departed from her.

Soon after this, Mary took a journey into Judea, to see her cousin Elizabeth. These two holy women were very glad to meet. They had much to say to one another; and all their time was spent in praising and thanking God for His great mercy and love to them. This is the right way of passing our time with our friends. We have all many things to be thankful for; and how much better it is to talk of God's mercies, than of foolish, and idle, and worldly things! St. Paul. says, that Christians ought to speak to one another "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in the heart to the Lord." Col. iii. 16.

Mary stayed three months with her cousin Elizabeth, and then went back to her own home at Nazareth.

But who was this Mary, that she should be so highly honored of God? We are ignorant of the name and occupation of her parents. The evangelist does not tell us; and we cannot know. She was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of the royal family of David. She was a maiden of Nazareth, the beauty of whose character is very manifest from the brief notices of her life found in the Gospels. Her purity, piety, faith, and humility were known to God. He was pleased to select her from all the women of her nation, to be the highly-favored mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. Honored as she was, it did not make her proud, but humble.

238. THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

AND now God remembered His promise and gave Elizabeth a little son. It was a joyful day in the house of Zacharias, when this child was born. The mother rejoiced, and all her cousins and neighbors with her; and the father rejoiced too; but he could not speak to tell them all how happy he was. When the babe was eight days old, he was circumcised. Then he was to be named. The angel himself had told Zacharias, that the child's name should be John. Elizabeth knew this, and wished to have it so; but all her friends and neighbors wanted the little boy to be called Zacharias, like his father, instead of John. They said to her, "None of thy kindred is called by that name:" Then they made signs to Zacharias, and asked him what the child's name should be. Zacharias wrote down directly, "His name is John."

This showed his obedience, and his faith in God; and now the punishment of his unbelief was taken away, and his mouth was opened, and he praised God. He was filled with the Holy Ghost, and was enabled to prophesy; and he spoke of the great mercy which God was now going to show to His people, in giving them a Saviour.

Why was the son of Zacharias to be called John? Because that name means, the grace and mercy of God. This child was to be the messenger of mercy; he was to tell the people the way of salvation; to point out Christ to them as their Saviour.

How thankful Zacharias must have been for his speech again; and what a good use he made of it when he praised and glorified God! The power of speaking is a great blessing, for which we ought to be very thankful; and we should try to use it, and all our other blessings too, to the glory of God.

239. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

MARY was married to a man named Joseph. He was a good man, and rejoiced in the blessing God had promised to Mary. An angel had told him in a dream, that his wife should have a son, and that God himself was the Father of that son; and that his name should be called Jesus, or the Saviour, because he should "save his people from their sins."

The time for the birth of Jesus was then very near. Where was he to be born? The prophets had been taught to foretell His birthplace. Micah had said, that it should be in Bethlehem, in the tribe of Judah. But Joseph and Mary lived at Nazareth, many miles from Bethlehem; how then could this prophecy be fulfilled? What God says, He always does; and what is hard to us is very easy to Him.

The Jews were under the government of Augustus, emperor of Rome; and just at this time,

he made a law that all his subjects should be taxed; that every person should pay a sum of money to the Roman government. All the people went to their own tribes, and their own cities, according to their families, to have their names taken down before the taxing began; so Joseph left Nazareth, and went to Bethlehem; for that was his city, because he was of the family of David, who was a native of Bethlehem. And Mary went with Joseph. But Joseph and Mary had no possession, no house in Bethlehem; they were poor people; and when they went to the inn, they were told there was no room for them; so they went into a stable to rest there. That very night, God's promise to Mary was fulfilled; the child Jesus was born. His mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger. He had no kind nurse to take care of Him; only his mother, and she was very poor, and could not do much for Him. How humble and lowly Jesus was!

His body was like that of any other little child; and He suffered pain and hunger like other children and He needed food, and rest, and care, as they do. But there were some things in which Jesus was different from every other child that was ever born into this world. He had no sin.

When Jesus came the first time, He came in great humility, because He was going to suffer and die for sinners. But when He comes again, He will come in power and glory, to punish His enemies, and to take His people to reign with Him for ever. Let us pray that we may be among His people, and that, when He comes, we "may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter iii. 14.

240. THE SHEPHERDS.

THERE were some fields not very far from Bethlehem, and in these fields were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks on that wonderful night when Jesus Christ was born. We may believe that these shepherds were good men; and that as they sat together in the long night, they often spoke to one another of holy and heavenly things. They knew that Jesus was coming into the world, and they were waiting and wishing to see Him. Perhaps they had heard of the angel's message to Mary, and knew that the time of His coming was now very near.

While the shepherds were thinking about these things, they saw a bright light shining around them. Was it the light of the moon? No; it was much brighter than the moon, or even than the sun, "an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid." But the angel spoke gently to them, and said, "Fear not; for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in

a manger." And while the shepherds were attending to this wonderful message, they saw, with the angel, a great multitude of the heavenly host; and these angels all began to sing a song of praise to God; and the shepherds heard them. What was this song? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will to men." Then the angels went away into Heaven, and the shepherds saw them no more.

Why did the angels sing this song ? Why did they sing of peace on earth and good will to men ? Because Jesus was come. He is our peace. He is called the "Prince of peace," because He came to bring peace upon the earth. If Jesus had not come, we could never have had peace with God; His anger would always have been on us. But when Jesus promised to suffer for our sins, and to take them all away, then God could smile upon this earth again; then He could accept all who believed in Jesus, and be at peace with them for His dear Son's sake. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. And God can now show His "goodwill to man." He wishes all to be saved. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that one poor sinner should perish. He invites all to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was why the angels praised God, and sang of "peace on earth, good will to men."

Did the shepherds stay in the fields with their sheep, after the angels were gone away? No, they were so anxious to see Jesus, that they said directly, "Let us go now to Bethlehem; and see this thing which the Lord hath made known to us." So they made haste, and went to Bethlehem; and there they soon found Joseph and Mary, and the babe lying in the manger, as the angel had said. Then the shepherds went, and made known to their friends and neighbors what the angel had told them about Jesus; and afterwards returned to their flocks full of holy joy.

We should be, like these shepherds, anxious to see and know Jesus. We cannot see Him with our bodily eyes, as they could; for He is not now a poor babe lying in a manger; He is in glory, in Heaven, at the right hand of God, far, far beyond our sight. But we can see and know Him by faith; we can come to Him in prayer; and He is still a Saviour, waiting to receive and bless all who truly believe, in Him and love Him.

241. SIMEON AND ANNA.

WHEN Jesus was eight days old, He was circumcised and named; He was called Jesus, or the Saviour, because He was to save His people from their sins. Afterwards He was brought to Jerusalem and presented in the temple to the Lord; and His mother offered a sacrifice in obedience to the law of Moses. Jesus was man as well as God.

There was a very old man living at Jerusalem at this time, named Simeon. He was a very

holy man. He had loved and served God many years; and he was now waiting to be called away to Heaven. Was Simeon willing to die? Yes; but there was one thing he wished before he died, and that was to see Jesus. He had long known Him in his heart by faith, but he wanted very much to see Him with his bodily eyes, and then to die. God knew Simeon's holy wish, and promised to grant it; He told him that he should not die till he had seen "the Lord's Christ." So Simeon came, led by the Spirit, into the temple, just when Jesus was there; and how pleased he was to see with his eyes that Saviour whom he had so long known in his heart; he took the babe up in his arms, and praised and blessed God, and said, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He had his wish; and now he wanted only to die, and go to Heaven.

There was another old person who came into the temple while Simeon was there. This was Anna, a prophetess. She was a widow, eighty-four years old, and most of those years she had spent in the service of God. She lived near the temple; and was very often there, night and day, praying and praising God. God honored Anna, as He did Simeon, in letting her see the Saviour before she died; and when none can die happily who do not see Him, she gave thanks, and spoke of Him to all in Jerusalem, who were looking for salvation through Him.

The Bible tells us no more about these two old people. Perhaps they soon after went to their rest in Heaven; and they were ready and glad when God called them there. When we come to die, there is only one thing that can give us true peace. It is that which made old Simeon and Anna so happy-- the knowledge of Christ, and of His salvation, in our hearts. Few people live to be so old as Simeon and Anna; and many die when they are very young. But, young or old, none can die happily who do not know Christ as their Saviour. We must seek to know Him now by faith; and then, whenever we are called away, we shall "depart in peace," and go to see that Saviour in Heaven, whom Simeon and Anna rejoiced to see on earth.

242. THE WISE MEN.

DID any other persons see Jesus while He was a baby? Yes; we are now going to read of some good men who came a very long way, and took a great deal of trouble, that they might see Jesus. Simeon, and Anna, and the shepherds all lived near the place where Jesus was; but these men lived a very long way off, in the east, in Arabia, perhaps, or some other distant country. They are called "wise men." They were very learned, and understood many things; and they had, too, what was better than all this. They had the best of all knowledge, which the Bible calls wisdom. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." Job xxviii. 28.

These wise men knew something of Christ, and they wanted to know more. They had heard about Jesus; they were expecting His coming, and they wished to see Him. But how could they tell where to find Him? God knew all their thoughts and wishes; and He led them, in a wonderful way, to Jesus. They saw a star in the sky; not a common star, such as they saw every night; but one quite new to them, unlike any they had ever looked at before. Perhaps these wise men understood a great deal about the stars, and knew many of their names, and could find out the constellations in the sky.

Astronomy teaches these things, and the wise men, no doubt, understood astronomy. But they had no name for this new star; it belonged to no constellation; and as they looked at it, they wondered why it was there, and how it came. Astronomy could not tell them, but God could; and He made them understand, that He Himself had put it there, to tell them that Christ was come, and to lead them to the place where He was. When the wise men knew this, they were very glad, and determined to go directly to Jerusalem and worship Jesus. So they took some of the precious things of their country (gold, and frankincense, and myrrh), to present to Jesus, and set off on their long journey. The star went before them, moving through the sky; and the wise men kept their eyes upon it, and it led them the right way to Jerusalem. The men knew then, that Jesus was not far off; so they went to some of the people living in Jerusalem, and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."

Was Jesus a king? Yes; He was then, and He is now, "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" but His kingdom was "not of this world." He came to reign in the hearts of His people, and to make them obedient to His will.

Herod, king of Judea, soon heard of the wise men, and what they had said; and he was troubled, and many of his people were troubled also. Why were they not glad to hear of Jesus? Did they not wish to see Him? No; Herod was afraid that this "King of the Jews" was come to take away his kingdom, and to reign in his place; for he did not understand that the kingdom of Jesus was "not of this world." So Herod called the priests, and the scribes, or writers of the law, and asked them where Christ must be born. How could they know? They had read the prophets; and there they had learnt that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. So they told this to Herod. Then Herod secretly called the wise men and asked them a great many questions about the star, and the time when they first saw it. They answered his questions; and then he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go, and seek there for the young child; and when you have found him, come back, and tell me; for I wish to go and worship Him also." This was only a false pretence of Herod. He did not wish to worship Jesus. He wanted to know where He was, that he might send and kill Him.

The wise men went away from Herod; and the star still moved before them, and led them to Bethlehem, and, at last, "stood over where the young child was." Then the wise men rejoiced with very great joy; and went into the house, and "saw the young child, and Mary his mother; and fell down and worshipped him, and presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

We may learn many holy lessons from the story of the wise men. We should be as anxious as they were, to know and worship Jesus.

We need not take a long journey to come to Him; for He is near us wherever we are. He is God; and God, we know, is everywhere. And we do not want a star to lead us to Jesus. His word and His Spirit will lead us to Him, if we ask to be led. And how are we to come to Jesus? In faith and prayer. We cannot see Him with our eyes, but we can believe in Him and love Him with our hearts; and He will hear our prayers, as He heard the prayers of the wise men; and bless us, as He blessed them. Must we bring gifts to present to Jesus? Not such gifts as the wise men brought; He does not ask for them. But He does ask us for something. He says, "Give me thy heart." He wants all our love-- all our affections; all we are, and all we have.

243. THE CHILDREN OF BETHLEHEM.

Did the wise men return to Herod, and tell him that they had found Jesus? No; God knew the wicked deceit of Herod's heart; and He warned the wise men, in a dream, not to return to the cruel king; so "they departed into their own country, another way." But when Herod heard that the men had gone away, without telling him what he desired, he became very angry. He was determined to kill Jesus; and as he did not know the house in which the Saviour lay, he said he would destroy all the little children in Bethlehem, hoping that Jesus would be killed among them. But God would not let Herod do what he so wickedly wished. Jesus indeed came into the world to die; but the time was not yet come. He must grow up to be a man, and obey all the law of God, and say, and do, and suffer many things; and then He would die.

When the wise men were gone away, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." So Joseph arose directly, and took Mary, and the infant Jesus, and departed into Egypt. It was night when they escaped, and none saw them go.

And now Herod's cruel command was given. All the children in Bethlehem, from two years old and under, must be slain.

Herod's hard-hearted messengers went from house to house, through the streets of Bethlehem, and tore one little child after another from the mother's arms, and murdered it. That was a sad, sad day in Bethlehem. The poor mothers wept bitterly, and begged the cruel soldiers to spare their children; and the little children themselves cried, and clung to

their mothers for safety; but nothing could save them: Herod and his men had no pity; all the babes in Bethlehem were slain.

Did Jesus feel for those little ones who died in Bethlehem for His sake? Yes; those children were very dear to Him. He knew all their sufferings. But they were safe, as all little children are who die before they are able to understand these things. The children slain in Bethlehem are now in Heaven: rejoicing there with many more little ones, who, like them, died in infancy. They are not sorry that they died so soon. No; they rejoice that He was pleased to take them, before they knew much of the sorrow and sin of this sad and wicked world. They know now all that Jesus had done for them; and why they are so happy, and so safe with their Saviour in Heaven.

244. JESUS WITH THE DOCTORS.

JESUS and his parents stayed in Egypt until the death of the cruel king Herod; and then an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life." So Joseph arose, and took Mary and the infant Jesus, and went back to the land of Israel. But they did not go to Bethlehem; for Herod's son Archelaus was now reigning in Judea, and Joseph was afraid of him; so, at the command of God, he went to Galilee, and settled in Nazareth, where he and Mary had lived before. Here Jesus was brought up. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."

You remember there was a feast which God commanded the Jews to keep, called the Passover. Every year, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to this feast; and when Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him with them. They went with a large company; and, after the feast was over, they returned together. Jesus stayed behind; but His parents thought He was in the company; so they began their journey towards home. A whole day passed, and they saw nothing of Jesus; and then they began to wonder where He was, and they sought Him among their friends and relations who were travelling with them. But no one had seen Jesus. Then His parents felt very unhappy, and returned to Jerusalem, anxiously seeking Him all the way. When they came to the city, they went through the streets, and into many of the houses, but they could not find Him.

At last, after three days, they went into the temple, and there, to their great joy, they saw Jesus sitting among the learned doctors; talking to them, and hearing, and asking them questions. And all who heard what Jesus said, wondered at his understanding and answers.

When Mary saw Jesus, she said to Him, "Son, why hast thou done this? Thy father and I

have sought thee sorrowing." But Jesus answered, "Why did you seek me? Know you not that I must be about my Father's business?" Mary did not understand what Jesus said; but she remembered all His words, and heard them with reverence and kept them in her heart. Jesus had work to do, which Mary did not yet understand. He had His heavenly Father to honor-- that Father was God. And what was the business which His heavenly Father had given Him to do? It was to make himself known as the Saviour of sinners. This was why Jesus came down from Heaven. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 John iv. 14.

But when Joseph and Mary called Jesus, He left the doctors directly, and went home with them to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them." And why did He submit to them? Because He came to obey all the commands of God; and one of those commands says, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" and because He wished to give an example to other children, and to teach them to be humble, and gentle, and meek, and obedient, as He Himself was. They must pray and try to be like Him; and, if they ask for the Holy Spirit to enable them to become so, their prayers will be heard and answered; and then, as they grow in years, they will grow in grace too, and in the love and favor of God.

245. JOHN THE BAPTIST.

WE read nothing more of the life of Jesus until He was thirty years old. All this time, perhaps, He was living at Nazareth with his parents, very quietly and humbly. Joseph was a carpenter; and Jesus himself might have worked for His daily bread. For "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;" and, though He was "equal with God," yet "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." This should teach us humility. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. ii. 5, 7.

Where was John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, all this time? He was in the deserts of Judea; he was alone, spending all his time in prayer and praise. He forsook the world, that he might give himself up to the service of God. John had a great work to do; he was to make ready the way for Christ; and therefore he needed much time to prepare for this work, by praying to God, and thinking upon holy things. But a little time before Jesus began His ministry, John came "preaching in the wilderness of Judea." His raiment was of camel's hair; and he wore a leathern girdle, and his food was locusts and wild honey. How did he begin his preaching? He said, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." John told the people, that Jesus himself was coming to show them the way to Heaven, and to set up his kingdom in the hearts of those who believed. But if people do not feel their sinfulness, they will not care for a Saviour; so when John was preparing the way for Christ, he said first, "Repent ye."

Were the people willing to attend to the preaching of John? Yes; they came to him in great numbers, from Jerusalem, and Judea, and round about Jordan. Some of them were really penitent; they felt that they were poor sinners unable to save themselves; and rejoiced to hear that a Saviour was coming, willing and able to save them. These people confessed their sins; and then John led them into the river Jordan, and baptized them, as a sign that they were truly penitent, and desired to give themselves up to the service of God. But the water of baptism had no power to cleanse their hearts; only the Holy Spirit could do that: and therefore John told those who came to him, that he could only baptize them with water; but that one was coming, much, much greater than himself, who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost. John spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, who promises to give the Spirit to those who ask, to renew and sanctify their hearts.

Some of the people who came to be baptized were not truly penitent. The Pharisees and Sadducees were among them. When John saw them, he warned them very solemnly of their sins: their pride, and deceitfulness, and unbelief. They were very proud of being Abraham's children; but John told them that this would not make them acceptable to God, if they had not Abraham's faith, and love, and obedience. He said, "Every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. Now God is looking for fruit in you; He wishes to see you living in obedience to His holy commands. You cannot be truly penitent if you do not love Him, and try to please Him in all you do; and, without true repentance, you must at last perish for ever." Then some of the people said, "What must we do?" John told them to be kind one to another, honest in all they did, and contented with what they had, and then they would show, by their works, that their hearts were sincere, and that they were truly penitent.

We who have been baptized, profess to be the servants of God. If we really are so, we shall show our love to Him by obedience; by bringing forth good fruits. You know what these good fruits are; they are those holy tempers, of which the Bible tells us, "Love, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." Gal. V. 22.

But these holy tempers do not spring up of themselves in our hearts. They are called "the fruits of the Spirit," because He only can implant them in us, and make them grow. The only fruits which come up of themselves in our hearts, are bad fruits; evil passions, and sinful tempers, and wicked thoughts. These are like the troublesome weeds which grow in our gardens; we must ask God to root them up, and take them all away, and we should pray Him to make us truly sorry for our sins, and to pardon them for the sake of Jesus Christ; and beg Him to give us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, and enable us to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

246. JESUS BAPTIZED.

WHEN all the people were baptized, John saw a person coming to him different from any who had come before. All the others were sinners who needed pardon; but He who was now coming, needed no pardon, for "He knew no sin." It was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who had left Nazareth, and come to Jordan, to be baptized there by John.

John was at first very unwilling to baptize Jesus. He felt his own unworthiness, and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Let it be so now, for thus we must fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him." Jesus was baptized to show us that baptism is right; one of God's commands which He came to obey. He submitted to the law in all things, because, as man, He was to obey that law.

After Jesus had been baptized, as He came out of the water, the Heavens were opened, and a voice was heard speaking-- the voice of God; and the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven, in the likeness of a dove, and rested on the head of Jesus. Who were witnesses of these wonderful transactions? God the Father was in Heaven, looking down in love upon Jesus, and saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was standing by the river Jordan; and God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of peace and love, was resting upon His head in the likeness of a gentle dove.

We cannot explain how this was; but we must believe it, because God has written it for us in His word; and all that He says is true, and needful for us to know. We here may learn who were concerned in the work of our salvation. It was God the Father who "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," and who pardons and accepts all penitent sinners who come to Him through Jesus Christ. It was God the Son who came down from Heaven, and bore for us the punishment which we deserve to bear; and it is He who now "ever liveth to make intercession" for His people, before His Father's throne. And it is God the Holy Ghost who comes into the hearts of sinners, who renews, and sanctifies, and prepares them for Heaven.

What did the voice say which spoke from Heaven? It said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God said this, that John and all who heard it, might know that Jesus was the Son of God; and that the Father accepted Him as the Saviour of sinners. Do you know and love this wonderful and gracious God of whom we have been reading? Pray that you may know and love Him more and more; that at last you may be taken to Heaven, where you will "see Him as He is," and dwell with Him for ever.

247. THE TEMPTATION.

AFTER His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He was there forty days and forty nights, alone with the wild beasts. He spent the time in prayer and fasting, and communion with his heavenly Father.

When the forty days were ended, Jesus began to be weak and hungry; and at this time Satan came to Him, to tempt Him. But why did Jesus let Satan come to tempt Him? Because Jesus was to suffer all that we suffer; and to be tempted like as we are, "yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15. You remember, when Adam and Eve had sinned, and God had passed sentence upon them for their sin, He said to Satan, the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15. This seed of the woman was the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to conquer Satan, and to deliver sinners from his power. Satan was to "bruise the heel" of Christ-- to trouble and distress him a little; but Christ was to "bruise the head" of Satan-- to subdue him altogether, and take away his power. This prophecy was now beginning to be fulfilled.

How did Satan tempt the Saviour? First, he brought stones to Jesus, and said to him, "Command that these stones be made bread;" for Satan knew that Jesus was weak, and hungry, and that He could make bread by a miracle if He pleased. But Jesus knew that it was not the right time for working such a miracle now; so He said to the tempter, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God can preserve life by any means He pleases, and in all our wants we must trust to Him to provide for us in the way He appoints and sees best.

Then Satan tried a new temptation. He took Jesus up into a very high mountain, and there showed Him in a wonderful way which we cannot understand, all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; all the riches, and pleasures, and vanities of the world. Then Satan said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." But did these things belong to Satan? Was it in his power to give them away? No; "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein." The kingdoms of the world, and all their riches, and all their glory, belong to God, and He can give them, and take them away, as He pleases. But Satan often uses these things as if they were his and tempts people with them as he tempted Jesus? But what did Jesus say? He told Satan that it was written in God's word, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Then Satan led Jesus to the top of the temple, and placed Him on the highest part of the building, and said, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, 'He shall command his angels to keep Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, that Thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.'" God has promised to keep those who trust in Him, when they act in faith to His commands; but He does not promise to keep those who boldly put themselves into danger without His command. Jesus would not cast Himself down from the temple, because it was not God's will; so He said to Satan, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Then Satan left Jesus for a time and holy angels came down from Heaven to comfort Him in His sorrows. This same Satan who tempted

Jesus, tempts us now every day we live. "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Wherever we go, whatever we do, Satan is near, trying to make us sin. We cannot see him with our eyes, nor hear his voice speaking to us, as Jesus could; but we can feel him in our hearts, trying to fill them with evil passions, and sinful tempers, and wicked thoughts. And how can we conquer this great enemy Satan? Jesus Christ conquered him by His own power; but we will not. Our hearts are so weak, that, till they are "renewed by the Holy Spirit," they love to attend to the temptations of Satan, and choose him, for their master, and not God. How then can we resist him? Only in the strength of Christ. He will help if we ask Him, and enable us to conquer Satan through His power. "For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. ii. 18.

248. THE LAMB OF GOD.

WHEN the Jews heard that a man was preaching and baptizing near Jordan, they began to wonder who He was. They thought that, perhaps, He might be the Messiah of whom they had read in the prophets: so they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who art thou?" John did not wish to have more honor than belonged to him. He did not want to be thought better or greater than he really was; so he confessed directly, "I am not the Christ. I am only come to make ready the way for him. I baptize with water, but there is one among you who is much greater than I. He can baptize with the Holy Ghost; and though He comes after me, yet He was before me; and I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latches of His shoes." John spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world, and began to preach after John the Baptist; but Jesus always was, for He is the eternal Son of God without beginning, and without end.

The day after John had spoken to the priests and Levites, he saw Jesus coming, and pointed to Him, and said, "That is he of whom I was speaking yesterday, who is so much greater than I, and who was before me. It is He whom I baptized a time ago; and I then saw the Heavens open, and the Spirit come down like a dove, and rest upon Him. I know that He is the Son of God. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Why did John call Jesus the Lamb of God? You remember that the Jews, by the command of God, used to sacrifice a lamb every morning and every evening, and also at the feast of the Passover, and at many other times. The priests killed the lamb, and sprinkled the blood upon the people; and if the people came to the sacrifice by faith, they were pardoned by God, and their sins were taken away. But it was not the lamb's blood-- it was the blood of Christ that took their sins away. All the sacrifices were typical of Him; He was called "the Lamb of God" and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," because God had

chosen Him from eternity to be a sacrifice for sin. Therefore John said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

And the lamb is a type of Jesus too, because it is so harmless, and meek, and gentle. So Christ was "without blemish and without spot;" perfectly holy; there was no sin in Him; and He was meek and gentle too; He was patient under all sufferings. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth."

This holy Lamb of God is not now upon our earth, as He was when John saw Him. He is on His glorious throne in Heaven, and many of His happy people are with Him there. But He is a Saviour still; and ready to take away the sins of all those who come to Him in faith and prayer. But He will not always be a Saviour. When the dreadful day of judgment comes, He will not hear the prayers of those who despise and forget Him now. He will then look upon them in anger, not in pity and love; and they will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

If we wish to be safe and happy in that dreadful day, we must ask now to be "washed in the blood of the Lamb," and to have our names written "in the Lamb's book of life." And then, when we die, we shall be taken to join the happy company in Heaven, and sing with them, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

249. DISCIPLES BROUGHT TO JESUS.

THE next day, as John was standing with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus again, and said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God." The two disciples were very glad to hear that Jesus was so near, and they left John, and followed Him.

Was John sorry to lose them? No; he was glad that they were so anxious to be with Jesus; for he knew that Jesus could do much more for them than he could. John could only preach and talk to them; but Jesus could save their souls. He was John's Saviour, and He would be the disciples' Saviour too.

When Jesus turned round, and saw the two disciples following, He said to them, "What seek ye?" They answered, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Then Jesus told them to come and see; so they came and saw where He dwelt, and stayed with Him that day; for it was now evening. What a happy evening it must have been for the disciples! They had many

questions to ask; and Jesus was willing to answer them; but the disciples did not wish to keep their happiness to themselves. They wanted their friends to know and love Jesus too. One of these disciples was named Andrew. He had a brother called Simon; and as soon as Andrew had seen Jesus, he ran to Simon, and said, "We have found the Messiah, the Christ!" and he brought his brother to Jesus. Jesus received Simon very kindly; and Simon loved his Saviour with all his heart. We shall often read about him again, for he was one of the twelve apostles. He was called Peter as well as Simon.

The next day, Jesus found a man named Philip, who lived in Bethsaida, the city in which Andrew and Simon Peter lived. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me." Philip was willing to obey the command, but, like Andrew, Philip did not wish to go alone to Jesus, he wanted to bring others with him. He had a friend named Nathanael, who was a very good man. Nathanael loved to read the holy word of God, and there he had learnt much about the Messiah; and he was waiting and wishing for the coming of Jesus; but he had not yet seen Him. Philip knew how anxious Nathanael was to know Jesus, so he went directly, to tell him that Jesus was come.

Philip soon found his friend. He was sitting under a fig-tree, thinking of holy things, and praying to be taught more of that blessed Saviour whom he loved so much. When Philip saw Nathanael, he said, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote,-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael felt, at first, unwilling to believe that Jesus could be the Messiah. The Jews disliked the city of Nazareth very much, and thought that nothing good could come out of it. And Nathanael had read, too, in the prophets, that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth. This was true; and Jesus had been born in Bethlehem; but Nathanael did not know it; so he said to Philip, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see;" and he brought Nathanael to Jesus.

When Jesus saw Philip and his friend coming, He pointed to Nathanael, and said to those who stood by, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Jesus meant, that Nathanael was sincere; that he really loved God; really wanted to know and believe in Christ. He was "an Israelite indeed;" one of the true people of God; not like the Pharisees who boasted that they were Israelites, but did not truly love the God of Israel. The Pharisees were hypocrites, only pretending to be God's people; but Nathanael was sincerely seeking to serve God in the right way.

Nathanael wondered very much to hear Jesus speak in this way; and he said, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus answered, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Jesus knew all the thoughts of Nathanael-- all his wants, and all his desires; He had heard his prayers from the first moment Nathanael began to pray; Jesus knew all this, because He was God.

When Nathanael heard what Jesus said, he felt that this wonderful person must be the Christ, the true Messiah; and he said to Jesus, "Master, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art

the King of Israel." Jesus answered, "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Jesus spoke of that wonderful day when He will come again in His glory, and every eye will see Him; but only those who love Him as their Saviour now, will rejoice to look upon Him then.

If we know Jesus ourselves, we should try, like Andrew and Philip, to lead others to Him also. Perhaps we may have brothers, or sisters, or friends, who do not yet love Jesus. Then we ought to ask them to come and seek Him. How pleasant it will be, as we journey to Heaven, to see our dear friends going there with us. We should say to all we love, to remember what Moses said to his father-in-law Hobah, in the wilderness: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come with us, and we will do thee good."

250. WATER MADE WINE.

A LITTLE time after this, Jesus went to Galilee. There was a marriage in Cana; and Jesus, and His mother, and His disciples, were invited to the marriage feast. A great many people were at this feast; the wine was soon drunk, and they wanted more; so the mother of Jesus turned to Him, and said, "They have no wine." Then Jesus told Mary not to trouble herself about this, but to wait patiently, and leave all to Him. For though Jesus submitted to His mother, because, as man, He was her son; yet, sometimes, He reprov'd and instructed her too, because, as God, He was her Lord and Master. Mary knew this; and she always humbly attended to what Jesus said.

The servants were in the room, waiting upon the company, and Mary spoke to them, and said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." There were set there six pots of stone, to hold water for cleansing and washing; for the Jews were very particular about these things.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the water-pots with water;" so they filled them up to the brim. Then Jesus told the servants to pour out, and carry it to the governor of the feast. The servants did as Jesus commanded. They poured out what was in the water-pots, and took it to the governor, and he drank it. But it was not water now. The wonderful power of Jesus had, in one moment, turned the water into wine. The governor did not know what had been done; but he was very much pleased with the wine, because it was so good; and he called the bridegroom, and said, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." The mother of Jesus, and His disciples, and the servants, all knew who it was that had made this good wine; and wondered at the great power of Jesus, and "His disciples believed on Him."

This was the first miracle which Jesus did. We have often read of miracles in the Old Testament History. Moses turned water into blood, at the the command of God; afterwards he sweetened the bitter waters of Marah; and then again, he struck the rock at Meribah, and water rushed out. Elijah and Elisha too, and many others, worked miracles. But the way in which they worked them, was not like the way in which Christ worked them. The prophets wrought wonders by the command of God; Christ wrought them by His own power. He had power to do any wonder He pleased, because He was God.

251. THE TEMPLE CLEANSED.

SOON after the feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem, to the passover which was kept there at this time, and He entered into the temple. We have often read of the temple at Jerusalem. You remember the glorious one which Solomon built, and which Nebuchadnezzar's army threw down and destroyed. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews built a new temple, but not as large and beautiful as the first. This second temple was rebuilt and beautified by king Herod, and the Jews were proud of it, and admired it very much. But they did not honor it in the way God's house ought to be honored. When Jesus came into the temple, He found people there selling oxen, and sheep, and doves. These animals were used for the sacrifices; but they should not have been sold within the holy walls of God's house. Jesus was very angry with the people who were buying and selling in the temple. He drove them all out, and the sheep, and the oxen; and threw down the tables, and poured out the money, and said to those that sold doves, "Take these things away; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." The temple belonged to God; and therefore Jesus would not let it be dishonored.

We, like the Jews, have temples for the worship of God;-- how do we use them? We never see people buying and selling in our churches; but there is a way of dishonoring God's house without doing this. How? By bringing worldly thoughts into His holy temple. Some people, perhaps, think about their money; some about their shops; some about their every-day work and business; some about their pleasures, or their dress, while they are in God's house. They think of these worldly things, instead of thinking of God, and Christ, and Heaven; instead of confessing their sins with all their hearts, and asking for pardon and grace. This makes God very angry. He gives no blessing to these careless, worldly minded people. They go away from the house of God with His frown upon them, and not His smile. If we wish for a blessing when we go into the temple of God, we must pray that all our vain, foolish, worldly thoughts may be taken away before we go there; and ask God Himself to take possession of our hearts.

252. NICODEMUS.

THERE was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees were not, in general, followers of Jesus. They were proud and self-righteous, and thought themselves too good to need a Saviour; so they hated and despised Him. But Nicodemus was not like these proud men. He was humble and willing to come to Jesus.

Nicodemus had heard a great deal of the miracles and wonders which Jesus did, and thought He must be a very holy man; a prophet, perhaps, sent by God; but Nicodemus did not, at first, feel quite sure that Jesus was the Son of God. So, like Andrew, and Simon, and Philip, he determined to "come and see." But Nicodemus did not, like those good men, follow Jesus boldly. He was afraid or ashamed to do this. Perhaps he thought his friends might persecute or despise him if they saw him going to Jesus of Nazareth. So Nicodemus went to Christ secretly, by night, when none could see him. The faith of Nicodemus was very weak and small; yet Jesus did not send him away; He casts out none who come to Him.

What did Nicodemus say when he came to Jesus? He said, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And afterwards He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant. He did not know what it is to be "born again." Do you know? It is very needful for us all to understand what it is to be "born again."

When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, then the heart is made new and clean, just as anything is made clean that is washed with water. Before, it loved sin and Satan; but now, it will love God and holiness. St. Paul spoke of this change of heart, when he said, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new." This is being "born again."

We cannot understand how all this can be. We cannot see the Holy Spirit of God working in the heart, and making it new and clean; but we can see the good fruits,-- the holy tempers which He causes to spring up. When Jesus was explaining these things to Nicodemus, He said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We can hear the wind blow; we can see the trees shaken by it: but we cannot see the wind itself; it is invisible. So, when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, we see that a person is changed,-- different from what he was before; and we know that God's Holy Spirit must have made the change; but this is all we know. We cannot see the Spirit; He is invisible like the wind.

Do you understand now what it is to be born again? It is to have a new heart; to be made a child of God. Has your heart been changed? You "cannot enter into the kingdom of God," till it is. Ask God then to take away your "stony heart," and to give you "a heart of flesh." Say, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm li. 10.

Nicodemus wondered very much at what Jesus said, and asked "How can these things be?" Nicodemus was a learned man; "a ruler of the Jews," "a master in Israel," and yet he could not understand the things of God, till Jesus explained them to him. And so it is with us all. People can never rightly understand heavenly things without God's teaching. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Nicodemus felt his ignorance and was anxious to be taught; and Jesus was ready and willing to teach him. He told him not only of the Spirit's power in renewing the heart, but of the Father's love in finding out a way of salvation for sinners, and of Himself as that way. He said, "God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." he told Nicodemus about the serpent of brass raised by Moses in the wilderness, upon which the bitten Israelites looked and were healed. The brazen serpent was a type of the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus had often read the story; but, perhaps, he had never understood it rightly, till Jesus said to him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus must be lifted up upon the cross and die, that perishing sinners, who look to Him in faith, may be eternally saved.

What wonderful things Nicodemus heard from Jesus that night! He was very glad to hear them; and he went away believing that Jesus was not only a prophet, but that He was "the only-begotten Son of God," the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners. When we read of Nicodemus again, we shall find that his faith became stronger, and that he learnt not to be ashamed nor afraid of confessing himself a disciple of Jesus.

253. JOHN THE BAPTIST IMPRISONED.

ABOUT this time, John the Baptist was thrown into prison by Herod the tetrarch of Galilee. This Herod was a son of the cruel king of Judea who had murdered the little children of Bethlehem. He was cruel and wicked like his father. When John first began to preach, Herod the tetrarch liked him, and did many things which John said was right, "and heard him gladly." But when John faithfully and boldly reprov'd him for his sins, Herod

grew angry; for he loved sin, and did not like to give it up. So he took John and cast him into prison, that he might hear his warnings and reproofs no more.

Do you think it was very wicked of Herod to do this? It was. Many people are impatient and angry when a faithful minister or a kind friend warns them of their sins, and of the dreadful end of sin if unrepented of. Even children are often very angry, when reprov'd of their faults by their kind parents or teachers. Instead of attending humbly to what is said, they are sullen and angry because they are told of their faults, not sorry because they have done wrong. All this is very wicked, and very foolish too; for those who kindly reprove us, are our best friends; and Solomon says, "He that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

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