

Sunday School

Lesson For Sunday, January 14

By Dr. Paul Caudill



LESSON FOR JANUARY 14
Topic:
JESUS FACES HIS LIFE WORK
Bible Material: Matthew 3:13-17

We do not know a great deal about the childhood of Jesus. The eighteen years that he spent at Nazareth, after the sojourn in Egypt, are often referred to as the "years of obscurity". The on-

ly specific light, we have on that period is found in Luke 2:51-52: "And he went with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them; and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men". The first record we have of Jesus' public appearance, following these eighteen silent years, is at the Jordan where John, his forerunner, is baptizing: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him". Matt. 3:13).

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

The baptism of Jesus, says Dr. Broadus, marks the transition from the ministry of John to that of Jesus himself. Mark gives a brief account of the event (1:9-11) and so does Luke (3:21-22). John apparently makes a brief allusion to it (3:26). It is interesting to note the account of the baptism as Matthew describes it. John seemed at first utterly unwilling to administer the ordinance to Jesus ("was hindering him"). "I have need to be baptized by thee, and thou comest to me!" he said. To John, such an act on his part would call for unworthy condemnation on the part of Jesus, a superior personage. It just could not be permitted to happen that way. Nevertheless, Jesus impelled John to baptize him, just as he had baptized others. "Suffer NOW that I take the position of inferiority to thee by receiving baptism at thy hands; the time has not yet come for me to assume my destined position" (Broadus). In the end, John yielded and baptized him.

What was the significance of our Lord's baptism? In what respect was it proper for him to follow in the footsteps of other devout Jews in the observance of the sacred rite of baptism? Many theories have been presented in answer to this question. There have been those who held that the baptism of Jesus served as a sort of consecration to the office and work of the Messiah. Others hold that "in baptism he was consecrated as priest". But as Dr. Broadus points out, "Jesus was not literally a priest. He had no connection whatever with the priestly line, and he did not do the work of a Jewish priest". Dr. Broadus suggests that for those who do not insist on carrying back the Pauline doctrine of imputed righteousness the simple and natural view is that "it was proper for all devout Jews to be baptized; therefore it was proper for Jesus. If one so deeply, though hitherto quietly devout had stayed away from the ministry and baptism of the new prophet, it would have

Complete Course



Opl. Quince E. (Ned) Nichols has returned to Fort Jackson, S. C., after completing a course of track vehicle engine mechanics at the Ordnance school, Aberdeen Proving ground, Md. Opl. Nichols entered the army April 14, 1943. He held a position in the Wilkes Hosiery Mills prior to entering service. His wife, the former Miss Esther Huffman, and son, Larry Wayne, make their home in Kannapolis. He is the son of Mrs. Ruby Nichols, of Millers Creek.

been setting a very bad example, unless explained; and explanation of his future position and work could not then be given, even if it was entirely plain to his own mind. Notwithstanding the peculiar mission of John and Jesus, it was becoming that they should fully perform everything "righteous".

We take it to be unnecessary to discuss in the brief compass of this lesson the mode of Jesus' baptism. The word "baptize" signifies "to immerse", "to dip". The word baptize is in reality an untranslated Greek word. It is what we would call an Anglicized Greek word. It would have been much better and saved much theological controversy had the early English versions substituted the word "immerse" for the word "baptize", or even the word "dip". Paul in his letter to the Romans (Chapt. 6:1-11) sheds no little light on the rite of baptism as he understood it. It is a symbolic ordinance given to the church and to be observed by every believer. It sets forth in symbolic manner the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of Jesus, and the new life of the believer here and now in Christ's name.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

As Dr. W. H. Davis has pointed out, Jesus, in coming into the world had what might be called a 3-fold relation. As Son of man, he was the human, Jesus. As Son of God, he was the Only Begotten. As Christ, He was the Messiah. It was only reasonable to expect him to be tempted at each of these points. Being both human and divine, very God incarnate, he would face temptations at every point of his ministry that were real, just as real as the temptations that his followers would face through all the years to come. The temptations that came to him in the Wilderness, therefore, are to be considered not merely as "trials" which he himself needed to face in order to prepare him for his holy missions; they are, in a measure, representative of the temptations that come to all men, and which shall continue to come to his followers as long as they are in the flesh. Let us note these temptations, one by one.

In the first place, Jesus was tempted to satisfy the reasonable, natural desires of the body in an unnatural manner, thus setting at naught the glory of the incarnation: "And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread". Jesus had fasted for forty days and was consequently subjected to the natural pangs of hunger, as would any man who had not eaten for so long a time. No doubt the tempter felt that it would be a most excellent time to thwart the mission of Jesus. Maybe he could be caught off guard in his moment of great hunger. After all, if he were really the son of God and had the power that he claimed to have, why should he wait to minister to the natural needs of his body in a natural way? Would not a mere spoken word produce bread in abundance? Jesus' answer was clear and simple: "But he answered and said, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'". In other words, Jesus refused to put the material above the spiritual, and to set a pattern for his followers that they themselves could not observe, and which would deliver him from sufferings that they must endure.

Again, Jesus was tempted to use his relation to the Father in such manner as to spare himself the common perils of life. In short, he was tempted to resort to magic!

"If thou art the son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, 'Thou shalt give thy angels charge concerning thee: and, On their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone'. In following the course suggested to him by the tempter, he would have sinned the sin of presumption. 'There is nothing moral in magic'. We are not to make selfish demands upon God, merely to enjoy a needless demonstration of his power. There is little place for showmanship in the work of the Lord Christ. Such a pattern might have led astray many of his followers who have a hankering for magic and the super-sensational. The act would have been a perversion of his real mission. His answer to the tempter, was fitting: 'Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God'".

Finally, Jesus was tempted to "win the world by adopting the methods of the world", that is to say, by bowing to the whims and fancies of the worldly multitudes. The tempter, says Dr. W. H. Davis, was offering to make Jesus popular with the world if he would only go his way. Everything would be his if he would only fall

down and worship him. Jesus' answer was again unequivocally in the negative. The scene closes with the departure of the devil and the coming of ministering angels.

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