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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter Lesson 3 Jan. 19 1902

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH—Acts 2: 37-47.

GOLDEN TEXT.—The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.—Acts 2: 47.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—Probably on Sunday, May 28, A. D. 30. The Feast of Pentecost, Whitsunday. The same day as the last lesson, but continuing into the days following.

Place.—Jerusalem, in the vicinity of the upper room where the disciples met, and afterwards in the temple, and elsewhere in the city.

PETER'S SERMON.—Vs. 14-36. In our last lesson we left the multitude amazed and perplexed at the wonderful power manifested before them. Peter as the representative of the apostles, and filled with the Holy Spirit, made an address to the gathering multitude. Only an outline is given in the Acts.

Respecting the charge of drunkenness, Peter goes on to show that what they had seen was, 1. The fulfilment of a prophecy of the Messianic times.

2. Jesus Christ did the works of the Messiah, and was proved to be the Messiah by signs and wonders, of which they were witnesses. And although they crucified Jesus, God proved that Jesus was the Messiah by raising him from the dead.

3. What they had just seen was the gift of Jesus promised by the Father.

THE INQUIRY MEETING.—Vs. 37-40. They were pricked, with the sharp point of his discourse. In their hearts. Conscience, moral nature. They saw they had committed a crime against God and the nation and themselves. They had rejected their best friend and Saviour.

Conviction of Sin (1) leaves men to seek the Saviour. If one does not feel guilty, why should he seek forgiveness? (2) The greatest means for the conviction of sin is a view of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. His perfect life shows us the imperfection of ours.

THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT makes these means effective. Men and brethren. Apparently the meeting broke up into fragments, and different persons not only asked of the speaker, but held conversation with the apostles and other disciples. What shall we do? The sin had been committed; the penalty overhung them. How could they themselves escape from their guilt? Repent. Repentance is the turning of the whole soul from self to God, and involves the breaking off from a selfish, sinful course of life, and the entrance upon a life of obedience, trust and devotion to God. And he baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. By which they publicly confessed their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, their trust in him, and their consecration to his service.

Two blessings were promised to those who should comply with these requirements. (1) For (unto) the remission of sins. Sins are remitted first, by forgiveness, taking away the penalty; and second by taking away sin itself.

(2) The other blessing was, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, sometimes in the same form in which they had just seen it manifested; and always in his abiding presence, dwelling within them as a fountain of life, teaching, guiding, helping, purifying, according to the promise. For the promise of the Messiah, and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and of salvation as foretold by Joel and other prophets. It includes all the hopes and blessings which the Messiah was to bring. Is unto you, in spite of your sins, and your crucifying the Messiah. He died that you might be saved. Therefore he wants to save you. And to your children. No one wants to be saved alone. You being saved from sin is the nearest and surest way to the salvation of your children. And to all that are afar off. All Gentile nations. Even as many as the Lord our God shall call. It does not declare that every one who is called accepts the call, but that this promise is for all. No one is left out. Not one is too far away. And with many other words, with every persuasive argument. Did he testify, bear witness that the promise was being fulfilled. Saves yourselves, by repenting and believing on Jesus. From this onward, intractable, perverse. The onward generation, was one turned away from God and from the right.

JOINING THE CHURCH.—V. 41. They that gladly received his word. All who received the word were baptized. It was a joyful act. Compulsory religion is no religion. Were baptized, not necessarily on the day in which they believed, nor by the apostles alone.

Baptism is (1) the appointed method of making a profession of religion, and therefore, every disciple of Christ should be baptized. Jesus himself was baptized, as an example to all his followers. (2) Baptism is a public renunciation of sin, and profession of cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ. It is a perfect symbol of the putting away of the defilement of sin, and of the cleansing of heart and life. (3) It is a symbol of the new, the risen life with Christ Jesus. (4) It is a symbol of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Confession of Christ is (1) a duty commanded by Christ. (2) It is a test of faith and obedience. (3) Public confession confirms and strengthens the disciple. It commits him to the side of Christ. (4) It gives power over the world; it is a continual sermon, proclaiming the gospel, and testimony that you believe Christ.

There were added, to the number of Christians. Three thousand souls. This was a great beginning for the new church. Three thousand burning and shining lights were scattered over the city.

THE CHURCH BEAUTIFUL.—Vs. 42-47. And they continued steadfastly, against all adverse influences. It is steady, persistent work that tells. In the apostles' doctrine, i. e. the "teaching" of the apostles in the truths of their religion, and in the practical duties of religion. And fellowship. The disciples were like one loving family. In breaking of bread. This is the New Testament phrase for the Lord's Supper, in remembrance of Jesus. The sacrament was probably administered in connection with every evening meal partaken by the disciples in common, probably following the meal. And in prayers. This, doubtless, refers to praying together; united prayer at fixed hour in some appointed place.

And fear. Reverential awe in the presence of the mysterious power, working such wonders of grace and love. Many signs were done by the apostles. This general description includes the miracles described more in detail in subsequent chapters (Acts 3: 1-8; 5: 12, 15, 16). The greatest miracle was the conversion of three thousand in a day, and the change made in these men. Such great marvels still follow the preaching of the gospel. And all that believed were together. They had one central home; they constituted a social committee by themselves, separated from the rest of the people, not by local and physical barriers, but by their own mutual sympathies. And had all things common. They were members of one family and held things in common just as members of a family do. Everything was for the good of all. And sold their possessions (real estate) and goods (personal property) in order to be able to impart them to all men, as every man had need. All did not give away everything they had. But everything was free. Rich and poor were alike. There was need of this, for there were many strangers away from home, and they needed to remain while they could earn nothing, in order to be trained and educated and filled with the new spirit, so that they could be prepared to witness to the gospel in their distant homes. In the temple, the one natural and national place of worship. The Christians did not reject the temple worship, but filled it full of spirit and meaning. So Jesus went into his Father's house. And breaking bread. See on v. 42. It was the common meal, eaten together, and closing with the Lord's Supper. From houses to house. Or, "at home" as in the N. V. Did eat their meals, i. e., took their food, their ordinary meals. With gladness. The gospel pervades the whole life with gladness. They were glad of the goodness of God which provided the food. They were glad because they had enough to give to others. Singleness of heart. It "marked a harmony of Christian life undisturbed by discord or unkindness." Praising God. The praise refers not merely to their thanksgivings at meals, but is characteristic of their whole devotional life, both in public and private. And having favor with all the people. Their joyous graces, their generous living, their noble lives, were attractive. And the Lord added to them, to the number of disciples. Such as should be saved. Better such as "were being saved," or "were saving," themselves "from this untoward generation," as Peter had exhorted them to do.

Depend on Yourself.

My girl or my boy, do you know how necessary it is to learn to depend on yourself? It is so easy to fall into the habit of depending on some one else who is quicker or brighter, or perhaps has more confidence in speaking out at the right time, or doing the right thing. This is especially so during your school lives. A good-natured but

mistaken compassion may help you along for a while, but if you are separated from that companion you hardly know how to act. I knew two girls, Annie and Teresa, who always sat together at school. They prepared their lessons in the same way, and appeared to be making equal advancement. They seemed to be particularly bright, and were noticed on that account by all the teachers who had anything to do with them. They were promoted from class to class together, and always managed to sit side by side. One day it happened that they were separated, and then a discovery was made. Teresa continued to do well, but Annie did not show the same proficiency as before, and so it turned out that Teresa, out of mistaken kindness for her friend, had been helping her right along. And Annie had learned to depend on Teresa's assistance, and when she was separated from her scarcely knew how to go on with some of her class work. Do you see how wrong they both were: Teresa in giving the help, and Annie in accepting it? Then, too, they had made the more grievous mistake of deceiving the kind teachers who had trusted them.—Christian Work.

Comparative Strength of Men and Women.

I think the first study ever made on the comparative strength of the sexes was by Dr. James, who has written so well for this journal up to the present time. This study was published in the Herald of Health some twenty-five years ago. Since then numerous others have been made. The following is one of the most recent:

Testing certain feats of strength between the members of a young woman's and young man's colleges at New York has resulted in the following comparison: The athletic feats of the college woman equal those of boys of fourteen or fifteen, and are far below those of college men, or even of high-school boys. The young women run fifty per cent more slowly than men; they jump sixty-two per cent as far—the average of three events in each case—and throw a baseball only forty-five per cent as far. But it must be remembered that these figures are from a single woman's college, as against the men's records for all colleges. The latter are the supreme achievements of years of selection and training, and of inherited traditions of form. Where women have been trained for athletics as carefully as men, much less allowance need be made for sex. Professional women gymnasts are little less efficient than men in skill and agility, and sometimes even in strength. The stiffness of their muscles is favorable to rapid and dexterous motion. Some trainers have even held that there is practically no difference in possible muscular ability of men and women of the same size, but that women are subjectively less athletic; that they are not so much the weaker as the gentler sex. They make good scores at tennis and golf, and their long distance achievements on the bicycle have shown them possessed of marvelous endurance.—Dr. M. L. Holbrook, in the Phrenological Journal.

The Romans told a story about Charon, who rowed the dead across the river Styx. He saw how gloomy they all were, and one day he went up to earth to learn why. Standing on top of a high mountain, he looked down upon the cities of men. No wonder they are gloomy, he said, when they come down to me. Why they are spending all their lives building birds' nests! That is a fair symbol of what a great many men really are doing—putting trivial things first.

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GASTRIC TROUBLES. "I had suffered three years at least from gastric troubles. I could not sleep at night. My head ached and my feet would be cold as ice. My bowels were not regular and I was in such a state such cramps from gases forming on my stomach that I would faint away. I was in such a state that I would have sooner died than live. About three months ago I was suffering and felt as if my body was tied up inwardly. My brother recommended Ripans Tabules to me. My husband obtained some for me from the nearest drug store and I would not now be without them. They relieved me of all the foul gases that formed in my stomach and they give my bowels regularity for which I had been taking physic all the time. I have no more gases, my bowels are regular and I have no more headaches and can sleep well. In fact, I feel as light as the air which I breathe, and that is saying a good deal for a woman who weighs 100 pounds. I am sorry that I did not commence using the Tabules a year ago, for they would have saved me a great deal of pain and suffering."

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