Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER.

STUDIES IN ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

(Condensed from Peloubet's Select Notes.)

Lesson II. July 10. Acts 2: 1-12.

THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." —John 16: 13.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE PROMISE FULFILLED—THE HOLY SPIRIT BESTOWED.—1. *And when the day of Pentecost.* The second of the three great Jewish feasts, the Passover being the first, and the third the feast of Tabernacles, in which all the males were required to go up to Jerusalem (Deut. 16: 16). *Pentecost* is the Greek name of the feast, derived from *Pentecostos*, fiftieth; because it was kept on the fiftieth day after the Passover Sabbath. Among the Hebrews it was called the Day of First Fruits (Num. 28: 26); the Feast of Weeks, because seven weeks later than the Passover (Ex. 34: 22; Deut. 16: 10; Tobit 2: 1); and the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23: 16); *i. e.*, of Wheat Harvest (34: 22).

WHY THIS TOOK PLACE ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST. Because at this feast, being in the summer, greater numbers were present in Jerusalem than at any other season, from all parts of the world. "From a census taken in the time of Nero more than 2,700,000 were gathered at the Passover, and still greater numbers came to Pentecost." Thus the good gift would most easily be carried back to all parts of the world.

Was fully come. Soon after dawn, some time before nine o'clock, the third hour (2: 15). *They were all.* The whole 120 mentioned above. *With one accord in one place.* The best MSS. have *they* were all *together* in one place, as Rev. Ver. Doubtless in the upper room where the apostles abode. They were moved by a common impulse. They were "Many as the waves, but one as the sea." It was the Lord's day, the beginning of the keeping by the church of that day as the Sabbath.

2. *And suddenly.* Without any previous indication, and unexpectedly to the disciples. They were expecting the fulfilment of Christ's promise (chap. 1: 4, 8), but in what manner it would be fulfilled they did not know. *There came a sound from heaven.* As a sensible, outward expression of the great spiritual reality, so that there could be no mistake, no uncertainty. *As of a rushing mighty wind.* It is not said that there was any wind, but only *a sound as of a wind.* No "whirlwind shook the building." The Spirit's presence seems to have been signified and revealed by a sound that came with that presence into the house and filled it. The audible sign filling the room announced the Power represented by it as doing the same. The Greek word was used in both senses, *wind* and *spirit*, by our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3: 8). The very word *inspiration*, meaning in-breathing, embodies an analogous metaphor.

THE SYMBOL OF THE WIND. See John 3: 8. The wind is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. (1) It is invisible. (2) It is powerful. (3) It is secret, hidden in its action. (4) It is all-pervasive. The air penetrates even the hardest rocks. (5) It is the means of life.

It filled all the house. As if in token of the wide range over which the new spiritual power was to extend its working, even unto the whole church, which is the house of God (1 Tim. 3: 15), and to the uttermost parts of the earth. As a token, too, that it filled every part and faculty of the soul, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

3. *And there appeared; i. e.*, to the entire assembly. After the *audible* sign immediately follows the *visible*. *Cloven tongues like as of fire.* Observe, not tongues of fire, but tongues of a fiery, burning appearance, though without real heat. (See Rev. Ver. *tongues parting asunder*, margin, or *parting among them, or distributing themselves.*) The idea is not that each tongue of fire was divided or forked, but that the fiery appearance soon divided into separate tongues of flame, one for each person in the assembly. Plumptre likens it to a shower of fiery tongues. *And it sat upon each of them.* There appears to have been no discrimination between the apostles and the others, nor between the men and the women. The appearance was not a momentary flash; the influence, which it symbolized, was to be permanent. A lambent flame upon the head was believed by the Rabbins to be a token of Divine favor.

THE SYMBOL OF THE FLAME. Fire, shining in light, is mysterious in nature, ineffably bright and glorious, everywhere present, swift-winged, undefiled, and undefilable. Light is the source of life, of beauty, of manifested reality, of warmth, comfort, and joy, of health, and of power. It destroys all darkness; it unites in itself purity and clearness. Without it the world would be but a mass of coldness and death. This symbol of the Holy Spirit represented (1) the light which should shine into each mind, revealing the truth of God (John 14: 26; 16: 13). (2) The light which the disciples should impart to the world. Light cannot be hidden. If it ceases to shine, it ceases to exist. (3) The burning energy and zeal with which the disciples should be subdued. (4) The comfort, warmth, cheer, life, joy, blessing, which the Holy Spirit would impart. (5) The restless power with which the Spirit consumes errors, and burns up evil. It is a purifying, cleansing power.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT. 4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.* A study of all the passages in which this expression is found leads to the conclusion that "being filled with the Holy Spirit," or "being baptized in the Holy Spirit," implies a reception from the Spirit of extraordinary powers, in addition to ordinary sanctifying grace. That the Holy Spirit was not now for the first time bestowed upon men is plain from the fact that "The same language here employed is used respecting Elisabeth (Luke 1: 41), Zacharias (Luke 1: 67), and John the Baptist (Luke 1: 15); and the Old Testament repeatedly makes mention of the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the prophets and others." That which was peculiar in this event is that (1) now for the first time *all* were filled with the Holy Ghost, not merely the apostles; and (2) the influence was not occasional and transient, but abiding. (3) But the chief difference is the *abundance* and *power* with which the Holy Spirit is now given, thus characterizing the Gospel times as the dispensation of the Spirit. Formerly the gift was like the dew, now it is like the rain; formerly like the early dawning light, now like the full splendor and power of the day; formerly like the first early fruits, now like an abundant harvest.

WHAT WAS THE GIFT OF TONGUES? The disciples began to speak in various languages. (1) Was this speaking in various languages a gift bestowed on the disciples for their use afterwards, or was it a mere sign, their utterance being only as they were mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit? The latter seems certainly to have been the case, for (*a*) Peter makes no allusion to the things said; (*b*) there is no trace whatever of such a power (speaking in various languages) being possessed or exercised by the apostles; (*c*) there was no need of such a power, for the Greek, or at most the Greek and Latin, was the medium of communication throughout the known world; (*d*) Paul, who spoke with tongues, more than all (1 Cor. 14: 18), could not understand the dialect of Lycaonia (Acts 14: 11). I believe, therefore, the event related in our text to have been a sudden and powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which the disciples uttered, not of their own minds, but as mouthpieces of the Spirit, the praises of God in the various languages, hitherto, and possibly at the time itself, unknown to them. (2) How is this related to the speaking with tongues afterwards spoken of by St. Paul (1 Cor. 14)? I answer that they were one and the same thing.

5. *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem.* Both permanent residents and pilgrims who had come up to the feast are probably included. *Devout men.* Truly religious men, waiting for the appearing of the promised Messiah. *Out of every nation under heaven.* Only a very small portion of the Jewish people lived in Palestine during the times of our Lord and His Apostles; by far the largest number were natives of other lands, dwelling in large colonies or in small communities.

6. *Now when this was noised abroad.* Literally, "This sound having taken place." The Greek word here for sound is never used for "report" or "rumor." Most modern interpreters regard it as the sound made by the coming of the Spirit. One and another would be drawn in to hear; and they would soon report it over the city, so that, in fact, the occurrence would be 'noised abroad.' *The multitude came together.* The house may have been on one of the avenues to the temple, thronged at this time by a crowd of early worshippers. *And were confounded.* Either the individuals were perplexed, or, more probably, the whole assembly were thrown into confusion and excitement, discussing the meaning of the singular phenomenon. *Every man heard them* (was hearing, imperfect) *speak in his own language* (or dialect). The meaning is, not that all the disciples spoke all the dialects, but that each one spoke in some one, so that all were heard.

7. *Are not all these Galileans?* All the eleven apostles were inhabitants of Galilee, and by far the greater part of the disciples belonged to the same district of country—men most unlikely to be acquainted with foreign idioms.

8. *In our own tongue wherein we were born.* This remark excludes the possibility of Luke's meaning that the tongues were merely an ecstatic or impassioned style of discourse.

9, 10. *Parthians, Medes, Elamites.* In the Persian kingdom. It was among these peoples that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, settled the captive ten tribes. *Mesopotamia.* The country lying between the river Tigris and the river Euphrates. Here were captives from Israel (2 Kings 17: 6), and the Jewish captives were left by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24). *Judea.* Judæa appears in the catalogue of nations as the representative of "Aramaic," because St. Luke desired to enumerate all the languages spoken that day by the disciples on whom the Spirit had fallen. *Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia.* These were all countries within Asia Minor. By Asia in this verse, and everywhere else in the Acts, is meant the Roman province known as proconsular Asia. *Egypt.* The vast numbers of Jewish residents in Egypt had necessitated the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into a language they could understand. *The parts of Libya about Cyrene.* Libya lay to the west of Egypt. Cyrene was a large city of Libya, where the Jews amounted to a fourth part of the population. *Strangers from Rome.* These were, no doubt, a Latin-speaking people. Tacitus speaks of the great number of Jews dwelling in Rome as exciting the jealousy of the government. *Jews and proselytes.* This reference divides the various foreign hearers of the disciples' inspired words into two classes—Jews by birth, and proselyte converts from heathenism.

11. *Cretes.* Inhabitants of Crete, now called Candia, a large and well-known island in the Mediterranean Sea. *Arabians.* Large numbers of Jews were settled in Arabia, the great peninsula which stretches between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. *The wonderful works of God.* The disciples praised God in these different languages, thus offering to Him, on this birthday of the new creation, the homage of all nations, the hallelujah of the human race. It can hardly be doubted that the theme of the disciples was the wondrousness of divine mercy shown in the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Messiah.

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How the Balloons Ran Away with Alan.

When his mother tied on his hat, kissed him good-bye, and told him not to be gone long, Alan did not mean in the least to disobey her. He only meant to go a little way into the park, but then he did not know he was going to be run away with.

Just inside the park was a man with a great number of balloons, red, green, and blue, more than Alan had ever seen before. He ran along by the man, wishing with all his might that he had one, and wondering if he could sail away up to the skies in it.

"I wish I could!" he said to himself. "Oh, I wish I could!"

The balloons bobbed merrily up and down in the wind. A sudden gush carried off the man's hat, and in trying to catch it the cord fastened to the balloons slipped from his hand.

"Oh, oh, ketcha my balloons!" he cried; "somebody ketcha my balloons!"

Alan caught the cord as it went past him, and held it fast in his fat fingers. He was such a little fellow, and the wind blew so hard, that the balloons had no trouble in dragging him along with them. Away he ran, his toes scarcely touching the ground. The cord cut his fingers, but he held on, afraid to let go.

The balloon-man forgot his hat, and started after him, and the big policeman near the gate joined in the chase; the little boys stopped their play to help. Away they all ran after Alan and the balloons.

"Mamma, mamma, don't let me be run away with!" cried Alan. Up and down bobbed the balloons, as though they were laughing at him.

"Your mamma can't hear you," they seemed to say, "and we're going to carry you off to the clouds, just as you wished."

And if it had not been for a big bush near by, who knows what might have happened? But into the bush tumbled Alan, balloons and all. The big policeman picked him up, brushed him off, and carried him home in his arms. You can be sure that he is quite satisfied to walk along the earth now, and does not want to ride in a balloon.—*Louise T. Brooks, in Our Little Ones.*

A Comical Baby.

"If you want to see a funny sight, just come out to the barn with me, Arthur."

"What is it, Uncle James?"

"I'll wait and see if you can tell me, my boy."

Arthur Merril had come to his uncle's farm in the late train the night before, and had just finished his breakfast. He was a city boy, and a very close student, and the doctors said he needed rest, and where could he find a better place to get rest and fresh air and healthful exercise, than on his good Uncle James' farm?

"There, young man, did you ever see such a comical baby as that is?"

"A baby!" exclaimed Arthur. "It is a bird, uncle."

"Yes, but what kind of a bird? You can't tell me, so I will tell you. This is a crow baby."

"I think he is a comical baby, surely," said Arthur, and the boy laughed heartily to see the bird trying, with its ungainly hops and tottering gait, to get over the barn-floor. "He wears tight boots, uncle. He minces along like some of the girls we have in our school. I never could see what kind of philosophy there was in wearing tight shoes, just to make one's feet look smaller. But that is just like girls. Hallos, the little fellow has no tail to speak of, yet he is as black and big as an old crow."

Just then the baby crow began to cry out, "Ma, ma, ma!"

"He wants his ma," said Arthur, and in a moment the baby had found its wings and flown off to the fence, where Uncle James and Arthur watched his efforts to keep his balance. Two or three times he made a somersault, but finally he got into position, and began to call "Ma, ma, ma!"

Soon a large, black crow, with flapping wings, came and lighted on the fence rail by his side, and the baby put his beak close to his mother's, as if to kiss her. Then they flew off together, she stopping every few minutes, so the baby could rest.

"The little fellow strayed too far from the nest this morning," said Uncle James. "Next time he will have more wisdom. 'As wise as a crow,' is an old adage. The farmer has to invent all kinds of traps to keep the crows off the corn-field. They will pull out more corn in a few hours than five men can plant in a day. The old way was to put up scare crows in the field. The last one I made was the worst looking old vagabond I ever saw, and yet I saw a crow, light right on the old hat, and while he stood there as sentinel, a flock of crows swooped down on the field. After that I bought balls of twine, and put strings all over the field, but that did not work as well as the way I have for fixing them now. They hate the smell of tar, the crows do, and now I shell my corn and roll it in coal tar, and then plant it, and there is not a hill touched. You would laugh to see the wise old fellows walking on tip-toe over the field, smelling as they go along."

"I should think the tar would spoil the corn so it would not sprout," said Arthur.

"It would seem so, but it does not. It comes up just as well."

"Look out there!" called out Uncle James at that instant. "We're too late. The old mother has got one of my brood of chickens. I only cooped them yesterday. It is the fatted calf in honor of the return of that baby of hers, I suppose. This is the first time I have lost a chicken this year. I'll have to put an old red flag on the tree there, and the wind will keep it blowing, and that may keep them away. But I suppose the crow mother wanted her boy to have a good breakfast, and "broilers" are very high this time of year, so she concluded to help herself. It is wonderful what dumb creatures will do for their young; what risks they will run to protect and provide for them. There is a mother love in the birds, very beautiful to see, and when we are mowing in the meadow, and I find a ground bird's nest, I leave the grass around it, and tell my men not to disturb the home, and bring sorrow to the good mother who tendeth her brood so carefully."—*Selected.*

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