

"WHAT MEANETH THIS?"

A Study of Pentecost by Dr. Clyde W. Meredith, President of Taylor University.

In the account of Pentecost and the initial success of the early church there are three clauses which fall into a logical correlation. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." "What meaneth this?" "What shall we do?" The first clause covers the incident itself. It is basic. Whatever phenomena there was should be regarded as decidedly irrelevant to this fundamental fact. The early church was filled. The next clause, the first question, stems from the people in their observance of the event. It was a casual question resulting from a natural inquiry in the presence of something not naturally understood. The last clause, the second question, is traceable to the effects of Pentecost upon the recipients. It is more than a mere inquiry. It is an evidence of some desperation. Unless Pentecost is repeated neither of these questions will arise. Unless both of them arise Pentecost will be but an historical event observed by a powerless church through the avenues of its liturgy and its festival days.

God never meant to provide in grace what would be understood universally. The very means itself is quite apart from general acceptance. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." There is a likelihood that whatever God does for us and wherever he does it, there will be some who consider it foolish and question the evidence of a Divine work.

Let us note these three clauses in the order in which they appear in the narrative.

"They were all filled." Two approaches to an understanding of this passage might be made. We should consider the personnel; the "they" who were found there. Likewise we should consider the person; the Holy Spirit. A group were gathered who were thoroughly convinced of his Messiahship. His ability and power had first intrigued them but now it had assured them that he was the Son of God, their Saviour. Yielding their lives to him they were both obedient in tarrying and expectant as they waited. Faith in his word of promise was not difficult. The descent of the Spirit brought its surprising phenomena, but his coming to their waiting hearts was no surprise. Believers receiving the baptism with the Spirit may have the element of the unpredictable in their demonstrations, to be accounted for by their distinctive personalities; but receiving him in sanctifying grace is exclusively the object of one's seeking. The personnel of believers have suddenly become the recipients of a Person who took complete control of them. In the sense of his introducing a dispensation he will never repeat again what he was doing on that initial day in his relationship to the Church. In the matter of his taking complete control of the believers' hearts and lives, that is the very work he seeks to duplicate in every life that allows him.

So completely did he take control that circumstances beyond human power of precipitation were in evidence. Words not their own were emitted through the lips of the believers who were Spirit-filled. "They began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." A boldness took hold of them. In the presence of a group before whom they might have cowed we discover a freedom for expressing their newly found victory. Likewise there was an insight into truth not pre-

viously apprehended. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," said their spokesman; and with that Peter launched upon an Old Testament exposition which the angels of heaven had heretofore longed to understand. A heart condition was realized among them which was traceable to the complete dominance of this Person who now had taken control. Heart purity was a conscious possession. (See Acts 15:8-9). Carnal traits which had heretofore clamored for expression suddenly gave place to expressions of perfect love; love to God and man that was without an alloy. The result was of a telling effect. Whenever Pentecost is actually demonstrated it provokes inquiry that is more than casual.

We now conceive why there should arise a question of meaning—"What meaneth this?" When we have an important event, prophecy about it has significance. The world today is being asked to consider many current events in the light of interpretations of certain New Testament as well as Old Testament passages. Repeatedly the statement is made: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet." Make no mistake, however, about Peter's interpretation of this being that. The same Holy Spirit that had filled him had enlightened him. When conjectures do not actually constitute a fulfillment, as time and circumstances prove, then reproach follows. Not so with Peter's interpretation.

The prediction made in the "former days" found its fulfillment in "the last days." Pentecost coming this side of the cross falls into the category of last days as everything prior to the cross became a part of the former days. The word days is a part of that prediction which brings encouragement to all of us. Had it been day, its entire fulfillment would have been consummated on the day of Pentecost; but no, the entire era since then is to be blessed by his pouring out of his Spirit. Pentecost can be repeated, as often as there are believers who claim the provision and tarry for the blessing. Thank God! "In the last days I will pour out my Spirit . . ."

The prediction in its fulfillment furnished a preparation for the work Christ has set out to accomplish through his Church. Had he not enjoined them to wait for power? (Luke 24:49). Pentecost must certainly carry with it an enabling power to command more than respect, and admiration. It is actually a power which carries its impact upon others until conviction and honest inquiries result. It did on this day. Power is quite similar to the current that is conditioned by the nature of the conductor. Electricity will be conducted over a steel wire, but the resistance encountered results in a selection of a better conductor. Copper has much better conducting capacity, hence our homes and churches as well as our industries, have current brought to them over copper wire. We're told, however, that silver is an even better conductor; but of course its cost makes the use of silver prohibitive. What God does in preparing us as power units is to divest us of the alloy of sin so that his power may be assured of a good conductor. There is cleansing in Pentecost also; and there has to be, or power would be wasted! Peter's testimony in Acts 15:8-9, is to the effect that the disciples' preparation included a purification of their hearts. The testimony of Peter in replying to the question of meaning resulted in a further question from the people.

With the impact of Holy Spirit power upon them their hearts were pricked and they cried

out, "What shall we do?" Here is a question of motivation. Having heard the answers to their first question they discover themselves under a terrible conviction. God is using a Pentecost upon his people to prepare for an increased family of God. I know of no way to extend the family of God except as Pentecostal experiences are multiplied. We are all prone to smell good food and decide that food is what we need also. God allows his children to become show cases for the devil's crowd to observe and envy. Our joy, our peace, our assurance are actually the envy of those without him. Let us have Pentecost personally so that we may be used of the Lord to incite others to the Lord for his grace so freely given.—Pentecostal Herald.

INSEPARABLE

Alcohol is bad. It lowers the efficiency of young men and women. But alcohol has its associate in tobacco. How much of the degeneracy to ascribe to one and how much to the other, we may never be able to determine.

We are no longer dealing with tobacco-smoking as practiced formerly. A new addiction has taken place. It is that of smoke inhalation. It is a drug addiction and cultivates a cell-craving which calls for the stronger narcotics to satisfy. By permitting the use of tobacco by our boys and girls we are defeating our efforts to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages.

The smoker who gives up drink almost invariably goes back to it unless he also gives up his smoke. The nation that gives up drink is in danger of going back to it unless she, too, discards the smoke. There is only one safe way, and that is to bury them both. The attempt to separate them, having proved a failure in individual life, will prove a failure in national life.—Scientific American.

"The rule that governs my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or make Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must as a Christian turn away from it."—J. Wilbur Chapman.

WEDDINGS**Sutherland-Steeves**

At Moncton, N. B., Aug. 25th, Kathleen Marie Steeves, of Dover, N. B., was united in marriage to Russell Neil Sutherland, of Moncton, N. B. Rev. B. C. Cochrane performed the ceremony.

Steeves-Lounsbury

At Dobson Corner, N. B., Aug. 28th, Jean Marie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Miles Lounsbury, and Curtis Rommell, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Steeves, were joined in matrimony by Rev. B. C. Cochrane.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Phebe T. Grant died recently at her home in East Hodgdon, Maine, in her eightieth year. Mrs. Grant was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Smith. She was a devoted follower of the Lord and died in the faith. Immediate relatives surviving include two daughters, Mrs. Leslie Dickinson and Mrs. Eva Moran, of East Hodgdon, one brother and two sisters. Interment was made at East Hodgdon.