The S. S. Lessons for 1883 will be on Acts of the Apostles, and in order that the "Visitor" patrons may have the best possible help, we have decided to give them the expositions of that book by Dr. Hackett, edited by Dr. Hovey. These alone will be worth the subscription price. This will make the "Visitor" one of the best helps for our Sunday School teachers and scholars. We hope our S. S. workers will make this fact known and endeavor to get them to subscribe.

Sabbath School.

BIBLE LESSONS.

COMPILED FROM DR. HACKETT'S COMMENTARY, EDITED BY DR. HOVEY.

Lesson 3.—January 21. Acts 2: 37-47.

THE BELIEVING PEOPLE.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And they that gladly received his word were baptized.—Acts 2: 41.

37. Not all, but many, of those addressed, *were pierced in the heart.* The verb expresses forcibly the idea of pungent sorrow and alarm.—*What shall we do?* The answer to the question shows that it related to the way of escape from the consequences of their guilt.

38. *Upon the name of Jesus Christ*, as the foundation of the baptism—*i. e.* with an acknowledgment of him in that act as being what his name imports—to wit, the sinner's only hope, his Redeemer, Justifier, Lord, final Judge. *In order to the forgiveness of sins.* This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other. [Observe (1) that forgiveness of sins is here conditioned on repentance. Hence the doctrine that sinners are forgiven unconditionally, in view of the Saviour's propitiatory death, is an error. Though mercy is offered, the wrath of God abideth on him that believeth not. (See John 3:36.) If one may be said in a certain sense to have been forgiven from eternity in consideration of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, it was because he was looked upon as having exercised repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Out of Christ the sinner is unforgiven. (2) That repentance and the prescribed expression of it by baptism are closely united. Peter did not feel it necessary to provide for exceptional cases in this address to the people. He saw that the inward change and the ritual confession of it were so knit together by nature that it was enough for him to state them in their proper order and sequence. Repentance and the first-fruits of repentance were generally inseparable. The former could not be genuine without manifesting itself in the latter. And in the circumstances of that day a willingness to be baptized was no slight evidence of a new heart.—A. H.]

39. *To your children—unto your descendants* (see 13:33); not *your little ones*, with an appeal to v. 17, for the sons and daughters there are so far adult as to have visions and to prophesy.—*To all those afar off*—*i. e.* the distant nations or heathen. The expression was current among the Jews in that sense. *Whomsoever the Lord shall have called.* The expression imports that as many would secure a part in the promise as it should prove that the divine purpose had embraced.

40. *Save yourselves from this perverse* (Phil. 2:15) *generation*—*i. e.* from participation in their guilt and doom. (Comp. 1 Cor. 11:32; Gal. 1:4.)

41. *Therefore*—viz. in consequence of Peter's exhortation.—*They* (who were mentioned as penitent in v. 37) *having received his word*—viz. that in v. 38. *Souls*, persons. (See v. 43; 3:23, 7: 14; 27:37.) *Were baptized.* Not necessarily at once after the discourse, but naturally during the same day, if we unite the next clause (*the same day*); closely with this.

42. *Constantly applying themselves unto the teaching of the apostles.* They sought to know more and more of the gospel which they had embraced. *The fellowship*—*i. e.* the community, oneness of spirit and effort which bound the first Christians to each other; *the communion*, meals in common, which were followed by the Lord's Supper; *the sacrament* itself. *The breaking of the bread* denotes *the breaking of the bread* as performed at the Lord's Supper. (See 20:7, 11; 1 Cor. 10:16.) The expression itself may designate an ordinary meal, as in Luke 24: 35; but that here would be an unmeaning notice. There can be no doubt that the Eucharist at this period was preceded uniformly by a common repast, as was the case when the ordinance was instituted. Most scholars hold that this was the prevailing usage in the first centuries after Christ. We have traces of that practice in 1 Cor. 11: 20, and, in all probability, in v. 46, below. The *bread* only being mentioned here, the Roman Catholics appeal to this passage as proving that their custom of distributing but one element (the cup they withhold from the laity) is the apostolic one. It is a case, obviously, in which the leading act of the transaction gives name to the transaction itself.

43. *Unto every soul*, of those who heard of the events just related—viz. the descent of the Spirit, the miracle of tongues, the conversation of such a multitude. *Fear*, religious awe. (See Luke 1: 65.)—*Many*, in this position, belongs to both nouns. *Through the apostles*, as instruments, while the power was God's. [Two or three remarks are suggested by the statement that miracles were wrought *through the apostles.* (1) We are not to suppose that the divine energy was literary transmitted through them—*i. e.* through their wills, hands, handkerchiefs—to the persons restored by it; but we must infer from the narrative that the miracles were wrought in answer to their believing word, or at least were so connected with them as to ratify their authority as ambassadors of Christ (3:16; 4:10; 9:34, 40). (2) Nearly all the miracles wrought at the apostles' word were gracious. Evil spirits were cast out (5:16; 16:18; 19:12), the lame and the sick were healed (3:6-10; 14:8-13), and the dead were raised to life (9:36-40; 20:9-10). The only exceptions are the death of Ananias and Sapphira and the temporary blindness of Elymas. (3) The faith which led the apostles to ask for miracles must have been distinguished from that which they possessed in common with all true Christians. It was a special charism, a prophetic assurance as to the will of God.—A. H.]

44, 45. *Together*—*i. e.* they met daily in one place. *And they had all things common*, looked upon their possessions not as their own, but held them as subject to the use of the church as they were needed. The next words refer to the act of disposing of their property, and hence these describe the spirit which prompted the act. *Them*—*i. e.* the proceeds of the sale. *As any one from time to time had need.* As this clause qualifies *sold*, it shows that they did not alienate their property at once, but parted with it as occasion required.

46. *From houses to house*—*i. e.* in different houses, some in one, some in another, or perhaps in different houses successively, or *at home*, in private. Even in the latter case we may suppose that they met in separate parties at different places; not necessarily all in a single place at once. Both renderings are justifiable. The latter may be more exact in form, since it brings out more strongly an apparent contrast between the public worship and their more private services. *With simplicity of heart*, with childlike affection toward God and one another.

47. *Favor*, approbation (Luke 2: 52).—*Those who are saved*, or more strictly, *are becoming saved* from day to day, since the present tense denotes a process going on. (See 1 Cor. 1:18 and 2 Cor. 2:15. *Added* (imperf. with reference to *daily*) brings to view God's agency in that acceptance of the gospel which ensures salvation.

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