

BEREAN NOTES.

A.D. 33.] LESSON II.—Acts 2.1-11. [April 8. THE DAY OF PENTECOST. TOPIC: Our Saviour's Promise Fulfilled. GOLDEN TEXT: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Matt. 3. 11.

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—Acts 2. 1-11. TUESDAY—Lev. 23. 4-21. WEDNESDAY—Acts 20. 1-16. THURSDAY—Mark 16. 9-20. FRIDAY—John 14. 15-31. SATURDAY—John 15. 17-27. SUNDAY—John 16. 1-16.

How does this lesson show that—

- 1. Jesus is faithful to his promises? 2. The promises of Jesus very rich? 3. He who receives what Jesus promises needs nothing more?

DOCTRINE: The personality of the Holy Spirit. John 14. 26: 1 Cor. 2. 10. 11.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

We find "Our Saviour's promise fulfilled." Of Him John had said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. He had himself promised the gift of "power." So we find the disciples here on the Day of Pentecost, 1. Waiting for; 2. Filled with, and; 3. Speaking through the Holy Spirit. The DOCTRINE, "The personality of the Holy Spirit," may fitly claim our attention. So do you, with faith, "wait" till you are "filled" with the Spirit, and are able to "speak" through his mighty inspirations.

1. Waiting for the Holy Spirit. Our Lord on the day of his ascension, as we saw in the last lesson, directed his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. Returning from Mount Olivet to the city, they went into an upper room, probably the same in which the last passover was eaten, and which seems to have continued a Christian head-quarters. Their souls were filled "with great joy" through the blessing of their ascending Lord. Ten days elapsed before the pentecost. Luke (chap. 24. 53.) tells us that they were habitually at the temple, that is, at the morning and evening sacrifice; but the upper room was their place of supplication for the promised Comforter. Here it was that the Lord Jesus, in answer to their prayer, chose Matthias to be the twelfth apostle in the place of Judas, thus making their number full. Their great business was to wait, not in indolence or listlessness, but in earnest, united prayer for the baptism of the Spirit and the gift of power. They were in number "about one hundred and twenty," men and women together, an organized body, waiting and persistently beseeching.

1. DAY OF PENTECOST. The fiftieth day after the passover, so called from the Greek word signifying fiftieth. It was the second of the three great Jewish festivals, which all the males were required to attend. Josephus tells us that in his time large numbers of Jews came to it from every quarter. It commemorated the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, fifty days after the departure from Egypt, and thus had an historical reference. It was also called the feast of weeks, a festival of thanksgiving for the harvest, and thus had reference to their current life. Lev. 23. 15-22; Deut. 16. 9-12. The two great pentecosts, of Sinai and Jerusalem, ushered in two great dispensations. The whole congregation was represented at both. At the former, thunders, lightnings, smoke, fire, the voice of a trumpet, and the quaking mount, proved to all the presence of God. Exod. 19. 16-18. So at the latter, the things heard and seen were to show beyond a doubt that what was done was his work. THEY. The "about one hundred and twenty." ALL. None absent from his place on that Sunday morning. WITH ONE ACCORD. Together in person, and agreed in spirit, as in chap. 1. 14. ONE PLACE. The same place, the upper room. They would not be allowed a room by themselves at the temple. Here they were gathered for prayer.

2. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. SUDDENLY. With nothing foretold. Jesus selected the time, and they were prepared. FROM HEAVEN. Descending perpendicularly, indicating whence, and from whom it came. WIND. There was no wind, but only a SOUND, and the sound was AS OF A VIOLENT WIND in a tempest, and, yet more, this sound FILLED the whole HOUSE. Thus much for what was heard.

3. APPEARED. Next what was seen. At the same time with the sound, in the air above them were appearances LIKE AS OF FIRE, yet not literal fire, in shape as TONGUES, firm at the root but divided at the tip. They were descending rather than floating, until a tongue SAT UPON EACH head.

4. ALL. The whole hundred and twenty, the women as well as the apostles. FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST. This was their experience. THE SOUND was the Spirit descending; the FIRE was the Spirit making himself visible; and now the same Spirit had taken possession of their whole being. The Holy Spirit was in the world before. Gen. 6, 3; Psa. 51. 19. Prophets spoke through him. 2 Pet.

1. 21. John the Baptist and Zacharias were FILLED with him. Luke 1. 15. 67. But never had he come with such abundant and mighty influences as now. God's provisions of grace go hand in hand and well-proportioned. Just as the atoning sacrifice of Christ transcends those of the Mosaic law, does the gift of the Holy Spirit transcend his previous bestowment. He could not thus come till Jesus had ascended, for he was still with them in person, (John 7. 39.) and now Christ's first act after being enthroned on high is to send him with POWER. This was the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. The first effect was upon the souls of the disciples, purifying them as if with consuming fire, and filling them with heavenly love. The great miracle was in their hearts.

3. Speaking through the Holy Spirit. WITH OTHER TONGUES. In language they had never learned. This was the first visible effect of which the tongues on their heads were a symbol. It was not intended to be a permanent endowment.

5-8. DWELLING. PIOUS JEWS, born in foreign lands, and now residing at Jerusalem. Many pilgrims were there for the feast. Jews were scattered literally in almost all nations, through captivities and voluntary emigration. On hearing the SOUND, a crowd soon gathered from curiosity in the open court of the house, where they found the disciples, who were mostly GALILEANS, and whose dialect was a peculiar one, speaking the language of their own countries. The Elamite heard Persian, the Egyptian Coptic, the Roman Latin, and the Jerusalemite Aramaic. No wonder that they were CONFOUNDED, or that continued listening and thinking filled them with astonishment. It was really a divine sign to arrest their attention and produce this very mental state.

9-11. The countries from which these hearers came. PARTHIANS, MEDES, BETH-SHEANS, from parts of ancient Assyria, 2 Kings 18. 9-12. MESOPOTAMIA, 2 Kings 25. 8-11. ASIA. A part of Proconsular Asia. STRANGERS. Non-residents. ROME, A general term for Europe. WONDERFUL WORKS. Not in preaching, but in joyful rapturous utterances of their new emotions under the mighty baptism.

LESSONS. 1. The Holy Spirit is not a mere influence, or energy, or another name for the Father, but a Living Person, a thinking intelligent Being. He is "God with us," though unseen, as truly as Jesus was when on the earth. Matt. 1. 23; 28. 19. He speaks, Acts 13. 2; John 16. 13; is grieved, Eph. 4. 30; witnesses, Rom. 8. 16; intercedes, Rom. 8. 26. 27. 2. Now that Christ has given the promised Spirit, we ought to have him filling our souls, that we may be pure and holy, and full of love and joy. Let us see our need, and seek him. Rom. 5. 5; 8. 9. 15; Gal. 5. 22. 23; John 3. 5; Eph. 5. 18. 3. It is in answer to prayer that he comes to us. It is worth praying for, earnestly and long. Let us pray till we feel the need of the Spirit, and then pray till the precious baptism falls. Acts 1. 14; 4. 31; 8. 15; Luke 3. 21, 22; 11. 13.

SINGING IN CHINESE.

The enlightenment in the Chinese in religious matters, more especially in singing, is a work of extreme difficulty. Mr. Walker, a missionary at Foochow, writes to the Missionary Herald: "There is one very serious drawback to the use of music as a means of preaching the Gospel in China. In singing the word tones cannot be given, and this destroys the sense. For in Chinese, as a rule, every articulation sound represents at least two or three different words, while the more common, such as 'ting,' 'ling,' and 'sing,' often represent two or three dozen different words, and without the help of tones they have no meaning whatever. So when a hymn is sung to a Chinese audience who are not already familiar with it, it has scarcely more meaning than a foreigner just arrived. In fact I have sometimes just sung a foreign hymn to the audience, and then interpreted and expounded it, and it seemed to answer as well as a native hymn."

The celebrated John Randolph, in one of his letters to a young relative, says: "I know nothing I am so anxious you should acquire as the faculty of saying 'No.' You must expect unreasonable requests to be preferred to you every day of your life, and must endeavor to deny with as much facility and kindness as you acquiesce."

"Jennie June" relates this reminiscence of her life at Southbridge, Mass: "I had one enemy in Southbridge, to my knowledge, and that was an elderly deacon's wife. The way it came about was this: I was my nephew's teacher, as well as his brother's housekeeper, and on one occasion, when we had been invited to dine in state at her house, she called out Egebert in a high voice from her end of the table, 'Sonny, won't you have some pudding?' and to the horror and consternation of his papa and myself, the terrible infant replied, 'I guess if you lived at my house my aunt would make you say pudding.' I am sure that at that moment I wished grammar and correct pronunciation were with truth at the bottom of a well, but it was of no avail. Going home my reverend brother remarked, 'It will never be forgiven, Jennie,' and he proved to be right; it never was."

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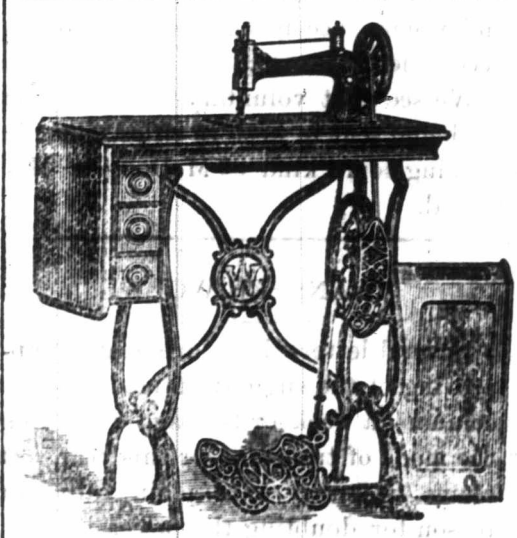
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