

The Quiet Hour.

The Promise of Power Fulfilled.

S. S. Lesson Jan. 12th; Acts 2: 1-11.

Golden Text 1:—Acts 2: 39. The promise is unto you and to your children.

BY REV. J. MCD. DUNCAN, B. D.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, v. 1. The date of this feast was reckoned from that of the Passover. The second feast depended upon the first. Without the Passover there could have been no Pentecost. The Passover represents the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Pentecost is associated with the bestowment of His great gift upon the church. We must therefore trace back all the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the church to Calvary. The blood of Jesus Christ is the price of the church's heritage.

They were all with one accord in one place, v. 1. There were no absentees in this congregation. Everyone was in his or her place. No one was kept away by threatening weather or shabby clothes, or trifling ailment or laziness. How it would cheer the heart of teachers and superintendent to see all the scholars present in the Sabbath School! How glad the minister would be to see all the children as well as the grown-up people at the public services in the church!

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, v. 2. By His life and death Jesus Christ introduced a new force into the history of the world. There is a picture called "The Dream of Pilate's Wife." It represents the woman standing on a balcony and looking down the vista of the coming ages. In the foreground is Christ bearing the rough, heavy wooden cross of the Romans. Behind Him are the apostles with their converts. Then comes the primitive church with the great fathers. They are followed by the early church with the majestic forms and splendid accoutrements of the crusaders. Last follows the modern church with its missionary heroes, while in the background are the shadowy figures of an innumerable multitude. A great company of angels look down upon the scene with intense interest, while over all is the cross, now transfigured into the brightness of a star, while the Saviour still bears the rough wooden reality in the foreground. The mightiest forces in the world are those which spring from the cross, and their triumphs will not cease until the sway of that cross becomes universal.

Cloven tongues like as of fire, v. 3. Fire is one of the active principles of nature. The intensity of God is set forth and illustrated by this active element of nature. In creation, in providence, in redemption, God is constantly energizing. Then, with fire we associate the idea of power. Fire is one of the mightiest of man's servants, enabling him to fashion the stubborn metals into shapes of utility and beauty, and to surpass the speed of the greyhound as he travels by land or sea. In it we see reflected the power of God who has opened up the floodgates of the deep and chained the waves, who has piled up the mountains, and scooped out the river-beds. Once more, we connect with fire the idea of purity. Nothing in nature is as pure as the ray of light or the flame of fire. It illustrates the holiness of

God, which on the one side is a love of the good, and on the other a hatred of the evil.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, v. 4. There is no aristocracy in the church of Christ. There is no favoritism in the bestowal of spiritual gifts. To be filled with the Holy Ghost is the privilege of every believer.

And they began to speak . . . as the Spirit gave them utterance, v. 4. It is to be remarked that in all the several cases recorded in the Acts of men being filled with the Holy Ghost, that they spoke suitably to the occasion. The immediate effect of being so filled was that men began to witness for Christ. The purpose of the Holy Ghost in coming into our hearts is that we shall witness. If we refuse to carry out this purpose, we cannot expect Him to dwell in us.

Every man heard them speak in his own language, v. 6. The message must be delivered to every man in "his own language" if it is to reach his heart and change his life. We must speak to children in the language of children and to men in the language of men. Spurgeon once said that to hear some men preach, one would think that the Lord had said "Feed my giraffes" or "Feed my cameleopards" instead of "Feed my lambs."

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, v. 21. Nothing is more remarkable in the address of Peter than the universality of his offer of salvation. A short time before, he and his fellow apostles had been speaking and thinking of the kingdom of God as an earthly kingdom confined to Israel (Acts 1: 6) and in which the twelve apostles should sit upon twelve thrones. Now he is proclaiming salvation to all men who shall call on the name of the Lord. We cannot explain such a change except by the miracle of Pentecost, which gave Peter and the rest not only new tongues to speak, but a new message to deliver.

The Home and the Church.

It is a quiet home in which all the large family are closely bound together. The parents are on very familiar terms with the children; their tones of voice are softened by love. There is life in abundance and no harsh restraint is put upon it, but there is obedience to every wish of the parents. We were guests over the Sabbath, and it was a delightful day to us. When we came down from our room some time before the hour for church going, we found the mother reading to the children and teaching them the Sabbath school lesson. In the afternoon the catechism was in order, and evidently it had been well studied. After this there was conversation and reading on the topic for the young people's meeting. Then there was the reading of the Scriptures by all, from the grandmother to the youngest child. After the evening service, as in the morning, there was family worship, with good, hearty singing of the Psalms. Such family life leads naturally to the Church, and will bear fruit in a noble Christian living in the world.—United Presbyterian.

A man who has doubts, is weakened in his own estimation; when he tells them to others he is weakened in the estimation of others.

THE CRIME OF THE CROSS.

BY REV. PRINCIPAL DYKES, D. D.

Israel's rejection of its Messiah was the fatal crisis in its history as a people. Looked at from an outside standpoint, it was certainly the most disappointing of all events in the history of religion. Here was a selected and guarded race, whose whole training for many centuries had been ordered with this very design, that it might furnish an appropriate soil and nidus for the appearance of the Divine Helper needed by mankind. Yet when he appears the religious chiefs and *elite* of this race not only misapprehend their expected deliverer, but bitterly resent His pretensions and cannot rest till they have compassed his death.

Disheartening as such a crime must be to one who cherishes a hope in the capabilities of human nature, we gain nothing by regarding it as utterly inexplicable, an atrocity too monstrous to be paralleled or even to be understood. In after centuries, when the rupture between the Synagogue and the Church had become complete and embittered, Christendom looked back on the cross of her Founder and Lord as on a hideous monstrosity, the diabolic wickedness of which it was impossible to exaggerate. Nothing could be too strong to say in denunciation of the crime of the crucifixion. The unspeakable shame of that Friday's deed not only overwhelmed the memory of all the actors in it, Roman or Jewish, with execrations and curses; it spread along the ages, stained the whole Jewish race, made successive generations infamous, and even justified, or palliated at least, the worst excesses of Gentile greed and cruelty against the children of Abraham. Some of the blackest pages in mediæval annals are those which tell how Christian princes and people ill-treated the hapless outcast Jew. This excuse covered everything: The blood of the murdered Son of God was on all his tribe.

In notable contrast to this fiendish Jew-baiting by later Christians is the restrained and humane language of the New Testament. The earliest disciples of Jesus, even in the heat of their first resentment or under the stress of acute controversy with their unbelieving countrymen, never allow themselves to use exaggerated language on the subject of His death. A "crooked generation" had, indeed, slain the righteous and holy One "by the hands of lawless men." "Betrayers and murders" of the Just One they had been but they had done it in their ignorance "because they knew Him not." Had they known better, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. After all, they were but the unconscious instruments of Providence to bring about what the council of God had determined and prophecy had foretold. Surely this milder tone was more in the spirit of the Divine Sufferer Himself, who prayed: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." Was it not also more true to the facts?

The anonymous author of that suggestive little book, "Pro Christo et Ecclesia," has called special attention to the fact—of which the significance is apt to escape many of us in spite of our familiarity with it—that the class which, sitting on judgment on the pretensions of Jesus, rejected them, counter-worked His popularity and ended by hounding Him to death as a deceiver of the people, was the most scrupulous, virtuous, and religious class in Palestine society, the "religious public" of His day. Not only so, but what is still more significant—it was precisely the fault of their religion that they so gravely and fatally misunderstood Him. They approached Him under preconceptions