

Lesson III.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Jan. 19, 1902

Acts 2: 37-47. Commit to memory vs. 37-39.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words he did he testify and exhort, saying, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Revised Version—1 Brethren; 2 And Peter said; 3 Ye; 4 Unto; 5 Your sins; 6 To you is the promise; 7 Unto him; 8 He testified and exhorted them; 9 Crooked; 10 Omit gladly; 11 Teaching; 12 The breaking of bread and the prayers; 13 They; 14 According as any; 15 Day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food; 16 To them day by day those that were being saved.

EXPLANATION

Connection—Peter continuing his discourse shows that the death and resurrection of Jesus had been foretold by David (vs. 22-31), and that the risen and exalted Christ, who had sent the Spirit, would yet triumph over all enemies.

37. When they had heard; the truths of Peter's sermon. Pricked in their hearts; felt the stings of a guilty conscience for rejecting Jesus. Said unto Peter. Their ridicule (v. 13) gives way to earnest inquiry. What shall we do? to be saved from sin. They were deeply affected by the sermon.

38, 39. Repent; the first requirement. Repenting is sorrow for, and a turning away from, sin. It is a change of conduct as well as a change of feeling. (See Matt. 3: 2; 4: 17.) Be baptized; to show that their repentance was genuine. It was a symbol, too, of the baptism of the Spirit. In (or into) the name, etc.; to signify adherence to and union with Jesus Christ in whom they believed. Remission; forgiveness (Matt. 26: 28). The gift of the Holy Ghost; to renew and sanctify their lives and give them power in the Lord's work. The promise. See verses 17-21 Unto you; a comforting assurance in their sorrow for rejecting Christ. (Matt. 27: 25.) Your children; thus renewing the covenant relation of the Old Testament. (Gen. 22: 17.) To all that are afar off; the whole heathen world. As many, etc. The Gospel invitation is for all who will receive it. (John 6: 40.)

40. He testified (Rev. Ver.); bore witness to the truth of what he preached. And exhorted; made a personal appeal to them. Save yourselves; by turning from sin and believing in Christ. It is God who saves; man only consents to being saved. Untoward generation; literally "crooked" generation. It was a corrupt age, guilty of all manner of wrong-doing.

41. They that gladly received, etc.; the repentant ones of v. 37. Were baptized; probably by pouring or sprinkling with water, a mode in keeping with the baptism of the Spirit (v. 17), and with Old Testament usage (Heb. 9: 13, 19). Three thousand; added to this little band, a great revival truly.

42-45. Stedfastly; perseveringly. Doctrine;

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

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teaching, instruction. And fellowship; sharing not only in the joys of each other's company, but in Christian charity—relieving the destitute. Breaking of bread; at the ordinary meal, or at the Lord's Supper, or at both. They lived in beautiful harmony, like members of the same family. Fear came, etc.; upon all outside the little company of believers. They were awed by the "wonders and signs," that is, the miracles of the apostles, which were performed to show the genuineness of their authority. Were together; living in the same place, but meeting frequently for social and religious purposes. All

things common; shared what they had with one another. Possessions and goods; lands, houses and other property. It was a voluntary, not a compulsory rule, (5: 3, 4), the impulse of love. Parted them; shared the proceeds with the needy.

46. In the temple. They came at regular hours for

worship. Breaking bread at home (Rev. Ver.). They met in private houses to partake of a social meal and also of the Lord's Supper, which generally followed the principal meal of the day. Their meat; their food. With gladness. True religion is sunshine, not gloom. Singleness of heart; with childlike simplicity. In this beautiful description, says a writer, "every feeling is excluded which could mar the picture of exquisite but child-like happiness."

47. Praising God; for the joy of fellowship and of Christian service. Having favor, etc. Persecution had not yet come. These were the palmy days of the Church. Those that were being saved (Rev. Ver.). Salvation is spoken of as past (Eph. 2: 8), future (Acts 15: 11), and present, as here.



Early Christian Seal