BEREAN NOTES.

A. D. 33.] LESSON IV.—Acts 2. 37-47. [April 23.]

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

TOPIC: Opening the Doors of the Church.

GOLDEN TEXT: Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Rom. 10. 13.

HOME READINGS.

MONDAY—Acts 2. 37-47.
TUESDAY—Luke 3. 1-9.
WEDNESDAY—Acts 16. 19-34.
THURSDAY—Matt. 16. 1-18.
FRIDAY—Luke 15. 1-10.
SATURDAY—Rom. 10. 1-13.
SUNDAY—Phil. 2. 1 11.

The church, whose organic form became complete in the election of Matthias, received its soul in the gift of the Holy Ghost, and was made a living spiritual body. It immediately *opened its doors* for the entrance of the world, and at once found a multitude ready for the call.

37. WHEN THEY HEARD. The argument of Peter was conclusive. Joel had foretold the outpouring of the Spirit; David had predicted the resurrection of Messiah; the apostles testified that, as a matter of fact, he had, to their personal knowledge, risen and ascended; and they ascribed their work to him, ver. 33. The only possible conclusion was that he whom they CRUCIFIED fifty days before was the now EXALTED LORD and true Messiah. PRICKED IN THEIR HEART. Compunction seized them as their terrible crime was set before them of having killed their long-looked for Messiah. And as he was now enthroned on high, they feared his wrath. The conviction was a sudden one, as if a sharp sword had pierced them. Peter's words were but the instrument of the Holy Spirit. John 16. 8, 9. MEN, BRETHREN. No longer "Galileans" and "filled with new wine." Conscience-smitten and afraid, they are anxious to know WHAT they must DO in order to be at peace with the glorified CHRIST.

38. REPENT. *Change your minds*, your feelings and purposes. Their opinions were already changed. Renounce your sins, especially your rejection of Christ, and turn to him as your King and Saviour. This is an act of the soul, very different from the Romish. *Do penance*, which is an external act. BE BAPTIZED. The first mention of Christian baptism. NAME OF JESUS CHRIST. In an open confession of faith in him as Saviour, and consecration to his service as Lord. REMISSION. *Forgiveness.* With a view to it, which is always granted to such a faith. Unwillingness to the open confession in baptism would shut the door to forgiveness. Luke 14. 26, 27, 33. Baptism does not wash away sin: it only pictures it. GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. He had already convicted them of sin, and the promise is that he will renew their hearts, and make them children of God. There is no evidence that these converts were endowed with the power of working miracles.

39. FOR. Ye shall receive this GIFT, *because* THE PROMISE of the Holy Spirit, as quoted in verse 17 from Joel, is UNTO YOU, Jews. Its first reference was to the Jewish people, to whom it was given. YOUR CHILDREN. For they are included in the prophecy. A Jew hearing Peter would certainly understand him as meaning the *little ones* of his own home, and not merely his posterity in general. They are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and are his from their birth; why should they not grow up with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as did John the Baptist? Infants were until then embraced in God's covenant, receiving circumcision as its token. So they are now, and are graciously entitled to baptism as its sign and seal. They who deny them this assume a grave responsibility. AFAR OFF. In residence. AS MANY AS. Whomsoever THE LORD shall CALL by his Gospel. So wide is the gracious provision. O! when shall this call be published throughout the world!

SAVE YOURSELVES. Rather, *be saved.* UNTOWARD, perverse, wicked. We have only an outline of what Peter said, but the burden of all his facts and exhortations was, *be saved* from these wicked people, their opinions, their sins, their influence, and their doom, as you certainly will be if you become *saved* by Christ. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," 2 Cor. 6. 17, is the constant cry of the Gospel. It is as if Christ had drawn a line and were bidding us come over from the crowd of the worldly and wicked and stand with him on his side of it.

RECEIVED. Of those who heard, many heartily accepted Peter's answer to the question, WHAT SHALL WE DO? They believed Jesus to be the Christ, and resolved to act out this belief in a full surrender of themselves to him as their Lord and Saviour. They at once put on the badge of discipleship, being BAPTIZED in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, (Matt. 28. 19.) the first that were ever thus baptized. They thus entered the opened doors of the church. The *mode* of this baptism seems very clear. It was the visible symbol of the heavenly baptism in the falling of the renewing Spirit upon their souls, and must have corresponded in its mode. The Spirit and fire descending upon the person, had that day showed how Christ baptises, and also how he meant his ministers to baptize. The element employed cannot affect the mode. THREE THOUSAND. A glorious work! Yet probably as many more refused. The apostles really meant to save souls, and the Holy Spirit spoke through them.

42. These converts knew only that Jesus was Christ, and needed further teaching. They therefore put themselves at once and perseveringly under the APOSTLES' instruction. FELLOWSHIP. Christian communion and intimacy. BREAKING OF BREAD. A simple meal taken together daily, the *love-feast*, followed by the Lord's Supper. PRAYERS. Socially. The infant Church had proved the power of prayer.

43. FEAR. There was, therefore, no outward opposition. An awe rested upon unbelievers. Within the brotherhood all was peace and love. ALL THINGS COMMON. Not in common stock, but such was their oneness of spirit that owners of property freely used it to meet the necessities of the poorer brethren. It was entirely voluntary and temporary, but it beautifully shows the power of love.

46, 47. DAILY. Attending the TEMPLE service, and then social prayer and praise together. No wonder that they were a happy company, and that THE LORD ADDED to their number DAILY. SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED. Literally, *those being saved.* Fresh cases of persons SAVED from sin occurred every day.

Lessons. 1. Thus was the visible church born, and its work begun of saving the world. How beautiful its love! How glorious its power! It should have gone on increasing till now. What mighty results would follow if all church-members and Sunday-school teachers were filled with the spirit of the Pentecost! Acts 1. 8; 4, 4, 32, 33; 5. 14; 11. 21; 1 Thess, 1. 5-8. 2. Let us be glad that the promise of the Holy Spirit is to our CHILDREN. Not one in our Sunday-schools or our families is left out. It is for them to-day. Some of them are baptized children, and Jesus claims them. May they every one to-day receive his grace! Isa. 44. 3; 54, 13; Jer. 31. 34; Mattt. 19. 13. 14; 1 John 2. 12. 3. Then, if any dislike this view, there is the duty to REPENT and CALL on the NAME OF THE LORD JESUS for his mercy. Let the teacher not yield this point. Matt. 4, 17; Heb. 3. 7. 8; Acts 17, 30; Rom. 10. 13.

EASTER.—The Southern Churchman says: "The mistake made by many persons in regard to Easter is, that it is calculated from the full moon of the almanacs, or the *real* full moon. Easter is never calculated in this way; always from the paschal, or ecclesiastical, full moon, which is an *imaginary* moon. This imaginary moon falls *after* the real full moon of April 8 by two or three days; hence Easter is on the first Sunday after the *(Ecclesiastical)* full moon which happens on or next after March 21. This year it is April 16, and is therefore Easter."

WRITTEN AT MY MOTHER'S GRAVE.

The trembling dew-drops fall
Upon the shutting flowers; like souls at rest,
The stars shine gloriously; and all
Save me, are blest.

Mother, I love thy grave!
The violet, with its blossoms blue and mild,
Waves o'er thy head; when shall it wave
Above thy child?

'Tis a sweet flower, yet must
Its bright leaves to the coming tempest bow;
Dear mother, 'tis thine emblem—dust
Is on thy brow.

And I could love to die,
To leave untasted life's dark, bitter streams—
By thee, as erst in childhood, lie,
And share thy dreams.

And must I linger here,
To stain the plumage of my sinless years,
And mourn the hopes to childhood dear,
With bitter tears?

Ay, must I linger here,
A lonely branch upon a withered tree,
Whose last pale leaf, untimely sere,
Went down with thee?

Oft from life's withered bower,
In still communion with the past, I turn
And muse on thee, the only flower
In Memory's urn.

And, when the evening pale,
Bows, like a mourner, on the dim blue wave,
I stray to hear the night winds wail
Around thy grave.

Where is thy spirit flown?
I gaze above—thy look is imaged there;
I listen—and thy gentle tone
Is on the air.

O, come, while here I press
My brow upon thy grave; and, in those mild
And thrilling tones of tenderness,
Bless, bless thy child!

—*George D. Prentice.*

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