

Jan. 14. }
1883. }

THE DESCENDING SPIRIT.

{ Acts 2
1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts 2: 4.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—After Christ ascended into heaven the disciples returned to Jerusalem, and continued together in prayer. They selected Matthias by lot to take the place of Judas the traitor among the apostles. They received the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

NOTES.—Pentecost, Greek word for "fiftieth," the second of the three great Jewish festivals or feasts; the Passover (in April) being the first, and the feast of Tabernacles (in October) the third; Pentecost was kept fifty days after the Passover (or in June); and was called also "feast of weeks" (Deut. xvi. 9, 10). Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers from the countries which were eastward of Palestine. Parthia was south of the Caspian Sea; Media lay east of Assyria and northwest of Persia; Elam or Susiana, of which Shushan was the capital, was north of the Persian Gulf, east of the Tigris river, and south of Media. Mesopotamia—*between the rivers*, that is, the land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, the home of Abraham (Acts vii. 2). Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, these were Roman provinces or proconsular divisions of Asia Minor, in the north-west corner of the continent of Asia; Cappadocia was in eastern central Asia Minor; Pontus was south of the Black Sea and north of Cappadocia; Asia was the most western division, comprising three or four smaller divisions of Asia Minor, its capital was Ephesus; Phrygia was east of and later was included in the province of Asia; Pamphylia was a central province, lying on the Mediterranean. The languages of these were probably dialects of the Greek and Syriac. Libya sometimes meant all Africa, but here, the country west of Egypt, of which Cyrene was the chief city, from whence came Simon who bore the cross of Jesus (Luke xxiii. 26). Cretes, dwellers on an island in the Mediterranean south of the Aegean Sea, and now called Candia. It has the classic Mt. Ida, and Virgil speaks of its 100 cities; Paul refers to the people as proverbially called liars (Tit. i. 12), a reputation they are still said to maintain. Arabians, dwellers in Arabia, a large country south and east of Palestine. The people from all these countries were Jews or Jewish proselytes, who had come to Jerusalem, either for the holy feasts or permanently to dwell in the city.

I. DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT.—Ver. 1.—Pentecost: so called from being fifty days after the Passover. Called "Feast of Weeks," in Deut. 16. One of the great Feasts (Deut. 16: 16). One accord: lovers of God like to be together; with one wish and desire.

Ver. 2, 3.—Sound: like a mighty rushing wind, came a sound, and tongues of fire seemed to be on each of them. And thus, with some thing of the *visible*, the Holy Spirit came to them. If one had been absent, Peter, or John, or Matthias, what a loss to him. Let us always be present where duty calls.

II. THE GIFT OF TONGUES.—Ver. 4.—Filled: lived, and moved, and spake, under the influence of that controlling Spirit. So may we have all the comfort, and joy, and love, and just as much of the *power* as God sees best.

Ver. 5.—Devout men: serious, religious men, from among the Jews in other lands.

Ver. 6.—The multitude came: the reason "devout men" are mentioned, is doubtless to let us understand that the multitude that heard Peter was largely composed of moral, good men, who were anxious to know the *truth*, whatever it was. Such are never disappointed.

Ver. 7.—Amazed: it seemed to them—as it was indeed—a miracle, that these "Galileans" should be able to speak

in all the dialects any of them spoke, in all the lands they came from.

Ver. 8.—Own tongues: the nations hear now, each in their own tongue. But these languages have to be learned. But whether by inspiration or study, Christ has been, and is being, preached in all languages.

Ver. 9-11.—Parthians: Wonderful works: not only was the speaking itself a wonderful thing, but the facts spoken of—the life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension, and atonement of Christ—were more wonderful still.

Ver. 12.—In doubt: not necessarily unbelief, but were wondering what all this would lead to?

Ver. 13.—Others: some, ill-disposed, and (perhaps not listening to the disciple who was talking in their own language, but to others they could not understand) began mocking. "Understanders" are not generally "mockers."

III. PETER'S FIRST SERMON.—Ver. 14.—Peter: it was a great distinction to be the preacher of the first Gospel sermon, but let not the man who is just coming down the pulpit steps from preaching the *last* Gospel, or the teacher, at this moment engaged with his class, think he has a less blessing.

Ver. 15.—Not drunken: it is often necessary solemnly to refute a very stupid or ridiculous slander. Nothing is unimportant that affects character and reputation. Drunkards are they "who tarry long at the wine." Men are not often drunk at nine in the morning. On their holy days, the Jews neither ate nor drank till after the morning sacrifice (nine o'clock). We see, then, that the disciples had *not* early. "Early will I seek Thee," says David. Early in the day; early in life—*now!*

Ver. 16.—This: outpourings like these were promised in the prophecies. Joel is quoted by Peter. The men to whom he spoke believed the prophecies (as far as they understood them), and therefore Peter appeals to the prophets. Paul—to the Athenians, who knew nothing of the prophets—appealed to their conviction of a great Supreme First Cause. Every man has some right conviction we can appeal to.

PRACTICAL TEACHINGS.

1. Pentecostal blessings come in answer to united, persevering prayer.
2. These may come suddenly and powerfully.
3. Cloven tongues as of fire rested on each disciple: each believer may now receive a special blessing.
4. The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be hid.
5. Those filled with the Spirit must speak of the mighty work of God.
6. Some will become serious inquirers; others sneer and mock at the truth.
7. The enemies of the Gospel are to be kindly treated and answered.

SEEK PENTECOSTAL BLESSINGS.

Jan. 21. }
1883. }

THE BELIEVING PEOPLE.

{ Acts 2.
37-47.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."—Acts 2: 41.

CONNECTED HISTORY.—Peter explained the wonderful gift of tongues; proclaimed Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, and 3,000 were added to the disciples.

NOTES.—Peter—*rock*. Peter was a fisherman of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee, a disciple of John the Baptist, then of Jesus, and an apostle; his name changed from Simon to