

SOME THOUGHTS ON “THE DAY OF PENTECOST.”

MANY dear children of God have read Acts 2 again and again, and this is well. How delightful is the unfolding of GRACE, and how definite are the allusions to other Scriptures. All the portions of God's one book are intertwined, and our hearts adore Him.

Amid the privilege of interpretation, let us never forget the glorious fact that it was in the very place where the Lord Jesus had just been crucified that God sent this message of mercy, and quickened 3000 souls. His condescending love shines forth: He did not leave the rebellious city untouched. Grace overflowed. And it is precious to see the victorious working of the Holy Spirit. In the very centre where Peter had denied his Lord, he now confessed quite openly. And men boldly took their place with the Rejected One, within a few weeks of the day when “He was numbered with the transgressors.” Our hearts rejoice, and we say, “What hath God wrought.”

The opening verse declares that this was the “being fulfilled” of the Day of Pentecost. There is no word for “come.” The Holy Spirit refers to the TYPE AS A PROPHECY. Passover prefigured Christ's death, the sheaf of Leviticus waved set forth His resurrection, and Pentecost (the feast without a sabbath) announced a NEW dispensation (Lev. 23. 16). In accord with this FULFILMENT we find

no Pentecost in Ezekiel 45.† Every arrangement of God is perfect.

And there is another allusion, namely to Genesis 11. How strangely solemn an OPPOSITE we find there. The tongues were divided to destroy an EVIL unity, and to show God's holy hatred of Babylon's iniquity. In Acts 2 we have grace at Jerusalem, and a new and precious unity, suggestive of another building (Matt. 16. 18), with living STONES (contrast the bricks of Gen. 11. 3 and its tower). Truly the heavenly company was far different from those who spoke of "heaven" in connexion with THEIR name (Gen. 11 .4, see Acts 2. 38). It is striking to notice in this connexion that the Jews regarded "120" as the number of "A CITY." God's contrast with Babylon is throughout Scripture.

The wondrous display of the Holy Spirit's work, awakening reverent awe, is deeply important in view of Acts 1. How had the apostles used their tongues? We thank God, for the most part, it seems, they had used them earnestly, in godly prayer. Yet this makes more remarkable the fact that their RECORDED words suggest human failure, even with good intentions. First, the question of ch. 1. 6, is tenderly rebuked by the Lord Jesus. Then the "standing up in the midst," (contrast "sit ye . . until" of Luke 24. 49), was followed by two inferences as to the man to be "then" chosen—(a) their own PRIMARY selecting, (b) the limitation to one who had "companied" WITH THEM. The Lord's twofold contrast in Paul is helpful. How

† We do find Passover, see Luke 22. 16.

often we, too, pray earnestly, but ask Him to choose from "two," whereas He may have a "THIRD." Hence, though Matthias was "numbered WITH the eleven apostles," we do not read Peter stood up with the eleven APOSTLES in 2. 14. On THIS background the Holy Spirit appeared in fiery tongues,—suggesting "fire" for precious dealing with leaven within (cf. the new meal offering of Pentecost, Leviticus 23, and contrast the Dove on Christ), and the necessary power to speak aright, because human tongues had failed (cf. Isaiah 6). This thought in their speaking with tongues is oft forgotten, but its loving principles are needed by writer and reader day by day.

Further, up till this time, God had used Hebrew, or a modification of it. But NONE of the New Testament Scriptures are in Hebrew! Thus there was a witness to JEWS when they heard, not Hebrew, but their own tongues wherein they were "BORN" (2. 8), laying stress on the geography of their birth, IN THE DISPERSION, instead of their Jewish UNITY. A striking illustration of Matthew 28. 19, and "all nations." Israel were now to be reached with the Gentiles. The thought of a fresh JEWISH dispensation seems Divinely set aside.

Isaiah 28. 11 is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14. 21, and thus gives a key in the light of verse 14. The tongues were a sign to UNBELIEVING ISRAEL. How many forget this, and 1 Corinthians 14. 22. O for discerning hearts. O for loving gratitude to our Heavenly Father. And, further, is there any evidence that any were saved by the speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost? Peter AFTER-

WARDS ministered, and they " that gladly received **HIS WORD**, were baptized " (verse 41). The 3000* are mentioned thus, and let not our study make us forget to praise God for this glorious work, though there is also joy over **ONE** sinner that repenteth.

In Acts it seems the wonders in heaven above were not granted. Yet they are equally part of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2. 19, 20). Are not these to precede immediately " the great and notable Day of the Lord ? " If **PART** of the one prophecy only belongs to the **END**, and that which is mentioned before was fulfilled at the **BEGINNING** of the dispensation, beloved children of God need to be careful lest they lightly assume the continuance of the tongues, then given as a witness to Israel. It is worthy of prayerful notice that whereas Matthew 28. 18-20 emphasizes the Lord's commands and His presence " **UNTO THE END OF THE AGE** " (cf. 1 Cor. 11. 26), Mark omits such words. May we have grace, and humility to accept all God's teaching, and, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and led by Him, along the way of truth, see more fully, beloved friends, the **HUMBLING** nature of His great work on the Day of Pentecost. We ever **NEED HUMBLING**. An empty, earthen vessel, broken, if need be, clean and ready for the Lord is so acceptable to Him.

* Contrasted with the 3000 in Exodus 32. 28, when the Law was given.
