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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson III.—First Quarter, For Jan. 17, 1909.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Acts ii, 22-27. Memory Verses 32, 33—Golden Text, Acts ii, 42—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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I find continual comfort in the assurance that in matters concerning nations and individuals (Job xxxiv, 29) God is working all things after the counsel of His own will and according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. i, 11; iii, 11). Whatever wicked men may plan under the counsel of their leader, the devil, and be permitted by God to carry out, their counsel shall in due time come to naught, while the counsel of the Lord shall stand forever and the thoughts of His heart to all generations (Ps. xxxiii, 10, 11). In the opening chapters of this book we find it repeatedly stated that the cruel treatment received by our Lord Jesus at the hands of wicked men was all foreseen by God and foretold by Him through the prophets (ii, 23; iii, 18; iv, 28). God's foreknowledge does not, however, in the least degree excuse or palliate the guilt of the wicked. The decrees of God and the free will of man stand as two heaven high pillars and puny mortals may not attempt to reconcile them.

The one thing that all may do who have heard the good news of the grace of God is that which 3,000 did under the preaching of Peter on the day of which our lesson tells, and that was to believe on or receive the Lord Jesus Christ as having suffered for sins the just for the unjust and risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, there to wait till His body is gathered from all nations, that He may come again to restore all things of which the prophets have spoken (iii, 21).

All such redeemed ones are expected to become Spirit filled people and bear such testimony to the risen Christ throughout the world that He may gather to Himself the company whose song we hear in Rev. v, 9, 10, who shall reign with Him on the earth when the kingdom comes. That kingdom will have redeemed Israel for its earthly center with Jesus Christ, as Son of David, on David's throne at Jerusalem, according to verses 30, 31 and Luke i, 32, 33. Jerusalem shall then be the Throne of the Lord and all nations gathered unto it to the name of the Lord of Jerusalem (Jer. iii, 17). While that kingdom is postponed because of Israel's rejection of her Messiah a new thing is in the unfolding of the eternal purpose of God is taking place, which was specially revealed for the first time to the Apostle Paul, as may be seen by a careful perusal of Eph. iii, 1-11. We will not reach the record of the first gathering of the gentiles into this one body, the church, till we come to chapter x, but we have in this and the following lesson the Jewish beginning of the church, for the 3,000 of verse 41 and the 5,000 of chapter iv, 4, were all Jews.

Our Lord's word to the woman of Samaria in John iv, 22, "Salvation is of the Jews," does not seem to mean much to the majority of Christians today, but it is the heart of the eternal purpose of God. Spirit filled people will use the Spirit's own book, the Bible, which is forever settled in heaven (Ps. cxix, 89), even though they may seem by so doing to be a drunken crowd in the eyes of many (verse 12), for the wisdom of God is foolishness in the eyes of the wisdom of the world. The prophets were the Lord's messengers with the Lord's message, going where He sent them and saying what He told them (Eg. i, 13; Jer. i, 7). Even our Lord Jesus Christ said only what the Father told Him to say, and His words and works were all those of the Father in and through Him (John xii, 49, 50; xiv, 10). Spirit filled Peter, on this occasion, just rehearses from the Scriptures that which the Spirit had written concerning the Lord Jesus, whom He is sent to glorify and take of His things and show them unto us (John xvi, 13, 14). In last week's study we saw him quoting from the prophecy of Joel; in this lesson we see him in verses 22, 23, summarizing Ps. xxii and Isa. liii concerning the sufferings of Christ, and he probably had in mind such words as Ps. xxxiii, 10, 11, concerning the counsel of God. In verses 24 to 28 he quotes from Ps. xvi concerning the resurrection of Jesus. In verse 30 he refers to God's promise to David to give him an immortal Son, risen from the dead, to sit on His throne forever (ii Sam. vii, 12, 13; i Chron. xvii, 11-14). In verses 34, 35, he quotes from Ps. cx, the great Melchisedek psalm, and assures them that Jesus, whom they had crucified, whom God raised from the dead, is the one of whom all these Scriptures tell and who, being now glorified by the Father, had sent down the Holy Spirit to convince them of their sin that they might be forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He entreated them to save themselves from a crooked generation, assuring them that the Lord was calling them and ready to receive them notwithstanding all that they had done. They received the message as the word of God to their hearts (Acts ii, 36, 37), and some there were 3,000 redeemed people, who continued to praise and pray and study and fellowship, and the Lord added daily to their number.

Then the Spirit honored His word and the Lord wrought.

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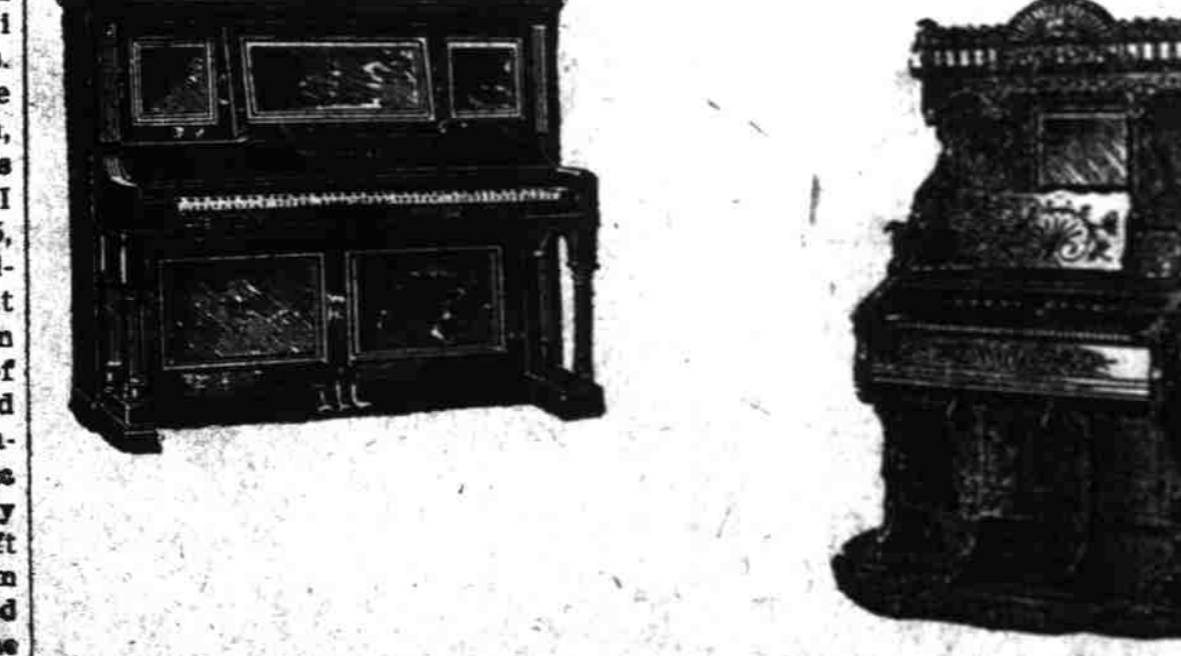
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