

**Chapter 96**

**A rich Pentecostal Blessing**

**Acts 1 v 15-36**

The disciples of the Lord Jesus are daily assembled in Jerusalem. They have seen how their Saviour was taken up into heaven. They have heard His words. Had He not commanded that they were to remain in the city, until the Holy Ghost should be poured out upon them?

They are now waiting for the fulfilment of that promise. The fulfilment would come, but when it would take place they did not know.

In love and peace they are gathered together. Only the eleven disciples? ... No indeed, just read what the Bible tells us: "The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty."

Who were all these people? ... Well, among them were the women, and Mary the Mother of the Lord. But do you know who were also present there? ... The brethren of the Lord Jesus (Acts 1 v 14).

We have already told you that some writers say that they were actually His brothers, but that others think that they were relations. More probably they were in fact the brothers of the Lord Jesus, since it is written that Jesus was the FIRST born Son of Mary. It is nowhere written that He was the ONLY Son. Whatever the case may be, His brethren are now among the company of praying people gathered in Jerusalem.

And now you must just read what it says in John 7 v 5. We read there: "For neither did His

brethren believe in Him."

At that time then they were still at enmity with the Lord Jesus. And now they are daily with the disciples and await with them the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost. Can you see that a great change has taken place in them? The brethren, that is, the brothers, of the Lord Jesus have also been converted to God. From unbelievers they have become believers. Yet another evidence of the power of God's grace.

At this time Peter stands up one day. He has something to say. He reminds them that before Jesus' death there had been twelve apostles, but one of them no longer lives. He refers to Judas Iscariot, the traitor. Judas had hanged himself because he could no longer bear the remorse for his base treachery. He had fallen headlong and burst asunder upon the rocks. Peter now suggests that another apostle be chosen in place of Judas to complete the number once more.

They all agree to this. They mention the names of two men who had also been with Jesus all the time. The name of one is Joseph and the other Matthias. Then they beg the Lord to show which of the two He had chosen as the twelfth apostle. With hearts full of prayer to God they cast lots and ... Matthias is indicated. He then shall fill the vacant place. Now the disciples are once more up to their full number.

You can read this story in Acts chapter 1.

# THE BIBLE HISTORY TOLD TO OUR CHILDREN

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### Acts 2 vv 1-13

Thus the day of the feast of Pentecost quickly approaches. This was one of the three great feasts. For centuries the Jews had celebrated the feast of Pentecost, year in, year out. Then they remembered how God Himself had once given the Law on Mount Sinai. At that feast too, the first bread, baked from the produce of the new harvest, was brought into the temple. That is why the feast of Pentecost was also named "the feast of the first fruits".

Now also, just as at Passover time, tens of thousands of Jews are gathered at Jerusalem. Not only Jews from the land of Canaan, but also the Jews who lived in "dispersion". They lived then in the lands round about Palestine. Yes, there were at that time many heathens who had embraced the Jewish religion. They were called "proselytes".

On this feast of Pentecost too, thousands of worshippers make their way in the early hours of the morning to the house of God. They want to be present when the morning sacrifice is offered. That always took place at the third hour, which would be nine o'clock in the morning.

The disciples of the Lord and the women also go up to God's house. In one of the rooms of the outer court they sit for a short while together. Oh, their souls long for the fulfilment of that promise which Jesus had made to them. It is now ten days since their Saviour ascended into heaven, and they are still waiting.

The forecourt is filled with a waiting multitude. Thousands of Jews and proselytes are assembled there. They are waiting for the offering

of the morning sacrifice.

Suddenly the murmur of the many voices stops, and it becomes breathlessly quiet. They all lift their heads and listen. An anxious, alarmed expression is seen in many eyes.

But, why? ... Oh, just listen. They can all hear, clearly and plainly, a great noise. What is that? ... Has the wind got up so suddenly? ... No, it's not that. The branches of the trees are not waving to and fro with a creak. Outside all is dead calm. And yet they hear a noise as of a rushing mighty wind. For those thousands of temple visitors it is a mystery as to whence that sound comes.

"Look over there!" comes the cry.

All eyes are directed towards the assembly of a hundred and twenty people who are sitting there, a little to one side, in one of the outer buildings of God's house. They all stare in the utmost amazement at that simple company.

For ... Oh, just look! They see upon the heads of the disciples, flames of fire which point upwards. In God's Word it says: "Cloven tongues like as of fire." No, they were not flames, but they were cloven tongues LIKE AS of fire.

But, still more takes place. The sound as of a mighty rushing wind and the tongues as of fire, are only the outward, visible signs.

We read however in the Word of the Lord, that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

The followers of Jesus of Nazareth have sprung to their feet and they begin to speak. They begin to speak in foreign tongues.

There stands an Egyptian. He listens amazed. However can that be? ... He hears someone speaking in his own language. Over there stands an Arab. He hears yet another

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speaking in the language which he understands. And so we could go on. Just read that portion of Acts 2 vv 9-11. Do so, mind! All these men, from those different nations, hear the simple disciples speaking in their own mother tongue. Their wonderment is the greater because the disciples of Jesus are not educated men, oh no, they are only simple unlearned Galileans.

But what is being spoken about? ... about cycle rides and country rambles? ... about races and prizes? ... about their own honour and fame? ... by no means! They are speaking about the wonderful works of God in grace!

It has become breathlessly quiet. All those thousands of worshippers listen with bated breath. That little company stands there with faces beaming with happiness. Heavenly joy fills their souls. Oh, they cannot keep silent now that the Holy Ghost fills their souls. They tell the wonderful works of God.

When, at school, a lot of children talk at the same time, then nobody can understand what they are saying. Here too different people are speaking at the same time, but here no confusion results. That is wonderful.

The multitude look one upon the other. An oppressive feeling comes into their hearts, in the Bible we read that they were in doubt.

"What meaneth this?" they ask. They are deeply impressed.

But listen, there all at once a mocking laugh is heard. Some Jews answer scornfully: "These men are full of new wine." They mean "These fellows are drunk! Can't you hear that they are speaking the language of drunken men?"

How terrible! These mockers have the effrontery to abuse the work of the Spirit as the work of a drunken man. They did indeed know

better, boys and girls, for this was no drunken man's language. And what about those cloven tongues as of fire, then? ... And the sound as of a rushing mighty wind? ... No, this was no work of the devil. They knew it too. All this made upon them an enormous impression. But they thrust this impression to one side, and allow themselves to be used by the devil, in order to ridicule the work of God.

We have once already pointed out to you in Chapter 30, that it is very dangerous to ridicule the holiest of all, intentionally and against better judgment. That mockery of the Spirit's work has shut the door of grace for many a one, here on earth, already. All sins can be forgiven through the grace of God, but the sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven. For those who commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, the time of grace is already past, even here on earth.

The prince of darkness is always trying to destroy the work of God. He tries to do that here too. The deep impression which has now been made, must be removed. Shall the devil then succeed? ...

### Acts 2 vv 14-17

"Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem" speaks a clear and penetrating voice all at once.

Now, who says that? ... Just look. There stands Peter and he is speaking to the assembled multitude. When he hears that awful, blaspheming mockery, he cannot bear it. He raises his voice and warns the Jewish throng not to listen to those mockers.

"No," he says indignantly, "these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third

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hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel: 'and in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh'."

He pauses and the mocking laughter is silenced.

Again Peter's voice resounds through the open forecourt. No, now he is not afraid. Now he does not deny his Master. On the contrary! He preaches unto them Jesus of Nazareth. He reminds them of the many signs and great wonders which the Lord Jesus has done. He reminds the listening crowd of their fearful sin, when a few weeks before they had handed over the righteous, innocent Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. They had then demanded His death, even the death of the cross.

"But", says Peter, "this Jesus whom ye have slain, God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. Of this we all are witnesses."

I cannot deal here with the whole of Peter's sermon, boys and girls, for that is still too difficult for you. I have told you some of it. Try to remember this.

The words of Peter make an enormous impression. Many of the Jews are pricked in their hearts. God's Spirit works powerfully in the hearts of hundreds of Jews. They have their sins discovered to them. Oh, now they see of what a great sin they have made themselves guilty. Many bow their heads in shame.

"What shall we do?"

Thus comes their anxious enquiry to Peter and the other apostles. They feel they can never make amends for the evil they have done. They have earned for themselves the judgment of God.

But Peter has yet another message for them. No, he does not just point out to them their imponderable guilt and send them away with that, but he shows them also the grace of God. Certainly their sin is great, their guilt is heavy, but it is just for guilty sinners that the Lord Jesus has shed His blood. He points to the Saviour. He points out to them the hope of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus. Solemnly and earnestly he exhorts them no longer to reject this Jesus, but to embrace Him as their Surety and Saviour. He cries to them: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

This solemn sermon is richly blessed by God. A multitude of three thousand people believe in the Lord Jesus. God bestows on them true and saving faith. Through that faith they embrace the Redeemer as their debt paying Surety.

Probably many of them a few weeks before had joined the cry: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And now, through grace, they know for certain that this same Jesus had shed His blood for them also. They are enabled to believe, that their sins too are reconciled through the Saviour's death.

Are all those people converted to God? ... Alas no! To them all, indeed, THE SAME message is brought. Peter indeed speaks these words to all who are present. He shows to them all the way of forgiveness. To all of them he points out the cleansing blood of the Saviour.

But only those in whose hearts, through the work of the Holy Spirit, ROOM is made for the Lord Jesus, only those, I say, embrace Him through faith. Oh, children, remember and never forget this, without the quickening work of the Holy Spirit no-one will ever, ever know the Lord

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Jesus savingly. We must from DEATH be made ALIVE, and that is so often alas forgotten.

No, not all the hearers are converted. There are many who do not accept the Messiah. They harden their hearts and depart. How terrible that was, for the full RESPONSIBILITY lies at their own door. And one day, in the Day of days, that solemn sermon will witness against them. No, then they will not be able to say: "Peter was not speaking to me" or "We did not know." On the contrary, they were obliged to listen to that earnest call. But they refused to humble themselves before God and to plead humbly with Him for forgiveness.

You see, boys and girls, thus was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

You too celebrate every year Whitsuntide (Pentecost). But how is that feast celebrated? ... Has there in your hearts ever been a longing for the work of the Holy Spirit to be manifest? ... He only can make your dead heart alive. Do you covet that? ... How often those days are spent in sport and vanity. How shamefully those days are misused in these times!

And yet that Spirit is still the same! By means of that one sermon of Peter's, three thousand people were converted to God. And now? ... How few are nowadays converted. Oh, may it only touch your hearts. May there arise in your hearts a cry for mercy, a cry for grace, a cry for the in-dwelling of the Spirit.

Peter said to the great multitude: "Repent!" but every Sunday God's servants bring to you the same message, "Repentance" is still preached. May you seek the Lord in your youth.

The feast of Pentecost was for the Jews the feast of first fruits. Truly, on the day of Pentecost three thousand "first fruits" were added unto such as should be saved.