

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

JAN. 10. – ACTS 2:1-13.

"They were all filled with the holy spirit." – Acts 2:4.

OUR last lesson contained a promise of the holy spirit, the "Comforter," and instructed the apostles and believing brethren to tarry at Jerusalem until thus endued with power from on high for the work of the ministry, in harmony with the Lord's commission, to preach the gospel to every creature. In that lesson we noted the methods adopted by our Lord to prove to the disciples his resurrection and the change from human to spirit nature, and his ascension to the Father, in harmony with his declaration that he would go into a far country to be invested with his kingly authority, and would come again and receive his faithful ones unto himself. Some have endeavored to make of this Pentecostal outpouring of the holy spirit upon the Church a fulfilment of the Lord's promise to "come again." But nothing could be further from the meaning of the Lord's words and from the expectations of the apostles, as can be readily proved. While telling them that he would come again and receive them unto himself, he also told them that in the interim of his absence they were to preach the gospel to all the world, for a witness, before the end of this age. He assured them that during this interim of his absence they would suffer persecution and be despised of all men for his sake; that they were incompetent for so great a work, and therefore must not begin it until they would [R2088 : page 12] be endued "with power from on high" – the promise of the Father, the evidence of the Father's acceptance, the foretaste of his blessing, which shall be completed and fulfilled on the glorification of the Church in the Kingdom. (Rom. 8:23.) The Lord did not represent that the holy spirit would be himself, but merely a power or influence emanating from the Father and from himself. – Acts 1:4,5.

None of the apostles had the idea that the holy spirit was the Lord, nor that its outpouring represented the second advent. Quite to the contrary, they spoke of this outpouring as being only the "earnest" or "first fruits" of the spirit, a divine blessing upon the Church. The Apostle Peter in preaching under the power of the holy spirit, after declaring the death and resurrection of Christ, said, "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy spirit, he hath shed forth *this*, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:33.) There is no intimation here that "*this*" outpouring of the spirit was the second coming of the Lord; but to the contrary it is stated that the Lord at the time was highly exalted, with the Father, and had shed forth this spirit or power upon his Church; having received authority of the Father to shed it forth, by virtue of the atonement which he had accomplished by the sacrifice of himself.

There could not be better proof that the apostles did not understand the outpouring of the holy spirit to be the second coming of Christ, the establishment of his Kingdom, etc., than the fact that speaking under the influence of this miraculous power, they continually and repeatedly exhorted the Church to wait for and to expect still greater blessings at the Lord's return, assuring them that what they had already received was but a foretaste. Not merely one of the apostles so points forward to the second coming of Christ, but all of them without exception – Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John in their most earnest exhortations point to the second advent of the Lord as the greatest hope and inspiration for faith, courage, patient endurance and hope, for the things that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Those expositors of Scripture, therefore, who endeavor to turn the attention of God's people from the hopes set before us in the gospel, of the "glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," so as to induce them to believe that our Lord's second advent took place at Pentecost, are guilty of gross perversion of the Word of God. And from the abundance of the testimony against such a view and the absence of all testimony in its

favor, it seems difficult to see how their course can be anything short of a wilful "wresting of the Scriptures."

And in view of the fact that some of those who thus pervert the divine Word, so as to make its testimony of none effect through their traditions and false theories, are seemingly earnest people, it behooves all who would not be blinded to rid their minds of everything in the way of prejudice in coming to the Word of the Lord; that we may see light in his light and not confuse ourselves by our own or other men's darkness. How strange it would be indeed for the Apostle John in his great vision (Revelation), nearly sixty years after this Pentecostal blessing, to be shown and to be commanded to record for our information, symbolic pictures of the events of this Gospel age, and of its close, and of the second coming of Christ, and of the Millennial judgment, and of the final destruction of Satan and evil, and of the introduction of the everlasting Kingdom beyond – how strange and inconsistent all this would be if our Lord's second advent took place sixty years before, and the beloved disciple John, although blessed by the holy spirit and especially inspired to be an instructor of the Church, were left in total ignorance of the truth and inspired to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus." Come quickly!

(2) It is not said that the holy spirit came as a rushing wind, but merely that a sound came, as of a rushing mighty wind. A wind is an *invisible power*, and so is the holy spirit an *invisible power*. The choice, therefore, of a sound of wind as a symbol of the holy spirit, and as a means for drawing the attention of the apostles to the wonderful blessing coming upon them, was an apt one. We cannot think what would have better represented the invisible power with which they were imbued. The word "spirit" is from the very same Greek and Hebrew words as the words "breath" and "wind:" not that the holy spirit is merely breath or wind, but that nothing else so well symbolizes God's *invisible power*.

(3-11) The cloven tongues, that is, the split or parted tongues of light, like fire, which sat upon each of them, were also evidently symbolic, representing illumination, – the intelligence which comes through the holy spirit. The holy spirit might have come upon them with equal power without either the sound of rushing wind or the tongues of light; but these accessories were no doubt intended to help the Church to grasp the situation, to expect and to appreciate the blessing then conferred and to make the matter the more notable and satisfactory to them.

The number of believers who were together in the upper room at the time of the outpouring of the holy spirit was about one hundred and twenty. They were all immersed in the holy spirit, because the holy spirit filled the house. But whether or not the tongues of light rested upon any others than the apostles we cannot surely know. It may have rested upon them only, [R2088 : page 13] by way of distinguishing them as mouthpieces of the holy spirit. Certain it is that in the subsequent preaching with various tongues there seems good reason for supposing that the apostles only preached; because it was said of the speakers, "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" We cannot suppose that the entire company of one hundred and twenty were all Galileans. It is quite probable, indeed, that the majority of them were Judeans; but the eleven apostles were all from Galilee, and hence it is probable that they alone did the preaching; and probably also that they alone had the manifestations of the tongues of light in the upper room.

The number of Israelites, otherwise called Jews, residing in the surrounding nations "dispersed amongst [R2089 : page 13] the Gentiles," where they were engaged in business, was much greater than the number who permanently resided in Palestine. Yet there was amongst them a reverence for the Holy Land and the Law; and the latter commanded an assembling, at least representatively, at the Passover or at Pentecost. In consequence great numbers came to Jerusalem from the surrounding countries as representatives of

families and communities to bear tithes and to offer prayers and sacrifices at the temple, on these occasions. "From a census taken in the time of Nero, more than 2,700,000 were gathered at the Passover, and still greater numbers came to Pentecost." The larger numbers in attendance at Pentecost was doubtless because this feast came in the Summer. These gathered multitudes were not drawn from idle curiosity, but were "devout men."

The countries from which many of them came are mentioned, and include a radius of several hundred miles and the most enlightened portions of the world at that time. Although Greek was the ruling language of that period in official matters and amongst the learned, the majority of the people evidently understood little more than their native tongues and dialects, nor did the character of the worship at Jerusalem make it necessary that they should be very fluent in one language. They came together to worship and to present offerings rather than to hear preaching. Yet doubtless the Lord's arrangement through Moses with reference to this feast had in view the very opportunities for publishing the good tidings recorded in this lesson. The miracle of speaking various tongues was appreciated by some at least of these representatives of true religion throughout the world. And the testimony of the apostles heard there was no doubt carried to every quarter; if not in sufficient power to convert to Christ, at least in sufficient measure to prepare the way in some degree for the message which was to be carried throughout the world by the apostles and believers in general who subsequently, as a result of persecution in Jerusalem, were scattered also and "went everywhere" preaching the gospel.

(12,13) Although the people mentioned were religious, "devout men," it does not appear that the miracle of the apostles speaking in various languages did more at first than to excite curiosity in some, while with others it was attributed to an evil influence – intoxication. Thus Satan, who endeavored to calumniate our Lord as a "wine bibber" and possessed of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, would now

fain hinder the people from hearing the message of the gospel preached with the power of the holy spirit sent down from heaven, and accompanied with wonderful manifestations. Then as now the servants of God were traduced even by "devout men." – See 2 Cor. 6:8.
