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PENTECOST – THE DAY OF JUBILEE.

– ACTS 2:1-11. – *MAY 26*. –

"When he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." – John 16:13.

PENTECOST signifies fiftieth, and was used amongst the Jews as the name of one of their most important feasts or religious celebrations. As their fiftieth "Jubilee" year followed a cycle of seven times seven years, so Pentecost, as a jubilee day, followed a cycle of seven times seven days, from the time of the gathering of the sheaf of first-fruits, which was presented before the Lord as a "wave-offering." This sheaf of the first-fruits evidently typified our Lord in his resurrection on the sixteenth of Nisan – he having been slain as the Passover Lamb on the fourteenth of Nisan. – Lev. 33:5,6,15,16. [Should be Lev. 23 - Site Editor]

In our last lesson we noted the fact that it was the eleven apostles that were witnesses of our Lord's ascension, "men of Galilee;" and it was these, who were to be his special representatives, and through whose word others were to believe, that he instructed to tarry at Jerusalem until endued with power from on high. The present lesson shows us the same eleven apostles in the upper room complying with our Lord's injunction, waiting in an attitude of prayer and expectancy, and in readiness to begin their mission of feeding his sheep and lambs. In harmony with this view is the statement, a little later on, when the preaching began, that "all these are Galileans." And again, "Peter standing up with the eleven." (Acts 2:7,14.) We are not positively informed that any others were present at this time, but from previous statements, to the effect that others (to a total of one hundred and twenty) met with the apostles, "continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication," we

may reasonably infer that they were present at the time of the pentecostal outpouring of the holy spirit, and that the whole company was thus baptized, immersed in the holy spirit, which filled the place where they were assembled. There is no good reason, however, for questioning respecting the cloven tongues of fire – that these sat upon any but the apostles. The statement is that "It sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the holy spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance." The subsequent statement is that all those who spoke, all to whom the spirit gave utterance or tongues, were Galileans; but whether or not the apostles were thus specially recognized at this time, we are assured, not only from our Lord's words, but also from his subsequent revelation, that the apostles occupied a special place in **[R2820 : page 174]** connection with his Kingdom, his Church, assigned to no others. – John 6:70; Rev. 21:14.

The Pentecostal blessing signified divine acceptance of the sin-offering which, finished at Calvary, our Lord at this time had presented before the Father. The outpouring of the holy spirit upon the consecrated believers constituted their begetting of the spirit to the new nature, and implied thus, that the condemnation upon them as the children of Adam and under the Law Covenant was cancelled, and that now they were accepted in the Beloved, counted as children of God, and if children then heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, if so be that they would suffer with him, that they might also be glorified together – Rom. 8:16,17.

As is implied in our Lord's statement and in his promise, this was a new thing. No such outpouring of the divine spirit had ever occurred before as respected the children of Adam. Indeed, no such acceptance and new begetting on God's part was possible until first the sin-offering had been made and accepted. The only thing corresponding to it was the descent of the holy

spirit upon our Lord at the time of his consecration at baptism in Jordan. He there received the holy spirit of adoption in the same sense, but "without measure," he being perfect; those who received this holy spirit at Pentecost received it by measure, that is, in limited degree. (John 3:34.) Altho they were all "filled" with the spirit, yet, because of weakness and imperfections of their organisms, they could only receive limited measures, – these differing one from the other according to natural temperaments, etc.

God's holy spirit had indeed been manifested in various ways previously, but all of them differed from this manifestation. For instance, it was the holy power of God which moved upon the waters in connection with the world's creation. (Gen. 1:2.) Again, as the Apostle Peter declares, "Holy men of **[R2820 : page 175]** old spake and wrote as they were moved by the holy spirit" – mechanically. (2 Pet. 1:21.) He further explains that what they spake and wrote they did not comprehend; because their utterances and writings were not for themselves, but for us of the Gospel age. We are, therefore, to recognize the fact that the spirit dispensation had its beginning in Jesus, when he was thirty years of age; but so far as others were concerned its beginning was in the sanctified ones at Pentecost, as recorded in this lesson. Neither are we to think that these Pentecostal outpourings and baptisms require a repetition, for the holy spirit thus once poured upon the Church was to abide, to continue, with the Church, not to be withdrawn and poured out afresh repeatedly. Some have concluded that there were times when the holy spirit was not in the world at all; but this was because they were looking for it in a wrong direction or under wrong conditions. At times the nominal church of outward professors has been so overgrown with the "tare" element that the true "wheat" could not so readily be discerned, yet we are confident that the Lord never left himself without a witness, and that even in the darkest hour of the dark ages there

were some of God's true people in the world; some representatives of the body of Christ; some, therefore, possessing the holy spirit; some who therefore constituted the salt of the earth and the lights of the world, even tho the darkness was great around them and its influence so powerful that no record of the true Church is to be found, but only the records of the apostacy.

The holy spirit, in harmony with our Lord's promise, was sent only to the consecrated class, and was to *abide* in the true Church class, "the body of Christ;" and we, and all others who since have come into fellowship and union with our Lord, "the head of the body which is his Church," have thus come into and under the influence of the holy spirit, our rightful portion and privilege. By this spirit we were begotten to the spiritual nature, and became heirs of all the exceeding great and precious promises which belong to "the body of Christ."

It was appropriate that the giving of the holy spirit should be with certain outward demonstration and manifestation; not merely to impress and convince the apostles and the early Church, but also for the benefit of those who should subsequently come into relationship with the Church. Faith must have a ground to rest upon; an assurance that there was at the beginning such a direct recognition of the Savior's sacrifice and of the divine acceptance of the consecrated ones who trusted in him. The rushing wind fitly represented this holy spirit; indeed the words "spirit" and "wind" are both from the same Greek word; a wind is the best illustration of God's spirit, because it is powerful, and yet it is invisible. The cloven or split tongues "like as of fire" or *light*, was also fit symbols by which to teach the Church something respecting the divine power that had come upon her.

As a tongue it represented the influence which God would use during this Gospel age as the agency of his spirit in accomplishing the work he now designs to do; for "it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21.) This way of preaching is not a foolish way, since it is God's way; but it is so different a way of effecting a work from what the natural man would have chosen that it seems to *him* to be an unwise way. True, at the beginning of this age the tongues, the preaching, was supplemented by miraculous "gifts" among the Lord's people, but these were not designed to be permanent, as the Apostle explains (1 Cor. 13:8); and after the apostles who alone had the power to confer these gifts had died, the gifts themselves of necessity gradually vanished; since which time the preaching tongue has been practically the only instrument which the Lord has used in connection with his great work of calling out and sanctifying the peculiar people to be the Bride, the Royal Priesthood, the Body of Christ.

Some have incorrectly identified the fire-likeness of these tongues with the prophecy of John the Baptist, respecting Christ, saying, "He shall baptize you with holy spirit and with fire." (Matt. 3:11,12.) John's words were not addressed to the disciples, but to the promiscuous company of his hearers, some of whom were Israelites indeed, and some, as he declared, a generation of vipers. The Pentecostal blessing was indeed the fulfilment of a part of John's prediction; *viz.*, the baptism of the holy spirit (Acts 1:5); but this was not the fulfilment of the latter part of John's prophecy respecting the baptism of fire. The room wherein the disciples were assembled was not filled with fire, and they were not immersed in it, either literally or figuratively. The cloven tongues which appeared upon their heads were not fire, but light, a fitting symbol of the holy spirit, and the message of light and truth and blessing which the apostles were proclaiming. The baptism of fire, which John predicted, came later, not upon the faithful of Israel, but upon the class whom

John designated, a "generation of vipers" – upon the class of whom the Apostle Paul says, "Wrath is come upon this people to the uttermost." The trouble, the *destructive* trouble, the fiery trouble, in which that whole nation was figuratively engulfed and baptized, and which ended in A.D. 70, after witnessing the destruction of millions of lives, millions of property, and the complete overthrow of Israel's national polity, was the worthy fulfilment of John's prediction of a baptism of fire.

The fact that the holy spirit upon the apostles was accompanied by miraculous manifestations or gifts, tongues, etc., does not imply any greater favor of God toward the primitive Church, which had those gifts, than toward the Lord's people of a later day, after those gifts had ceased; for, as the Apostle points out, it was possible for some to have those gifts without having much of the real spirit of the Lord. He says, "Tho I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, *I am become as sounding brass* or a tinkling cymbal. Tho I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and tho I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am *nothing*." (1 Cor. 13:1,2.) We are, therefore, to esteem love for the Lord and for the brethren and for the neighbor – active love, which does as well as wishes and says – to be the best evidence of an acceptable condition [R2820 : page 176] with the Lord, the best evidence of a filling with *his holy spirit* – a far better evidence than the possession of the "gifts" described. Far greater, far more precious gifts of the spirit, then, are the gifts which the spirit develops in us – the fruits of the spirit – joy, peace, faith, love, etc.

The news respecting the miraculous manifestation of divine power spread rapidly through the city of Jerusalem, which, in addition to its general population, had at this season of the year visitors from all the neighboring countries, speaking

various languages and dialects. And this furnished the opportunity for the Lord's humble disciples, "unlearned men," to begin their great work for which now they were fully commissioned and empowered. Quite possibly by this gift of tongues the Lord made up to his disciples the lack of larger education and fitted them for the work; at all events, not only on this occasion do we find that they were able to discourse in all the various languages, but subsequently, when traveling in various quarters, we have no mention of any difficulty encountered in respect to the languages or dialects, tho these were many amongst the different classes and nationalities.

The concourse of the people at Jerusalem attending this feast was of a religious kind – the most religious Jews from all the surrounding countries and nations (where more Jews resided than in Palestine), gathered on such occasions to do homage to the Lord, to render thanks and to pray for the promised blessings [R2821 : page 176] and Kingdom. In addition to this it was the custom for many of the most religious to permanently remove to Jerusalem in their old age, that they might die there; and thus we see that the Lord's arrangements, and the human arrangements which his providence had favored, all cooperated at this time for the favorable presentation of the good tidings that Messiah had come, and that he had redeemed Israel and the world, according to the prophets and the types; that he had ascended to the Father as the great High Priest for his people; and that this Pentecostal blessing represented the divine favor bestowed through him, and open to as many as would really receive him and become his followers – disciples. When we consider the class of hearers, and the miraculous power resting upon the speakers, it need not surprise us that so many were converted in so short a time – three thousand. – Acts 2:41.

We are given but a meagre account of the preaching; *viz.*, an extract from Peter's discourse; but from the number of

converts it is evident that all of the apostles engaged in the service. A summary of their preaching is given in vs. 11, where the hearers are represented as saying, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." These wonderful works we have already referred to as relating to our Lord's death and resurrection, and his commission to his apostles, which they were now carrying out. True, it is said that the apostles used other words, amongst them, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" – thus intimating the condemnation of the Jewish Church and polity, and the fire of divine wrath, the trouble, shortly to come upon them.

But the main part of their discourses was not a tirade against the Jews, but rather a showing forth of the wonderful features of the divine plan; and even in the charge against the rulers and the people for the great crime they had committed in crucifying Jesus, the Apostle puts the matter as kindly as possible, saying, "I wot that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Herein we have a valuable lesson for all the followers of Christ who preach in his name and who would win souls from the darkness of error to harmony with God. The proper, the effective preaching, today and then, is that which tells of the wonderful works of God in man's redemption, and not that which tirades against the nominal church – even tho it be necessary occasionally to point out the errors of Babylon, as the apostles pointed out the errors of Judaism. Our course, like theirs, should be one of great moderation and kindness, as well as plainness of speech, "speaking the truth in love."

The harvest work of the present time reminds us much of this gathering of the harvest in Israel. Now, as then, those who are addressed by the holy spirit are the Israelites indeed – "devout men out of every nation under heaven." And so prominently is this the direction in which the holy spirit is guiding in this harvest work that one of the charges against the

work is, that we are not going after the drunkards and harlots and gamblers and thieves and vagabonds, but are seeking to feed the Lord's sheep and lambs, – seeking to present present truth, meat in due season, to the devout of every nation. And such, we believe, is the will of God concerning us; and so we advise that all of the Lord's people, as they seek to proclaim the grace of God, remember the words of the Lord, that we are to feed his sheep and his lambs, and not spend unnecessary time with the goats and the wolves, as soon as we recognize their kind, except it be to drive them off or to expose their true character to the sheep.

Our commission is to "preach the Gospel to the *meek*," not to the froward and the vile; to bind up the broken-hearted, not to seek to break the hard hearts. The Lord has his own plan for dealing with the stony hearts in the time of trouble which is near, and during the Millennial age, in which the necessary force will be used to restrain the evil and to open their eyes and ears of understanding. Now our commission is to go to those who have an ear. "He that hath an ear let him hear." Those who have not the ears to hear the message, and who have not the hearts to appreciate its beauty, should not be argued with or wrangled with, but wisely left as quietly as possible in their ignorance and blindness until the Lord's due time for scattering the pall of darkness, the gross darkness which Satan has brought upon the people. We had rather leave in ignorance and under the bonds of superstition those who manifest no appreciation of the grace of God; for doubtless, if their superstitions were loosed in the present time, it would be nothing to their advantage; perhaps to the disadvantage of others. Let us remember that the Gospel message is to gather out the Lord's peculiar people, a little flock, and that so far as the world is concerned the Gospel is only a "witness" now.
