

SPEAKING WITH OTHER TONGUES.

– ACTS 2:1-11. – JAN. 12. –

"The promise is unto you and to your children." – Acts 2:39.

WAITING FOR the power from on high, the eleven apostles (and with them apparently a considerable number of believers – possibly 120 – (Acts 1:15) were rewarded with the blessing of Pentecost. They were "with one accord in one place;" they may have been expecting the blessing during the preceding nine days of their assembling, but Pentecost being a specially holy day it may have appeared to them as probable that it would bring the consummation of their hopes, and with one accord or agreement the full number were all present at the time. There is a thought here respecting the propriety of the Lord's people being at one, or in accord, in respect to the things they are seeking for and waiting for. It is to this end that the Lord has exhorted us, through the Apostle, that we forget not the assembling of ourselves together, and so much the more as we see the day drawing near – not the day of Pentecost, but a still greater and still grander day: Pentecost brought merely the first fruits of the spirit, while the day we wait for is the day of the consummation of all our hopes and of all God's promises in respect to the Church, as the Bride and joint-heir of his Son.

We cannot all come together in the literal sense, as did the apostles and the early Church on Pentecost, but we can come together into one place in another sense; we can come into the holy place, into the sanctuary or consecrated condition of heart and of life, and thus into oneness and fellowship with the Lord, and with all who are in the same holy condition, and partakers of the same blessing of the inner light of the golden candlestick, and the inner food of the table of shew-bread, and the inner communion with the Lord, represented in the golden altar and its

incense. Our natural dispositions are various and their crooks and twists different; but our new natures are one, begotten of the same Father, through the same spirit. We are to seek accord as new creatures, and are to restrain, mortify and cast out the weaknesses of the flesh and the contentiousness of disposition which may be ours, accordingly – that as new creatures we may be one with the Lord and with all who are his body or Church, under the one Head or Lord, infused or energized by one spirit of obedience to the one Father, and under the control of the one law of Love.

It is not said that the holy spirit was imparted in connection with a rushing wind, but merely that there was "a sound *as* of a rushing wind." Neither is it said that flames or tongues of fire rested upon them, but that tongues or flames having the appearance of **[R2926 : page 397]** fire, as in the case of the burning bush, rested upon them. The holy spirit is an invisible power, and its impartation need not of necessity have any outward demonstration. But God's purpose was the contrary of this. He desired to accompany the holy spirit with certain manifestations which would be convincing to the apostles themselves as respected their acceptance with him, and their identification as his ministers, ambassadors of the new dispensation; he wished also to make manifest the nucleus of the Gospel Church to others, to devout Jews then in Jerusalem, attending this feast; and we think it quite probable that it was God's intention also by these gifts to manifest who were the apostles and to indicate their special office in the Church.

It is not stated specifically upon whom the tongues rested; "upon each of them" might mean upon each of the eleven apostles, or it might mean upon each of the one hundred and twenty present. Whoever the tongues sat upon were filled with the holy spirit, and **[R2927 : page 397]** they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance; and this preaching with other tongues seems to have been done only by the eleven apostles, for

the multitude, hearing them, exclaimed, "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" As for the eleven apostles, they were all Galileans, but as for the remainder of the one hundred and twenty, it is probable that the majority of them were Judeans, residents of Jerusalem. We incline, therefore, to suppose that while the whole room in which they were present was filled with the holy spirit, and the entire company present made partakers of the holy spirit, and immersed into it, and blessed thereby, yet, nevertheless, these outward manifestations of tongues and speaking miraculously were at first only given to the eleven, for the purpose of designating them as God's chosen instruments in connection with the new dispensation. We know that it was so subsequently; so that whoever *received gifts* of the holy spirit received them through the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

From the construction of the Greek text it is evident that these were not split tongues, on the heads of the favored ones, but rather that they were tongues of flame cloven or split off from a central or luminous body, tongues which emanated from one common center, and went to the heads of those for whom intended. It was not fire, however, but light. The tongues represented nothing akin to destruction, which fire would symbolize. They represented, on the contrary, enlightenment, knowledge, intelligence, and implied that a holy intelligence or light from the Lord had come upon the recipients, marking them as the Lord's mouthpieces; indicating that from henceforth their tongues should show forth his praise, to the blessing and enlightenment of the world. And so indeed it has been; those poor fishermen, illiterate, unlearned as respects earthly education, under the power of the Lord's spirit became mighty indeed in the pulling down of strongholds of error, and the scattering of darkness by the illumination of the minds of those prepared for the word of God's grace.

Some have made the mistake of supposing that these tongues of flame were fulfillments of the prediction of John the Baptist,

who said of Christ, "He shall baptize you with the holy spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16.) This was the fulfillment of only the first part; it was merely the baptism of the holy spirit; it was not the baptism of fire; – the baptism of fire and destruction was for a totally different class. The faithful of the Jews were to receive the baptism of the holy spirit, and the unfaithful majority of them were to receive the baptism of fiery trouble, and they did receive it a little further along. After the holy spirit, coming upon the infant Church at Pentecost, had searched, sifted and winnowed out of the Jewish dispensation all of the true "wheat," gathering it into the garner of the Gospel (spirit) dispensation, then the fire came upon the "chaff." (Luke 3:17.) The Apostle speaks of this, calling it wrath, saying "Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." – 1 Thess. 2:16.

The tongues of light which came upon the faithful at Pentecost did not continue with them, – even as the dove, which was seen descending upon Jesus, did not continue to be seen. Both the dove and the flame of light were merely outward representations, not to deceive, but for the purpose of teaching a great lesson, for the purpose of convincing that the promised blessing and power had come. The Lord's people who since come under the influence of the holy spirit have neither signs of flames nor doves, nor sounds of rushing wind; nor do they speak miraculously. They, nevertheless, come into and are made partakers of the holy spirit, which no longer uses these outward manifestations because they are no longer necessary; the Church having been established, and the fact of the holy spirit's impartation having been demonstrated, we now are to accept the same by faith, and to permit it to dwell in us richly, and to cultivate in our hearts and lives the *fruits* of the spirit, instead of expecting them or other things as miraculous *gifts*.

The tongues of light are a forceful illustration of the fact that God purposed to use human tongues as his agencies in

promulgating his message and calling out his elect from the world. An energy of soul evidently went with the outward demonstration, giving a courage to the apostles of which previously, as humble and unlearned men, they were naturally deficient. Note, for instance, how it led Peter, who, fifty-three days before had denied the Lord, saying, "I know not the man," for fear of the Jews, to now courageously stand up in the midst of those very Jews, and to proclaim him as his Master, as the Son of God risen from the dead and ascended up on high; as the great Mediator and High Priest of the new order. It gave him the courage to charge home to the hearts of his hearers their responsibility for the crime. So also the other disciples, who previously had fled from their arrested Master, were now courageous to tell forth his praise. Not only had they become convinced, by the proofs received, respecting his resurrection and his ascension, but now these proofs were added to by the fulfillment of his promises, evidencing the fact that he had ascended to the Father, and that he had been favorably received, and that these gifts of the spirit were evidences of the return of divine favor toward them, – of their acceptance in the Beloved One, and of their right and authority to go forth in his name and **[R2927 : page 398]** to declare remission of sins to all the penitent who would come unto the Father through him.

At this particular season of the year the city of Jerusalem was crowded with visitors from various parts of the world. We are to remember that millions of the ten-tribed kingdom, called Israel, were taken captive, and later millions more of the two-tribe kingdom, called Judah, was also taken captive, to Babylon; and that these millions were scattered as immigrants in the various districts of Assyria and Babylonia, where they settled down, making these strange lands their home, so that when the opportunity for returning from captivity came in the days of Cyrus, and by his edict, only a very small proportion of the two tribes, and a still smaller proportion of the ten-tribes, returned to Palestine – the great majority preferring to remain in the countries

where they at one time had been captives, but where, during their long exile, they had become at home and formed attachments. From that time on all distinction as between Israel and Judah was at an end; and all were recognized as at first, as Israelites, and all came under the general name of Jews. Thus it was that our Lord and the apostles addressed the people as Israelites and Jews, using the terms interchangeably, and that they spoke of the dispersed ones indiscriminately, as Jews and as Israelites also.

It was at seasons like the Passover and Pentecost that numbers of devout Jews, not only from all parts of Judea and Galilee, went to Jerusalem, but also the "dispersed" Jews of devout spirit from the surrounding countries came thither, to worship the Lord and to obey the command requiring all his faithful to assemble themselves before him at Jerusalem. Thus it was that at the time of these visits the city would sometimes have a crowded population of from two to three millions of people, chiefly adults. The city was crowded at the time of this Pentecostal blessing, and a great concourse of people was drawn together by the miraculous manifestation of divine power amongst the disciples. Some of these, hearing the apostles speaking in various languages which they could not understand, passed on, declaring that they had no interest in the matter, and that probably the speakers were intoxicated, and did not know what they were saying themselves; but others recognized their own tongues and dialects, some apostles speaking in one tongue, some in another; and when they perceived that all of the speakers were Galileans they were astounded, especially in view of the fact that they were unlearned men. The miracle helped to impress the situation upon their minds, and we may be sure that the words spoken were also powerful. We cannot suppose that the Lord would make a special manifestation of power without an equal manifestation of wisdom. Indeed, wherever we find people claiming various gifts and powers, and find these to be accompanied by nothing that is reasonable and logical and comprehensible, we are justified in

doubting that the matter is of the Lord at all. It is reasonable to suppose that when the holy spirit gives utterance it will utter that which is good and reasonable and sound of logic, and not folly. And so we read that the hearers said, "We do hear them speak in our tongues the mighty *works of God.*"

The words of their discourse are not given us in detail here, but we can readily discern that the mighty works of God which filled their own hearts and minds were those wonderful things which they had just been learning from the Lord, viz., that God's time had come for conferring the blessing long before promised through Abraham; – that Jesus was the Messiah, whom the Father had sent, and whose death was necessary in order to the carrying out of the plan, as our Lord had declared to them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26.) It was theirs further to declare another wonderful work of God, – that in addition to Messiah, the Head, God was about to gather out of the people a little flock to be joint heirs with **[R2928 : page 398]** Messiah, in the Kingdom, preparatory to its establishment for the blessing of the world. We may be sure that it was the true Gospel that they preached, and not the terrible mixture of confusion about hell torments, which since "the dark ages" has falsely claimed the right to be called the Gospel of Christ. They preached the Gospel of salvation, and not a message of damnation; and their message was in the power and demonstration of the spirit.

The miraculous gift of tongues is no longer with us, yet the same spirit, received by us, dwelling in us richly and abounding more and more, gives us utterance, also, in respect to the *wonderful works of God.* This is still true of all the Royal Priesthood, the consecrated. As the Apostle expressed it in his day, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye (for yourselves); for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:19,20.)

The enlightenment of our understanding has shown us Jesus as the Redeemer of the world, and our share in his redemptive work; and also our acceptance with the Father, through him, to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom, and to be fellow-servants with him in the present time, in bearing the reproaches of the true Gospel in this time, when the great Adversary is deceiving the world in respect to these matters, putting light for darkness and darkness for light.

More and more we, too, speak with *other tongues*. Those whose tongues had blasphemed the holy name now give thanks and praise; those who had ignorantly misrepresented the divine character and plan now vie with each other in showing forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. The influence of the holy spirit transforms our sentiments and expressions respecting the brethren also, and respecting the world, so that instead of hatred and anger and malice we have love and gentleness and patience; and instead of our tongues showing forth envy and bitterness and pride, worldly ambition, etc., they show forth the new mind in gentleness and wisdom, in helpfulness and love – toward all men, and especially toward the household of faith. These, our new tongues, and the new living epistles which they represent to our families, our neighbors and the world, are beautifully expressed by the Prophet to be our "song" – our praise, our acknowledgement to God for his grace and truth; as it is written, "He hath put a new song into my mouth, even the loving kindness of our God."
