

THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST

---JANUARY 9. – ACTS 2:1-13.---

WHAT THE PENTECOSTAL BLESSING WAS – ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE CHURCH THEN AND NOW – THE LESSON IT TAUGHT – HOW UNDERSTOOD BY SOME AND MISUNDERSTOOD BY OTHERS.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" – 1 Corinthians 3:16.

PENTECOST was a notable day in the Jewish calendar. It marked the fiftieth day in the harvest – after the gathering of the first ripe sheaf. Our Lord in His glorious resurrected condition was the Antitype of that sheaf, the First-fruit of God in the great Plan of Redemption. The first forty days, as we have seen, were used in giving occasional lessons to the disciples – helping them over the difficulties of their position, getting them properly started, with proper faith in the resurrection, to make a good witness and to gather out the Lord's jewels from amongst men. But when Jesus left them at the end of the forty days, He instructed them not to begin their ministry at once, but to wait until they would be endued with power from on High – by the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, they waited ten days, and then their waiting was rewarded by the outpouring of His Spirit upon them in the upper room on the fiftieth day, Pentecost. They did transact just one item of business during those ten days; but it was without authority from the Lord, and was never recognized by Him. It consisted in casting lots for a successor to Judas. As they cast lots on only two men, it followed that one of the two must be the choice of the lots. But the Lord never recognized the matter, and we hear nothing more of

Matthias whom they chose. Instead, in due time God brought forth St. Paul – "not a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles."

APPEARED IN GOD'S PRESENCE

When our Lord ascended, the Apostle declares, He appeared in the presence of God for us – for His Church, for all who would comply with the terms and conditions of discipleship. (Hebrews 9:24.) He did not appear for the world, but merely for us. He loved the world, He died for the world, and He is yet to bless the world; but the time for the blessing of the world must wait until first the Divine Program in respect to the Church shall have been carried out.

How much of our Lord's time was spent in going to the Heavenly Throne, and how much of the ten days was necessary for the return of the Holy Spirit, we do not know; but we do know from the Apostle's words that the Holy Spirit sent forth upon the waiting disciples in the upper room was the testimony to them that Jesus' work was satisfactory to the Father, that the Father gave the Holy Spirit to Him for His Church, and that Jesus shed it forth. – Acts 2:33.

The events of that day of Pentecost were very valuable to the Church at that time, but have been equally valuable to all of the Lord's members. The Scriptures represent that all who are received into God's family receive a begetting of the Holy Spirit; and this begetting was what Pentecost meant to those waiting ones in the upper room. From that time onward they were sons of God; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ" their Lord. (Romans 8:17.) And so it is with us who have come into the Body of Christ since Pentecost. We do not receive special manifestations of Divine power, such as the cloven tongues that came upon those disciples; but we do receive from God the same Holy Spirit which they received.

MEANING OF THE PENTECOSTAL BLESSING

The Lord represents Jesus and His Church under the figure of a great Priest – Jesus was the Head of that Priest; the Apostles were the first members of the Body, [R5831 : page 13] under the Head; and all the Church of Christ from then till now are members in particular of the same Body, the same Church. The Holy Spirit came with an outward manifestation upon Jesus, the Head of the Church, that we might know thus that He was accepted by the Father. Then at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with an outward manifestation upon the disciples, in order that they might know that they had been received into the same fellowship, as members of the same Body.

But it was not necessary for us to have an outward demonstration today; for this pouring out of God's blessing was upon the Church as a whole; and as we come into the Church of Christ by a full consecration of our hearts to do the Lord's will, and with full trust in the work of Jesus, we receive the Spirit and are counted in as members of that Church Body, though without any outward demonstration whatever.

We can see a necessity for the outward demonstration in the case of the Apostles for two reasons: First, they were Jews, and had believed in Jesus, had made their consecration and had been received into discipleship by Him. But the Father could not receive any into sonship until after Jesus had died. Additionally, the Father could not recognize any human beings as His children and grant them full forgiveness of sins, full reconciliation and an entrance into His family, until Jesus, as the great High Priest, had not only died, but had ascended up on High and proffered or made applicable the merit of His death on our behalf. And so we read respecting the Apostles before Christ's death: "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." – John 7:39.

There had been no human sons of God recognized from the time Adam, the first of these sons, sinned, until Jesus came as the Son of God. The Jews were members of the House of Servants, as we read:

"Moses verily was faithful in all His House as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His own House, whose House are we." (Hebrews 3:5, 6.) The Pentecostal blessing, therefore, [R5831 : page 14] was the beginning of the recognition of the followers of Jesus as sons of God and heirs of God's promise.

GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Another matter: At Pentecost the Lord gave gifts to the Apostles, and to the remainder of the Church through them. These gifts were represented in the ability to speak with various tongues and in power to perform miracles – heal the sick, etc. Evidently these gifts were necessary for the establishment of the Church; but they must have all expired when the Apostles, through whom alone they were bestowed upon others, fell asleep in death. But while God has not continued the gifts with the Church, He has promised something still better; i.e., the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits are more valuable than the gifts, because they represent character and not merely powers. – 1 Corinthians 12:31; 13.

The fruits of the Spirit are meekness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love; and these evidence that the individual possessing them has become a member of the Church of Christ, and has been begotten of the Holy Spirit. Much therefore as we rejoice that the Apostles had the gifts and afterwards cultivated the fruits, we are glad that we now have the fruits of the Spirit.

One of the gifts of the Spirit was manifested by one of the Apostles immediately – the power of speaking with unknown tongues. They were all Galileans, and therefore used to only the one dialect. The testimony, however, is that under the Divine power of the Holy Spirit they spoke in various languages so that the people of the countries represented by those languages understood clearly and were astonished, saying, "Are not all these which speak Galileans, and how hear we every man in our own tongue?" – Acts 2:7, 8.

We are not to understand that the miracle was in the hearing, but in the speaking. It was not that all the people from the different lands heard the same utterance, as though it had been in their own language, as stated for them, but that the different Apostles speaking these different tongues were all heard by the people and appreciated by the people who used those tongues. It was a miracle, surely, and had the designed effect. Not merely was it a convincing power and experience for the Apostles themselves and for the other believers of that time, but it became a witness to the holy Jews who had gathered at Jerusalem from all the nations of the world.

These annual gatherings at Jerusalem were directly commanded by the Lord through Moses, and were observed by all the Jews who remained loyal to God and His Word. If they had moved into other countries and were located there for business reasons, they nevertheless came regularly every year to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. It was these reverential people who were especially blessed at Pentecost. For although some of the number tried to explain away the phenomenon by saying that the Apostles had evidently drunk too freely of grape juice, new wine, nevertheless, apparently the majority of those who heard were provoked with such an interpretation and took more readily to what the Apostles said, and realized in time that they were all telling the same glorious Message of the love of God, though telling it in various languages, so that all present might understand.

A TEMPLE OF GOD

The figure of a temple is variously used in respect to the Church. Each Christian is spoken of as being a temple of the Holy Spirit after he receives the begetting of the Spirit. Each congregation might be considered the Temple of God. And the Church as a whole when gathered to the Heavenly condition will be God's Temple, in that God will dwell in them. According to another figure, each Christian is a living stone in preparation for the great Temple of the future, now

being chiseled, polished, made ready for his place in the Temple above.

The thought is that as God in olden times was represented in the Tabernacle by the Shekinah glory of the Most Holy, and was also represented in the literal temple of Jerusalem, so He is represented now in all those who are begotten by His Holy Spirit, and will be represented further by all who walk in harmony with their spirit-begetting and continue to abide in the Lord's love.

