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ST. PETER'S PENTECOSTAL SERMON

---JANUARY 16. – ACTS 2:21-39.---

THE SIGNIFICATION OF PENTECOST – SPEAKING WITH OTHER TONGUES – ST. PETER'S EXPLANATION OF THIS – DAVID NOT ASCENDED TO HEAVEN – HE SPAKE NOT OF HIMSELF, BUT PROPHETICALLY OF JESUS' RESURRECTION – PRICKED TO THE HEART – OTHER FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS – NONE TO BE SAVED IN IGNORANCE, THOUGH JESUS DIED FOR ALL.

"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." – Acts 2:21.

TODAY'S lesson is a most interesting Bible Study; for it covers a wide range of Truth. The Apostles, in harmony with Jesus' instructions, had waited in the upper room for the Pentecostal blessing, as necessary to their qualification before beginning their great work as the representatives and mouthpieces of Jesus and Jehovah. It came on the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection, in harmony with the type. – Leviticus 23:15-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20.

The Apostles received the begetting of the Holy Spirit and with it certain outward manifestations of miraculous power, which in turn they were privileged to communicate to all believers by the laying on of their hands. These special "gifts of the Spirit" were evidently intended to assist in the establishment of the Church and to mark the Apostles as the special representatives of God. These were but eleven in number, until St. Paul was received of the Lord, and became "not one whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles." (2 Cor. 12:11.) We have these Apostles still with us, represented by their teachings.

Although, later on, certain Bishops of the Church claimed to be Apostles also, they never have had any authority according to the Bible,

never have been able to convey any of the miraculous gifts and are referred to by Jesus as falsely claiming authority which they do not possess. (Revelation 2:2.) With the death of the Apostles and the death of those to whom they had committed these gifts, all such gifts necessarily ceased, being supplanted by the fruits of the Spirit, developed through knowledge, faith and obedience.

SYNOPSIS OF ST. PETER'S SERMON

The eleven Apostles, exercising their gift of tongues, began to talk to the assembled crowd of Jews who were worshiping at Jerusalem – not merely residents of Palestine, [R5831 : page 15] but thousands from all parts of the world, gathered at Jerusalem at that season in harmony with the demands of the Law, to worship the Lord. From their dress, etc., the Apostles were recognized as Galileans. Much astonishment therefore was manifested when they were heard talking in the various tongues of the various nations. At first some thought that they were intoxicated and uttering merely peculiar sounds; but presently the multitude began to gather themselves to one and another of the Apostles as they heard their own language spoken. This not only called attention to the Apostles, but also manifested a Divine power and made their [R5832 : page 15] Message the more impressive.

The essence of the preaching was that Jesus, who had been crucified, had risen from the dead and had now shed forth this miraculous power upon His followers. This led to the mention of the prophecy of David which foretold the resurrection of Messiah, saying, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol" – Hades. (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27.) The Apostles pointed out that this was fulfilled in Jesus, in that God raised Him from the dead; but that it was never fulfilled in the Prophet David, who on the contrary was still dead in his sepulchre, awaiting resurrection. David, as a prophet, had merely foretold the resurrection of Jesus.

With various details the preaching went on, explaining the righteousness of Jesus, the beauties of His teaching, the wickedness of those who had crucified Him without a cause, and showing how the

entire Jewish nation was guilty before God, because as a people they were bound by their Law Covenant and the action of their officials had brought condemnation and guilt upon the whole people. Three thousand believed. The case was so plain that they were pricked to the heart – they realized that Jesus was the Son of God, and that a great crime had been committed in crucifying Him. With fear and sorrow they cried out, "What shall we do?" The answer was, "Repent" – God is gracious; He will forgive you. In further explanation, they were told that they and their rulers had done this wicked deed in ignorance, and that God would very graciously forgive those who would acknowledge their sin and call upon Him for forgiveness. They did so; they made a consecration of their lives to God, and became followers of Jesus.

DIVINE FAVOR ABOUT TO RETURN TO ISRAEL

The Bible declares that the Jewish people, because of their rejection of Messiah, were cut off from God's favor. Nevertheless the time is at hand when they shall be brought back again to the favor of God. Their eyes have been holden for more than eighteen centuries now, as are the eyes of the world in general. Only the few have the eyes of their understanding open to see the Truth respecting these matters. St. Paul avers this, saying, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." – 2 Corinthians 4:4.

But through the Prophet, God has assured us that in due time all the blind eyes will be opened and all the deaf ears will be unstopped. (Isaiah 35:5.) To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, will eventually come a full knowledge of the grace of God through Christ. It will then be for them to accept or reject intelligently. The rejectors will be wicked in a sense that none of the world are wicked now, because their wrong-doings are largely based upon ignorance and superstition. When brought to the full light, their crisis, or judgment, will be to everlasting life if they accept and obey the Lord, or to everlasting death if they sin against and wilfully reject the light and opportunities of that blessed Millennial Day.

Respecting the Jews in that coming time, it is written that they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn because of Him; and that the Lord at that time will pour upon them the spirit of prayer and of supplication. (Zechariah 12:8-10.) But that return of God's favor to Natural Israel will not come until Spiritual Israel shall first have been completed. Bible Students believe that we are now at the dawning of the New Dispensation, that the Church class will soon be completed and glorified with the Savior in His Kingdom, and that then, forthwith, God's mercy will begin to operate toward the Jews again. This seems to be the clear teaching of St. Paul in Romans 11:25-32.

THE CURSE TO BE ROLLED AWAY

Another item of special importance in the lesson is that the Hell to which Jesus went was not Hell-fire, but the grave, the state of death. God did not raise Him up from the Fire, but raised Him from the dead. We are to remember that this same word – Hell, Sheol, Hades – is used in the Bible respecting all mankind. All the good and the bad – old and young, male and female, of every nation – go down to the Bible Hell; and according to the Bible they sleep there, awaiting the resurrection Morning and the awakening of all the dead – "every man in his own order" – not all at once. – 1 Corinthians 15:23.

The Bible represents that we are now in a night time, in which Satan is "the prince of this world," and Sin and Death reign. But it pictures the New Dispensation of Messiah's Kingdom as the glorious dawning of the New Day of blessing for mankind, in which the curse of sin and death will be rolled away and the blessing of the Lord through Messiah's Kingdom will extend to every member of the race, giving all an opportunity for eternal life. This will not be the same opportunity that is granted to the Church at the present time – not an opportunity for glory, honor and immortality on the spirit plane, as the Church have – but an opportunity of returning to human perfection, to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary.

OUR GOLDEN TEXT – ITS BEAUTY

Here we note the beauty of the 21st verse – our Golden Text. The death of Jesus guarantees that all who will call upon the Lord in sincerity of heart will be saved from sin and death. It guarantees that all shall be brought to the condition where they will understand sufficiently to desire to call for this blessing. The heathen, the majority of people of civilized lands, and the Jews, have no such hearing ears now. Only the few out of every nation have yet received this great blessing. Only these, brought back into relationship with God, have yet been rescued from their alienated condition; and they are to be ultimately saved in the First Resurrection, to glory, honor, immortality and a share in the Kingdom of Messiah. Through these, ultimately the blessing of light and knowledge and uplifting influences will reach every member of the race, to afford all an opportunity for life everlasting in a world-wide Eden.

CASTLES

Let them that would build castles in the air,
Vault thither, without step or stair;
Instead of feet to climb, take wings to fly,
And think their turrets top the sky.
But let me lay all my foundations deep,
And learn, before I run, to creep.
Who digs through rocks to lay his ground-works low,
May in good time build high and sure, though slow.

CHRISTOPHER HARVEY.

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