

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An Exposition

by

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## CHAPTER TWO

A chapter of great importance is before us. Never was its closest and prayerful study so needed as in our days. Most of GOD's people are ignorant of that which GOD in His Grace did on the day of Pentecost; they know little of the exact meaning of the great event, which took place and their share and part in it as believers. This lack of knowledge is often responsible for all the fads and fanciful interpretations we meet about us.

We divide this chapter into five parts.

- I. The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit** (Verses 1-4).
- II. The immediate effect of His Presence** (Verses 5-15).
- III. Peter's address** (Verses 14-36).
- IV. The result of the delivered testimony** (Verses 37-41).
- V. The gathered company in fellowship** (Verses 42-47).

*Before we take up the first part and study the text, we desire to make a few general remarks on the great historical event, the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.*

What took place on that memorable day and what was accomplished? First of all the promise of the Father as well as of the Son was accomplished. It is familiar to every reader of the New Testament that John the Baptist had witnessed concerning Him who was to baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3). The Lord also had spoken repeatedly to His disciples about the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 11 we read His words: "**If therefore ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much rather shall the Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?**" This promise related to the future.

In John 7:37-39 we read: "**In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He said concerning the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus had not yet glorified.)**"

The promised Spirit could therefore not come, the promise could not be fulfilled till the great work of redemption on the cross had been accomplished and the Lord JESUS CHRIST had risen from the dead and taken His place in Glory.

In the subsequent promises in this Gospel, the Lord always spoke of the coming of the Comforter in connection with His own departure. He promised that the other Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, was to be in them; but none of these promises could be fulfilled before He Himself had been glorified.

We have already seen how He, before His departure to be with the Father, had told them to tarry in Jerusalem, to await the promise of the Father, and how He had reminded them that: "**John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.**"

On the day of Pentecost all these blessed promises were once and for all fulfilled. As all believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all (Hebrews 10) so all believers share in the accomplished promise of the Father and are in the possession of the Holy Spirit. But we must emphasize that He was not given by measure, but He, the person, came Himself.

What a blessed work, a work we cannot fully estimate, the Lord JESUS CHRIST must have accomplished on the cross, that the third person of the Trinity came down from heaven and has made His abiding place in believing sinners! His presence therefore testifies not only to the fact that the promise of the Father has been accomplished, but also to the efficacy of the precious blood, and that JESUS is in glory at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It is therefore incorrect to ask GOD for the gift of His Spirit, or to plead promises which He fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. It is not scriptural to pray for a greater baptism of the Spirit, as it is often done, or, to ask GOD to give more of the Spirit. He has given us His Spirit, He seals every believer and indwells every child of GOD.

And what are the purposes of the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost?

Without giving a lengthy dissertation on the work of the Holy Spirit in this age we only point out that the purpose of His coming is revealed in the historical event reported to us in this chapter. Other purposes are indicated, and these are later fully revealed in the Pauline Epistles. The Book of Acts, as a purely historical book, does not contain a single doctrine of the Holy Spirit; it rather shows revealed doctrine in its practical side.

Two things are at once apparent. He came upon the assembled believers individually, and also did a work in a corporate way.

Each believer on that day was filled with the Holy Spirit. He came as the indweller to each. But He also was present as the mighty rushing wind which filled all the house. He did not only come upon each, but all were baptized of the Holy Spirit, and He united them into a body.

In I Corinthians 12:13 the more complete revelation is given concerning this fact. **"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."**

The One Spirit is the Holy Spirit as He came on the day of Pentecost, the One Body is the church. All believers were on that day united by the Spirit into the one body, and since then, whenever and wherever a sinner believes in the finished work of CHRIST, he shares in that baptism and is joined by the Spirit to that one body. He may be in dense ignorance about all this, as indeed, the great majority of believers are; but this does not alter the gracious fact of what GOD has done and is doing.

*There is an interesting correspondency between the second chapter of Luke and the second chapter of Acts, which we cannot pass by without mentioning.*

In the first chapter of Luke we have the announcement of the birth of the Saviour. The angel said to Mary, **"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."**

In the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, the same who penned the book of Acts, we read of the accomplishment of that promise given to the virgin. And so the second chapter of Acts contains the fulfillment of a similar promise. The Holy Spirit came and the church, the mystical body of CHRIST began.

We said that Pentecost marks the beginning of the church on earth. This is often doubted by Christian believers. Some claim that the church began in the Old Testament. The sixteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew answers this wrong statement and belief completely. Others teach that the church did not begin on Pentecost, but some time later, after the Apostle Paul had begun his activity. So far has this point been pressed that membership in the body of CHRIST has even been denied to the twelve apostles, that they were exclusively on kingdom ground. That such theories and views are not only fanciful but very confusing and harmful needs not to be demonstrated. It is quite true that the doctrine concerning the church as the body of CHRIST as well as the other relationships was not made known on the day when the Holy Spirit was poured out.

In fact, any doctrine would be out of place in a book which gives a historical account. But this does not mean that the start was not made. The foundation of the building as described in Ephesians are the Apostles and Prophets (not Old Testament Prophets, but the New Testament Prophets). Later Gentiles were added to be joint heirs of the same body and joint partakers of the promises. Then through the chosen instrument, the Apostle Paul, the secret which was not made known in other ages was made known. The Apostles and the Prophets knew of it according to Ephesians 3:5, but only to the Apostle Paul was it given to reveal it.

That the church as the body of CHRIST existed before Paul ever revealed the mystery is clearly seen from the account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

The glorified CHRIST was seen by him on the road to Damascus. He heard Him speak and these were His words: "**Saul, Saul, why persecutest Thou ME?**" He was not persecuting JESUS CHRIST personally, but he was persecuting such who had believed in CHRIST. The Lord from the glory owns these as part of Himself. They were indeed members of His body.

We state it again, the Holy Spirit came to each believer on the day of Pentecost, they received Him, He filled them individually and corporately they were united into one body. And what was done then is done in the case of every believing one who rests on the finished work of CHRIST. As a believer each receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a member of the body of CHRIST.

"There may be a variety of forms and measures in which His power is displayed; there may be and are different degrees in which the joy of His presence is entered into; but the fact remains (and what can be more glorious and blessed than the fact) that, as to Himself he dwells equally in every believer who rests now on the finished redemption in CHRIST JESUS." \*

\* Lectures on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Of many other things which might be mentioned by way of introduction we only mention two.

The testimony was given by the Spirit filled disciples and every man heard them speak in his own language; those who were present were "**out of every nation under heaven.**" They were all Jews not a single Gentile was present. However, the event shows that the good news was to go forth in the new age, to every nation under heaven.

Lastly we call attention to the fact that the events on the day of Pentecost have a special Jewish-national significance. The resurrection of JESUS CHRIST is demonstrated. The signs are given to show unto the people Israel that JESUS of Nazareth whom they rejected is the CHRIST and at the right hand of GOD.

The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of a second offer of mercy to the nation. This fact will be carefully studied as we expound this chapter and the chapters which follow. And now we turn to the text itself.

### **I. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.**

**"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"** (Verses 1-4).

Pentecost is a Jewish feast.

This name was given to this feast by the Greek-speaking Jews, because it occurred 50 days after the offering of the barley sheaf during the Passover feast.

In the Old Testament it has three names.

- "*Chag Ha Kasir*" Feast of Harvest, Exodus 23:16;
- "*Chag Shavuoth*" Exodus 34:22, Feast of Weeks and
- "*Yom ha-Bikkurim*" Numbers 28:26; Day of the First Fruits.

The orthodox Jews call it simply "*Shavuoth*."

It commemorates the wheat harvest. After the exile it became the traditional feast to remember the giving of the law, the birthday of the Torah (law). The orthodox Jews in keeping it at the present time, besides the prayers they offer, read publicly in their synagogues the account of the giving of the law as recorded in Exodus.

From the prophets they read the first chapter of the Prophet Ezekiel and the third chapter of Habakkuk. No doubt this was their custom at the time when the Holy Spirit was poured out. It is not unlikely that the Jews were occupied with the reading of these portions of GOD's Word, when suddenly there came the sound from heaven.

It is certainly a significant fact that some of the outward signs which were present when the law was given, the "tempest," "fire" and "the voice of words" (Hebrews 12:18-19) were prominent on the day when the Holy Spirit came: A new dispensation was inaugurated with outward signs and wonders. But as the outward signs were not present at all times during the dispensation of the law, but simply in the beginning, so in this new dispensation these outward signs were only for the beginning.

The reading on the day of Pentecost of the first chapter of Ezekiel and the third of Habakkuk, especially the latter, is prophetic. It points towards that time when the Lord JESUS will be manifested in visible glory, and when all that will be fulfilled spoken concerning the nation Israel, which was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, nor ever after up to the present time.

Before we look at the details of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit we wish to mention the day of the week on which the event occurred. This is an interesting question. It was no doubt on the Lord's day. The best which has been written on this point is by Lightfoot. As his statements are not accessible to all we quote here from his *Horae Hebraicae*:

"Let us inquire, therefore, whether the day of Pentecost fell on their sabbath day. I know, indeed, that the fifty days are reckoned by some from the resurrection of our Lord; and then Pentecost, or the fiftieth day, must fall on the fiftieth day of the week, that is our Lord's day; but if we number the days from the common epoch, that is from the time of offering the sheaf of firstfruits, which account doubtless Luke follows, then the day of Pentecost fell on the Jewish sabbath. And here, by the good leave of some learned men, it may be questioned, whether the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples on the very day of Pentecost, or not. The reasons of this question may be these:

"1. The ambiguity of the words themselves '**when the day of Pentecost was fully come.**'

In Italian they are translated '*E nel finire del giorno delta Pentecoste*' that is , when it was fully gone.' So that the phrase in the Greek leaves it undetermined, whether the day of Pentecost was fully come or fully gone, and what is there could be alleged against it, should we render it in the latter sense? \*

\* Rotherham translated it "when the day of Pentecost was being filled up." The language shows that the feast was in process.

"2. It is worthy of our observation, that CHRIST the antitype, in answering some types that represented Him, did not tie Himself up to the very day of the type itself for the fulfilling of it, but put it off to the day following. So it was not upon the very day of Passover, but the day following, that CHRIST, our passover, was sacrificed for us; it was not on the very day that the sheaf of the firstfruits was offered, but the day following, that CHRIST became the firstfruits of them that slept. And so it was agreeable to reason and to the order wherein He disposed of things already mentioned, that He should give the day following, the day of His own resurrection from the grave; that the Spirit should not be poured out upon the same day wherein the giving of the law was commemorated, but upon a day that might keep up the commemoration of Himself forever.

"3. We can hardly think of a more fit and proper reason why upon this day they should be gathered together in one place, than that they were so gathered together for the celebration of the Lord's day . . . On that day beyond all controversy, the Holy Spirit did come down amongst them."

On the Lord's day they were all together. How large the number we do not know, yet it is more than probable that every believer in the Lord was present. Suddenly something happened. A sound was heard from heaven. The sound was more than a mighty wind; the literal rendering of the description is "as a violent, impetuous blowing." This mighty rushing, blowing wind filled the house where they were sitting. It all came to pass in the twinkling of an eye.

Before we continue our meditation on this event we call attention briefly to the mode and manner of the departure of the church from the earth. It will be "*suddenly*." This is according to His own and last promise, "**Behold I come quickly**" (lit.: speedily). Some day He will come suddenly for His saints and take them to Glory into His own presence as revealed in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 The birth of the church was an instantaneous event as well as miraculous. The departure of the true church will be the matter of a moment and will be miraculous. But this is only a passing thought suggested by the word "*suddenly*."

The rushing wind, which filled the whole house, was the first sign of the advent of the Holy Spirit. As an outward sign it accompanied the descent of the divine Person who had come to dwell in these believers and to form and start the building, which is His habitation. In I Kings 8, verse 2 we read that the cloud, the sign of the Lord's presence, filled the whole house after the sacrifices had been brought. But here was a still greater event than that which took place at the dedication of the great Solomonic temple. The whole house was filled in which the believers were gathered to signify thereby that from now on there would be a nobler building on earth, the church, the habitation of GOD through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22).

Besides this outward sign for the sense of hearing there was also a visible sign that the Holy Spirit had come. There appeared unto them parted tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. While the filling of the house indicated the fact that His abode would be the church, the parted tongues as of fire sitting upon each, testified to the fact that every one of the company had received Him. There was no difference among them. Peter, John and James did not receive "more of Him" than the youngest and weakest of these believers. The person, not a power or influence: given by measure, had filled each and every believer. He came as the gift of GOD.

The parted tongues as of fire were the symbols of the diverse languages in which the testimony concerning CHRIST and the blessed Gospel was now to go forth. The fire was of course not literal fire. It is symbolical of the righteousness and holiness of GOD, as well as of judgment.

"The tongues were '**as of fire**,' for the testimony of Grace was none the less founded on righteousness. The Gospel is intolerant of evil. This is the wonderful way in which GOD now speaks by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the mercy of GOD, whatever the proved weakness, need and guilt of man, there is not nor can be the least compromise of holiness. GOD can never sanction the evil of man. Hence the Spirit of GOD was thus pleased to mark the character of His presence, even though given of the grace of GOD, but founded on the righteousness of GOD. GOD could afford fully to bless. It was no derogation from His Glory; it was after all but His seal on the perfectness of the work of the Lord Jesus."

And this great gift was not only given to that assembled company of believers, but everyone who is born again throughout this age in which the church is forming, shares in this gift and the Holy Spirit is through Grace the heavenly and abiding guest in the believer. There is no need for the believer to ask Him to come, but the need is to realize in faith that we are the temples of the Holy Spirit and then live and act according to this great truth. But there was a third sign. They began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Thus we have three great signs: The mighty rushing winds, the parted tongues as of fire and the speaking in other tongues, the result of the Holy Spirit's inward presence.

Wind, fire and voices. As stated before the Law at Sinai was given under some of these accompanying signs.

This is likewise true of some of the other Theophanies of the Old Testament, for instance in the history of Elijah, where the tempest, the fire and the still small voice are prominent. All this shows that a divine person, GOD the Holy Spirit, had come.

A most interesting Talmudical tradition declares that when GOD gave the Law from Sinai the voice of GOD parted into seven voices; each of the seven voices again parted into different voices, so that GOD heralded the law in seventy different tongues heard by all the nations of the earth.

This is only a tradition and no doubt incorrect, but here on the day of Pentecost a miracle took place in that all who had received the Holy Spirit spoke in other tongues.

We give this part of the chapter the most careful attention. It is of great importance that we examine this miraculous evidence of the advent and presence of the Holy Spirit as thoroughly as we can. Of late a movement has sprung up, which appears in different sects and calls itself either the Apostolic Faith, or the Pentecost Movement, etc. These movements claim that the Holy Spirit is poured out again and that along with His coming there is the same miracle of the gift of tongues.

And now before we take up this subject in detail we read the contents of the next paragraph of this chapter.

## **II. The immediate effect of His Presence.**

**"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his Own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our Own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying One to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine" (Verses 5-15).**

It is clear from the inspired narrative that all the assembled believers spoke in other tongues, that is, in different languages, and that it was as the Holy Spirit gave them to speak forth.

This third great sign which happened on the day of Pentecost has been differently interpreted, and by Some the miracle has been altogether denied. We mention Very briefly some of these different views.

One prominent view which was already advanced by some of the so-called "church-fathers," and which has not a few modern followers, is that the miracle consisted in the way the multitude heard rather than in the speaking of the Spirit-filled disciples. According to this view the people heard in the different languages, while the company of the believers only spoke in their own tongue. This view hardly needs an answer, because it states something which is in direct opposition to the words of the record, **"they began to speak in other tongues."**

Some of the critics claim that the speaking and hearing must have been the result of a "magnetic report" between the speakers and the hearers. Such a foolish view is easily answered by the fact that they first spake and there was none there to listen, some time later the multitude crowded in, attracted by the rumor. Others declared that the new or other tongues meant a new spiritual language, or that they spoke in an unusual, enthusiastic poetical phraseology, etc. All these versions as well as others are in such flagrant contradiction with the simple words here before us that it is unnecessary to follow them any further.

The speaking in other languages was a miracle produced by the Holy Spirit who had come upon them in mighty power. These Galileans spoke in different tongues, sixteen at least, if not more. "By a sudden and powerful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these disciples uttered, not of their own minds, but as mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, the praises of GOD in various languages hitherto, and possibly at the time itself, unknown to them." \*

\*Dean Alvord in Greek New Testament.

The significance of this miracle speaking in other tongues is not hard to discover. It was the oral manifestation of the parted tongues of fire, which had come upon each. Besides this it proclaimed the great fact that the Holy Spirit had come to make known the blessed Gospel to all nations under heaven, and though no Gentiles were present when this took place, the languages of the Gentiles were heard, and that from Jewish lips, indicating that the Gospel should indeed go forth to the uttermost parts of the earth.

For the unbelieving multitude it was a sign though we do not read anything in the record that they were converted by hearing their different languages spoken. They were amazed and in perplexity, while others mocked; upon those it made no impression at all. The great result on the day of Pentecost was by the preaching of the Gospel from Peter's lips.

This brings before us the question, What did they speak in these different tongues? Did they all proclaim in an orderly discourse the Gospel, or relate something concerning the person of CHRIST, or were their utterances rather of an ecstatic nature, in the form of praising GOD, exalting His Name? We believe the latter was the case. It was rather an outburst of praise to GOD for the great things He had done, than the preaching of the Gospel. All was done, no doubt, in perfect order and not in confusion. The gift was bestowed just for this occasion and not for future use.

We look in vain through this Book to find that they continued in speaking in these different languages. It is a wrong conception to think that they exercised this gift ever after in preaching the Gospel. From the sixteenth chapter we learn that Paul and Barnabas did not understand the Lycaonian speech; the Greek language was universally used and made the use of the other languages almost unnecessary.

Twice more we find in this book the tongues mentioned in connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit - in Acts 10:46 and chapter 19:6.

In the first passage Cornelius and his household having believed the Gospel received the Holy Spirit and they spake with tongues. Not a word is said in this instance that other languages were used. There was no need for it. It was an ecstatic speech glorifying GOD.

In chapter 19 after the Apostle Paul had laid hands upon the disciples of John whom he had found in Ephesus (a thing which Peter did not do with Cornelius) the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Here again not a word is said about anyone hearing a strange language. The speaking in tongues is here paired with prophesying.

*These are the three instances in the Book of Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned.*

On the day of Pentecost; Cornelius and his house and the Jewish disciples found in the dispersion, waiting for the Hope of Israel.

In each case it was for a sign and for a specific purpose, but only in the first instance are different dialects and languages mentioned.

- On the day of Pentecost the gift was for a sign to the multitude;
- In chapter 10 the evidence to Peter and the Apostles that the Gentiles had received the same gift (chapter 11:15) and
- In chapter 19 the outward evidence that the Jewish disciples of John had also received the Holy Spirit and shared in the same gift.

We read not a word about this gift in connection with the other places visited by the apostles, not a word is said about speaking in tongues in the ministry of Philip in Samaria, nor during the great journeys of the Apostle Paul, with the exception of the case mentioned above. It is therefore clear that the speaking in tongues was neither a universal nor a permanent gift, and that it appeared only in these three cases for a sign.

We emphasize these facts on account of these spurious movements which claim that a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit is now in progress, that each believer must seek "his Pentecost" and that the true evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the speaking in an unknown tongue.

Such claims are unscriptural and cannot at all be confirmed by the historical account of this book for thousands and tens of thousands were saved and baptized by the one Spirit into the one body, the Holy Spirit filling them, without ever speaking in an unknown tongue. Stephen was a believer who was indeed full of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere do we read that he had the gift of tongues.

However in the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians we find a long chapter in which "**speaking in unknown tongues**" is largely entered into. From this chapter we learn that that gift was prevalent in the Corinthian assembly (chapter 14). In the twelfth chapter where the different gifts of the Spirit are enumerated we find the speaking in tongues and the interpretation of these tongues mentioned. They stand last in the list, showing thereby their inferior place.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, addressed to that assembly of believers who enjoyed the best gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Word of Wisdom and the Word of Knowledge, no mention whatever is made of the speaking in tongues. What the spiritual condition of the assembly in Corinth was we learn from this entire epistle.

Their walk was carnal, all kinds of wicked things had been tolerated in their midst; sectarianism and vain-glory held sway. Their spiritual knowledge was very low indeed, and the Holy Spirit could not flash forth the great truths, which He so fully reveals in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Paul had to take up a good part of the Epistle with correcting their evil habits and walk. That the gift of tongues was sought for by these Corinthians can be learned from the chapter in which the Holy Spirit through Paul enlarges upon this gift. May they not have sought it for the sake of display rather than to glorify GOD with it? Then no doubt women were in the foreground, and they are especially cautioned. **"Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church"** (14:34-35).

In this modern movement women seem to be very much in the foreground, acting in many instances as preachers and leaders, and therefore in direct disobedience to the Word of GOD. Eyewitnesses have told us that they were in such "gift of tongue meetings" where women became hysterical, rolled on the floor, uttered all kinds of queer noises, screeched like the former prophets of Baal "Oh GOD, send the power!" One friend said he felt he was among demons. Convulsions, rigor and foaming at the mouth like madmen were also noticed. Some such things may have also happened in Corinth for we read several exhortations in this chapter which point in this direction. **"For God is not the author of confusion (lit.: tumult)"** (verse 33). **"Let all things be done decently and in order"** (verse 40).

We quote here from a pamphlet by Dr. Arthur T. Pierson, on I Corinthians 14.

(1) Speaking in an unknown tongue is unintelligible to the hearer. If it be genuine, it is only known as such to GOD, so that even when one so speaks in the Spirit he speaks mysteries to all others-which we take to be the true reading here.

(2) Speaking with tongues, therefore, is not in and by itself edifying to men. While prophesying is profitable for "edification, exhortation and comfort," the gift of tongues in itself can do no more than cause the hearer to wonder and be in awe at what he understands not.

(3) Speaking with tongues, therefore, is comparatively undesirable and unserviceable. It ranks last among all the Spirit-gifts and manifestations, and is mentioned among the last in the enumeration in chapter 12:7-10, where seven other gifts out-rank it.

(4) Speaking with tongues is dependent for all real value upon the companion gift of interpretation of tongues, and hence is coupled with it in the previous category of gifts (12:10). In fact, only such interpretation of what is uttered can lift it to the level of **"that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"** (Ephesians 4:29). There is no speaking with tongues apart from such interpretation, no profit, for it brings no "revelation," "knowledge," "prophesying," or "doctrine" (verse 6).

(5) More even than this: speaking with tongues may degenerate into an empty display of the mysterious - a mere babble, if not Babel, of confusion, like many "sounds" (or "tunes" - margin), in which no one can tell what is sense and what is nonsense, what is spurious and what is genuine.

(6) Speaking with tongues is rather a means of dispersion than of closer association. Its tendencies are divergent, not convergent. As at Babel, when they could not understand one another's speech they separated and scattered, so, if the hearer "**know not the meaning of the voice,**" the speaker will **'be unto him a barbarian'** - i.e., a foreigner, and conversely.

(7) Such a gift, therefore, acts rather as a hindrance than a help to common joint worship. Part of the power and acceptableness of all worship and service in the assembly depends on the responsiveness of the worshipper to the leader. Whether it be the service of song, praise, or prayer, or hearing of the Word, what is in a dead language cannot evoke the hearer's "Amen." How can the heart intelligently answer to what is not understood by the "unlearned?" However well the speaker does, the hearer cannot enter into the sentiment of what is spoken, and joint worship or communion is impossible.

(8) The Apostle hints further that speaking with tongues alone - independent of interpretation - may even work damage. He pictures an assembly, where all speak with tongues, as impressing an unbelieving outsider so unfavorably that he declares them "mad" (verse 23). In such a jargon of confused sounds, he thinks himself in a mad house.

(9) Paul goes even further, and by the Spirit enjoins that, when such gift actually is bestowed, its exercise shall be carefully regulated. And for such regulation he gives two distinct laws:

- (a) The law of precedence;
- (b) the law of silence.

**"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."**

(10) His final argument is that what produces confusion and not order cannot be of GOD, for He is not the author of disorder, but of decent conformity to law and order, and "peace." While, therefore, speaking with tongues is not to be forbidden, it is not to be coveted, but rather the edifying, instructive, intelligible utterances of inspired teaching.

(11) It is more than hinted here also that speaking with tongues is peculiarly open to spurious imitation. The Devil, who is the master counterfeiter, is always with peculiar subtlety imitating the manifestations of the Spirit. When GOD is mightily working, so is he; and no one gift of the Spirit is so easily "aped" as this. So long as there be no interpretation to make the language intelligible, who shall tell whether it be blessing or cursing, reverent or profane! Not only can interpretation alone make speaking with tongues edifying, but this alone can attest it as genuine.

(12) Some think that the injunction here, bidding the Corinthian "**women keep silence in the churches,**" has special reference to this speaking with tongues. Women in the Orient were then, as now, especially excitable and prone to excess. When once emerging from seclusion and privacy of their home life, and introduced into the new freedom of the Christian brotherhood, they often ran into the wildest fanaticism, and might easily have mistaken an hysterical mania, with its incoherent mutterings, for a gift of supernatural utterance.

Another recent writer on the *glossolaly* or gift of tongues states the matter still more briefly.

"We notice that, though Paul spoke with tongues more than all the Corinthians, he does not set a high value on the gift of *glossolaly*. He ranks it last of the gifts and apparently among childish things (I Corinthians 14:18-20).

For (1) it did not edify others.

Rather (2) it tended to cause disorder in the church.

(3) The fact that the speaking in tongues lay in the spiritual and not in the rational sphere opened the door to dangerous confusion.

Its phenomena might be counterfeited either by evil spirits, or by religious impostors and charlatans of which the world was then full. Again it might be hard at times to distinguish them from similar symptoms due to physical causes, etc."

This warning is well founded indeed. It is a territory on which Satan appears as an angel of light and it is to be expected that he will develop an increasing energy in this direction as the coming of our Lord draws nigh. In an address on the characteristics of the age, \*

\*Published in pamphlet form by "*Our Hope*."

Mr. Philip Mauro spoke a timely word on this matter which bears repeating:

"The wicked spirits, or demons, who form part of this spiritual host, display abnormal activity at the time of our Lord's first coming; and now again, as His second coming approaches, they are aroused to a state of great activity. Spirit 'control' and 'possession,' accompanied by unusual physical demonstrations, rigor, protracted unconsciousness, convulsions, hysterics, spasmodic movements, strange noises, which may or may not be articulate speech of some sort (and hence easily confounded with the Holy Spirit's gift of tongues) are now quite common and becoming more so. These abnormal manifestations are no longer confined to circles where Spiritism, hypnotism and the like are openly cultivated, but are now breaking out among groups of GOD's people who have been induced to stray away from scriptural ground, and to seek for excitements and 'experiences,' who are urged by misguided teachers to yield themselves, to come under 'control,' to seek 'power' instead of weakness, and otherwise to disregard the plain injunctions of Scripture."

Now while it is true that there was such a gift as speaking in an unknown tongue in the apostolic age, and no Christian believer would doubt the power of GOD to impart to a person the gift to preach the Gospel in a foreign tongue, we do not believe that this gift of speaking in an unknown tongue was to abide in the church. Repeatedly claims were made in years gone by that it had been restored (for instance during the Irvingite delusion in England), but in every case it was found to be spurious or emanating from the enemy. The present day "apostolic or Pentecostal movement" with its high pretensions and false doctrines, lacking true scriptural knowledge and wisdom, creating new schisms in the body, with its women leaders and teachers, has all the marks of the same great counterfeiter upon it.

The Epistle to the Ephesians, that highest revelation of GOD, speaks of the gifts which are to abide. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers; we still have them. The apostles are of course the men of GOD, the great gifts through whom the Holy Spirit revealed the great doctrines and truths of the New Testament, Peter, John, James, Paul as well as those who were not apostles, but the prophets, the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. Evangelists preach the Gospel so that the body of CHRIST may become complete as to numbers; these will ever remain till the last member is added to the body. Then pastors and teachers to shepherd the flock of GOD, for the perfecting of the Saint. These gifts of our risen Head will abide. But there is not a word said about miraculous sign-gifts in this great Epistle.

But some have suggested that when the age draws to its close the Holy Spirit will once more unfold special energies to give a last witness, and that in the closing of the age the Gospel of the kingdom will be heralded with accompanying signs and miracles among all the nations. This is partially founded on truth. The Gospel of the kingdom is to be preached and most likely special signs may accompany that preaching during that period known as "**the great tribulation.**" However, the preachers of that last witness are not Christian believers, members of the one body, hut the Jewish remnant will do this great work.

On the other hand, everything in the New Testament Epistles as well as in the Book of Revelation, shows that decline, ruin and apostasy and not restoration of apostolic gifts and power mark the close of this Christian age. To demonstrate this fully would be quite impossible in this connection.

Before we follow Peter's great address to the assembled multitude, a brief word on the peoples, which are mentioned as composing the amazed company, may be in order. When it says "**every nation under heaven,**" it does not mean that representatives of all the Gentile nations were there. The phrase has reference to the Jews and proselytes living then in dispersion outside of the land.

All the countries into which they had wandered were represented in the multitude. Gentiles as such were not present. Nor were those present only from the house of Judah. The ten tribes were most likely also represented. This may be learned from Peter's address.

He first addresses the men of Judah and all that dwell at Jerusalem; then he addresses them as men of Israel. So that in all probability Judah and Israel, the two houses into which the people of GOD had been divided, were represented. These may have dwelt in Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia. That the ten tribes were known in apostolic times is also seen by the fact that James addressed his Epistle to "**the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad** [in the dispersion]."

We mention this because occasionally someone inquires about that fanciful theory called "Anglo-Israel," which claims that the Anglo-Saxon race is composed of the lost tribes.

Representatives of "**all Israel**" were present when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem upon the believing Jews and when Peter arose to address them.

### III. Peter's Address.

**"But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Verses 14-21).

What an impressive scene it must have been when, in the midst of the tumult the outbursts of praise and adoration, the ever-increasing multitude, Peter and the eleven with him arose. Twelve divinely appointed men, the twelve apostles, faced the representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel. Peter is the spokesman. What boldness, courage and directness characterizes now the man and his speech! What a change from the Peter before Pentecost! It was all the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Such boldness and courage to witness for the absent Lord is our blessed privilege likewise, for we have received the same Spirit.

Peter's address deals with the great historical facts of the gospel; the heart and center of it is the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord JESUS. In its scope and pointedness it is a most wonderful production. It is in itself an evidence that the Holy Spirit had come and that He witnessed through Peter.

The main part of the address has three divisions. Each begins with a personal address to the hearers, states a great vital fact in terse language and closes with a passage from the Scriptures.

1. Verses 14-22. In the opening of his address he speaks to them as "**men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem.**" Then, after briefly refuting the charge of drunkenness, he quotes from the book of Joel. With this Scripture quotation the first part of the address closes.
2. Verses 22-28. Now he addresses them as "**men of Israel.**" Here we find a brief witness of the life, the crucifixion and resurrection of JESUS the Nazarene. Then he quotes, from the Book of Psalms, the sixteenth Psalm.
3. Verses 29-36. The last part he begins with "**Brethren**"; in it he speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the result of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. The briefest but deepest of all the Messianic Psalms is quoted, the one hundred and tenth. The chief part of his address closes with the following words: "**Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**"

After the interruption which followed, addressed to the twelve, "**Men and brethren, what shall we do?**" Peter spoke again, and not all his words are reported. "**And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.**"

*What a great model this first sermon after the gift of the Holy Spirit ought to be for all who preach the Word. The Holy Word of GOD has the leading part in it to witness to the person of CHRIST. The difference between Peter's preaching and much of the modern day preaching is indeed appalling. \**

\* The continual use of anecdotes, pleasant little stories, which make old people smile and send the young folks a-giggling is especially to be condemned in Gospel preaching. The Gospel is too solemn a thing to be mixed with hilarity.

*But briefly we shall now meditate on these different parts of Peter's address.*

Its aim as already stated, was to prove to the house of Israel that the crucified JESUS is raised from the dead and that GOD made Him Lord and CHRIST, witnessed to by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The accusation had been, "**these men are full of new wine.**"

To answer this false charge was the first necessary step. Peter lifted up his voice, which means that he spoke in loud tones, which was no doubt needed on account of the confusion which must have prevailed. He declared that it was but the third hour of the day and for this reason it would be next to impossible that the Spirit-filled disciples were drunk with new wine. The third hour corresponds to our ninth hour of the morning.

On the Sabbath or other feast days no Jew would eat or drink before that hour; this custom was universally observed at that time, and it is still so with the so-called "*Chasidim*," the most orthodox Jews. Nothing is tasted before the prayers of the synagogue are ended; these are sometimes prolonged till noon. This fact, apparent to all and not controvertible, disposed at once of the false charge. And now Peter states what it is they were witnessing. He quotes from one of the great Old Testament prophecies in the book of Joel. \*

\* See Exposition of "The Prophet Joel." Published by "*Our Hope*."

That Peter quotes Joel in connection with his address to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shows the accuracy of the Scriptures, for Joel's prophecy was addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. In the next place we notice the language Peter uses in quoting Joel: "**This is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel**"; careless and superficial expositors have often stated that Peter said that all this happened in fulfillment of what was spoken by Joel. He did not use the word fulfilled at all. Had he spoken of a fulfillment then of Joel's prophecy, he would have uttered something which was not true, for the great prophecy of Joel was not fulfilled on that day. Nor has this prophecy been fulfilled since Pentecost, nor will it be fulfilled during this present Gospel age.

This great prophecy which Peter quotes in part will be accomplished at the end of the Jewish age, that end which has not yet come and which cannot come as long as the church is on the earth. \*

\* There remains one week (seven years) of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy to be fulfilled. That last week comes in after the church is completed and these seven years constitute the end of the Jewish age, interrupted by this present church age.

*Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled in connection with the coming of the Lord.*

Before that day comes there will be visible signs of which the prophet speaks. All this is still in the future. Before it can all be fulfilled, the events spoken of by Joel as preceding this prophecy must be accomplished, and, besides this, the church must be removed from the earth in the way as revealed in the Word (I Thessalonians 4:15-18).

Comparing Peter's words here with Joel's words we find that Peter uses instead of the phrase found in Joel, "**it shall come to pass afterward,**" the expression, "**it shall come to pass in the last days.**"

The prophecy relates, therefore, to the last days. This phrase, found in the Old Testament, has reference to the coming days of the Messiah, when He shall come as King and establish His Kingdom in the midst of His earthly people. See Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1; Jeremiah 23:20; Hosea 3:4-5, etc.

In this sense Peter uses the phrase here and not as applying to this present age at all. He tells the assembled multitude that something similar to that which they now were witnessing GOD had promised in connection with the days of Messiah. With His coming as King, the Spirit was to be poured out upon all flesh. That which they saw and heard was indeed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but not in the full sense as given in the prophecy of Joel.

What took place was an evidence that, JESUS, whom they had crucified, is the true Messiah and that what had taken place is a pledge that in due time all of the prophecy contained in the book of Joel would be fulfilled.

What had really taken place was not known to Peter and to the eleven at that time. It was only subsequently revealed that by the one Spirit all were baptized into one body; the great purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit for this present age was not revealed or stated on the day of Pentecost. It was the fact only which Peter speaks of, that GOD had promised the gift of the Spirit in connection with the coming of the Messiah.

In regard to the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy we say once more than it cannot fall into the present age. Nor will it be fulfilled as long as the church is not removed from the earth.

It comes with the second visible coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, preceding the establishment of His Kingdom. Pentecost was only the earnest of what is yet to take place in Jerusalem.

**"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him. being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life. thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance"** (Verses 22-28).

*Peter now puts before them in the second part of his address the whole story of the Messiah, whom they had rejected.*

He could therefore use, not the name as he had confessed Him at Caesarea Philippi, but he speaks of Him as "**Jesus of Nazareth.**" By that name, the Nazarene, the lowly, blessed One had been known to them. That name, too, was written above His Cross; it was the name which was an offence to them. Inasmuch as it was the aim of the Holy Spirit to show the guilt of the nation, to demonstrate the humiliation and rejection of CHRIST and to declare His resurrection, no other name could be used. For us it would be improper to speak of Him as "**Jesus of Nazareth**"; we call Him by His name as He is revealed in resurrection, "**The Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Briefly Peter traces the events during the past three years. These events were familiar to them.

This JESUS the Nazarene was a man witnessed to by GOD by works of power and wonders and signs, which God had wrought. Many of his hearers had been, no doubt, eye-witnesses of the power of GOD and the wonders done. They were fully convinced, like Nicodemus, that no one could do these signs unless GOD was with him (John 3:2).

This same argument that His works prove Him to be that which He claimed to be was used by Himself. "**The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me**" (John 5:36).

But the stumbling block was that He had been crucified. Could He be truly the Messiah, who was spit upon, mocked, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross? Was such an end in a shameful crucifixion not a sure evidence that He was not the One who was to possess glory and honor? The cross of CHRIST was the stumbling-block. But the Holy Spirit removes this and gives His answer.

The death of JESUS of Nazareth was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD.

The sufferings of the Messiah had been fully revealed in the Old Testament; He must suffer these things and so enter into glory. All had come to pass according to the foreknowledge of GOD. Eternally, from before the foundation of the world, GOD had made His plan and arranged all in His counsel.

But Peter also shows that they were the guilty instruments. They by lawless men - that is, the Gentiles, into whose hands they had delivered JESUS - had crucified and slain Him. They were responsible for what had taken place" Thus the death of CHRIST is described.

*But next follows the great climax, the resurrection of the One who had been slain.*

GOD raised Him up from the dead. By resurrection through GOD's power the final proof is given, yea, the highest proof, that JESUS of Nazareth is the CHRIST.

It was impossible that He could be held by the power of death. In being raised from the dead the "**pains of death**" were loosed. He came forth as the Firstfruits, victor over death and the grave. His redeemed people can now shout: "**Oh, death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave, where is thy victory?**" The deliverance for them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15) had come.

Three great evidences are therefore given by Peter that JESUS of Nazareth is the Messiah:

- His life,
- His death, fulfilling what had been in the counsel and foreknowledge of GOD,
- His resurrection.

The quotation from the sixteenth Psalm follows. What mind of man could ever have discovered in that Psalm a prophecy about CHRIST? The Holy Spirit throws His light upon the Psalm. The Spirit who spoke through David had CHRIST in view. What David uttered he said "**concerning Him.**" This ought to silence every "higher critic." All this needs no further explanation.

In this portion of his address Peter shows the path of CHRIST from humiliation to the death of the cross and His resurrection and all GOD's doings. In the next paragraph, the last part of the address of Peter, we behold Him by GOD made Lord and CHRIST.

"The Man Jesus of Nazareth was by GOD demonstrated, by GOD wrought in among them, by GOD's counsel delivered unto death, by GOD raised up, and finally by GOD made Lord and Christ." (Alford, Greek Testament).

**"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Verses 29-36).**

With these words Peter has reached the climax of his address. "**Men and brethren,**" a Hebraism meaning simply "*Brethren,*" the same phrase he had used in addressing the waiting company before Pentecost, is how he addresses the gathered people. This loving expression shows how the Holy Spirit had filled him with love and how his heart was full of affection for his brethren according to the flesh. But he also is made very bold by the Spirit.

His boldness, however, is not harshness, but characterized by tenderness; what he says is couched in humble and polite language.

**"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you."**

He addresses them on the matter of the prophecy already quoted from the sixteenth Psalm concerning "**the patriarch David.**" Here alone David is called a patriarch because he is the progenitor of the kingly race.

There was a reason for enlarging upon that prophecy, which becomes the foundation of his appeal. None of the rabbis ever thought of applying the Psalm to the promised Messiah. There is, however, an old tradition, which no doubt was known and believed in that day, which applied the Psalm literally to David. This application was as follows: "Those words, "**my flesh shall rest in hope,**" teach us that neither worm nor insect had any power over David."

Peter shows that such a traditional belief that the words referred to David himself were incorrect. They could not mean King David.

David had died and been buried (I Kings 2:10). Moses' burial place was not known, but the tomb (literally monument) of David was known amongst them in that day (Nehemiah 3:16).

David saw corruption. It was, therefore, impossible that the prophecy could mean him. But David was a prophet and as such he spoke, not of himself, but of the promised descendant, who was to come out of his loins to occupy his throne.

The promised son of David was none other than the CHRIST. So, "**seeing this before**" by the Word of GOD (see the similar expression in Galatians 3:8), he spoke concerning the resurrection of the CHRIST; in Him alone were these words fulfilled.

*And now comes Peter's witness and that of the eleven as well as the other assembled believers.*

**"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof We all are witnesses."**

They had talked with Him, seen His body, knew that it was a real body of flesh and bones. \*

\* The perniciousness of the denial of the physical resurrection of our blessed Lord as taught in different evil "isms" (Millennial Dawn also called "International Bible Student Association") of the present day is fully laid bare in meditating on these words.

But Peter does not stop here with the fact of His resurrection. The Holy Spirit bears witness to an exaltation which human eyes had not beheld at that time. Stephen, Saul of Tarsus and the Apostle John were later privileged to behold the CHRIST in Glory. Here it is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. This JESUS has been exalted by the right hand of GOD. The presence of the Holy Spirit, who had been poured forth, as they beheld and heard, was the evidence that JESUS was with the Father at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Again the Holy Spirit turns to the Scriptures. How clearly He proves Himself on the day of His advent that He testifies in the Word and through the Word!

He quotes now another Psalm, which was known among the Jews as prophesying about the Messiah.

**"David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool."**

This is the beginning of that sublime 110th Psalm. This Psalm our Lord had used to silence His enemies.

His own testimony had brought out four indisputable facts about that Psalm.

1. That David wrote the Psalm.
2. That he wrote it by the Spirit.
3. That the Psalm spoke of Himself.
4. That it revealed Himself as both David's son and David's Lord (cf. Matthew 22:41-46).

And now the Holy Spirit uses this Psalm likewise to show that the CHRIST had to ascend into heaven and take His place at the right hand of GOD till the time should come when His enemies are made His footstool.

This exalted place JESUS the Nazarene had now taken; that He was really there was fully demonstrated by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

*But we must not overlook something else which this prophecy teaches.*

These Jews might have said, If JESUS of Nazareth is the Messiah, why does He not take the throne of His father David and begin His Kingdom reign? The 110th Psalm gives the answer. He was to go to heaven first and sit upon His Father's throne. He was to wait there for the promised Kingdom while His enemies are in opposition to Him.

How perfect the Word of GOD is!

Here, then, was perfect proof, perfect evidence of the rejected One being the promised Messiah, raised from the dead, seated in Glory, waiting for the Kingdom, the throne of His father David. The Holy Spirit witnessed to all this.

Solemnly brief is the summing up and the appeal.

**"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."**

The crucified One is Lord and CHRIST. This was the great theme of Peter's address on the day of Pentecost. And this is still the great and blessed theme of the Gospel, which, whenever it is preached, has the power of GOD with it:

- CHRIST died
- CHRIST arose
- CHRIST is Lord
- CHRIST is in Glory
- CHRIST is coming again.

#### **IV. The Results of the Delivered Testimony.**

**"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Verses 37-41).**

Such were the wonderful results. It could not be otherwise. The Word had been preached. The Holy Spirit carried it home with convicting power to the hearts of the hearers. Before His ascension the Lord had left the promise to his disciples that they were to receive power with the gift of the Spirit. This power to witness had been bestowed upon the disciples and was fully manifested in Peter's bold testimony.

The Holy Spirit backed it with His mighty power and the hearts and consciences of the hearers were pierced. They were convicted, after hearing all these words, of the great sin which had been committed by them in the rejection of JESUS. The guilt had been fully demonstrated, and now they cried out in terror: **"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"**

There is not a moment's delay in answering the great question. The divinely given instruction comes at once from Peter's lips.

Repentance and baptism stand out very prominently in this answer to the conscience-stricken Jews, and attached to it is the promise of the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

***These words not being correctly understood, have led to much confusion. Upon these words doctrines, especially concerning water baptism, have been built, which are not alone nowhere else taught in the Bible, but which are opposed to the Gospel.***

The words of Peter to his Jewish brethren have been used to make water-baptism a saving ordinance, that only by submission to water-baptism, with repentance and faith in the Lord JESUS, can remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit be obtained.

We do not enlarge upon these unscriptural conceptions nor controvert the utterly false doctrine of "*baptismal regeneration*," but rather, point out briefly what these words of Peter mean.

We must bear in mind that Peter addressed those who had openly rejected JESUS. They had, therefore, also openly to acknowledge their wrong and thus openly own Him as Messiah, whom they had disowned by delivering Him into the hands of lawless men.

*Repentance meant for them to own their guilt in having opposed and rejected JESUS.*

Baptism in the name of JESUS CHRIST (in which it differs from the baptism of John) was the outward expression of that repentance. It was for these Jews, therefore, a preliminary necessity.

And here we must not forget that Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost had it still to do with the kingdom, as we shall more fully learn from his second address in the third chapter.

Another offer of the kingdom was made to the nation.

The great fact that the Holy Spirit had begun to form the body of CHRIST, the church, as stated before, was not revealed then. In this national testimony the word "**repent**" stands in the foreground, and their baptism in the name of Him whom they had crucified was a witness that they owned Him now and believed on Him.

*As soon as we leave the first part of this book in which Peter's preaching to the Jews is prominent, we find the word repentance no longer in the foreground; all the emphasis is upon "believe."* \*

\* Of course faith and repentance are inseparably connected.

The Gospel in all its blessed fullness as revealed to the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, which he called "**my Gospel**," and as preached by him, makes "**faith**" - "**believe**" as prominent as Peter's preaching "**repent**."

Remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit comes by faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

In connection with the Jews, baptism was a condition. There is no such condition for Gentiles.

The case of Cornelius and those who were assembled in his house to whom Peter preached the Gospel, illustrates this fully. He had not mentioned a word about baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When he had declared that through "**His Name**" whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins, his address was cut short:

**"The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word"** (chapter 10:44).

This clearly proves that baptism in water has nothing to do with the gift of the Holy Spirit to these believing Gentiles. Water baptism followed in their case. He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

"For the Jews who had openly rejected the Lord, baptism is always pre-requisite; they must openly Own Him whom they had disowned." The entire setting aside of ordinances in the case of the Gentiles at once destroys the ritualistic teaching as to baptism. According to this ritualistic teaching Cornelius must have received the Spirit while in an unregenerate condition, for he had not yet received "the sacrament of regeneration!" \*

\* *Numerical Bible*; Acts p. 24.

Peter told his hearers that the promise (remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit) is for them and their children. Blessed assurance to them and their offspring!

Theirs are still the promises (Romans 9:1-5).

In a future day the Spirit will be poured out upon them, after their great national repentance, when they will mourn for Him (Zechariah 12:9-14; Ezekiel 39:29). But the promise is also to them who are afar off, as many as the Lord Our GOD shall call. Those afar off are the Gentiles. Peter, no doubt, could not fully realize the far-reaching meaning of this utterance.

The Holy Spirit put these words into His mouth, but Peter did not understand then that the far-off Gentiles were to participate in the gift of the Spirit and become fellow heirs. To make it possible for him to go to the Gentiles the Lord had to give him a special vision. But the statement that the promise is to those who are far off, to as many as the Lord shall call, is otherwise significant. It shows that not all the Gentiles are to be brought into the one body, that not all the Gentiles will accept GOD's gracious offer during the age which began with Pentecost.

Those who received the word were baptized. and in that day about three thousand were added.

*It is not correct to speak of this as a fulfillment of the prediction in the 110th Psalm, as it has been done repeatedly.*

There it says: "**Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.**"

The day of Pentecost was not that promised "**day of . . . power.**"

Nor is this age the age when He manifests His power. When He returns in power and in glory, the day of His power begins and then His earthly people will be a willing people.

What took place on Pentecost was only the earnest of what shall yet take place amongst that nation.

## V. The Gathered Company in Fellowship.

**“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Verses 42-47).**

About three thousand had been added.

We ask, added to what? Certainly to the company of the believers, which by the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been formed into one body. And now we learn at the close of this great chapter, that the church, or assembly, yet unrevealed, was indeed in existence.

*It is a most precious scene which is pictured to us in the above words.*

It shows the energy of the Holy Spirit in uniting these believers into one body, gathered together around the blessed person of the Lord. While Peter gave that great testimony to the people, concerning the rejected, crucified and risen JESUS, that He is Lord and CHRIST, those who repented, having believed the message, were added by the Spirit to the body. In the foreground of the description of this happy, gathered company stands the fact that they **"continued steadfastly [persevered] in the apostles' doctrine."**

There was need of instruction and the Lord had given command that the apostles were to teach (Matthew 28:20). The teaching of the apostles must, of course, have been concerning the Lord JESUS CHRIST. They were, as revealed later, the foundation of the great spiritual building (Ephesians 2:20).

*That teaching is placed in the first place shows its great importance.*

True fellowship and prayer as well as right living, is only possible in the truth. Throughout the Epistles, which concern the church, doctrine is always the first thing. One of the last exhortations the Holy Spirit gave through Paul, is an exhortation to be true to right teaching.

**"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 1:13).**

Almost one of the last words in this Epistle Paul wrote from the Roman prison predicts the departure from the doctrine of CHRIST. **"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:45).**

*This is exactly what we see about us in the present day.*

An unrecoverable apostasy has set in and the true doctrine, the faith delivered unto the saints, has been given up. In accepting the teaching of the apostles they were in fellowship together. But the fellowship which they possessed and enjoyed was expressed in a special way. It was expressed **"in the breaking of bread."** Some expositors of this book make this **"breaking of bread"** a common meal.

A learned expositor, after a lengthy discussion on the phrase **"breaking of bread,"** as used by the Jews, concludes by saying, "The breaking of bread must not be understood by their eating together, but of the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper); which the Syriac interpreter does render so in express terms; a parallel to which we have in I Corinthians 10:16 and Acts 20:7."

It was the carrying out of the request which the blessed Lord had uttered during that memorable night in the presence of His disciples, **"Do this in remembrance of Me."**

It is significant that we find this mentioned at once in this great historical book. The Holy Spirit having come to glorify CHRIST, did exactly what the Lord had foretold.

**"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you"** (John 14:26).

One of the first things He brought to the remembrance of the disciples was the loving, tender request the Lord had made when He had broken the bread, foretelling the giving of His holy body, and handed them the cup filled with wine, the emblem of the precious blood to be shed.

At that time they knew not what it all meant. But now the sufferings were ended; CHRIST had risen from the dead and returned to the Father. The Holy Spirit had come and opened their understanding. United by Him they met, as it seems *for a time at least*, daily, to break the bread and to pass the cup in remembrance of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit led to this at once He signified by it how pleasing it is to Him to remember the dying love of the Son of GOD.

And if we had been there we would have beheld a simple gathering. No long robed priests officiating, no preparatory service, no ritual; nothing of the other things which tradition has connected with communion and by which the request of the Lord has been so completely obscured. They were just together praising GOD; exercising their holy priesthood by giving thanks in His Name. Then someone, moved by the Holy Spirit would arise and give thanks and break the bread, of which all partook, and the same was done with the cup, which passed from hand to hand.

It must have been this breaking of bread which kept them close to the Lord and which kept His Person and His great love ever fresh before their hearts.

There is no command given anywhere how often the Lord's supper is to be observed.

Elsewhere we find that they came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Chapter 20:7).

No doubt that was the custom in the assemblies at that time. Is it too much to carry out His loving request every Lord's Day, the day on which He left the grave? It is a sad evidence of the spiritual condition of Christendom, the way the request of the Lord is ignored. How grieving this must be to the Spirit of GOD. And what shall one say of such, who had the knowledge of the preciousness and simplicity of all this and who have given up the Lord's Supper altogether because they believe it is an ordinance of the Kingdom.

Then prayer is mentioned.

They had their prayer meetings in which they prayed to GOD in the name of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

**"And fear came upon every soul."**

The power of GOD was manifested in the gathered company; besides this many signs and wonders were wrought through the Apostles.

*Then we find something additional. They had all things common and sold their possessions and goods.*

This was peculiar to Jerusalem and was an additional testimony to the existence of the one body, that they were members one of another. It was like a great happy family, which in reality they were through the Grace of GOD.

It has often been attempted to reproduce these conditions, which has invariably led to great failure and dishonor to the Lord and the cause of CHRIST. All this was perfectly in order in the beginning in Jerusalem. We believe it was arranged just in that way to give at once the strongest possible picture of that into which the united gathered company had been formed - one body.

*They also went to the temple with one accord.*

In this they fulfilled but their great mission of being a testimony to the nation. The breaking of bread, however, was carried on from house to house; in this respect they were outside of the camp.

And how happy they were!

They had CHRIST, and that was enough. No system of theology, creeds, set of forms or any such thing, with which historical Christianity abounds - "Nothing but CHRIST."

They received their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising GOD and having favor with all the people. Joy and singleness of heart are the two great characteristics of the true believer.

The good work went on. Many more were added to the assembly. They were added not by the efforts of themselves, by all kinds of methods, as it is done in our days to increase "church membership," but the LORD added to the assembly.

He alone can add to that body of which He Himself is the head.

Some have translated "Added daily those being saved." There is no need of doing this. It is correct - "**such as should be saved.**"

All those who were added by the Lord daily were true believers and as such they were saved. And yet they also were to be saved. The clouds of judgment were fast gathering over Jerusalem and over the nation; all who were added to the assembly were to be saved out of the judgment soon to fall upon that nation.

Thus ends the great and blessed chapter, the historical record of the advent of the Holy Spirit and the empowerment of the church.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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