

Acts 2

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon highlights the significance of the Holy Ghost coming to dwell with the disciples of Jesus, signifying the accomplishment of redemption and the beginning of a new era in the history of God's people.

Scripture: Joel 2:1, Matthew 12:19-20, John 7:39, Acts 2:4-36, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 2:22

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Grace and Redemption"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the monumental event of the Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost, marking the transformation of believers into the dwelling place of God. He explains how this event signifies the fulfillment of God's promise and the opening of grace to all nations, transcending the barriers established at Babel. The Holy Spirit's descent, characterized by wind and fire, empowered the disciples to proclaim the gospel in various languages, demonstrating God's desire for all to hear His message. Darby contrasts the law and the gospel, highlighting that through Christ's death and resurrection, redemption is available to everyone, not just the Jews. He warns against the rejection of this grace, which is essential for salvation.

Transcript

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST.

But the great event of which we have spoken now claims our attention - the immense fact of the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell with the disciples of Jesus, in each, and in the midst of all together. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, the church as a universal assembly is the temple of God; and then, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, the body of the faithful is the temple of God. All those who, steadfast in Jesus, habitually gathered together were thus assembled on the day of Pentecost. We have seen (chap. 1:14), that they continued with one accord in prayer while waiting for the Comforter, promised according to the word of Jesus.

Suddenly an impetuous wind is felt, filling all the house where they sat, as the cloud filled the tabernacle, [temple] so that the priests could not enter there (1 Kings 8:11). But now men themselves composed the tabernacle where God disdained not to dwell. The blood of Jesus had purified them, and rendered them fit to be the habitation of God through the Spirit (or in Spirit) Eph. 2:22. Marvellous truth, fruit of accomplished redemption, and blessed knowledge, that a Man, much more than a man, sits at the right hand of God (John 7:39). But how beautiful is the truth, this divine fact, that - such is the effect of the death and of the blood of Christ, and of our reconciliation and purification - instead of driving away the priests by His presence, God, in grace, makes us His habitation! What a contrast between the law and the gospel!

326 But, besides this, a marvellous testimony is found in this fact to the grace of God. The presence of the Holy Ghost depended on the sitting of the Man Jesus at the right hand of God; demonstration and fruit of the accomplishment of the work of redemption. Now this could not be limited to the Jewish people. This presence was in itself a testimony to that accomplishment, and the earnest of our inheritance, Christ being dead for all, and ascending into glory. For the moment, the patience of God fulfilled the work of grace among the Jews, people of the promises; but the gospel which should be preached was for the whole world.

When the judgment of God fell on man at the tower of Babel, it dispersed them, confounding their speech; but God took Abraham, separating him from his country and from his father's house, to have a seed and then a people for Himself. During many years God endured the iniquity and unfaithfulness of this people, sending prophets, till no further remedy could be found; at last He sent His own Son, and they, as we know, rejected and crucified Him. Then the nation is put aside till the sovereign grace of God - His church, the fulness of the Gentiles, being gathered out - commences anew on the footing of the new covenant, and of the presence of the Messiah on the earth.

In the meantime He gathers together the heirs of Christ, the heavenly assembly. Thus - although for a moment the Spirit had separated in the midst of the Jews, spared as a nation by the intercession of Christ on the cross, till they should have rejected a glorified Christ in the same way that they had a crucified Christ come in humiliation: and also to gather together all those among this people that had ears to hear - it is shewn by the Spirit how the God of grace was ready to overstep the limits of the chosen people and surmount the judgment of Babel, speaking to all the people in their own tongue - highest testimony of grace towards the world!

327 The barriers remained, but God surmounted them - passed over them - in order to announce the Saviour's grace and salvation unto the whole world. We also see this special gift every time that God intervenes anew, as in Samaria and in the house of Cornelius. In fact, it was impossible that a glorified Saviour should be only the Jewish Saviour. The history of this people, when they had rejected the Saviour, was finished, save by grace: and the eternal redemption of God could not be for the Jews alone.

The visible character that the Holy Ghost takes corresponds to this work. When it descended on Christ, the Spirit was like unto a dove, symbol of the meekness and sweet tranquillity of Him of whom it was written, "He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matt. 12:19, 20). But to the disciples He said, "That which I say in the darkness, tell it in the light; and that which ye have heard in the ear, proclaim it on the house-tops."

The Spirit came then as an impetuous wind, filling all the house, and as cloven tongues of fire. The partition was symbolical of the diverse languages, the fire of the penetrating power of the word of God, discerners of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It seems to us, that not only the apostles, but all the one hundred and twenty, were invested with this power. They were all together; and the explanation given by Peter of the prophecy of Joel confirms the matter (Joel 1:14, 15; Joel 2:1, 17).

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in strange tongues, according as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now, at Jerusalem, men of all countries were present, and the rumour of what had happened brought them together. This great crowd was astonished to hear each his own dialect, speaking together and saying, "Are not all these Galileans? How then do we hear each his own tongue?" They were

in doubt, saying, "What meaneth this?" Others, cavilling, said, "They are full of new wine." These were, especially the Jews, always prone to incredulity.

To them Peter replies, speaking firmly in their mother-tongue, and makes them understand that this was what Joel had said, prophesying that these things should happen in the last days. It is clear, on reading Joel, I doubt not, that the Holy Ghost will be poured out anew when Israel is re-established in its own land. It will then be the rain of the latter season. Remark that verse 30 of Joel 2 should come before those preceding. These things will happen before the terrible day of the Lord comes: but the blessings are after that day. Peter says, in a general way, "in the last days," and speaks of judgment as yet to come, as in fact was the case.

328 But what is important in his discourse is the presentation to the conscience of the Jews of their actual position: because, whatever the case may be, God is always clear and positive in the declaration and in the setting out of the sins of those souls where grace works. In short, this was their position; they had outraged and crucified Him whom God had set at His right hand, His own Son. Him they had put to death, and God had raised Him up, besides what had been demonstrated by the power manifested in His works. Horrible position! and we say it not only for the Jews, but for all men. Their Messiah, foundation of all their hopes, rejected; the Son of God put to death - a rupture which seemed irreparable between God and man; and on man's side, it was in fact irreparable.

All was lost. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and mankind had refused it. Sin was there, transgression against the law was already there: God had come in grace, and man had not received Him. Now He had gone back into heaven; but, blessed be His name, the counsels of God were not frustrated: far from that, they were accomplished. Grace had won the victory; and where man had manifested his enmity against God, God had manifested His love towards man, and accomplished the work for the salvation of believers in Christ. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by hand of lawless men have crucified and slain."

God has made use of the iniquity and enmity of man to accomplish the work of redemption. The enmity of man and the love of God were contrasted in the same fact on the cross, in the glorious manifestation that His love surpassed and surmounted the enmity of man. Woe to him who neglects and refuses this immense grace, this work alone efficacious for salvation!

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