

The Acts of the Apostles - Part 1

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon on The Acts of the Apostles explores the continuation of Christ's ministry through the Holy Ghost and the importance of repentance and forgiveness.

Scripture: Joel 2:28-29, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 24:49, John 20:22, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 13:38-39, Romans 1:16, Hebrews 10:14

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "The Great Commission"

Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the continuity of Christ's ministry through the Holy Spirit as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, emphasizing that the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins is central to both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. He highlights the significance of the Holy Spirit's role in empowering the apostles and the early church, noting that the resurrection of Christ marks a new phase in His ministry. Darby also addresses the importance of understanding the relationship between the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as well as the implications for the church's mission to preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Transcript

Acts 1

We shall find that "The Acts" follows Luke's Gospel: it speaks of a "former treatise," which is the Gospel, but it follows it in its tone and character.

Is the style of the Greek the same?

Yes, there is no question with anyone that it came from Luke's pen. The only thing, and an astonishing thing too, is the thorough mastery of shipping Luke shews in Acts 27.

Had not Luke sailed more than once with Paul?

Yes; and he may have been to sea otherwise, as to that. But as to teaching, the Gospel closes with "repentance and remission of sins," to be "preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" and "tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Both those you get taken up again in the Acts. And you will find Luke's commission taken up too in all the sermons in the Acts, whether by Peter or by Paul. In Acts 2:38, Peter says, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," etc. In Acts 13, "Repent ye, therefore, and be

converted, that your sins may be blotted out," etc. And in Acts 13 you will find the same thing again: "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," etc.

62 Why does it say "among all nations beginning at Jerusalem," as though Jerusalem were among, the nations?

Because the message comes from heaven, and therefore Jerusalem does come in as one of the nations, though as Paul says, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16)

One thing struck me a long while ago in the beginning of this chapter, and that is, that Christ acted by the Holy Ghost as a risen Man, as well as when He was a Man on earth. This shews, if you reflect on it, that we shall not lose the Holy Ghost hereafter. There is this to be remembered also, that the power of the Holy Ghost here is necessarily spent very much in making us go on, but there will be none of that above; then, all His power will be our capacity for enjoyment. I refer to the second verse.

Would the word "began" in the first verse imply that the Lord continued His ministry through the Holy Ghost?

Yes, His ministry is looked at as going on.

Both before and after His resurrection?

Yes, "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up." We shall not want the power of the Spirit to keep flesh down when we are raised - "changed." That gives a great idea of the power of the enjoyment - the divine enjoyment - which we shall have; what the capacity of it is.

Then the second verse is connected with resurrection but not with ascension?

No; it is clear if you read on in verse 3, "to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Then there is the coming of Christ to the earth, and the restoring of the kingdom to Israel, and the power of the Holy Ghost meanwhile; but there is nothing about the rapture here.

63 This too answers to Luke's Gospel; in Luke 24:51, "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," and in our verse (9), "while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Does that word "until" in verse 2 exclude the idea of any private ascension before the public one?

Well, I do not know of any ground for such an ascension. "The day that he was taken up" is evidently His ascension.

Is there no ground in scripture for any intermediate ascension?

No. It has been held by some, I am aware, because of the expression in the garden to Mary, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father," while afterwards He tells Thomas to touch Him; but that is simply a misapprehension of the Lord's meaning.

Would you explain a little the difference between His saying to Mary, "Touch me not," and the women touching His feet in Matthew?

Touching His feet was merely in a spirit of deference, a kind of worship, whereas the other has a deeper meaning. Mary thought she had got Him back again as Messiah in this world, and the Lord says, No, I am not going to be bodily present here, you must not touch me, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And there He associates His disciples with Himself as gone up on high; while Mary was made the vessel of the communication of this heavenly character in so calling them His brethren.

64 "I ascend," would not that be a present thing?

Yes; in the form of statement, but clearly not as saying, I am doing it now.

Is not the word "touch," handle me not, do not detain me?

The word is ἀγγίζω, used thirty-six times in the New Testament, and always rendered "touch" in the Authorized Version.

But He would receive homage as one risen?

Yes. And He was putting the disciples in their place with Himself as One gone up but not yet gone - not taking the kingdom to be bodily present here yet. Then another ground has been given which I do not think anything of, though there is no heresy in it that I know of, His saying, "Peace be unto you," but He could not make peace (so it is said) until He had gone up and presented His blood to God. Now in Colossians 1:20, it says, He "made peace through the blood of his cross," and He says, "Go in peace" to the poor woman in His life, Luke 7:50, and again in Luke 8:48.

Would either of those salutations in John 20:19-21, mean more than, "be kept in peace?"

Well, perhaps so, but that is a great thing. But peace was made only by the blood of His cross.

Still the perfection of the work in Hebrews 10 is connected with the Lord's having entered in by His blood, and so having perfected the work; could we say it was perfected until He had sat down?

65 Ah! I could not say that. By His "one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." You get not merely the clearing of what I am, as walking down here, but perfected for ever so as to go up there, as well as having no more conscience of sins; and all by His one offering. That is just what the so-called evangelical church does not get at all, when it is talking of forgiving past sins, and getting into perplexity about sins to be committed afterwards; and, some, like the boasted primitive church, even wondering whether they can be forgiven at all. And then come in absolution and the sacraments, and that is the way they get forgiveness. But Hebrews 10 puts the believer absolutely perfect before God, so that he has no more conscience of sins, but is brought into the holiest into the presence of God.

But is the work perfected before His ascension?

The work was perfected before, that was perfected on the cross; the resurrection puts God's seal upon it, and then for us to enter into the holiest, He has gone up to heaven.

But until the Lord had sat down, the work had not come to an end?

Had it not? The point the apostle insists on is, that the Lord is not standing, because the work had been finished.

When Stephen went in it was finished, but the Lord was standing then. After all, you see, "standing" is a formal thing, I believe, to express that till the Jews had rejected the testimony to a glorified Christ the door of repentance was open. (See Acts 3) He was not sat down till then. The work was finished on the cross, and God puts His seal upon it by resurrection, and then the full result follows. And that carries us a great deal further than forgiveness and cleansing, looked at as regards this world. Here am I, a responsible being on earth, of course I want cleansing and justifying, and I get it; but I really get a great deal more. I have often said when speaking of the gospel, a man may have all his debts paid, and not have a penny himself to buy a morsel of bread with; paying his debts is a very different thing from starting him afresh with capital, and so on, after the debts are paid. We too are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

66 Take the Jews in the millennium, they will be forgiven through the work of Christ, but they will not be in the heavenly places. You must not confound the effect and application of the work, as regards the forgiveness of sins, with its full efficacy. We do get the forgiveness, of course, or we could not stand before God at all; we are cleansed and we are justified.

Could the disciples enter the holiest before the ascension?

I do not think they knew anything about it, the title to enter was fully there, but it was not brought out yet.

In the Hebrews Christ is said to be the forerunner, and so there was no such thing as worship until He had entered?

No; but the veil was rent from top to bottom the moment He died, and now we are talking of the application of that. The whole thing, in short, was done upon the cross, even the resurrection was the effect of that (though of course Christ could not be holden by death), God in it putting His seal upon the work.

67 And on that ground peace could be proclaimed fully?

Yes, and the Lord could tell it beforehand. Peace was made by the blood of His cross, but I hardly see anybody that gives full value to the death of Christ. I do not mean as to the forgiveness of sins, but as to the whole question of good and evil, which has all been brought to an issue, in every respect, in the cross. I know I come by my sins, and ought to come, and cannot come in any other way in truth, but when the soul has got peace and can contemplate it, then it can see the whole power of good and evil brought to a point and culminating in the cross. There I see man in absolute enmity against God, and that when God is displayed in goodness; and I see a Man, perfect in His love to God, and perfect in His obedience to God, on that same cross. I get all the power of Satan, with all the malice of man, and all the righteousness of God against sin, and all the love of God to the sinner, all united in the cross, and therefore I find there the foundation of the new heavens and of the new earth - of God's glory, in short; and all the consequences of blessing flow out. But then the application is varied so that everything in heaven and earth will be reconciled by it ultimately. I get the forgiveness of all my sins as a sinner, I am reconciled to God, and I get glory like Christ. The Jews will be restored in the millennium by virtue of it; but these are all effects.

Is the peace that the Lord spoke of in John 14. one of them?

Yes, prospectively, and He does not say "Peace be unto you" until after His resurrection. The two cases we mentioned in Luke 7, 8 have a special character. Neither did He call them brethren before; but then that was the fulfilment of Psalm 22, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren.

68 What ought to be the measure of the effect and application of the cross to us now?

Why, full. We are called and predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

With regard to our chapter once more, you were mentioning the Holy Ghost, could the writer have said that second verse before the Lord had risen?

No. That is when He has risen, and that is what I was noting; I get that a risen man has the Holy Ghost; it is not only he has a kind of help down here in the place of our infirmity, but after he has risen he has the Holy Ghost.

What is the difference between this and the outpouring in Acts 2?

Christ received the Holy Ghost a second time for the second of Acts. He was sealed and anointed in His own person, the Holy Ghost came down in a bodily shape like a dove and rested upon Him, but He came a second time for us.

But He gave commandments through the Holy Ghost when on earth?

Yes, but what I get here is, it is still so when He is risen. He acted through life by the Holy Ghost; He says, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils," He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and again He says, "the Father that dwelleth in me He doeth the works." The moment Christ takes His place as a man, the whole Trinity is revealed; He publicly takes His place with the godly remnant at His baptism; the Holy Ghost comes down, the Son was there, and the Father owns Him; and that is when Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are revealed together. Then it is written of Him, "and him hath God the Father sealed;" and John says specifically, "upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And now He was going to baptize with the Holy Ghost, founded upon His own bloodshedding, because we could not receive the Holy Ghost until redemption was finished.

69 But could Peter understand Psalm 109 as he uses it in verse 20, before he had received the Holy Ghost?

Ah, there you get the value of "He opened their understanding to understand the scriptures." That is what enabled him; and that is one of the points we have to notice, the difference between intelligence and power; there was power when the Holy Ghost came down, but they received intelligence before they got power. In Luke 24:44, it says, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them [this is after the resurrection], Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among, all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you." Now He had opened their understanding, and Peter could explain Psalm 109, but they had not got power, and therefore they go on in their old way, casting lots.

70 But could He say He gave commandments by the Holy Spirit while He was down here?

I do not know why He should not; He worked miracles by the Holy Ghost.

But could they receive them?

That is another thing; their capacity. The capacity to give, and the capacity to receive, are very different. The Lord attributes to them the capacity to receive, He says to them, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," He attributed to them what belonged to them in the position they were in, though they had never found it out. There is all the difference between His speaking to them in the Spirit, and their capacity to receive what He said. He gave commandments by the Spirit, but they had not the Holy Ghost. He comes down in Acts 2.

In our second verse it does not seem to be at all a question of the state of the disciples, but the great truth of the Lord Himself risen and acting by the Holy Ghost?

Just so.

Then do you believe that they had seen the Father?

They had seen the Father in Christ. God Himself dwells in "light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see."

71 Would that passage "he now liveth by the power of God" be connected with His giving commandments?

That is His resurrection, but He raised Himself from the dead too. Divine power was always in Him.

A risen state is a new thing, more new in one sense than ascension; a risen man is a totally new thing. Having passed death, and passed judgment, and passed Satan's power, and passed sin, and everything, when you get the man raised, then is the grand change; resurrection is the grand new thing. It is not ascension that we are justified by, you will never find that, but He is "raised again for our justification."

The point in the state of the disciples here is that they had not power, but had understanding, though that did not take them out of Jewish apprehensions; they had no guidance by the Holy Ghost, but they go and draw lots. Probably the Lord directed them in that, I do not doubt it, and Matthias was numbered with the twelve.

Then they had intelligence?

Yes. They had capacity to understand but not to display power.

I suppose their referring to the Lord in the matter of the lot was definite in that way?

Yes. I know people call Paul the twelfth, that thought is old enough, but I think he was a totally distinct thing.

It is said of all of them that He opened their understandings; in Luke, is it not?

Yes, quite so, it was when He was eating the fish with them.

72 Matthias, would he be there, because it says, he continued with them?

Yes.

"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now, howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth;" what is that?

That is fresh revelations, not the understanding of the scriptures, but things the Lord could not tell them then.

There is the breathing on them?

Breathing on them would imply the communication of the Spirit as to intelligence.

Would it be too the communication of risen life?

Yes, I suppose so, as God breathed into Adam at first the breath of life. It is connected also with "whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." (John 20:23.)

"Ordained" in verse 22, is not altogether warranted, I suppose?

Is "bishoprick?"

Well, "bishoprick" is all very well, but "ordained" is all wrong, it is not even a wrong translation, but it is added, and put in; it is simply "must one become a witness?"

What is the connection between "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and "whose soever sins ye remit," etc.?

They were then spiritually competent. You see administration on earth is a most important thing. It is a fact that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is forgiven all his sins for ever and ever; you cannot be too clear about that, but the administration in this world is very important too.

73 Then who administers the forgiveness?

The church of God does. "To whom ye forgive anything, I also."

Is there any sense in which the assembly forgives in receiving to the table?

Not exactly, it merely recognizes; but it might happen so, if a person is only then brought to the Lord it may take of that character.

What is the connection of resurrection life with the forgiveness of sins?

There was no forgiveness of sins before it, in this way, for there was no assembly.

How would you regard Psalm 32, "and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"?

I will tell you how that came about: David sinned, and a prophet went and told him of it, which now, I do not want. Nathan went to him and told him - that is just what I do not need. It required a prophet then to get it, and it does not require a prophet now.

The Lord could say to the woman, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"?

And that was administrative too on earth. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

In James, "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him," is that administrative then?

To be sure, that is just what it is.

Is the breathing on them a collective thing?

Well, they were all there, that is all that is stated.

In John 8 He tells the woman to go and sin no more?

74 Well, there was no forgiveness in that.

What do you mean by the church of God administering forgiveness?

It is all administered. They were not to go and preach without people getting it. "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," that was what Peter declared to them.

Was not that exhortation?

But as people acted on it; that was what they got.

Where is the difference between that and priestly absolution?

The one is the priest and the other is the church. Paul says, "to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also.

Do you mean sins against other Christians, or sins against God?

All sins.

Do you mean they receive the remission from the church and not from God?

Well, read 2 Corinthians 2:10. "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also, for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes' forgave I it, in the person of Christ." That is administrative forgiveness.

Is that anything but concurrent?

It may be concurrent, but it is administrative forgiveness.

Is it governmental?

Well, governmental if you like, I called it administrative.

If, in the case of James' Epistle, the man was under the chastisement of God, is it administrative then?

75 Yes, it is. As the Lord says, "whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted."

People have lost the idea of the present reception of forgiveness as a fact down here.

Is it not exceptional?

Every heathen received, and every Jew receive by the apostles, each and all were forgiven their sins.

It is the not making a difference between "perfected for ever," and the recognition of such an one on earth by the administration of the assembly that causes the difficulty.

"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," what is that?

Paul did so, and they were all put away. I see in scripture the believer come into a new place in Christ, where there is no possibility of condemnation: he is accepted in the Beloved, he is perfected for ever, and no sin imputed to him. In the Acts they came in, and when they were baptized, they got the forgiveness of their sins, and had no idea of difficulty as to administration.

Persons now put belief instead of baptism, and then say he is forgiven. A Roman Catholic will tell you it is when he is baptized, and, after that by the sacrament of penance; and a Church of England person will say it is when he takes the sacrament; while in the primitive church, so-called, you will find discussions whether he could ever be again forgiven for sins after baptism. But all of them have totally lost sight of "perfected for ever."

How does administrative forgiveness come in?

The sin is bound upon the person, for example, when he is excommunicated, and it is forgiven him when he is let in again.

But "whose soever sins ye remit," was said when there was no church?

There is no difficulty about that. The difficulty between the original forgiveness on admission, and forgiveness afterwards, is because "perfected for ever" is not known.

Could the Holy Ghost say now by a man as Paul said to the Corinthians, "I forgive also"?

No; Paul had a power to speak as we could not, not being apostles.

But could the Holy Ghost say that?

The Holy Ghost could do it, of course, because if the church does it, the Holy Ghost does, that is if the church is acting rightly.

What would "in the person of Christ" be?

That is because Christ was there.

Then administration has three aspects, it is declarative in the gospel; in admission; and in restoration?

In John it begins with remission, but in Matthew with binding, so that they are not analogous, in John it is more flowing out; "peace be unto you," &c., precedes it.

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" is a mission in John, and the apostles are never named in John?

In the original testimony of the Gospel in Acts, when people were forgiven, it was administrative because a man was forgiven then and there, of course, supposing that he received the testimony.

May I ask further, Would you say the administration of forgiveness is now only in the case of church discipline?

No, I should not. Suppose I was going to preach to the heathen, then the moment one became a Christian, he would receive the forgiveness of his sins at that time. Past sins then it would be of course.

77 But then he received it from God?

Well, if he did not receive that too, the other would not be worth much.

You see when a person was received from the heathen, or when a Jew was received, he then got the forgiveness of his sins, his relationship to God was changed. In the thoughts and counsels of God all his sins were forgiven for ever and ever, and there never will be any question of them in judgment; but supposing he became a Christian, he then got the forgiveness of his sins on earth, and stood in a different relationship to God, he was reconciled to God, and not before.

What is the difference between administrative forgiveness by the church, and the actual forgiveness of God? Say I preach the gospel, and a man receives the text of scripture, in which is the forgiveness of his sins?

There must be the direct agency of the Holy Ghost upon his soul; but there is a vast difference between the absolute efficacy of Christ's work for the whole acceptance of the man before God, and the change which takes place in his state from being an unreconciled to a reconciled man acknowledged on earth.

Would you not say that Simon Magus had received administrative forgiveness but was not actually forgiven?

I speak of administered as being governmentally a present act, in contrast with an everlasting acceptance which a man has in God's sight; he receives as well the forgiveness of his sins here which he had not before.

78 If a person is converted by reading the scripture alone, what would that be?

Well, it would only be by Paul's preaching, or something of that sort. People do not seem to have got hold of the idea of the thing. Paul had washed away his sins when he had been baptized but not before.

It might help if we took the case of a person who was converted but refused to be baptized?

Well, there was just such a case of a Jew who said he believed Jesus was the Christ, but he would not be baptized; I said I could not own him as a Christian.

We must guard against reasoning from a state of confusion, to what was the case when there was no confusion. Until you get clear of the confusion, you will not understand either the administrative forgiveness or the other. Put the case that Paul was preaching at Lystra; and that people were convinced what he said was true after all, but still said, "We will not become Christians," would their sins be forgiven them? As a fact, then, would they stand before God as forgiven people, if they refused to be Christians?

"Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Now, say I hear that text, and I believe it, am I not a Christian?

I cannot tell yet, I want to know if you take your place with the Christians; if you will not, then I say, you cannot be reckoned one.

79 But am I not forgiven by God?

Well, God will tell you about that, but I say you are not now forgiven here.

But I believe on Christ?

God will settle with you about that.

But I shall go to heaven?

Well, that may be, but you are not forgiven on earth.

Take the case of a Quaker?

I must leave him to God; he has not taken his place in a scriptural way, that is all I know. There is a certain standing-place on the earth where certain blessings are, and God has set this place up; the administration of it gives these blessings then. There is administration in the word of God according to which things were administered down here; "but that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." There it is. It is not reasoning about the acceptance of that soul for eternity; it does not say there that that paralytic man was saved for eternity, but that he had the forgiveness of sins on earth.

What would be the course then to be taken by us?

Go and preach the gospel to every creature, and get them to see clearly the details afterwards.

Is administration the same as bestowal?

Well, administration is equivalent to bestowal, in a sense, at once.

"Thy sins are forgiven thee," would not imply that all his future sins would be forgiven?

Of course not.

80 If a person believes and goes among Dissenters would he get the forgiveness administered?

Now you come back to the confusion, and I do not know anything about it. I do not know how such an one receives the administration of forgiveness in the present confusion.

Did you not say the administration comes through baptism?

Well, yes, with heathens and those outside it does.

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," is that administrative?

No. That is the moral thing, and it is God, not the church. This question in the present state of confusion is in many cases only theory.

But we know in places how busy Puseyite clergymen are, saying that they have power to forgive sins?

But that is the clergyman personally, and in another sense of forgiveness. They do not talk of administrative forgiveness at all, but of putting away the sin. I deny the whole thing there, and I say, Who are you? The clergyman. Who made you so? The bishop. Who is the bishop? And the whole authority falls.

In verse 3, "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" - in what sense is the kingdom of God set before us there?

It is just going to be set up as the kingdom of heaven, as it would be in Matthew 13.

This would go on to the glory, would it not?

Yes. The appearing of Christ is brought out.

Is it the kingdom of God Paul preaches?

Yes; he says so.

81 Do you connect Romans with Luke and Acts, as it says, "to the Jew first"?

Yes, of course, even more so than the Gospel and Acts.

Should the preaching now be the kingdom of God?

Not that alone.

At Thessalonica the offence was his preaching another king?

Yes, but in his ministry of the gospel Paul brought in much else about the Lord's coming and the Antichrist.

Acts 2

I think it of moment to notice here verse 1, because there is a general current idea that only the twelve were present, that there were a hundred and twenty, and not the apostles only. "They were all with one accord in one place."

What of the "five hundred brethren" in 1 Corinthians 15:6?

There is no clue to that, that I know of. Very likely that may have been in Galilee, where the Lord had appointed others to meet Him, but there is no statement about it.

The hundred and twenty would comprise the whole assembly?

Not all who were converted, but those who were at Jerusalem.

Would it include the women?

Probably. Yes. In chapter 1:14 it says, "with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

82 But in verse 16 Peter addresses them "men and brethren"?

Yes, but it is clear that the Holy Ghost was poured out on women: "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," "and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;" and Philip had four daughters who prophesied.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," how are we to understand that in connection with this?

They were baptized into one body then and there, only it was not fully developed until the Gentiles came in. The Spirit coming down upon them then did baptise them into one body, but the term "baptism" is never applied to this, except at Pentecost, in scripture, that I know of; though all come into that one body. In chapter 1 the Lord says, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

But the Corinthians came in afterwards?

Yes, and they are spoken of as "sealed" and "anointed." In John 1:33 "the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," it is the second part of the work of Christ. The first part was the taking "away the sin of the world" as the "Lamb of God," the second, baptizing with the Holy Ghost.

What would that mean, "fell upon them as upon us at the beginning"?

That is not called baptism; but it is just the same thing in effect; the disciples were formed into unity by the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon them; it was a special case with the Gentiles to shew that they were all one. The body was not in its developed condition before the Gentiles were brought in.

83 What was their condition before the Holy Ghost fell upon them?

They had intelligence of course but no power, like the disciples before Pentecost, as we were saying.

Would it be the condition of infancy in Hebrews 5?

That was the Jewish state before Christ's death and resurrection.

Would you not say that every believer is baptized with the Holy Ghost?

No. When brought into liberty, he is sealed and anointed, and comes into the general baptism; he comes into the same place then. I know how people speak, and God does not make a man an offender for a word; but you get the case of Cornelius clear enough, when God was saying, I will have the Gentiles in spite of you.

What would you call the action of the Holy Ghost in giving a believer his place in the body of Christ?

No action. He is sealed when he receives the Holy Ghost, it is not another Holy Ghost, and so he becomes a member of that body.

But in 1 Corinthians 12, he speaks of Gentiles having been baptized into that one body?

Yes; it is merely the use of a word. The practical idea is simple. I do not find it applied to an individual; it is the same Holy Ghost and the individual receives it; if a Gentile came, he received the Holy Ghost, and was formed into the same unity, that is the important point, the thing to be thoroughly seen and believed, that we do receive the Holy Ghost, and so get into this unity. When a man receives the Holy Ghost he is a member of the body of Christ, only the difference between this, and sealing, and anointing is important in this, that there are individual relationships as well as unity, because in receiving the Holy Ghost, he

becomes a conscious son of the Father: I say conscious son, and he knows that he is in Christ, and Christ in him, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in him; there are many individual things you must not lose sight of.

84 Would the individual things you refer to be expressed in 1 Corinthians 12?

No; that is a different thing. But there is "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" and again, "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;" that is all individual.

How are we to understand in Acts 19, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed"?

They were only John's disciples.

Were they not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, I suppose Paul saw something in them that made him ask the question. But they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as risen.

What is the difference between anointing and sealing?

None. It is by the Spirit, and the Spirit is the earnest, but anointing is the general term; it is a figure; the leper was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil: and when God anoints a man, He puts His seal upon him, and gives him the earnest of the inheritance and all other things.

85 Would you expect that to follow immediately on conversion?

Yes, when one heard a clear gospel preached. But I could not expect anything; that is a matter of God's condescending wisdom in particular cases, or He might see a person who wanted breaking down first, or a thousand things.

There seems to be an interval in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8?

Yes, and so there was here too in Acts 2. I think it is gracious of the Lord to make all these things so distinct. I know what pious books say, that I receive the Holy Ghost when I am converted; it is all false, I receive the Holy Ghost after I am converted.

But the Holy Ghost works before?

Yes, of course, but my building a house, and my going to live in it when it is built, are two different things.

What is the "unction" in John's First Epistle?

The Holy Ghost, always. It is an allusion to the anointing with oil, after sprinkling with the blood. It is said of Christ, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, but Christ is never said to have been baptized with the Holy Ghost, you get "him hath God the Father sealed." Only remember, He was sealed and anointed in witness of His own perfectness, while we are sealed and anointed in virtue of Christ's work.

But the holy anointing oil was not to come on man's flesh?

Just so; and so Christ takes us out of flesh in that sense.

86 But before God does not anointing exist in every case whether known or not?

No, certainly not. These in Acts 19 were not anointed. I know no reason why there should be any delay. It was the regular thing when a man was sprinkled with blood, then he was anointed with oil.

There are many Christians who do not know what the anointing is?

The question is, Can they really cry "Abba, Father?"

Is that the criterion of having the Holy Ghost?

Certainly; "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts."

Does not that imply receiving the Holy Ghost as soon as we are sons?

Naturally it does If I find a person in liberty with God, he will say "Father," and also if truly at liberty he will say, I am God's son. People may sometimes say "Father" through a measure of training and habit, but such will be afraid to say, if they have not the Holy Ghost, that they are God's sons. I mean even when they may use the name Father.

But there is such a thing as judicial blindness?

Oh yes, as chastisement there is. But, otherwise, when sealed, the consciousness of relationship will be there. That is a very distinct and definite thing. Just as a child may be forgetful and naughty, but still it lives in the consciousness of its being a child. It may have conscience deadened and hardened, but it is never out of the consciousness of the relationship after all. So when a person has the Holy Ghost, that gives him the consciousness of being a son.

87 Did the Prophet Joel think of the body of Christ? is it not merely a promise to the Jewish remnant?

That is what it really is, but it is promised to all flesh. It has its place so far here as well. But it is not true of us as its full final accomplishment. But we have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

But will it not be true of them that they will be baptized into one body?

No. But God was here going on in a way with Israel for a time.

But the full prophecy was not fulfilled here?

No. In Joel it says "afterwards" God will do it, but here it says, "in the last days."

How can we divide it?

We have it divided for us here; only Peter changes the language.

Is there anything to be learnt from the quotation?

If you look at Joel it is clearly this, "And it shall come to pass afterwards" - after God has restored Israel, and set them in blessing in their land, and they own Messiah, then they get the Spirit; but they are not connected with Christ in heaven then, because Christ is down here on the earth with them. The Lord will do great things for them; He will restore them in blessing, He will be jealous for His land, and will pity His people, so that they shall never be ashamed; they shall know that God is Jehovah, etc., "and afterward I

will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Now here Peter changes the word "afterward" and puts in "the last days," and so takes in a distinct testimony.

Then would you say that those in the last days who receive the Spirit will receive Him, and the Holy Ghost dwell in them?

88 Poured out upon them is all that is said, but they have Christ present with them.

What part was fulfilled at Pentecost?

Just the fact of pouring out.

He does not say it was fulfilled, but "this is that which was spoken"?

Peter stops in the middle of Joel 2:32. What he really gives you is the fact that the Spirit was poured out.

Is there anything in the leaving out of the "of"?

No. But you get it used of the Holy Ghost in scripture, as in "because he hath given us of his Spirit." It is important to see that the Spirit is personally present on earth; that is another truth.

What of "I will shew wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath"?

That is warning.

Then the restoration in the land will take place before the outpouring of the Spirit?

Yes, but they are distinct parts of the prophecy altogether; and they are separated on purpose in the way that Peter is speaking. Joel 2:30 begins distinct testimony; he states a complete restoration of Israel to blessing; then He will pour out of His Spirit; and then in verse 30, before those days come, He will send signs and wonders; you get upon this little remnant of Israel, the Holy Ghost poured out, with the warning of signs and wonders before the terrible day comes. But Israel reject this, as they did all the rest, and then Paul comes out with the Son in heaven; and the ground of bringing that out is Stephen's murder.

89 Will the remnant get this pouring out of the Spirit before the Lord comes?

No. Joel says 'afterwards.' I believe there will be a working of the Spirit, as by Elias, and so on; but they will not get this pouring out. You get the restoration of Israel to full blessing, then the Spirit. But then Joel says before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord - the wonders.

The Lord delivers the people and then the Holy Ghost comes down, so that they are saved already before the Holy Ghost comes down, and then they shall never be ashamed.

Would the end of Joel 2:29 be how much of the prophecy was fulfilled?

Yes.

But must not those words of Joel be the unity of the body?

Why "must?" I have nothing to do with the unity of the body here; other teachings makes us know about that, but not this passage.

Why will not this outpouring make the Jews one when it comes? Will it not be a necessary consequence, because Christ will have left heaven then?

But can you make things necessary with God?

You cannot unite with a Head in heaven, when He is here on earth. Why is God to do in one dispensation the same that He does in another? Christ's place now is ascended up on high to receive gifts for men . . . and now the Holy Ghost gives gifts, but gifts have nothing to do with the nature of the unity of the church. There is a prophet now, and so there was in the Old Testament, but they are different; you are assuming that God is pledged to act in the same way always.

90 Will the Jews have these apostles and prophets?

No, I do not say that . . . You get Christ's ascension in Psalm 68, and His sitting at the right hand of God in Psalm 110. But what comes out between that and His return, on being united to Him in heaven, is not presented then at all. He gives gifts for the rebellious also, that is Jews in Psalm 68, but the apostle does not quote that, but says "received gifts in man." But in the future day the Lord will be among them then as Messiah, and it is not the same order of things. Christ received the Holy Ghost again for communicating these gifts.

Does not the fact of Paul's ministry coming out bring in a different character of action?

Yes, but it is Stephen's death which is the turning point.

Would you be good enough to divide Joel for us?

In Joel 2:17, they are to weep between the porch and the altar; in verse 18, the Lord is jealous for His land and pities His people, He sends them corn, and removes the northern army, and does great things for the land.

Is the northern army Gog?

I suppose so, but the Lord comes in with many blessings; and in Joel 2:27, "ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel." There you get Israel completely restored, and that is one division. Then in Joel 2:28, He goes outside Israel.

Is that, after the last week in Daniel?

Of course it is. He goes outside Israel and pours His Spirit upon all flesh, and "on my servants and handmaids, in those days will I pour out my Spirit," that finishes verse 29. Then there is another testimony, "and I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." The day of the Lord is on the northern army; the "day" is the judgment of the Lord. Verses 28, 29 are together; but verses 30, 31 are distinct from them, and refer to what takes place before.

91 In the Acts of the Apostles we have the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh but a preliminary testing of the Jews. In Acts 2 Peter says, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

But in Joel, Israel is in full blessing before the Spirit is poured out on all flesh?

Exactly; he says "afterwards," after Israel is completely established in blessing. We have it now before, and here in Acts the Jews had it as preliminary. And Peter does not say that it was the fulfilment of Joel.

Would you say the Lord was present then when the Spirit was poured out on all flesh, in Joel?

Joel calls on the Jews to repent, and as soon as they do that, there is this northern army which is oppressing them and cutting them off, put down by Jehovah, while the Jews weep between the porch and altar. Then He gives them complete blessing, so that they shall never be ashamed, and they are established for ever and ever, and then He gives them the Spirit.

Does the Lord come personally to do all that?

Surely; how is the day of the Lord to come without the Lord?

92 Do verses 31, 32 then go back?

Yes, it says so, you get "afterward" in verse 28, and "before" in verse 31.

Then the whole of the chapter has yet to be fulfilled in detail?

Yes, it certainly has.

Why the weeping between the porch and the altar?

Humanly, it looked as if there would be destruction there, because this terrible enemy had come up.

Then verses 28, 29 are suitable to a remnant that received Christ as Messiah?

They are suitable to "all flesh."

But when the Lord comes back there will be only Judah and Benjamin in the land?

Well, but there is often a process going on, though you may not see every detail clear, I mean as regards Israel. You get Judah and the children of Israel their companions, and then the forming the whole house of Israel. What the Lord will do will be a long process, as I believe.

I get this, that the Jews are cut off in the land but the ten tribes are cut off outside of it. In Ezekiel 20 you have the restoration of the ten tribes.

I thought they came back after the beginning of Zechariah 14, and so were not in the land when the Lord came down?

Very likely. When Gog comes up for the last time (he besieges Jerusalem twice in Isaiah), that is, this northern army of Joel. The Lord has already destroyed the beast, and then the Lord sets up His throne. Gog finds Him there.

The ten tribes never get back except as a remnant. The moment the Lord has destroyed the beast, He takes His throne, and the whole thing is settled.

93 Does Peter's preaching in Acts 2 imply that, if the Jews had repented, the whole of Joel's prophecy as to the Spirit would have been fulfilled?

Well, in a certain sense, yes, and the Lord would have come. The more you see, the more you will see, that the Lord's dealings until Christ comes are provisional.

But many are looking now for the latter rain of the Spirit?

Well, then, they are looking in vain; but it is in a great measure ignorance.

There are two kinds of gifts entirely distinct; I said so thirty years ago to Irving. Those in 1 Corinthians 12 are gifts of power, so much so that often when there was positive power nobody was to use it; it was all under the rule and authority of Christ's order in the house. And so there, therefore, I get no promise of the continuance of gifts; but when I come to Ephesians 4, I get no gifts that are signs at all; but, after the foundation of apostles and prophets, I get evangelists, pastors and teachers, those which the Lord uses to build up His church, "until we all come." I get Christ caring for His own body to build it up, and also the positive declaration of their going on to the end; they are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." You have the caring for the church, and continuance.

94 What is "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail," etc.?

It means that there is no promise there of their continuance. Corinthians is merely power and the Holy Ghost.

It is not a statement that these should pass away?

No, but there is no promise of their continuance though it may foreshadow their passing away. It is power, and then the Holy Ghost distributing to every man severally as He will, but it is a perfect state of things; the gifts are in a certain sense meant to fail, and so their continuance is not the subject at all, but I do get the assurance of their continuance when I come to edification. The word of God never contemplates the continuance of the church, but it contemplates Christ coming. People say, How could God set up a thing and not provide for its continuance beyond thirty years? Of course He did not. He taught the saints to look constantly for the Lord as a present thing.

What is the difference between the talents in the Gospels, and the gifts spoken of in the Epistles?

I believe the talents are the gifts, the things that Christ gave when He went away. The lord left the talents with his own servants and not with anybody else.

Is it not important to see here that we get the Holy Ghost connected with a glorified Christ?

Yes, here and everywhere. And that is what I was noticing that Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh for us, "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."

Until the death of Stephen you get more of signs, and as in 1 Corinthians 12, and the other gifts come afterwards?

95 Yes, but you find signs too afterwards You see, until a man had gone to heaven, the complete thought of God is not brought out. We see God come down to the earth, and man gone up to heaven into the glory of God. As regards the cross, the immense thing is, not merely my sins are put away, that of course must be, but I get all the purposes of God founded upon it. I have man in absolute wickedness against God in the cross, then Man in His absolute goodness on the cross, and perfect obedience to God; "but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do" - absolutely obedient, and absolutely loving the Father, both; and then, too, at the cross, all the power of Satan is brought out as governing this world; while on God's side, I have His righteousness against sin in the cup Christ had to drink, and God's perfect love to the sinner also. I have every form of good and evil in man, and in Satan, and what God is in righteousness and love, brought out in the cross, and all settled - settled for ever, and the consequence is, man goes into the glory of God. And then many other consequences come flowing out.

. . . . The entire question is settled, and it is no longer man upon his responsibility - like Adam who had to be tested - but man already tested takes his place in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal all this.

Did you say Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh after His resurrection?

No; but in ascension. He is exalted first. This same Jesus is made Lord and Christ, the One whom they had crucified. It is that that reaches their hearts in the preaching - Him in that position, you do not get Jesus preached as Son of God, but the rejected Man is made Lord and Christ.

96 Is there any thought of the oneness of the believer there with the risen Christ?

No. It is perfectly true, but it is not brought out here. Peter is dealing with the Jews, and saying, You rejected Christ and God received Him.

Would you say that so far as the testimony went before Paul's conversion, it was an earthly thing?

Well, not quite; because you get in this chapter, "save yourselves from this untoward generation;" that did not refer to the ancient promises to Israel, though it was on earth in a certain sense. Still Christ had gone up as forerunner.

Is there any intentional difference in the form of the words here, ἀἰνῶμεν ἰν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, "in the name of Jesus," (Acts 2:38) and ἡμεῖς ὑποτασσόμεθα ἰν κυρίῳ, in Matthew 28:19?

No, not that I know of: ἀἰνῶμεν ἰν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ is more the character, ἡμεῖς ὑποτασσόμεθα ἰν κυρίῳ, the effect.

In Acts 3:13, "His Son Jesus" should be "Servant" Jesus, should it not?

Yes, it is a mere mis-translation. It is so again in Acts 3:26, Acts 4:27, 30; in the two last ἡμεῖς ὑποτασσόμεθα ἰν κυρίῳ, is rendered "child," but the same word in Acts 4:25 is rendered "thy servant David."

Is there anything special in Peter saying to them, "Repent and be baptized," or is that still to be the preaching?

It is not quite the preaching now, because people so largely profess to believe in Christ already. It is the same gospel though, as to the value of Christ's death and resurrection.

97 But if you were preaching to Jews, would it not then be correct?

Yes, I suppose so I believe it will be carried on in the remnant.

Then how would the apostles preach to Gentiles?

I cannot tell how precisely to Gentiles, because they never went; but there is no different gospel as to the foundation of it, whether to Jews or Gentiles.

But Peter went to Cornelius?

Yes, that is a special case entirely by itself.

Could any who were not baptized at all be really happy?

Well, I suppose Christians might rejoice in the Lord who have not been baptized at all. Baptism here is "baptism for the remission," please all recollect that, the only baptism here recognized is for the remission of sins.

Would an assembly be justified in refusing those who confessed Christ, though not baptized?

It would not be in order to receive such; only you never get to the baptism for the remission of sins now, I mean to the ground the apostle takes here.

But how would you meet the case supposed?

That depends; we are all in confusion about it, and there is no way out except patience.

But how would you deal with those who have been baptized as children, and do not think it baptism now?

If anyone is anxious to be baptized as an adult, who has already been baptized, he must settle that for himself.

98 But were not the sins remitted through the bloodshedding of Christ?

Yes; here is the doctrine of the bloodshedding of Christ for the remission of sins, and they were baptized on that ground.

Would it be baptism by the apostles for the remission of sins?

Whoever baptized: Paul washed away his sins.

Is not baptism death?

It is the figure of death, shewing how the sins are washed away; still the fact of its being for the remission of sins shews what the administration of it is.

Did Paul preach it at all?

No, I do not get that, he was not sent to baptize, but he did not abrogate it either.

Does the commission in Matthew refer to the church at all?

The doctrine of the church was not brought out at the end of Matthew. There was no command to baptize Jews then.

Is there a single proof of the commission ever being acted upon?

No; but the question is the obligation of the command. The mission of the twelve was to teach all the nations, but in Galatians 2 they gave up this mission to Paul; and I should insist upon it that it never was fulfilled. Even to Peter, the sheet was let down before he went out to preach to Cornelius. But this is only proving what bad people the apostles were; they were to go discipling and baptizing and "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," that is, the age.

Does not that refer to the seventy weeks?

99 I have no objection to that. Here I have a positive command to go and do something; I agree with you that it was not carried out, but that does not touch the command itself.

But is it not important to see that the disciples begin anew from the ascension?

Yes. Paul never owns them, nor even Christ after the flesh; and in that sense you must start from the glory.

I suppose Rome has kept to Matthew 28?

Yes, and lost plenty else besides.

Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus, is it not?

Yes, practically.

The kingdom of heaven, goes on, I suppose, until the Lord comes after the church is removed.

Well, that is a transitional time.

But will not the testimony then be like it was before the Lord first came?

You cannot have a John Baptist again testifying to the people of a Christ born in Bethlehem; and so coming for their reception. But you may have testifying to His coming in glory.

How does Paul's work stand in relationship to the twelve?

I get Paul supplanting the twelve as to the Gentiles in scripture.

Are the twelve representative of us, or are they the apostles of the kingdom, looking beyond church time altogether?

In Matthew 10 the Lord takes up the ministry in the land of Israel, and that by the twelve.

But does not the latter part of that chapter make a difference?

100 But Christ tells the disciples, You go and do so and so, and you must not say they are not to do it at all: I do not say that it did not fall through, because it did; but that does not touch the authority of the command. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then the chapter is divided into two distinct parts, after "Behold I send you forth as sheep," turning to a testimony to the Gentiles. Christ has gone then, for the Holy Ghost has come, and it is to be the Spirit of their Father that speaks in them. First, it should be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah through the disciples' then mission; and then He goes on to the time when the Holy Ghost should be there; and He does not think of the church, but says, "you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." The division is between verses 16, 17.

When is that testimony (ver. 18) borne?

When they are brought up as prisoners.

Have you not their mission to the Gentiles in Matthew 24?

That is yet to come.

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