

The Acts of the Apostles

AN EXPOSITION

By

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Prophetic Word," "Exposition of Matthew,"
"Joel," "Daniel," etc., etc.*

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FOREWORD.

Judaism and Christianity; Legalism and Grace; the Kingdom and the Church; these are in contrast, at poles apart, and defy all attempts at reconciliation. Ishmael—"the wild-ass man"—untamed and untamable, the son of the bond woman, is unalterably opposed to Isaac—"laughter"—spontaneous and obedient, the son of the free woman.

These distinctions, known and observed, are of incalculable worth in Bible Study.

In The Book of the Acts there is revealed the passing of Judaism, and the incoming of Christianity: wherein we see how the old wine-skins of legalism are without strength to restrain the expansive spirit of the new wine of grace. This Book of the Acts, showing as it does the transition of Judaism to Christianity, is, therefore, of absorbing interest; and Mr. Gaebelein, whose oral teaching is so abundantly owned and blessed of God, has, in this volume of interpretative study, extended the sphere of his ministry to multitudes that may never come within range of the hearing of his voice.

The author's breadth of conception of God's plan of the Ages stamps the book with a peculiar value; while, at the same time, there is of the spiritual application of truth a thorough and clear perception that pervades and illumines the exposition of the text.

From the study of this book, so untrammelled by the yoke of traditional interpretation, so far removed from the feverish discontent with the supernatural, so different from the cold and critical analysis of the casuist, so reverent, and so unalterably loyal to the plenary inspiration of the Scripture, one rises in spirit refreshed, in faith strengthened, and to new endeavor encouraged. It is a pleasure and a privilege to commend this book.

FORD C. OTTMAN,
Stamford, Conn.

INTRODUCTION.

The book known by the name "The Acts of the Apostles"* follows the four Gospel records. This is its proper place. The books of the New Testament have been correctly divided into five sections, corresponding to the first five books, with which the Bible begins, that is the Pentateuch. The four Gospels are the **Genesis** of the New Testament. Here we have the great beginning, the foundation upon which the subsequently revealed christian doctrines rest. The Book of Acts is the **Exodus**, God leads out from bondage a heavenly people and delivers them. It is the great historical book of the New Testament describing the beginning of the church on earth. The Pauline Epistles are the **Leviticus** portion. Holiness unto the Lord, the believers separation and standing in Christ, what believers have and are in Christ by whose blood they have redemption, is the core truth of these Epistles. The Epistles of Peter, James, John and Jude, known by the name of the Catholic Epistles, are for the wilderness journey of God's people, telling us of trials and suffering; these correspond to the Book of **Numbers**. The Book of Revelation in which God's ways are rehearsed and a review is given of the entire prophetic Word concerning the Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God has the same character as **Deuteronomy**.

By whom was this Book written? There is no doubt that the writer of the third Gospel record is the one whom the

*The oldest Manuscript, the *Sinaiticus* dating from the 4th century gives the title simply as "The Acts," which is, no doubt, the better name for the book,

Holy Spirit selected to write this account of the establishment of the Church on earth and the events connected with it. This becomes clear if we read the beginning of that Gospel and compare it with the beginning of Acts. The writer in the third Gospel says: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent *Theophilus*, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke i:3-4). The Acts of the Apostles begin: "The *former* treatise have I made, O *Theophilus*, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." The former treatise known to Theophilus is the third Gospel, called the Gospel of Luke. The writer of that Gospel is also the penman of the Book of Acts. Though we do not find Luke's name mentioned in the Gospel nor in the second Book he was entrusted to write, there is no doubt that he wrote them both. We find his name mentioned a number of times in the Epistles and these references give us the only reliable information we have. In Colossians iv:14 we read of him as "the beloved physician." In the Epistle of Philemon he is called a fellow laborer of the Apostle Paul, and from the last Epistle the great Apostle wrote, the Second Epistle of Timothy, we learn that Luke was in Rome with Paul and was faithful to him, while others had forsaken the prisoner of the Lord. From Colossians iv we also may gather that he was not a Jew, but a Gentile, for with the eleventh verse Paul had mentioned those of the circumcision. Epaphras was one of the Colossians, a Gentile, and then follow the names of Luke and Demas, both of them undoubtedly Gentiles. The reason that the Holy Spirit selected a Gentile to write the Gospel which pictures our Lord as the Man and the Savior and the Book of Acts, is as obvious as it is interesting. Israel had rejected God's gift and the glad news of salvation is now to go to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Luke addressed

by a Gentile to a Gentile (Theophilus) is the Gospel for the Gentiles and Luke the Gentile was chosen to give the history of the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem to the Gentiles.

There are numerous internal evidences which show likewise that the writer of the third Gospel is the instrument through whom the Book of Acts was given. For instance, there are about fifty peculiar phrases and words in both books which are rarely found elsewhere; they prove the same author for those two books.

Then we learn from the Book of Acts that Luke, the beloved physician, was an eyewitness of some of the events recorded by him in this book. He joined the Apostle during his second missionary journey at Troas (chapt. xiv:10). This evidence is found in the little word "*we*." The writer was now in company of the Apostle, whose fellow laborer he was. He went with Paul to Macedonia and remained sometime in Philippi. He was Paul's fellow traveler to Asia and Jerusalem (ch. xxi:17). He likewise was with him in his imprisonment in Caesarea and then on to Rome. There is no doubt that Luke had completely written and sent forth the Book of the Acts of the Apostles at the end of the two years mentioned in Acts xxviii:30, though the critics claim a much later period.

The contents and scope of the Book. The first verse gives us an important hint. The former treatise, the Gospel of Luke, tells "that Jesus **began** to do and teach." The Book of Acts contains therefore the continuation of the Lord's actions no longer on earth but from the Glory. The actions of the risen and glorified Christ can easily be traced throughout the entire book. We give a few illustrations. In Chapter I He acts in the selection of the twelfth Apostle, who was to take the place of Judas. In Chapter II He himself poured forth the Holy Spirit, for Peter made the

declaration: "therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, *He* has poured out this which ye behold and hear." And in the close of the second chapter we behold another action of the risen Lord: "the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved." In the third chapter He manifested His power in the healing of the lame man. Throughout this book we behold Him acting from the Glory, guiding, directing, comforting and encouraging His servants. These beautiful and manifold evidences of Himself being with His own and manifesting His power in their behalf we hope to trace in our exposition of the different chapters.

Then on the very threshold of the book we have the historical account of the coming of that other Comforter, whom the Lord had promised, the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, came. His coming marks the birthday of the Church. After that event we see Him present with and in His people. In connection with the Lord's servants, in filling them, guiding them, fitting them, sustaining them in trials and persecutions as well as in the affairs of the church, we behold the actions of the Holy Spirit on earth. He is the great administrator in the church. Over fifty times we find Him mentioned, so that some have called this book "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." While we have no doctrines about the Holy Spirit and His work in the Acts of the Apostles, we find here the practical illustrations of the doctrine found elsewhere in the New Testament.

In the third place another supernatural Being is seen acting in this book. It is the enemy, Satan, the hinderer and the accuser of the brethren. We behold him coming upon the scene and acting through his different instruments either as the roaring lion or as the cunning deceiver with his wiles. Wherever he can, he attempts to hinder the

progress of the Gospel. This is a most important aspect of this book and indeed very instructive. Aside from the human instruments prominent in this Book of Acts, we behold three supernatural Beings acting. The risen, glorified Christ, the Holy Spirit and Satan.

Another hint about the contents of this book and its scope we find at the close of the Gospel of Luke. There the risen Christ said: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem." In the first chapter of Acts the Spirit of God reports the commission of the Lord, about to ascend, in full. "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The Book of Acts shows us how this mission beginning in Jerusalem was carried out. The witness begins in the city where our Lord was crucified. Once more an offer was made to the nation Israel. Then we behold the Gospel going forth from Jerusalem and all Judea to Samaria and after that to the Gentiles, and through the chosen Apostle of the Gentiles it is heralded in the different countries of the Roman empire. The parable of our Lord in Matthew xxii:1-10 gives us prophetically the history of these events. First the guests were called to the wedding and they would not come. This was the invitation given by the Lord to His earthly people when He moved among them. They received Him not. Then came a renewed offer with the assurance that all things are ready. This is exactly what we find in the beginning of the Book of Acts. Once more to Jerusalem and to the Jewish nation is offered the kingdom, and signs and miracles take place to show that Jesus is the Christ risen from the dead. In the above parable our Lord predicted what the people would do with the servants, who bring the second offer. They would ignore the message and treat the servants spitefully and kill them. This we find fulfilled in the persecu-

tion which broke out in Jerusalem, when Apostles were imprisoned and others were killed. The Lord also predicted in His parable the fate of the wicked city. It was to be burned. Thus it happened with Jerusalem. And after the second offer had been rejected the servants were to go to the highways to invite the guests. And this stands for the invitation to go out to the Gentiles.

Jerusalem is in the foreground of this book, for the beginning was to be in Jerusalem "to the Jew first." The end of the book takes us to Rome and we see the great Apostle a prisoner there, a most significant, prophetic circumstance.

The division of the Book. The division of the Book of the Acts is very simple. We divide it into three parts.

I. Chapters I-VII. These chapters give us the historical account of the beginning in Jerusalem, the renewed testimony to the nation concerning Jesus as the Christ and the Kingdom. The seventh chapter, the stoning of Stephen, closes that testimony.

II. Chapters VIII-XII. These chapters mark a transition period. The Gospel goes forth to Samaria. Saul of Tarsus sees the Lord and is converted. Peter goes and preaches the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter is cast into prison and miraculously delivered.

In these two parts Peter is in the foreground. He does most of the preaching and acting. He used the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven in the second chapter by preaching to the Jews and in the tenth chapter by preaching to the Gentiles.

III. Chapters XIII-XVIII. These chapters contain the inspired accounts of the travels and labors of the Apostle Paul, the proclamation of the Gospel in the different lands and the events and circumstances connected with it. His

journey to Rome and abode there closes the book. Another division as given by Bengel in his *Gnomen* is also good.

I. Pentecost, with preceding events. Ch. I, II.

II. Acts in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria among the circumcised. Ch. III-IX, XII.

III. Acts in Caesarea and admission of Gentiles. Ch. X, XI.

IV. First Journey among the Gentiles. Ch. XIII, XIV.

V. The deputation and council in Jerusalem. Ch. XV.

VI. Second Journey of Paul. XVI-XIX.

VII. Journey to Jerusalem and Rome. XIX:21-XXVIII.

In closing these brief introductory remarks to this great book we wish to say that the careful study of its contents is very needful at the present time. It will take us back to the beginning and show us the path which the Lord has marked out for His church on earth. In the light of this book we shall discover the dark picture of the present day confusion and departure from God and from His Word. There is much comfort and direction for the faithful remnant of God's people living in our days in this book. There is much earnest exhortation to greater faithfulness, to more holy boldness in preaching the Gospel and standing up for the faith, which comes to us from this book. Most blessed it is to follow the Holy Spirit in His work in, upon and with the believer. With the gracious help of our Lord and the help of His Spirit we hope to touch upon all these blessed phases, and we are confident that He will make the closer study of the Acts of the Apostles a blessing to our readers as well as to the writer.

CHAPTER I.

The opening chapter of this book gives the events which preceded the great day of Pentecost. However, of the many things which must have transpired in Jerusalem during the fifty days between the resurrection day and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit not all are mentioned in this chapter. Here, as in the great historical books of the Old Testament and in the Gospels, only certain events are reported while others are passed over. Not man but God by His Spirit arranged the matter to give us more than a mere historical account of what took place. As the Book of Exodus in its history foreshadows spiritual and dispensational truths, so, as we shall find, does this New Testament Exodus book teach spiritual and dispensational lessons.

The events preceding Pentecost written in this first chapter are:

I. An account of events preceding the ascension of the Lord, the ascension itself and the message of His personal, visible and glorious return. Verses 1-11.

II. The waiting company in prayer. Matthias added to the Apostles in the place of Judas. Verses 12-26.

I. Verses 1-3. The first three verses of the chapter form the introduction.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 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:

As shown in the introduction the first verse proves that Luke, the beloved physician, the writer of the Gospel of Luke, was the chosen instrument to write the Book of Acts. Theophilus (Friend of God) is as prominent in the beginning of the Acts as he is in the Gospel of Luke, where he is addressed as "most excellent." From a reliable source dating back to the second century we learn that he was an influential and wealthy man residing in the city of Antioch. He dedicated his magnificent palace, called a Basilica, to the preaching of the Gospel. Luke came most likely also from Antioch. He may have belonged to the household of Theophilus. It is not unlikely that Luke had received great kindness from Theophilus; some claim that he used to be a slave and became through Theophilus a free man. That both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts are addressed to Theophilus does not mean that these discourses (the word used in the original) were meant for Theophilus alone. Luke addressed Theophilus as a prominent man, a responsible person, whose name bespeaks close walk with God, and through him to that assembly to which Theophilus belonged, and in a larger sense to all the Gentile-Christian churches.

According to the address to Theophilus we have in the Gospel of Luke the beginning of what Christ did and taught and therefore in Acts a continuation of these. He began on earth and now the scene is changed. He is the Man in Glory and from there He continues His work.

It is beautiful to see how the Lord Jesus is brought to our view in these few sentences with which this book opens. How this manifests the One who guided the pen of the beloved physician, that is the Holy Spirit. Seven things are mentioned concerning our Lord. 1. His earthly life of doing and teaching. 2. He charged His Apostles by the Holy Spirit. 3. He was taken up. 4. He had suffered. 5. Presented Himself living with many proofs. 6. He was seen

by them for forty days. 7. He spoke of the things which concern the Kingdom of God. What an array of wonderful facts we find in these few sentences! The fact of His resurrection after His passion is the leading feature of the passage. It must be necessarily so for His resurrection is the great foundation upon which the Gospel and the Church rests. He presented Himself living with many proofs and was seen by them for forty days. It is only here in this passage that the period of time during which He manifested Himself is mentioned. And during that time the "many proofs" were given. He appeared in their midst; He walked with them, ate with them, they touched His body, His hands and feet, and they found He was not an apparition, but had a body of flesh and bones. Blessed fact, He presented Himself living, He is the living One! That He thus showed Himself with many proofs is beyond controversy. But these forty days are likewise shrouded in mystery. It is easy to make fanciful applications of these forty days and to teach unscriptural doctrines by such applications. For instance, a widespread evil system which denies some of the fundamentals of the faith, holds that the Lord is *now* present on the earth as He was present for forty days after His resurrection. According to this teaching (Russellism or Millennial Dawn) He came in a secret manner in 1874 and is to remain here for forty years, when He will reveal Himself. Such teaching, if it can be called that, lacks all scriptural support. During these forty days, a number which stands for testing, He not only showed Himself, but also spoke of the things which concern the Kingdom of God. The words He gave them at these occasions, the instructions they received from His lips are not reported to us.

The verses which follow describe the farewell meeting, His last words to His disciples, the ascension of the Lord, and the promise of His return to earth.

And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which *saith he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Verses 4-11.)

This occurred ten days before the day of Pentecost. Their place was to be in Jerusalem and to wait in that city for the promise of the Father, which they had heard from His lips. He had given them this promise, when He talked to them before His death, as written in the Gospel of John. The same command to remain in the city is found at the close of the Gospel of Luke as well as the fact that the promise of the Father was soon to be fulfilled. Then He refers to John and his baptism with water, that they were to be baptized with the Holy Spirit; the "fire" of which John spoke (Matthew iii:12) the Lord does not mention, because the baptizing with fire does not refer to the day of Pentecost, but to the time when: "He shall gather His wheat into the garner and burn the chaff with fire unquenchable;" that is, His second coming. He announced once more the "other Comforter" who was to come to be with them and in them. All this we shall follow in detail when we come to the great second chapter in our study of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Here we only wish to add that the waiting of the

disciples for the promise of the Father remaining in Jerusalem for ten days cannot be repeated now. Often people, well meaning and spiritually-minded, have appointed meetings for days of waiting and prayer that "the promise of the Father" might be given to them. Such expectations are out of order. The Father has kept His promise, the Holy Spirit has come. To ask the Father now to keep His promise amounts to the same thing as to ask God to *make* peace by the death of Christ. Peace has been made; the Holy Spirit has been given.

And now we hear the assembled disciples addressing the Lord. What blessed intercourse they had with Him! He spoke to them in all His former tenderness and sympathy and they could ask Him their questions. And so He is still accessible for His own who draw dear to Him. "Lord, is it at this time that Thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?" This was their question, and a very natural question it was for them to ask. They were still Jews and knew only the earthly kingdom as their hope. He had risen from the dead and to their minds this must be the time in which the kingdom is restored to Israel.

Frequently the inquiry of these men who had believed in Jesus and followed Him is declared to have been prompted by ignorance and selfishness. They were, so it is said, still expecting an earthly kingdom, to be established in the land with Jerusalem as the center; they were not yet delivered from their Jewish ideas. Others tell us that at the time they asked this question, they were ignorant of the true meaning of the kingdom. According to these interpreters the kingdom is the New Testament Church; the Holy Spirit swept away these earthly kingdom expectations. Such and similar reasons have been given to explain the question of the disciples.

It has occurred to but a few that this question was perfectly in order for them as Jews, which they were still, and

did not emanate from ignorance, but was asked by reason of their superior knowledge of God's purposes as revealed in the Old Testament, a knowledge which is so sadly lacking in the present-day professing church.

The Lord does not rebuke their supposed ignorance nor does He tell them that they were mistaken. "And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath placed in His own authority." This answer approves the subject of their question. The Kingdom is to be restored, the times and the seasons were not then to be revealed, for the Father hath put these in His own power.

And this answer is most instructive. In connection with the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, the establishment of the theocratic kingdom on earth, as promised by God's holy prophets, times and seasons are expressly stated, and the declaration was made that at the time of the end, preceding the coming of the kingdom, the wise should understand (Daniel xii:10). But the Lord does not here, as He did in His Olivet discourse, direct their attention to Daniel. "For *you* it is not to know the times or the seasons." A better hope, a heavenly hope was to be theirs, and in connection with that blessed hope of the Coming of the Lord for His Saints to bring them not to Palestine and given them an earthly kingdom, but into the Father's House in Glory, there are no "times or seasons" revealed. For His Saints He may come at any time. These disciples were soon to be formed into the one body, the church, by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Lord anticipating this gave them this answer. It pointed them away from the earthly Hope of the Kingdom. Others in the future, Jewish disciples once more, a faithful remnant of Israelites, called after the completed church has left this earthly scene, will surely know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Once more He announces their great mission, and that before they could be such witnesses they were to receive power by the Coming of the Holy Spirit upon them. Such was the case on the day of Pentecost as we shall find when we reach the events of that day.

One verse only gives us the account of the ascension of our Lord, His Return to the Father. He was taken up, they beholding, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. What a spectacle this must have been! He in whom they had believed, in whose company they had been, to whose loving, tender words they had listened, whom they had forsaken when the hour of His suffering had come; He who had died on a cross, reckoned among the evil-doers, who had rested in a tomb and was raised from the dead by the power of God; He who had been with them in a glorified human body and manifested Himself in His resurrection glory and power during the forty days was now taken up, "received into Glory." Gradually He must have been lifted out of their midst. Lovingly His eyes must have rested upon them while their eyes beheld only Him. Now He is lifted higher and still they behold Him in human form. And then a cloud received Him out of their sight. The Greek verb used is "to take in;" so that it reads literally, "And then a cloud took Him in out of their sight." This cloud surrounded Him, and the last they saw of Him was that He disappeared from their view in this human glorified body in a cloud.

And that cloud was not a cloud of vapor. It was the same cloud which had appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Shekinah. It was the same cloud of glory which had filled Solomon's temple, which so often in Israel's past history had appeared as the outward sign of Jehovah's presence with his people. The Glory-cloud came to take Him in, to bring Him back to the Father from whence He had come. What human tongue or pen can picture what took place after He had disappeared from human vision! The Shek-

in a cloud had come to meet Him and where that Glory began sight ceases and faith begins. What must it have been when He came into the presence of the Throne of His Father when He took His seat, greeted with the word of welcome: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec—sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." What a glorious scene it must have been participated in by the angels in heaven! And now He is back with the Father. In His Name we can approach God; He is our Advocate, our Priest in the presence of God, appearing for His own. The evidence that He is thus with the Father is soon given by the answered prayer of the first chapter, and the greater evidence, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Coming of the third person of the Trinity.

We must not overlook the teaching of one great truth assailed so much in our times by higher critics and infidels. The Lord Jesus Christ passed through the heavens with a real human glorified body, a body of flesh and bones and went with that body to a literal place, the throne of God, where He sat down and where He is now "the Man" in the Glory. The denial of this fact, so universal in our day, strikes at the very foundation of the Gospel, our salvation and our heavenly Hope. This great truth that the Lord left bodily His own and bodily returned to the Father is indisputably seen in this account of His ascension. May His person, His ascension and bodily presence in Glory be as real to our hearts, dear readers, as it must have been to the hearts of the eye-witnesses of this great event.

The cloud had taken Him in and still they were gazing into heaven. It was because they had still a vision of that cloud; "as He was going." The verb used in the original indicates this. They could not take their eyes away from that bright spot where He was, their Saviour, their Lord, their Hope, their All in All. This upward look should have been the attitude of the church. Two heavenly visitors ap-

pear now upon the scene and they give utterance to that familiar promise of His Second Coming, which establishes that great event beyond the shadow of a doubt. "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven." Could human language make it any plainer? It seems almost impossible that any intelligent human being could not grasp the simple fact of His return, personal, visible and glorious, as revealed in this angelic message. The same glory cloud will bring Him back, yea even to the same place, for Zechariah tells us that "His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (chapter xiv:4).

However, we must beware of confounding this event given here with that blessed Hope, which is the Hope of the church. The Coming of the Lord is His visible Coming as described in the prophetic books of the Old Testament; it is His coming to establish His rule upon the earth. It is the event spoken of in Daniel vii:14 and Rev. i:7. When He comes in like manner as He went up, His Saints come with Him (Col. iii:4; 2 Thess. i:10). The Hope of the church is to meet Him in the air and not to see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. The coming here "in like manner" is His Coming for Israel and the nations. The Coming of the Lord for His Church before His visible and glorious Manifestation, is revealed in 1 Thess. iv:16-18. It is well to keep these important truths in mind. Confusion between these is disastrous. He left them to enter into the Holy of Holies, to exercise the priesthood which Aaron exercised on the day of atonement, though our Lord is a priest after the order of Melchisedec. And when this promise of the two men in white garments is fulfilled, He will come forth to be a priest upon His throne.

II. The waiting company in prayer. Matthias added to the Apostles in the place of Judas.

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Verses 12-14.)

With what emotions they must have left the blessed spot from which the Lord had visibly gone to the Father! And now we behold them in a waiting attitude. Obedient to the command of their Lord they tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Their waiting was unique as a company of disciples, believers in Jesus as the Christ. They were not the church. Ten days after the promise of the Father came, the Holy Spirit was poured out. Ever since He is here. There is no need of waiting now for the promise of the Father. No company of believers in this age could ever be again in the position in which the disciples were before Pentecost. It is, therefore, incorrect and unscriptural to hold prayer meetings, as stated before, waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Persons who expect a repetition of what took place on Pentecost, who pray for and expect another sending of the Holy Spirit are on unscriptural ground.

We see the disciples gathered in an upper chamber. This was not in the temple, but in a private house. Perhaps it was the same room, which is mentioned in the Gospel of John. Such rooms of good size were used by Hebrews for prayer and meditations. They do so still and have large assembly rooms for prayer (Beth Midrash) in private houses in different cities. The expression "upper room" is used

often in talmudical writings. Peter's name is put in the first place, as he appears in the foreground throughout the first part of this book. After the names of the disciples are given and that they gave themselves with one accord to continual prayer the fact is mentioned that the women were present likewise. These, no doubt, are the same mentioned in Luke viii: 2-3. They are mentioned not by name. Last of all appears Mary the mother of Jesus and His brethren. That the Holy Spirit gives the name of Mary the mother of Jesus, is most significant. It reminds us of the whole story of the incarnation and the blessed life of Him, the Son of God, who came of a woman, Mary, the virgin of prophecy (Isaiah vii: 14). But the significance is in the fact that she, who was chosen by God's grace to be the blessed vessel, through whom the Creator, the Son of God, entered in human form the world He had created, is mentioned here in company with the other waiting disciples. She has no place of superiority among them, but with the rest, waited for the promise of the Father; when the Holy Spirit was poured forth she too was baptized by the one Spirit into the one body of which through the Grace of God, she is a member like any other believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. She was fallible and sinful like every other person, and all which a corrupt form of Christianity has made of her is wicked teaching. Not once is she mentioned after this chapter in the Book of Acts. In vain do we look for her name in the Epistles, in which the Holy Spirit reveals christian doctrine and privileges. Mary, the mother of Jesus, has absolutely no relation to the redemption work of the Son of God. Then the brethren of our Lord are mentioned, the same, who with Mary, their mother, attempted to interfere with the ministry of our Lord (Mark iii: 21-31-35). Not one of these was an apostle. It is positively stated that up to a certain point His brethren did not believe in Him. "For neither did His brethren believe in Him" (John vii: 5). How they believed later we do not

know. Their presence in the waiting company shows that they had believed.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,) Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*. For it is written in the book of Psalms, *Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and, His bishoprick let another take.* (Verses 15-20.)

On a certain day, which is not mentioned, the number of the disciples present were one hundred and twenty. This however, was not by any means the whole number of believers before Pentecost. We read elsewhere that the risen Christ had appeared to about five hundred brethren at once (1 Cor. xv: 6). These no doubt belonged to Galilee. On that day before Pentecost, Peter arose in the midst of the one hundred and twenty and addressing them as brethren, laid before them the sad case of Judas, who had been numbered among the twelve apostles. The awful fate of Judas is mentioned once more. There is no discrepancy between Matthew's account and the words here. He committed suicide by hanging, and the rope broke, and the terrible thing happened, which is reported here. The Apostle Peter, in bringing the case before the disciples, quotes the Word of God in a most remarkable way, which shows its inspiration.

The question arises at once about the legitimacy of Peter's action. Was it right to act in this way? Was he authorized to address the assembled company and propose the addition of another apostle in the place of Judas? Or was his action

another evidence of his impulsiveness, wholly wrong? We are aware that some good brethren, teachers of the Bible, declare that Peter made a mistake. They tell us that this action was not according to the mind of the Lord. They assert furthermore, that not Matthias, but Paul, should have been the Apostle in the place of Judas.

We do not agree at all with their teaching. Peter and the gathered company did not make a mistake. He acted by inspiration and what they did was not only according to the mind of the risen Christ, according to the Word of God, but it was a manifestation of Christ in their midst. It was the Lord who added Matthias to the twelve. To say that Paul was meant to be the twelfth apostle is a *great* blunder. Paul's apostleship is entirely different from that of the men, who were called to this office by our Lord, in connection with His earthly ministry. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles and received from the risen and glorified Christ the double ministry, that of the Gospel, which he called "my Gospel" and the ministry of the church. Not till Israel's failure had been fully demonstrated in the stoning of Stephen, was Saul of Tarsus called to his apostleship. Furthermore twelve apostles were necessary. Twelve is the number denoting earthly government. Inasmuch as there was to be given another witness to Jerusalem after the ascension of our Lord, a national witness, a second offer of the Kingdom (Acts iii: 19, 20) twelve apostles were necessary as a body of witnesses to the nation. If only eleven apostles had stood up on the day of Pentecost, it would not have been in harmony with the divine plan and order. How strange it would have sounded if the record said "but Peter standing up with the *ten*" instead of "with the eleven" (Chapter ii: 14). Twelve had to stand up on Pentecost to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, therefore another one had to be added *before* that day. Besides this, there is positive proof that the Holy Spirit indorsed the action of the disciples in the upper room.

In 1 Corinthians xv: 5 the Holy Spirit mentions the *twelve*, who saw the Lord, to whom He appeared. Paul then is mentioned apart from the twelve; he saw the Lord in glory as one born out of due season (Verse 8).

A closer examination of the record of their action shows that the Lord guided them in this matter. Peter begins by quoting scripture. He does it in a way which clearly proves that he was guided by the Lord. "The Scriptures should be fulfilled" is what Peter said. How different from the Peter in Matthew xvi when he took the Lord aside and said after he had announced His coming death, "far be it from Thee." He had then no knowledge of the Scriptures. Repeatedly it is said that they knew not the Scriptures and that their eyes were holden. Here, however, he begins with the Scriptures. Surely this was the right starting point, and thus ordered by the Lord. He quotes from the Psalms. Part of Psalm lxix: 25 and Psalm cix: 8 are given by him as the foundation of the purposed action. These Psalms are prophetic of the events, which had taken place. The Lord Himself had opened his understanding as well as that of the other disciples. In Luke xxiv we read that He spoke of what was written in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. "Then He opened their understanding to understand the Scripture" (Luke xxiv: 46). It was a gift of the risen Lord and here Peter guided by the Spirit of God uses the prophetic Word. All the company is one with Him in the undertaking. It must be done. The Lord moved them in this matter.

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. (Verses 21-22.)

Here he defines the qualification of an apostle. He must be a witness of the resurrection of Christ as well as of what He said and did in His earthly ministry.

And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Verses 23-26.)

How simple it all is! How can anyone say that they erred in this action! Two are selected. Then they prayed; no doubt Peter led in audible prayer. And the prayer is a model of directness and simplicity. They address the Lord and believe that He had made a choice already. What they pray for is that the one chosen by Him may now be made known by Himself. The lot was perfectly legitimate for them to use. The Scriptures speak of it. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi:33). As they were still on Old Testament ground, it was perfectly right for them to resort to the lot. It, however, would be wrong for us to do it now. We have His complete Word, and the Holy Spirit to reveal His will. The Lord selects Matthias. His name means "the gift of the Lord." Thus the Lord gave him his place. The Apostolate complete, all was in readiness for the great day of Pentecost.

CHAPTER II.

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 iii). The Lord also had spoken repeatedly to His disciples about the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Luke xi 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 vii: 37-39 we read: "In the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been 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 indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized of the Holy Spirit after not many days." 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 x) 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 accom-

plished, 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 1 Corinthians xii: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. The believing company was then formed on the day of Pentecost into one body. *It was the birthday of the church.*

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 Ephes. iii: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 xxiii:16; "*Chag Shavuoth*" Exodus xxxiv:22, Feast of Weeks and "*Yom*

ha-Bikkurim” Num. xxviii: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 xii: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 Jehovah-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 della 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?*

“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

*Rotherham translated it “when the day of Pentecost was being filled up.” The original shows that the feast was in process.

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 1 Thessal. iv: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 1 Kings viii, verse 2 we read that the cloud, the sign of Jehovah'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 (Ephes. ii: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