

PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL

HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN PRIOR TO JESUS' ADVENT

30. That the Holy Ghost was given to the people before the Savior came, that David and others enjoyed it, is evident from the testimony of Jesus and the apostles. Many statements to this effect are also found in Moses and the prophets. We will first consider the testimony of the Savior.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT

“And Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Your enemies Thy footstool.” [60]

The Savior said that David had the Holy Ghost; and David lived more than a thousand years prior to the Pentecost of Acts 2. (b)

TESTIMONY OF PETER

“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, . . . Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.” [61]

This was before the great outpouring of the Spirit.

DAVID'S OWN TESTIMONY

Now these be the list words of David. David, the son of Jesse, said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue.” [62]

“Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit.” “All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.” [63]

TESTIMONY OF OTHER PROPHETS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT

“And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. But there remained two of the men in the camp and the Spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Envies thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” [64]

WHY ALL THE PEOPLE COULD NOT RECEIVE THE SPIRIT

31. What was this last statement of Moses, if not a longing desire that all the people might receive the Holy Ghost? God longed to give it to them; but they were not converted; they knew not the regenerating power of the Spirit in their life, consequently were not prepared to receive the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

“And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. . . . Then went he also to Ramah, . . . and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And

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one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither. . . . and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied.” [65]

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE WILDERNESS

“I will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His loving-kindness. For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them.” [66]

COULD NOT RECEIVE THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE OF LACK OF FAITH

32. An abundance of evidence might be further produced from the Scriptures, clearly showing that the people in the days prior to the advent of Christ, enjoyed the experience of conversion, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, if they would only believe the Lord and receive this blessing. It was for every one, for God never has been any respecter of persons. The reason, however, why the majority of the people did not receive it, was because of their lack of faith in the salvation of God, [67] and in His servants who delivered to them the messages of salvation. [68] They preferred to have the smooth sayings [69] of the teachers and leaders, therefore they lost the precious gift of God.

THE SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SPIRIT

33. As has been mentioned in a previous chapter, several centuries prior to the advent of the Savior, the rabbis instituted this spurious substitution for the Spirit of God, known as “Bath-kol,” the daughter of a voice. This fraud, however, could not be discerned but by the rabbis; and the poor people were left in entire ignorance of this precious gift. This, no doubt, partially explains the reason why the disciples were so perplexed when Jesus told them of the coming of the Spirit to them, which they should receive, while the world and even the learned rabbis would reject” it. To think they could have the real gift, which Jesus told them was so precious, and the rabbis and other learned men would not receive, was to them inexplicable. However, all could receive this blessed gift, if they would only open their hearts to it.

A GENERAL SUMMARY

34. Thus salvation, conversion, the Holy Spirit, and all other gifts necessary for the salvation of the soul, were manifested in the word of God; and all these every one might have received through Jesus Christ, before His appearance in the flesh. Many of the people did avail themselves of its precious blessings, and were saved. This was true of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of other Patriarchs. Moses, many of the prophets, priests, and kings, as well as some of the more pious of the people of God, enjoyed this salvation. [71] Then the Old Testament Scriptures, rightly understood, clearly reveal that the Jews might have known many wonderful truths concerning the Lord Jesus. Might have been prepared to receive Him when He came; might have been the heralds to the world of the grand and glorious gospel message of the Christ who had come; might have been freely and fully saved. Tradition, human theology, man-made teaching, and the philosophy [72] of so-called science [73] obstructed the channel of the soul; and those very people to whom He came, knew Him not. [74] What a sad thought! What a terrible fate! [75]

THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY

35. The church, however, should bear in mind the fact that all this which happened to the Jews has a very forcible lesson for the present time. [76] We are repeatedly admonished by the apostles and prophets that everything that happened aforetime was to illustrate to the church of Christ for today what the people

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might expect, should they follow now in a similar course. [77] If, however, the professed people of God will take heed to the admonitions and rightly interpret that people and those times, a great deal may be received which they otherwise must lose. But we see at the present time so much of the experience of Israel being repeated, the teachings of philosophy, the teachings of science, the traditions of the elders and of the theological leaders, the higher criticism of the word of God, the destruction of much of the truth of the gospel, the neglect of the study of the blessed Bible. When we consider how little the Bible is studied at the present day, and how much less its grand truths are understood and practiced, we can discern that the same path in which the ancient Jews traveled is being again beaten down. The masses are depending largely upon the few teachers to interpret the word for them, and many of these are constantly differing in opinion. Consequently spiritual death is resulting. Form is being substituted for devotion; outward demonstration takes the place of piety; large edifices are an indication of spiritual growth. [78] Yet the form of godliness without the power of God is vain in His work and worship. [79] The teachings of men in the place of the word of God are lifeless and spiritless; [80] and with God such worship is vain. [81]

WHAT THE JEWS OUGHT TO HAVE KNOWN, THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW

37. If men would but take heed and observe what transpired as a result of the Jews instituting so many customs, they might be saved from falling into the same snare, as well as from the same results. God's word is true; His word is sure. What the Jews might have known they lost sight of; what the church of today may know it is not earnestly seeking for, because the teachings of Moses and the prophets are laid aside. Then while it is called today, [82] let the salvation of God be sought as revealed in His own word; then life, power, and blessing will come to thousands of hearts, [83] which in turn will bless still others. The experience of the Jews will then be a valuable lesson. The Holy Ghost, faith, conversion, salvation, sanctification, obedience, as well as all the other gifts of the Spirit, will once more be manifested with power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Paragraph 3.

(a) Just when the Sanhedrin came into existence is not definitely known. One thing is certain, it must have come into existence some time during the Grecian rule, as the word, Sanhedrin, though written in Hebrew characters, is a Greek word. It is true this council was called by a Hebrew title, "the great house of judgment." But if this had been its original name, it never would have accepted the Greek title, for the Jews naturally abhorred the Grecians.

It is claimed, however, that it was in direct line of succession of the seventy elders appointed by Moses. The reason they had seventy-one, was to have the extra place filled, which Moses occupied in addition to the seventy. Exodus 18:19-26; Numbers 11:16.

They had full power to judge the people and to execute the judgment. Their method of execution was originally strangulation; afterward they adopted crucifixion. This power of execution was removed about the middle of the second century before Christ.

Paragraph 22.

(b) The blessedness of the complete gospel of Christ is contained in this one verse, Genesis 3:15. It not only promises a Savior to die for the sins of the world; it also promises His Second Coming, the destruction of Satan, and the restoration of the earth to its Edenic beauty. All this was accomplished through Jesus only. He came and died for sins according to the Scriptures; He will come again according to the Scriptures; He will destroy Satan according to the Scriptures; He will restore all things to their Edenic beauty. Thus Christ was revealed to Adam, and the gospel, or good news of salvation, must have been known by him.

Paragraph 30.

(c) Matthew says, in chapter 1:17 of his Gospel, that twenty-eight generations elapsed from David to Christ. From the birth of the Savior to the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost was about thirty-one and a half years. According to chronology David was in his prime about 1050 BC. Add to this the years from the Savior's birth to the experience of Acts 2, and we have nearly eleven hundred years.

1. Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 2:37; John 5:40.