

TONGUES, SIGNS, AND VISIONS, NOT GOD'S ORDER FOR TODAY

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With Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

It is in every way to be rejoiced in that Mr. Bishop has sent forth the testimony enclosed in the pages following. Never has there been greater need, both on the mission field and here at home among the churches, of a clear word of testimony concerning this important part of divine revelation. I am glad to commend it unreservedly.

C. I. SCOFIELD.

FOREWORD

After repeated study of the Epistles written after Paul's arrival at Rome, I am convinced that in them is found a curative teaching for all of the present-day delusions and fanaticisms found among many of the most sincere saints in the Church.

Also by careful restudies of the Book of the Acts and of the Epistles written before its close, I am convinced that those who contend for a purely kingdom dispensation covering the Book of the Acts period are as much deceived by Satan as are those who contend that the sign gifts are still in the Church and would be in manifestation everywhere if God's people were in a healthy spiritual state and exercising faith to that end.

From Romans 9 to 11, it is evident that Israel was set aside nationally before the close of the Acts. The imprisonment of the apostles, the inhibition to preach, and the stoning of Stephen seem to be Israel's answer to the proffered amnesty granting pardon for the Deicide committed and promising national deliverance upon condition of national repentance (Acts 3:19 and 20). That the Jew is in the forefront right down to the end of the Acts cannot be disproved, notwithstanding the setting aside of his nation during the present dispensation and the clear revelation given in the Acts period (I Corinthians 12:12 and 13; Galatians 3:26 to 29), proving that the Jew has no preference over the Gentile in the Body of Christ.

It is impossible that the Spirit of God could have wrought in the things which kept the Jew to the front after God had set him aside, and, if we leave Satan out of the question, we will never be able to understand it. Likewise, if we fail to see the hand of Satan in the present eccentricities and fanaticisms prominent in the “Tongues,” “Pentecostal,” and “Holiness” movements, we will dishonor the Lord, and not be able to serve Him in the deliverance and protection of His own from these delusions.

Some of the most renowned Bible teachers of the world have been very kind in answering my questions relating to the miracles and sign gifts and all are unanimous in believing that the sign gifts were divinely removed after having accomplished their purposes in the beginning of the present dispensation.

All that is written is said in love, with no thought of offending, but with a desire to pass on the helpful light which God has given to one of the least of His children, with sincere prayer that He may use it for the edification, protection, and deliverance of many of his loved fellow-pilgrim brethren.

Guatemala City.

A. E. BISHOP.

TONGUES, SIGNS, AND VISIONS, NOT GOD’S ORDER FOR TODAY

THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

The prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament, speaking of the Kingdom blessings, stated clearly: “Your God will come with a recompense: he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:4 to 6).

John in prison, with a wavering faith, sends two of his disciples to Jesus, saying: “Art thou he that should come; or, do we look for another?” Jesus answered: “Go, and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:2 to 5).

This proves quite conclusively that the said miracles were performed for the purpose of authenticating Jesus the Christ to Israel as their expected Messiah and King. It is quite reasonable to believe that the Messiah empowered His disciples to perform miracles in the historic period of the Gospels for the same purpose—that of authenticating His Messiahship and Kingship.

THE PURPOSE OF THE APOSTOLIC MIRACLES

On this point the apostle gives a ringing threefold testimony:

First. They were performed as the “signs of an apostle.”

“Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds” (II Corinthians 12:12) .

Second. They were performed to convince the Gentiles.

“To make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God” (Romans 15:18, 19).

Third. They were performed to confirm a great Salvation.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?” (Heb. 2:3 and 4).

INSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS ON PENTECOST

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest feast held just fifty days after the feast of the Passover.

A great feature of the celebration was the presentation of the “two loaves” made from the first fruits of the harvest (Leviticus 23:17).

Fifty days after the paschal lamb had been offered, the Holy Ghost descended to fulfill, among other things, the significance of the “two wave loaves” by uniting the individual disciples of the Lord into one organism, the Body of Christ, which is the Church (I Corinthians 10:16 and 17; I Corinthians 12:12, 13 and 20).

On the day of Pentecost the Spirit made His advent into the world to remain unto the end of the present dispensation. Any waiting or praying for the Spirit’s descent is therefore out of harmony with revealed truth, as is the singing of such hymns as “Come, Thou Heavenly Dove!”

All who were prepared were that day filled by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

The Spirit’s coming was accompanied by a sound from heaven as of “a rushing mighty wind,” a kind of bugle call (Weymouth—Acts 2:6), to attract the attention of the Jews, “devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), who were assembled at Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost.

A cloven tongue, a visible sign accompanying the advent of the Spirit, like as of fire, sat upon each of those who were with one accord in the one place.

That day the preaching was in tongues, which caused great amazement as every man heard the disciples of the Lord speaking in the tongue in which he was born (Acts 2:6 to 8).

For some years after Pentecost the Church was exclusively Jewish, clinging to their rites and ceremonies, the converts sometimes receiving the Holy Spirit subsequent to their conversion, by the imposition of the apostolic hands (Acts 8:14 to 17).

This was an overlapping of the former and present dispensations, as some years elapsed before the dispensation of grace took its normal course.

The Holy Spirit, however, was given to the first Gentile converts without any laying on of hands, but they spake with tongues, a sign to convince the astonished Jews who had accompanied Peter, that God was no longer making any distinction between Jews and Gentiles as individuals, and that the Holy Ghost was for both alike.

While the new Gentile converts did speak with tongues, it is interesting to note that there was no sound as of “a rushing mighty wind,” and no “cloven tongues as of fire” accompanying the gift of the Holy Ghost to them. If we give heed to this fact, it will be easy for us to see later on why God, who is sovereign in the giving of signs, afterward retired completely the sign gifts.

Pentecost was a partial fulfillment only, of Joel’s prophecy. It was cited by Peter at length, a part of which only was applicable to the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:16 to 21; Joel 2:28 to 32).

At Pentecost the Spirit was not poured out upon all flesh, but only upon a small company. Neither will the Spirit be poured upon all flesh in this dispensation.

At Pentecost there was no blood, nor fire, nor vapor of smoke; the sun was not turned into darkness, nor the moon into blood, and the dreams and the visions were lacking.

Only a small portion of the prophecy could apply to the events of Pentecost. Of this prophecy, Dr. Scofield well says: "It has a partial and continuous fulfillment during the 'last days,' which began with the first advent of Christ (Hebrews 1:2); but the greater fulfillment awaits 'the last days' as applied to Israel."

MARVELOUS UNFOLDING OF GRACE

Pentecost heralded the advent of the Holy Spirit into the world. The Book of the Acts gives many examples of His power manifested through human instruments.

But the Epistles give us the precious doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They tell us how we can be filled; how Christian character can be produced in us in the twinkling of an eye; how we can know that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, and a multitude of other wonderful things which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, until they were revealed to us by the Spirit in the Epistles.

Pentecost marks the birth of the Church. The Acts tells us something of its growth.

But the Epistles reveal to us the mystery which was hid in God through all the past ages of eternity. The Epistles alone reveal to us the wonderful organism of the Church and the relation of each member to the Head. The Epistles instruct us how each member can have the resurrection power of Christ without waiting, pleading, or asking for it.

The Pentecostal Sermon and the Book of the Acts made much of the resurrection of Christ, without which foundation there can be no superstructure.

But the Epistles only give us a clear revelation of "the Man in the glory," of the Shekinah glory of God upon His face, and of His high-priestly work.

Pentecost introduced the dispensation of grace. The Book of Acts records the conversion of no Gentiles during the first few years following Pentecost. Jewish rites, vows, and ceremonies were in vogue among the truly regenerated even down to the close of the Book of the Acts period.

But the Epistles unfold grace, and reveal light for the elimination from the Church of the last vestige of Judaism.

Pentecost is referred to but twice after the second chapter of Acts and both times reference is made only to the Jewish feast of that name. (See Acts 20:16, and I Corinthians 16:8).

Thus we see that the Holy Ghost in the written Word does not call us back to Pentecost for light on the doctrines, nor for instructions relating to power for life and service, but, for these, He does point us clearly to the Epistles.

THE SIGN GIFTS RETIRED

Years ago I read in one of Dr. Scofield's comments: "The sign gifts were to be retired." I said, "But, dear Dr. Scofield, where in the Bible is it so stated

Unbelievers often ask, "Where in the Bible does it say that Christ is divine?" But the spiritual Christian who knows his Bible finds proof of His divinity everywhere, from Genesis to Revelation.

We have said that the "tongues like as of fire" and the "sound as of a rushing mighty wind" were lacking when God gave the Spirit to the first Gentile converts.

Let us now note that the angelic chorus praising God at the time of the birth of Bethlehem's Babe was heard but once, and but by one elect company of shepherds.

The star which guided the Magii of the East to the new-born Babe, served but for one trip, and that only to an elect few.

When the Israelites crossed over into Canaan the walls of the first city fell by miraculous power unaided by the sword, but that mode of conquest ceased at once.

To the spiritually observing student it has ever been noticeable that the sign gifts accompanied the opening of this dispensation of grace rather than its continuation.

We have seen the purposes of the signs and wonders wrought by Christ and His disciples in the Gospel times, and of the apostles in the Book of the Acts period.

When the purposes of those signs were accomplished, why should we expect them to be continued?

When the apostles were doing "signs and wonders" in the Book of the Acts period for the purposes mentioned in Romans 15:18 and 19, and Hebrews 2:3 and 4, the sovereign sign gifts of the Spirit mentioned in I Corinthians 12, were operative among some of the members of His Body, the Church.

The fact that the Bible does not give a hint of the manifestation of the sign gifts after the close of the Book of the Acts period, must carry convincing evidence to the careful student who compares scripture with scripture, that they have been retired.

We who work among Roman Catholics find a potent contra-Mariolatry argument in the fact that the Virgin's name is not referred to after Acts 1:14.

In contrast with the sign gifts of I Corinthians 12, limited to a portion of the believers and operative only during the Book of the Acts period, let us note that the non-sign gifts of Ephesians 4:10 and 11, were given for the purpose of perfecting all 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 faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man (Ephesians 4:12 and 13).

In connection with what has previously been set forth, how convincing, how final is this latest proof that the non-sign gifts, and not the sign gifts, accompany the continuation and unfolding of the purposes of God in the present dispensation! All of the proofs are by no means inferential. Some say that the fact of the "sign gifts" having been given to the Church is prima-facie evidence that they are still there, though dormant, for lack of faith. This argument falls to the ground at once by a study of chapters 12, 13 and 14 of I Corinthians. The apostles were a gift to the Church (I Corinthians 12:28), but they soon passed away. The New Testament prophet was a gift to the Church (I Corinthians 12:28) for the definite purpose of giving divinely inspired messages to the Church until the written Word was completed. At the very time these prophets were given to the Church, it was stated that their prophesies would fail (I Corinthians 13:8) They accomplished their purpose and soon failed. Not one of them is incorporated as such in the written Word. In that connection it was also stated "whether there be tongues, they shall cease" (I Corinthians 13:8). The "knowledge" that was given as a special gift to some in the Church (I Corinthians 12:8) for the short period of time until the written Word should be completed, vanished away (I Corinthians 13:8) soon after the canon of Scripture was completed.

DELUSIONS, HOBBIES AND FANATICISMS

The healings divinely wrought in connection with the shadow of Peter and the handkerchiefs "brought unto the sick" from the body of Paul, were signs in the early days of the

present dispensation, wrought for the purposes already stated. Those purposes accomplished, the sign gifts were removed.

Even in the Jewish Christian Epistles we find no indication of a continuation of the sign gifts. The prayer of faith that always saves the sick (James 5:15) is not the exercising of the sign gift of healing.

In the latest Epistles of Paul not only is it noticeable that the sign gifts are nowhere in manifestation, but a different order is brought forth by the Holy Spirit for the correction of prevailing hobbies and fanaticisms. A remedy is suggested to Paul's ablest helper; a choice servant is sick nigh unto death, not because of sin, but because of excessive labors in the Gospel; another companion journeying with Paul must be left at Miletum sick and the apostle, who had once the gift of healing, proceeds on his journey with no attempt to heal his sick fellow traveler, and a beloved physician is commended, the emphasis being placed upon the "beloved physician," and not upon the beloved brother.

There is no foundation in the Word of God for the prevailing popular doctrine of "divine healing."

It is not true that healing is as much the will of God for every Christian as salvation is for the unsaved. Some of the choicest of saints by the elective will of God, have been patient sufferers for years upon sick beds. Age tells upon the best of God's servants and it is His first will for the majority of them to avail themselves of the services of oculists and dentists. Those who do so, while believing the popular teaching on "divine healing," are inconsistent.

The missionary who smashed his false teeth to pieces, saying: "If God wants me to have teeth, let Him grow them," was, if not wise, at least consistent with the doctrine he had been taught.

It is reasonable to expect miracles in our Father's family. God often performs them, but they are sovereign.

Because God heals once or frequently is no guarantee that He will always heal. Because He heals one is no proof that He will heal all.

There is a fly in the ointment; Satan, and not God, has put it there.

Incalculable damage is being done by fanatical teaching on tongues, healing, visions and dreams.

In a mission station where a "Pentecost" was insisted upon in prayer for years, it is now affirmed that "Pentecost has come." Visions and trances are now the order of the day. Lads and lasses in their teens are said to be caught away in holy visions from earth to heaven: "They have seen the streets of gold; they come back, saying that the missionary in charge has many stars in her crown." Before the armistice was signed it was revealed to them that Germany would fail. When in a trance those whom the lads embrace are said to be holy, not having "spot or wrinkle," and those whom they wave away are said to be unclean.

Their missionaries regard what is taking place as a precious work of the Holy Spirit through the visions given. They claim to have a knowledge of conditions in churches and individuals at a distance.

At one time Paul was burdened to know the conditions in a distant church. The Holy Spirit did not reveal them to him, and of that burden he wrote: "When I could no longer forbear, I sent to know of your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you (I Thessalonians 3:1 to 8).

Those who know the supernatural element in Spiritualism, called Demonology in the Old Testament.

will not fail to recognize the source of such visions and information.

In other circles, a branch of the Tongues Movement, now sometimes designated as “Convulsionists,” the actors are furnishing sport for the curiosity seekers. A spirit of trembling and shaking comes upon them and they sometimes fall upon the floor with spittle foaming from the mouth.

One has tersely said: “The difference between riding a horse and riding a hobby is that you can get off of a horse, but you can’t get off of a hobby.”

Multitudes of saints as sincere as angels are riding hobbies and riding them furiously. They could dismount, but most of them will not avail themselves of God’s appointed method of getting off. Of themselves they certainly will never be able to dismount. It is written: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”; “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

A careful study of the Epistles, especially of the latest Epistles of Paul, which give the normal course of the Church during the present dispensation, would dismount all from their hobbies, eliminate the last vestige of Judaism from their lives and teaching, and would adjust things in general, placing secondary things in their place and first things where they belong.

It would seem that Hebrews 1:1 and 2, would be sufficient to convince any who weigh the statement that God is not in these last days speaking unto us through visions, dreams and trances as He did in former times. The written revelation of His Son is complete and anything that detracts from that Word is of Satan, and not of God.

THE REAL SATAN NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

Satan is under great obligations both to the church and the stage. Milton, Dante, and Dore, and the author of “Black Crook” and others, have rendered Satan invaluable aid. Satan is not a bit offended when he is looked upon as a myth, when his existence is denied.

Satan is content when the full-fledged orthodox look upon him as a king reigning in hell, and when the unlearned think of him as a dreadful monster with horns, hoofs, great teeth and long tail, aided by beings of slightly inferior magnitude, armed with pitchforks and tongs.

How distinct is the real Satan who goes “to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7), sometimes like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5 to 8) !

The Scriptures of truth declare him to be the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4), the prince of the power of the air energizing the unsaved (Ephesians 2:2) and blinding their minds only to the gospel of the grace of God (II Corinthians 4:4) .

As an angel of light, in the sphere of ethics, morals and religion, aided by his own “ministers of righteousness” (II Corinthians 11:13 to 15), he is doing in these last days more against the Cross of Christ than he ever did through the most world-renowned infidels and atheists of other days.

His ministers of righteousness are not confined alone to “false apostles,” for in many things he deceives the very elect of God and uses them to further his purposes.

Those who know the Scriptures and are acquainted with the tactics of Satan will have no trouble in believing that he is ever the enemy and opposer of every God-given truth in its own place and time, and the friend and sustainer of that same truth out of its place and time.

Early in the Book of the Acts period, in the sheet vision (Acts 10:9 to 16), the basic feature of the mystery hid in God from all ages was revealed to Peter.

Some years before the close of the Book of the Acts, Paul wrote by inspiration: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This agrees exactly with the Ephesian revelation of the “one new man” feature of the mystery of the Church, written years after the close of the Acts (Ephesians 2:14 and 15; Ephesians 3:5 to 9).

After this clear revelation of the mystery hid in God from all ages, removing the Jew from the position of superiority he had occupied and placing him on a level with the Gentile in the body of Christ, it is impossible to believe that the Spirit of God could have directed in the procedures which kept the Jew in the forefront right on to the close of the Book of the Acts.

Was it the Spirit of God or Satan, who sustained circumcision among the Jewish converts (Acts 21:20 and 21), after it was revealed that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek?

Was it the Spirit of God or Satan who got Paul into Jerusalem when he had been divinely warned (Acts 22:18; Acts 21:4) to stay away?

Was it the Spirit of God or Satan who influenced James and the elders to persuade Paul to take a Jewish vow involving a Jewish sacrifice (Acts 21:18 to 26), after the clear revelation in Galatians 3:27 and 28, had been given?

The writings of Paul and James are infallible, but their acts in this case were fallible, influenced by Satan, who is the friend and sustainer of every divine work out of its place and time.

Was it the Spirit of God or Satan who prevented the poor Greek believer Trophimus (Acts 21:29) from being extended an equal fellowship with the thousands of Jewish believers who were all zealous of the law (Acts 21:20) ?

Is it the Spirit of God or Satan, who attempts to revive the sign gifts that were divinely retired after having fulfilled their purposes?

Every widespread attempt to revive them has, without exception, resulted in confusion, divisions, injury and disgrace.

Is it the Spirit of God or Satan, who turns the eyes of sincere Christians back to Pentecost and away from the goal placed before them in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians?

Is it the Spirit of God or Satan who teaches young and unestablished believers that it is sinful to use remedies in sickness when they are plainly suggested in both the Old and New Testaments (II Kings 20:7; I Timothy 5:23)?

Is it the Spirit of God or Satan that leads multitudes into the practice of things that pertain only to the dispensation of the law, and which proclaim louder than words that “they are Jews, and are not, but do lie” (Rev. 3:9)?

A little boy, nine years old, said to his father: “Papa, is Jesus stronger than Satan?” “Yes, dear, the Lord Jesus is all-powerful, much stronger than Satan,” replied the father. “Then, why does He not kill him, so he will bother me no more?” The father explained that God has done something infinitely better.

Reader, God has placed the Omnipotent Holy Spirit in every redeemed saint that he may know that “Christ in you, the hope of glory” is stronger than he that is in the world (I John 4:4; I John 5:18).

The saint who maintains the right adjustment to the indwelling Holy Spirit, praises God for His wisdom in having left the fallen Adam nature in him. Such an one experiences a type of victory beyond, far beyond that attained by those who believe in the eradication-of-sin theory which, being contrary to God’s revelation (I John 1:8 and 10), must be of Satan and not of the Holy Spirit.

There is a corrective passage in God's Word for every error, every heresy, every delusion, every hobby, every fanaticism, and every unbalanced position.

What injury to the cause of Christ, what distress to babes in Christ, what heart-rending, faith-destroying disasters would be avoided by dividing the Word-aright, by comparing scripture with scripture, by forming no doctrine upon a passage of scripture disassociated from the complete revelation, and by studying the Word, the whole Word, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to learn God's mind about everything, instead of taking some pet hobby, some precious inclination, doctrine or preconceived idea to the Word of God to establish it, prove it, sustain it.

May it please God to use this message to keep some out of the popular, prevailing Satanic delusions looked upon by many sincere Christians as a high order of Christian attainment, and for the recovery of some who have been ensnared by them.