

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Jesus' Resurrection: Foundation for all Bible Truth and Conduct

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (Acts 2:22–24, KJV 1900)

Just a few days earlier Jesus instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem, not to leave the city, until they received His power in the form of a miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4, 8) This was His last recorded word to them before He ascended back into heaven. They didn't know when this miracle would occur; only that they were to wait in Jerusalem until it appeared. Acts 2:2 uses the word "suddenly" to introduce the fulfillment of Jesus' word to them. Something that occurs "suddenly" occurs without warning. The disciples didn't wake up on Pentecost morning and say, "Today is the day." They knew something powerful was coming, but they didn't know when.

What was the form of the Spirit's manifestation? Luke, inspired author of Acts, indicates that the disciples heard a sound "...as of a rushing mighty wind," they saw "...cloven tongues like as of fire" that settled on each of them, and they "...began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The "tongues" languages with which they spoke were not mystical utterances that required translation. Quite in contrast to the modern claims of mystical utterances that no one can accurately understand or interpret, these men spoke, apparently in their native Galilean dialect; those who heard them knew that they were Galileans. (Acts 2:7) The miracle appears in the hearers. Jewish people had gathered in Jerusalem from many nations and languages for the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:8-11 documents at least sixteen different regions representing sixteen different languages. While recognizing that the men were Galileans, they marveled that each man heard the words spoken by the disciples "...in our own tongue wherein we were born." (Acts 2:8, 11) There is nothing mystical about their speech. The miracle occurred in the ears and minds of the hearers. Those who heard the disciples speaking heard in their native-born language, not in mystical utterances that they could not understand. I do not doubt or question the sincerity of most people who believe that they speak in miraculous tongues today, but none of them ever speaks in the manner that Scripture clearly describes these men as speaking. Rather than requiring translation, the Holy Spirit's miracle was an immediate translation

of the disciples' words from their native language simultaneously into the various sixteen different languages represented by the hearers of their words. No mystical utterances occurred. The Holy Spirit used known human languages to produce a miracle that none who heard the disciples' words could doubt or deny with any credibility. Believe the content of what the disciples said or not, they could not deny the miracle of human language that the Holy Spirit produced that day.

When the gospel is preached with the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, it always divides hearers. Some will hear with deep conviction and be stirred to ask questions, to seek more information. They sense something very important for them to know and do that the gospel teaches. Others will hear with rejection, often even with either anger or with a discrediting charge against the messenger. You see an example of this "Great divide" in this chapter. Those who rejected the disciples' preaching accused them of being drunk at 9:00 A. M. Those who believed the preaching were stirred, "...pricked in their heart," (Acts 2:37) and asked for more instructions, specifically what they should do because of what they believed in the disciples' preaching. There is always a link between what people believe and what they do. If they believe error, their attitude and conduct will manifest that error. If they believe the truth, their attitude and conduct will likewise manifest the truth that they believe. Not at all dissimilar to folks who reject the gospel today, the unbelievers on this day sought to discredit the messenger when they heard a message that they didn't like. They refused to consider that the message came from God, so they didn't consider that their attack against the messengers would not in any way neutralize the message.

When someone hurls false and unsavory words against you, your first human inclination is to strike back. While Peter briefly rejected the false charge, he had a far more important message that day than anything to do with himself. He devoted one simple sentence to the personal attack, "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day." (Acts 2:15) He then devoted the remainder of his message to the gospel, affirming

what his false accusers most feared and hated, that the same Jesus whom they had crucified had arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven from which He sent the Holy Spirit in power, as manifested that day. One of their number later acknowledged the futility of resistance if God indeed had sent these men. (Acts 5:34-39)

While we read about many unusual events in Acts that did not continue as permanent manifestations of the gospel after that time, we also see many things that have encouraged and instructed struggling, persecuted saints across the centuries. Whether preaching to a Jewish audience in Jerusalem or to Greek philosophers in Greece (Acts 2, 17), they never strayed far from the central truth of the gospel, Jesus, and the resurrection. When Paul taught the Ephesian elders, possibly his last personal time with them, he reminded them that he had preached all the gospel to them, not just parts of it.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (Acts 20:26-27)

Paul preached many things beyond the resurrection, but he kept that truth prominent in his hearers' minds as he preached "...all the counsel of God." When Paul wrote a deeply troubled and compromised Corinthian Church, he "...determined" not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. However, as we read the whole first Corinthian letter, we do not read sixteen chapters of nothing but the sufferings and death of Jesus. Paul confronted this compromised church on multiple errors in both their belief and their conduct that deviated from the truth of the gospel. He rejected their preacher loyalty above loyalty to Jesus. He rebuked them for their moral laxity in the church. He shamed them for appealing to human courts to settle personal differences instead of appealing to the Lord's judgment in His church. He dealt in extensive details with the then-sticky question of meat offered to idols. He warned them to study the Old Testament and learn thereby to avoid the sinful bad examples recorded there. He rebuked their errant attitudes and practices regarding the Lord's Supper. He spent three whole chapters on the right understanding and purpose of spiritual gifts. He even taught them regarding the right way to go about giving. And, yes indeed, he wrote a long chapter that specifically taught them regarding their departure from the truth of Jesus, and the resurrection. He challenged and taught them on every point of their errors; he expanded and enriched their minds regarding a far better way. (1 Corinthians 12:31) He gave us a powerful example in his two Corinthian letters of what it means to preach all the counsel of God, not just one dimension of it. However, if Paul had not included his resurrection teaching, his message

about Jesus Christ and Him crucified would have been incomplete. And, if he had not challenged the errant beliefs in this cosmopolitan and compromised church, he would have failed to apply the ethics of the gospel to the Corinthians. Based on New Testament teaching, believing all the right things serves as a foundation for living; it is not an end in itself. If you believe in Jesus and the resurrection, God commands you to also "...depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:19) In the lesson immediately following this verse, Paul draws a rich and instructive analogy about vessels in a "great house." Our faithful obedience, not just what we believe, important as that belief is in Scripture, classifies us as a vessel of honor, "...sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Timothy 2:21) However, failure to depart from iniquity dooms us to be a vessel of dishonor, not ready for the Master's use and sadly unprepared "...unto every good work."

When Mordecai encouraged Esther to face her honored position boldly for God, he reminded her that perhaps God had raised her up for just that purpose. (Esther 4:14) God is quite competent to fill His house with the right vessels that are ready for His use. However, if you or I choose the path of profane and vain babblings that steadily decline to more ungodliness (1 Timothy 2:16), or if we constantly invest ourselves in foolish and unlearned questions that promote strife rather than the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," we reduce ourselves to a dishonorable vessel whom that Master of the "great house" will reject for His use, choosing a clean and prepared vessel instead. (2 Timothy 2:23; Ephesians 4:3) Jesus warned the Jewish leaders in His day of just such a judgment that they had brought upon themselves.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. (Matthew 21:42-44)

Whether we acknowledge and honor Him as God's sure foundation corner stone or not, Jesus is the Rock on which God builds His church and all of His gracious works. If we choose to oppose Him instead of honor Him, He shall take the kingdom from us. Whether you fall on Him as if He were a small stone that you might stumble over on your path, or whether you turn from Him and His righteous judgments fall on you, refusal to honor Him brings destruction upon you.

Jesus warned the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2-3) that their refusal to obey Him put

them in danger of His falling on them in judgment and removing the candlestick, a symbol in this context of His blessing in honoring them as one of His churches. There is no faithful church in any of those seven cities today. Eventually each of these churches turned from Him and lost their candlestick, a solemn warning to us. As we gather in our various locations for worship this Lord's Day, let us pray for grace to humble us before Him, for clear conviction to avoid the foolish questions of spiritual immaturity and strife-evoking contention, grave indications and warning that we are not fit for our Master's use or prepared for every good work. Let us pray for the Lord's conviction to direct us to repentance where we need it, to show us what He requires of us to be one of His clean vessels, prepared for whatever good work that He may direct us to do and ready for whatever use He may choose to make of us. If we are not so prepared, we may face the same judgment that fell upon those first century people who lost His kingdom blessings because of their refusal.

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus and of our own resurrection because of His conquering death imposes a powerful ethical obligation onto each of us. If we call His name, have we departed from iniquity? Have we departed from the iniquity of those "Ten Commandment" kind of sins that He forbids? Have we also departed from those sins of foolish and contentious strife that renders us a dishonorable vessel, not prepared for His use and not ready for every good work? We prove our belief in Him and in His resurrection by our faithful and consistent "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3)

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:3)

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (1 John 3:16)

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (1 John 3:23)

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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