

*The Coming
of the
Comforter.*

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THE COMING OF THE COMFORTER.

WE read, in the first chapter of the Acts, that the Lord Jesus, when risen from the dead, commanded, *through the Holy Spirit*, the apostles whom He had chosen not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father (which ye have heard of Me); for ye shall receive “power after that the Holy Spirit is come” [or, “of the Holy Spirit coming”] upon you.

He then was seen to ascend, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (Acts i. 2–10.)

The coming down of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is traced by Peter (Acts iii. 33) up to its source. He was to come down with power to the apostles as witnesses of the Lord’s life down here

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(Acts i. 2–8), and of His resurrection. (Chap. i. 16–26.) He came to the *company*. Afterwards Paul knew the same power for witnessing to an ascended Lord as centre and end of a new system. But the Spirit has not *left* the people of God down here. He abides still with them. (John xiv., xvi.; Rev. xxii. 17.) His taking up His abode in and among the company which the Lord Jesus had gathered was altogether a new thing, never known before. It made them and those of their company to become the habitation of God (through the Holy Spirit there, Eph. ii. 22), and was power for witnessing unto the Lord Jesus, from whom it came—*unto the uttermost part of the earth*.

Observe, it was the Holy Spirit Himself—a person in the Godhead—who came down (John xiv. 16) to earth from the Father and the Son in heaven, and took up His abode on earth (not in a tent, however ornamented, made of skins and curtains—nor in a temple built of stone with hands of men—but) in and among living men on earth,

whom the Lord Jesus loved and who loved Him ; and He came to be the Paraclete (or Guardian, translated vers. 16 and 26 "*Comforter*") down here when Christ became the Paraclete in heaven with the Father, 1 John iii. 1. (Here translated "*Advocate*.")

This company is looked upon in after parts of scripture in different aspects. 1st, *as the habitation of God* ; 2ndly, *as the family adopted of the Father* and committed by Him to the Son to bring to glory ; and 3rdly, *as the spiritual body of Christ*—one Spirit, and so one with Himself—the bride. But in each of these blessed aspects the Holy Spirit has His own full and distinctively peculiar place. Quite true is it that men have been entrusted with a new revolution [in that called the New Testament], and a new place of obedient dependence upon the Holy Spirit in a new position, and men have failed in the responsibility again, as ever—forgotten both Holy Spirit and the truth which He came as witness of. But He has no more failed than God

can fail; no more failed than the Father on high has failed in His counsels and plans about the Son of His love, and therefore there is to faith a habitation of God down here still, and there is to hope the New Jerusalem to come. There are those that say I am a "son (*hu-ios*) of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26), and into whose hearts God has sent the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father (chap. iv. 6), and if Abba's heart be our present blessing, Abba's house is our hope (John xiv. 2, 3), where Abba's self and Abba's Son will be together for our joy in the Spirit. So there are those now that *hold the Head* and know themselves members in particular, cared for by Him, to whom eternity is as time, and who nourishes and cherishes His body (Eph. v. 28-30; see also chap. i. 22—ii. 10), and means to present it to Himself a glorious bride without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Remark, in chapter i., how the Lord Himself, through the Spirit, gave commands (ver. 2): we, too, now ought to

—and in the glory to come we shall—know what “by the Spirit all-pervading” means; He was promised by the Father, as the Son Himself had told them (compare Heb. ii.); He was come in an all-covering baptism (ver. 5); as power for testimony to Jesus [for us] unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Ver. 8.)

As the taking possession of the tabernacle and of the temple was in either case attended with most signal marks, so in chapter ii. the Holy Spirit's taking possession of the new sort of habitation (the old sort of temple itself was left standing with its rent veil) had its indications too; suddenly came a sound *from heaven* as of a rushing mighty wind—the house where they were sitting filled with it; cloven tongues as of fire upon each of them; all of them filled with the Holy Spirit; each spake in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Ver. 4.) When this got noised abroad the multitude were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

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(Read vers. 5–11.) Eighteen localities are named whence they came. The confounding of the tongues at Babel's tower to stop wickedness found its contrast here when the wonderful works of God in Christ had to be proclaimed.

Then, again, this was not the result of drunkenness—but of a promised pouring of My Spirit upon *all* flesh (vers. 17, 18); connected with what went beyond Israel and set it aside in its then state. *Whosoever* shall call, &c., went beyond Israel, as *whosoever shall call* on the Name of the Lord did not describe Israel's then state. Peter's testimony is contained in one sermon of twenty-six verses. (Vers. 14–40.) One sermon gained 3000 souls. Verses 42–47 describe the favoured company. Its marks were peculiar, but very beautiful before God and man.

And the Holy Spirit who had come down, took into His own hands the reins of government and administration; the arrangement, settling, and carrying out of every part of what He meant to be done. The will was and is in God, not

in man, though voluntarily did those that knew the Blessor go along with Him, taking the lead, and Himself working out what He would. In chapter iv. 8, Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit, and has a bold and wise testimony to give. (Vers. 10–12 and 19, 20.) They return to their own company—prayer ascends—the place is shaken, and all, filled with the Holy Spirit, spake the word of God with boldness (vers. 23–31); and then follows another beautiful account of the company.

If any one would take the trouble to read through the Acts, and mark in the margin with an S all verses in which the Spirit is named, such an one will be astonished to see how the presence of God the Holy Spirit, and His using men and working by men, is marked upon every part of it.

It seems to me that the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was so arranged by Jehovah that every part of it threw out His presence into light. If there was an Exodus, it proved that He was there; if there was no being locked up

at Pihahiroth, it was because He was there whose word the Red Sea heard and obeyed. The pillar of fire and cloud marked the presence of Him who had water and manna to give. He present, the way into Canaan was patent, and made good by Israel. If He was dishonoured, forgotten, disobeyed, there was no possible tenure of blessings given. And afterwards His temple could not stand without Himself. God is all and in all to faith, and man is nothing. If in subjection, dependent and obedient—then blessed. If unbelievingly out of subjection, independent and disobedient—where and what is he? What could the twelve apostles have done, or what do, without a living Lord to look after them? If subject (dependent and obedient) they were as John—in the bosom; if true but self-complacent and not self-judged, then they were as Peter; if not real, but self-honouring, as Judas. But as to the good, the Lord was alone—and the all in all was in Him. And what can I do if I forget the Holy Spirit

came down from the Father and the Son in heaven? that I may have power to look up and be taught of God to see Jesus Lord of all at the right hand of God, and the Father in heaven Himself, firstborn, among many brethren; Himself head over all things to His company down here; Himself, who made and upholds all things—making the throne on high to be the mercy-seat, and all His springs of life to be known as His people's, and the light of the blessing resting *upon all them that believe*. (Rom. iii. 22.) Let Paul plant, let Apollos water; it is God alone that gives the increase to His own seed.

Has the Father given us another Paraclete "*that he may abide with us for ever*;" even the Spirit of truth—whom we know, and who is in us? (John xiv. 16, 17.) Is this a blessing now enjoyed by us (chap. xv. 26, 27): "But when the Paraclete is come whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me?" Most surely it is a blessing now ex-

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istent. Does the Spirit of God dwell in us—even the Spirit of Christ; then let us, the body being dead because of sin, mortify its deeds. Led by the Spirit of God—we are sons of God, have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. We have the testimony of the Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God; and then follows the blessed verse 17, and that other, 21, Romans viii. And note it in 1 Corinthians iii. 16, 17; believers collectively are the temple in which the (compare 2 Cor. vi. 16) Spirit of God abides. And in chapter vi. 19 the individual is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit wrought in creation, providence, government, also in eternal redemption (Luke iii. 35; Acts x. 38; Heb. ix. 12, &c.), and in eternal salvation as applied to us. All our knowledge of God and of the things of God is through the Spirit. (1 Cor. ii. 9–14.) The Bible, too, He wrote it. (2 Pet. i. 21.) He is the Spirit of truth and testifies of Christ. (John xv. 26.) We

received Him by the hearing of faith. (Gal. iii. 2, 5.) Our access to the Father is by the Spirit. (Eph. ii. 18.) Our union with the Lord is by Him. (1 Cor. vi. 17, xii. 13, 14.) We may be filled with the Spirit; Paul speaks (Phil. i. 12) of a supply of the Spirit, of standing fast in one Spirit (ver. 27), of common fellowship of the Spirit (chap. ii. 1), of worship in the Spirit (iii. 3). See also Eph. i. 17. He is wisdom and revelation, and as strength in the inner man to those who seek Him. (Chap. iii. 16.) He warns us, too, not to quench Him (1 Thess. v. 19), nor grieve Him (Eph. iv. 30), and speaks of some having done despite to Him. (Heb. x. 29.)

It is a great thing (without being wise above what is written) to be wise according to what is written, and to have a solemn sense of the dignity of Him who ministers Christ to us and can enable us through faith to do all things.

If the dignity of Him, the promise of the Father, who has come down to earth and ministers as the Spirit of truth, Christ to us individually and

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collectively, and is the one charged with the administration of God's house down here, were more thought of—there would be more reverent awe, perhaps, in our assemblies, more sense of our nothingness in ourselves, and more courageous confidence of Christ's strength going, made perfect in our weakness.

One habitation—*one* heavenly family of God—*one* body (called also the Espoused, 2 Cor. xi. 2, and the Bride, Rev. xxii. 17, and the Wife, Rev. xix. 7, of the Lamb) until the Lord comes. *One*, and by *one*, till all is finished and perfected.

Who could know the counsel, and the plan, and the way, and the energy needful to form a company which would meet all this? None but God and those to whom He reveals it. Who could undertake and be entrusted with the work of atonement (making the throne of God to be the mercy-seat), and of being in that throne the giver and sustainer of eternal life? None (says scripture) but the Son, Jesus the

Lord and Christ. And who (in spite of the world, and the flesh, and Satan) is in administration down here for God, even the Father, and for the Christ, Son of His love? God Himself, even the Holy Spirit. He who came down at Pentecost and will be in sole administration until the Lord Jesus takes to Himself that which is His and the Father's.

Would to God that we might all see this—and, owning Him, might be true and real, dependent and obedient in all things and times.

* * * Taught of God in His book, you will find that the Spirit does not occupy us with Himself, but with the Lord Jesus, *to witness to whom He came.* Himself is the divine power of our intelligence as to all the realities of that world into which He has brought us.

The Holy Spirit Himself, and the pure word of His testimony (both are from the Father and through the Son), are that which *we have, now, to count upon.*

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THE love of God is a love that gathers us into the presence of God Himself: a love that communicates the life of His Son to those dead in trespasses and sins; and they possess a life that is locked up in the Son, never to be touched. Is it true that you can turn to God and say, *that* is the manner of life you possess? Life hid with Christ in God! If Christ Himself, up there, is my life, it links me up with Him in whom is the whole bundle of life. If the Head could not say to the feeblest member passing through the difficulties and sorrows of the wilderness down here, "I have no need of thee," why is it? Because of being bound up in one bundle of life, that life being communicated by the Father, and being so in us that Christ cannot say He has no need of us. Did you ever look up in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ with the consciousness of having *one life* with Him? If so, you cannot entertain a single question about the place you are in before God. If you have the eternal life that is in the only-

begotten Son, you cannot look up without seeing that you are in a new place altogether before God.

Looking round Eden, man might have said, what a large giver God is? But what can *we* say, as those to whom this life has been given? Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son!

If I begin with self, there is nothing but ruin. Is there anything to be got out of the ruin? any want felt there of God? Impossible that there could be! I begin with God, not with self. If God uses my sin to shew out the virtues of the blood of His Son, am I to be occupied with *Him*, or to be saying, "My leanness, my leanness!" *Your leanness!* how came you to be calculating on anything in yourself? If you bring an empty vessel, you can keep it full to overflowing if you put it into a cistern of water, even if there be a crack or flaw in the vessel.

The proper expression of a redeemed soul is thanksgiving that such a manifestation of the divine will should have

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come out—the deepest, highest, brightest, fullest, most blessed counsels of God, having their expression in Him who said, “Lo, I come to do thy will.”

Who was that Babe laid there in a manger? What could it mean, those angels saying, “Glory to God on high”? God could look down on that Babe, and see there the perfect expression of His glory. All God’s glory came out in connection with the person of Him who said, “No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father.”

After all the self-denial of Christ for me, is there to be none from me for Him? When He says, “I bought you with My own blood, I charged myself with all your guilt,” am I never to say, “Anything that is not for the glory of Christ I will renounce”?

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