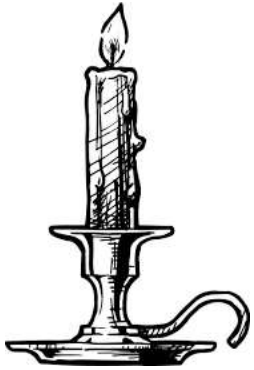


Wednesday, 3rd March 2021



THE CANDLESTICK

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come ... (Acts 1:1)

About one hundred and twenty people met in an upper room in Jerusalem, - perhaps the same upper room the Lord Jesus celebrated His last supper with the disciples. 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 (v.2-4). ... The Holy Spirit descended upon those believers who were awaiting the special promise of God. These were phenomenal times out of which the New Testament church was born.

It's amazing how the Holy Spirit has recorded this event. He did not dwell upon it, or extrapolate how it happened, or why it happened, but instead, He records it for the purpose of showing how at Pentecost God's mighty power fell upon His people for the purposes of the proclamation of the Gospel.

During that special religious season, Jews came from all over the ancient world, - from wherever they had been scattered during the *Diaspora*, - to give thanks for the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, known as the Feast of Pentecost (*Shavuot*, Lev. 25:10), which was held fifty days after the Passover. Jerusalem was packed! It was crowded, thronged ... and when the Jewish followers of Jesus left the upper room, they went to the people and began to mingle with the crowds and speak about Jesus. Their audience, at first, was 'confounded' (v.6), 'amazed and marvelled' (v.7,12), incredulous (v.12), and 'mocking' (v.13). They had not a clue what was happening!

And then Peter stood up, - not a rabbi, not a member of the Sanhedrin, - ... but a fisherman from up beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations (Is. 9:1). He began to quote from the Old Testament Scriptures, from the ancient prophecy of Joel (2:28-32), written nearly one thousand years earlier.

Even though we do not exactly know when Joel prophesied, he was one of the earliest prophets ... and it is a reminder how God fulfils His promises in His own time. He is in no hurry. We cannot rush His plans and purposes, as King Solomon penned, There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand (Prov. 19:21).

Joel's prophecy had been long-since forgotten by these religious Jews in Jerusalem. Many of them would have succumbed to believing it was archaic and fanciful symbolism, and allegory ... not to be taken seriously or literally. What a mistake when God's people fail to take His Word as He says it!

But, as Joel prophesied, the New Testament Church was born when the Holy Spirit came and immersed His redeemed people into one body, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ! In his day, Joel would not have understood what He was prophesying for it was a mystery, for an age to come, when the Jew and the Gentile would ultimately be made one by the death of Christ on the cross.

What was Joel speaking about? He was referring to a time beginning with the coming of the Messiah. This time-period would include miracles, and visions, and prophecies, and special dreams, and wonders in the sky, and signs on the earth, blood, fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon to blood ... and it would all culminate in the great and glorious day of the Lord. By means of this ancient prophecy, Peter was telling the Jewish people '*it has started!*' Joel's prophecy was beginning to be 'rolled out' from Pentecost and would conclude with the second coming of Christ! Peter was informing them 'the last days' had begun ... and we are in them, he said! The events leading up to the return of the Messiah is under way, so we need to make ready! ... It is the same message John, who was standing beside Peter on the Day of Pentecost, later wrote, Little children, it is *the last time*: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists: whereby we know that it is *the last time* (I Jn. 2:18). ... And it is also supported by the writer to the Hebrews, but *now once in the end of the world* hath he [*Christ*] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26).

Since the Word of God teaches we are presently living in these 'last days', what is the message to be taught and preached? Peter did not create his own answer, but instead he repeated the revelation of the prophet, it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (v.21 ... Joel 2:32). God's answer to the

defilement of our sin is nothing less than the pure unadulterated Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is God's only promise of deliverance to the 'whosoever believeth' ... 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation' (Rev. 5:9). It is for all who believe in Christ's atoning work!

Just as the period of the Old Testament prophets was drawing to a close, another prophet prophesied, For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings: and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall (Mal. 4:1,2).

We are living in exciting times so do not become waylaid with all the shenanigans around us. The Bible draws the clear picture of how the world will indeed emaciate itself and end up in a horrible place. But that is not the end of the story for, as Peter went on to preach, the Lord Jesus died and was buried and was raised from the tomb (Acts 2:29), He ascended from the Mount of Olives (v.32), He is 'seated by the right hand of God exalted' in Heavenly glory (v.33), and the Gospel is a true and living incontrovertible reality, 'He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear' (v.33).

In his second epistle Peter continued this theme of our great hope, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Peter 3:11-13).

When with the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see,
 'Twill be my joy through the ages to sing of His love for me.
 How marvellous, how wonderful, is my Saviour's love for me.