

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

BY

J. N. Loughborough

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"GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Heb.1:1-2.

The above text clearly shows that the Lord has had various ways of speaking to His people in different periods of time. In the earliest record of the human race found in Biblical history before sin entered the world, man had communion face to face. We learn also that after man had sinned the Lord instructed His people in an audible voice. In this manner He addressed Adam (Gen.3:8-18); Cain (Gen.4:6-15); Noah (Gen.6:13-22; 7:1-5; 8:15; 9:8,12,17); Abraham (Gen.17:1-6); Isaac (Gen.26:2-15); Jacob (Gen.28:13); Moses (Num.12:6-8); and Samuel (1Sam.3:4).

ANGELIC INSTRUCTION

The Lord spake also to men through the agency of angels. These holy beings are not, as some suppose, the spirits of dead men, but are beings of a higher order than men, as man was made "a little lower than the angels." Heb.2:7. In those ancient times, Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, sought to lead men into a false worship of their dead friends and heroes, and represented himself and angels as being the spirits of their dead. The Lord plainly said of such worship and transactions that what they professedly offered to the dead was in reality sacrifices to devils - fallen angels. See Deut.32:17; Ps.106:28,35-37; 1Cor.10:20. He strictly forbade any such "consulting with familiar spirits," specifying a death penalty for such an offense. Lev.17:7; 19:31; 20:27; Deut.18:10-13. The pure, holy angels are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb.1:7,14); but they never come to represent dead persons. Through the instrumentality of angels the Lord has often communicated His will to men. In this manner He spake to Abraham (Gen.18:1-3); to Lot (Gen.19:1); to Joshua (Josh.5:13-15); to Gideon (Judges 6:11-22); and to Manoah (Judges 13:3-9).

PROPHETS

Another mode of communication was by prophets, through visions and dreams. Of these the Lord said, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream." Num.12:6.

Of the visions given to God's servants, the prophets, there seemed to be two kinds - one called "open visions," or those given where the individual could be seen while in the vision, and the other called "night visions." Reference is made to the former visions in 1Sam.3:1, where is found the experience of the child in Samuel in these words: "The Word of the Lord was precious in those days' there was no open vision." There were prophets in those days who had instructions from the Lord, but their visions were not given to them openly before the people. In the previous chapter, at the same date of Samuel's -1165 B.C. - there came "a man of God" - a prophet - unto Eli, and told him of his wrongs, and predicted the fate of his two sons, that they should both die in

one day etc. 1Sam.2:27,30,33. In the same chapter where it is said, "There was no open vision," is the record of the vision given to Samuel. It was not an open vision. Not even did Eli see Samuel in the vision. The Lord taught him the tidings he was to bear to Eli. The record of the following morning says, "And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision." 1Sam.3:15. Samuel at this time had a vision from God, although it was not an open vision. His vision then must have been of the same character as that called in other portions of the Scripture a

NIGHT VISION

"God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night." Gen.46:2. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar was "revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." Dan.2:19. So also Daniel himself had a view, "in the night visions," of Christ asking the Father for the kingdom. Dan.7:13. On another occasion he was taken in vision in the midst of those Chaldean rulers. Had they remained, they might have seen him in the vision (an open vision); but, instead, "a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves." Dan.10:7.

On turning to the New Testament we find that in Paul's experience a vision appeared to him in the night. Acts 16:9. And again it was in the night season that he received that valuable instruction in reference to the shipwreck at Melita. Acts 27:23-24. He was also encouraged in a night vision at Athens. Acts 18:9. So also in a night vision the Lord showed him that he must bear witness for Him in Rome. Acts 23:11. From the above texts it will be observed that these night visions are treated in the Scriptures as of the same force and origin as are the "open visions."

The following statement in reference to dreams and night visions is found in the book of Job: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Chapter 33:14-17. See also Job 4:13-47.

This mode of communication by prophets was not a matter of rare occurrence in those olden times, for the Lord said of it, "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets." Hosea 12:10. He thus testified to them "by all the prophets." 2Kings 17:13. This He did "betimes" ("continually and carefully," margin.) 2Chron.36:15. Through these prophets He plead with the people to flee from idolatry, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." Jer.44:4. The masses, with their rulers, continued in their wickedness, "belied the Lord," and their prophets became wind. Jer.5:12-13. They "set up their ensigns for signs," and there was "no more any prophet." Ps.74:4,9. Then they sought "a vision" from the Lord, but they found none, because the law perished from the priest. Eze.7:26. When the people were thus left without a prophet it was a source of great loss to them, as shown by the word of Azariah, the son of Oded, to Asa, king of Judah, when he said: "Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found of them." 2Chron.15:3-4.

While Uzziah, king of Judah, gave heed to the Word of the Lord by His prophets, prosperity attended him. The record says: "He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction; for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense." "And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death." 2Chron.26:5,16,21.

When the people heeded the instruction from the Lord through His prophets, their prosperity was as visible as that of King Uzziah. As an illustration we refer to a time during the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, when the people were greatly perplexed, as their enemies, in overwhelming numbers, came against them. They in their distress sought the Lord, and He sent them word through His prophet Jehaziel, saying, "The battle is not yours, but God's," and, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle." As they were marching against their enemies in obedience to the instruction given, the king proclaimed in the ears of the people, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2Chron.20:20. As the people thus moved out by faith in the prediction of the prophet, a might defeat of their enemies was the result.

Notwithstanding all these tokens of God's favor, this people fell again into idolatry, and the Lord testified to them by the prophet Jeremiah: "If ye will not hearken to Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." Jer.26:4-6.

Disregarding the admonition of the Lord, the people were brought into a position at last where they could see the force of the words of Solomon, when he said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish (cast off restraint, R.V.); but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." Prov.29:18. Still, however, they persisted in following their own way, walking in the imaginations of their own hearts, until their city was laid in ruins. Then came the lamentation of the prophet Jeremiah: "Her gates are sunk into the ground; the law is no more; . . . her prophets also find vision from the Lord." Lam.2:9.

WOMEN AS PROPHETS.

In Old Testament times the Lord not only used men as prophets, but also devout women were favored with this gift. In the days of the judges of Israel we have the record of Deborah the prophetess, the wife of Lapi-doth, who was not only a prophetess, but served in the position of judge. Through instructions given by her, their enemies were overthrown, as seen in Judges 4:4; 5:31. Then again mention is made of Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, in the days of Josiah, the good king of Judah. She seems to have been connected with the school at Jerusalem, and was sought unto for counsel, as recorded in 2 Kings 22:13-20; 2Chron.34:22-28.

Satan, seeking to mar the work of the Lord, in olden times sometimes used for false prophets women as well as men. Of these women agents, and their flattering, soothsaying work, sewing pillows to armholes of statues to hunt souls, etc., a graphic description is found in Eze.13:17-23.

At the same time the Saviour was taken to the temple to have made for Him the required offering, the devoted Simeon recognized Him as the promised Messiah. And there was also present upon that occasion Anna, a prophetess, who dwelt in the temple - probably in the "college," or "school," as did Huldah. Thus it is evident that when Peter on the day of Pentecost - in harmony with Joel's prophecy - declared that as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit, the "handmaidens" and daughters" should prophesy, it was not a strange thing to the church to learn that women should share in the prophetic gift in the Gospel age.

THE SON SPEAKING

He who spake in divers manners in old time, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." This of course includes Christ's personal teaching when on the earth, as we have it in the four Gospels of the New Testament. That was not, however, the whole of His teaching for the "last days," for when He was about to leave the world, He said to His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." John 14:16. Respecting this Comforter, He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. Again, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me." John 15:26.

Of the special work of the Comforter, which was to "abide forever," the Saviour said: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now." John 16:7-16.

All that was to be spoken by the Son was not accomplished when He was here in person, for He said: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:13-14. Of the coming and work of the Spirit, our Lord further spake to the disciples: "And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49. A record of the same conversation is also given in these words: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise (fulfilment of the promise) of the Father, which, saith He, ye heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1:4-5.

PROPHECY OF JOEL

This promise which the Father had made, and to which our Saviour here refers, must be the promise recorded in the book of Joel, for when, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out, Peter recognized it as the beginning of what was predicted by Joel. We read: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, 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." Acts 2:1-4.

The mocking ones among the multitude who came together on seeing and hearing of this wonderful manifestation, said: "These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words; for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those

days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy; and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." Acts 2:13-20; Joel 2:28-32.

It is not recorded that a single thing enumerated by Joel, to be produced by the Spirit, took place on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was, however, poured out on that day, and there was a wonderful manifestation of the gift of tongues. In Joel's prediction of what should result from the outpouring of the Spirit, nothing was said about tongues. Tongues is, nevertheless, one of the operations of the Spirit of God, as well as those directly specified in Joel's prophecy, and all were to be seen in the work of the Spirit. The time covered by this prophecy of Joel reaches down to the close of probationary time - even to the "great and terrible day of the Lord."

The "last days" must include the very last day of the last days, which would take in the last day of probationary time. Hence this prediction of Joel relates to the work of the Spirit of God - the Comforter - as it should please the Lord, "forever," even through the entire Gospel dispensation.

That this outpouring mentioned by Joel, is the "promise of the Father" to which Christ referred, is evident from Peter's discourse. He says: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:32-33.

PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

That Peter understood this promise to cover the Lord's working to the end of time is set forth in these words: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38-39. Then as long as the Lord calls people to His service, so long is the promise of the Holy Spirit extended to them.

With the idea in mind that the Spirit of God was to have much to do with the believers during the Gospel age, we can more fully comprehend the words of the apostle Paul when, comparing the past dispensation with the present one, He says: "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" 2Cor.3:8. If this entire dispensation is the "ministration of the Spirit," it surely must be that the Spirit is to have much to do with those who will accept its working.

Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1Cor.12:7. The manifestation of the Spirit must refer to its manner of working. The Spirit may and does come to the sinner in his sins, as a reprover; but after he yields to the Lord, and it leads the mind to the blessed assurance of God's promises, it is an approver. Eph.1:13. Then it is that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Rom.8:26.

Man, in his fallen state, is infirm, "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph.4:18. "Alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works." Col.1:21. There is "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 2Pet.1:4. After yielding to God and becoming partakers of the divine nature, we are recognized as "the sons of God;" being "led by the Spirit of God." Rom.8:14. That Spirit dwelling in us "quickens (gives life - even the life of God - to) your mortal bodies." Rom.8:11. It then "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," and seals us as His. Rom.8:16; 2Cor.1:22. When thus yielded to the

life of God we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Eph.3:16-17. Then we may say with the prophet Micah, "Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord." Micah 3:8. Then the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom.8:4.

THE TEMPLE OF THE SPIRIT

The church of Christ on earth is really a place prepared for the indwelling of the Spirit. The apostle says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1Cor.3:16. To the individual member of the church He says, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1Cor.6:19. Again, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." 2Cor.6:16. And once more, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph.2:21-22. Standing thus, we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Eph.3:16. "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Col.1:11. Thus we may labor, "striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." Col.1:29.

MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT

In Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians he thus speaks of the work of the Spirit, saying: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." 1Cor.12:7-11. Those manifestations are all by one and the selfsame spirit. How unlike the communications of Spiritualism, which are from a variety of spirits, many of them being lying spirits!

Paul proceeds in his discourse by comparing the church with the human body, representing the gifts of the Spirit as members of the body, the eyes, ears, hands, etc., saying: "Now hath God set the members of every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. . . . And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? but covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." 1Cor.12:18-31. We here read of the Lord's setting these gifts "in the church;" do we read elsewhere of His setting them out of the church?

CHARITY OR LOVE

The more excellent way is not to have a church without the gifts of the Spirit; it is a more excellent way than simply to "covet" gifts. That "more excellent way" is fully set forth in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, in the apostle's discourse on charity - fervent love to God, and to our fellow-men. Instead of simply coveting some particular gift for ourselves, it is better to seek entire consecration to the Lord - to have His love in our hearts - to "follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." 1Cor.14:1. However, this discourse on charity does not dispense with the gifts of the Spirit. We read: "Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which

is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." 1Cor.13:8-10. By this it is understood that the gift of prophecy may be manifest, as it may please the Lord, until the perfect state shall come. In that state, when the Lord is seen face to face, prophecy will no more be needed. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1Cor.13:12.

After dwelling upon the superior excellence of charity, the apostle says, "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy," Again, "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." And "wherefore, brethren covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." 1Cor.14:1,12,39-40. Hence we see our anxiety and desire should be the upbuilding of the church through the manifestation of the gifts. Especially does he show that it is desirable that the gift of prophecy shall be manifest.

PROPHECY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

On looking through the Acts of the Apostles the fact is apparent that the Lord had many sons and daughters who were favored with divine revelations. In chapter 11 is mentioned the case of Agabus, who predicted the great dearth that was to come on the land of Judea, which prediction moved the Lord's people to provide relief for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Verses 27-30. The exact fulfilment of this prophecy established the faith of the believers in Agabus as a true prophet among them, so that when at Caesarea, nineteen years after, he told them what would be done to Paul in Jerusalem, there seemed to be no question as to the certainty of the fulfilment of his prediction; for they at once besought Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Acts 21:10-11. In the church at Antioch, four prophets are mentioned, namely, Barnabas, Simeon (Niger), Lucius, and Manaen. Acts 13:1. It seems also that Philip, the evangelist, who resided at Caesarea, "had four daughters, virgins," that were prophets. Acts 21:8-9.

Paul, when writing his epistles to the Ephesians, spake of the gifts of the Spirit on this wise: "Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive ("a multitude of captives," margin), and gave gifts unto men . . . And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in ("into," margin) the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Chapter 4:8-16.

The Lord gave these gifts for the accomplishment of a certain purpose in His church (perfecting saints and edifying the church), and there still exists a need for such work to be done; who will say that the Lord will not even now, as formerly, manifest those gifts for the same purpose, until probation shall end? It is further seen from the writings of the apostle that he recognizes these gifts as members of the body of Christ; and as such, who has a right to mutilate that body, and say that this or that gift is not now necessary?

As other scriptures are considered it will plainly appear that it is the Lord's purpose that the gifts of His Spirit, in the work of the Comforter, shall, in harmony with

the prediction of Joel, be manifested all through these last days, even down to His coming.

THE APOSTASY

We find in the Scriptures that the manifestation of the gift of prophecy is closely allied with obedience to the law of God. When the people faithfully followed the Lord, He favored them with instruction through His prophets. As they fell into sin and departed from His Law, they had no vision from God, as already shown. So it is emphatically true, as expressed by Solomon. "Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he," Prov.29:18. They are happy, for, as they obey the Lord's law, He is pleased to favor them with instruction through His prophets.

We have seen that the early church began its work with a manifestation of all the gifts of the Spirit, and with many prophets among them; but the apostle Paul predicted that there would come an apostasy. Of this he said to the elders of the Ephesus church: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Acts 20:29-30. Also to the church in Thessalonica, he said that there should "come a falling away," and "that man of sin be revealed." And of him the apostle said he should sit "in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." 2Thess.2:3-4.

It is a fact that, while the early church maintained their purity, the Lord manifested among them the gifts of His Spirit; but as the apostasy developed, their condition became more and more like that of ancient Israel, of whom He said: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Isa.59:2.

Neander, in his "Church History," thus speaks of the Montanists of the second century: "The Montanists looked upon it expressly as something characteristic of this last epoch of the development of the kingdom of God that, according to the prophecies of Joel then in course of fulfilment, the gifts of the Spirit should indifferently be shed abroad over all classes of Christians of both sexes." "It appears also to have been the doctrine of the Montanists that the season of the last and richest outpouring of the Holy Spirit would form the last age of the church, and precede the second coming of Christ, and be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel." -Rose's Neander, pp.330,332.

John Wesley, in speaking of the Montanists, says: "By reflecting on an odd book which I had read in this journey ("The General Delusion of Christians with Regard to Prophecy"), I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected, (1) That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real, scriptural Christians; and, (2) that the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn, was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began even then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all, as either madness or imposture." - Wesley's Journal, vol. 3, p.496.

To the question, "If you allow miracles before the empire became Christian, why not afterward too?" Mr. Wesley answers: "Because after the empire became Christian, a general corruption both of faith and morals infected the Christian church, which by that revolution, as St. Jerome says: 'lost as much of her virtue as it had gained of wealth and power.'" - Wesley's Works, p.706.

THE REFRESHING

When Peter addressed the people in the temple just after the day of Pentecost, he said: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when

the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-21. Here is brought to view a time of refreshing spoken of in close connection with Christ's second coming. This undoubtedly refers to the same time as that mentioned by the apostle James, which says: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James 5:7-8.

The early and latter rain is also mentioned by the prophet Joel in connection with his description of the last days. The coming of the "former rain moderately" is called, in the margin of the text, "a teacher of righteousness, according to righteousness." Joel 2:23. The outpouring of the Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost - the coming of the Comforter as a teacher - was comparable to the "former rain," which caused the newly sown seed of the husbandman to take root and grow. So in the ripening of the harvest of the earth, just before the end, the Husbandman - our heavenly Father (John 15:1) - is waiting for the "latter rain," the "refreshing," to aid in ripening off the harvest of the earth. The Lord has said by His prophet, "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." Zech.10:1. And thus will be fulfilled His promise: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hosea 6:3.

PERILOUS TIMES

The time immediately preceding the second coming of Christ is presented as perilous, as a time of the working of Satan in mighty power, and also a time in which the Lord's people will be in a special sense "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1Peter 1:5. Of this we also read in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Speaking of Christ's second coming, he says, "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." 2Thess.2:9. Again, in the Revelation, we read of "three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God almighty. Behold, I come as a thief." Rev.16:13-15. From this it is seen that just prior to the end Satan is to work with mighty power, and why should it be a thing improbable for the Lord to pour out in a special manner His Spirit to instruct, strengthen, and keep His people from the wiles of Satan in that trying time?

In writing to Timothy, Paul says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." He then enumerates eighteen sins to be found among a people having the "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Of these he says: "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. . . . Their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." 2Tim.3:1-9. Jannes and Jambres were chief magicians of Pharaoh, who sought to resist the work of the Lord through Moses by counterfeit miracles. The Lord, by the hand of His servant Moses, wrought in a manner that the magicians could not counterfeit. Ex.7:11; 8:18-19. It is seen, then, that as the end is nearing, and Satan works in power, the Lord gives showers of blessings to His people, thus defeating the purpose of Satan. So they are kept by the power of God, and the folly of counterfeit workers made manifest.

FINAL DELIVERANCE

In Ezekiel's prophecy the following seems to be a description of the final deliverance of God's people: "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Eze.20:35-37. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their entrance into Canaan, seems to be here used to represent the final deliverance of God's people into the heavenly Canaan. Israel passed through a literal wilderness, but these through "the wilderness of the people." So we find, in the Revelation, an account of the people of God going into the wilderness for the 1260 years of the "Dark Ages." Rev.12:6,14. In the Song of Solomon we have a reference to the church coming out of the wilderness. He says, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Solomon's Song 8:5. Again he speaks of her as "she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Solomon's Song 6:10.

The Lord says He will plead as He plead when He brought His people out of Egypt. He plead with them then respecting His law and His Sabbath, saying, "How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My law? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath." Ex.16:28-29.

In this latter pleading the Lord says He will bring His people "into the bond of the covenant." The bond of the covenant must be its confirmatory seal, or the sign of its authority. The sign of God's covenant (which covenant commanded He declares is the ten commandments, Ex.34:28) is the seventh-day Sabbath. That Sabbath four times in the Scriptures is said to be His sign. Ex.31:13,16,17; Eze.20:12,20. We see, therefore, that in the preparation for the final deliverance there is to be an agitation of the law of God, and a restoration of the seal to that law, which seal is the Sabbath of the Lord.

There is still another feature that was connected with the deliverance of Israel, which is mentioned by the prophet Hosea when he says, "By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved." Hosea 12:13. So if there is a similarity in the last deliverance to that from Egypt, we may look for the gift of prophecy to be connected with the preparation for the deliverance.

LAW AND PROPHET'S MESSAGE

In the following words of Isaiah the prophet is shown what is to be expected in the last days: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever ("the latter day," margin, Heb.); that this rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits; get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." Isa.30:8-11. By reference to 1Sam.9:9, we learn that a seer and a prophet mean one and the same, for there we read, that "he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer" - one who had visions from God and prophesied. The force, then, of the above scripture is that the gift of prophecy will be connected with the proclamation of God's law in these last days. This the masses will reject, because they do not like reproof, preferring a smooth path.

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

In the New Testament, where Paul is speaking of the people waiting for Christ's second coming, he says: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you;

so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Cor.1:4-8. From this we see that all the gifts are to be manifest among that people who stand at last prepared to meet Christ in peace at His coming.

From this it also appears that one gift is singled out the confirmation of which prepares the way for all the gifts to be developed in the church. That one gift he calls the testimony of Jesus. To ascertain the meaning of this scripture, we will compare it with others. In Revelation, Chapter 12, after the persecution of the Dark Ages, we find the apostle speaking thus of the last of the church in her probationary state: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Verse 17. By a remnant we understand the last of that of which we speak. The remnant of cloth is the last of the bolt. So the remnant of the church is the last of the church in its probation here. This is seen in Joel's prophecy of the Lord's people just before the great and terrible day of the Lord. In the preparation for that day He says salvation shall be "in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Joel 2:32. This remnant will have war made on them for keeping all of God's commandments, and for having manifested among them the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of those who were taught in vision by the Spirit of God is called the testimony of Jesus. We read: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2Pet.1:21. When speaking of those ancient prophets, He says, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Chapter 1:11. Then the instruction of those prophets in holy vision was the "testimony of Christ.

By looking in Revelation, chapter 19, we get a Scripture definition of the "testimony of Jesus." This is John's account, given while in vision on the isle of Patmos. He mistook the beautiful angel that was before him as an object for him to worship, and said: "I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Verse 10. We now have an inspired definition that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

When we have the right definition of a word or phrase, it is proper to substitute the definition in the sentence. Substituting thus in 1Cor.1:6-7, the text would read,

"The spirit of prophecy was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And in Rev.12:17 it would read that the dragon went to make war with the remnant who "keep the commandments of God, and have the spirit of prophecy." We see, then, that the remnant church, the members of which will be keeping all of God's commandments, are to have the gift of prophecy among them, and that that gift is to lead out in preparing the way so that all the gifts will at last be manifested among the people who are waiting for Christ's coming. So, then, as the Lord's people return to obedience, to the keeping of all His commandments, the gift of prophecy is restored to His People.

PROPHESYINGS.

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, in the first epistle, chapter 4, he speaks of Christ's second coming, the resurrection of the righteous, and the change of the living saints. In the fifth chapter he shows that that day will come upon the masses as a thief in the night. He says, however, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." 1Thess.5:4. That people who will be found watching for Christ's coming, whom He calls "children of light," He exhorts as follows: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in

Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1Thess.5:17-21.

What is more consistent than to expect the Lord to directly teach His people who are to pass through the perils of the last days and be prepared to meet the Saviour in peace at His coming? It is that point of time to which the patriarchs, and the true prophets of all past time, have looked with intense interest, when the conflict of ages, the controversy between sin and righteousness, is to close, and the age for which all other ages were made is to be brought in. It can not be that God, who is abundant in mercy, will refrain from specially instructing His people. Thanks be to God, He has not left this as a matter of supposition; for He will guide His people by the spirit of prophecy, as the Scriptures clearly teach.

PROVING THE GIFT

There is no surer way to prove a prophetic gift than by comparing it with the description of such gifts as were manifested in Scripture times, and testing it by the rules therein given. The Scriptures thoroughly furnish us unto all good works (2Tim.3:16-17), and give a correct record of the manifestation of the gift of prophecy and how the true work of the Spirit of God may be known from the workings of Satan, with his spurious gifts. In the prophecy of Isaiah a statement is given reaching down to the last days, in these words: "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." Isa.8:16-17. This looking for the Lord is not looking to find Him, for these are already waiting upon Him; hence the people here introduced are looking for, and expecting, Christ's coming, and also the restoration of the seal to God's law. To these He says: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa.8:19-20. From this we see that in the time near the coming of Christ, when Satan comes professing to represent the dead, those who seek the Lord may expect special instruction from Him.

Why are the people seek to the dead in this time? - For instruction and guidance. Where should they seek for instruction? - To the Lord God, who made heaven and earth. Why seek to Him? - Because He has instruction for His people in this time, and they need not go to the dead, of whom He says they "know not anything." Eccl.9:5. If the Lord is sought unto, He has instruction for His own through special manifestation of the gift of prophecy. But all such manifestations, the genuine, will be in harmony with His "law" and with the "testimony" of His Word.

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

In the New Testament, rules are given for discerning the true prophets from the false. The question naturally arises, Why these rules, if there be no true prophets? Our Saviour taught that as we near the end false prophets will "show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Matt.24:24-26. Here are two features of false prophets in the last days. One is the calling of the people to "go forth" - literally to rally together at some point. The other is the teaching of a secret coming of Christ. When called upon by those professing the gift of prophecy to rally together, or invited by those who claim that their private Spiritualistic circles and seances are the coming of Christ, it is well carefully to ponder the steps, and refuse to "go forth" with the one, and avoid being swayed by the other; for these are some of the marks given of false prophets.

TRY THE SPIRITS

The apostle John writes, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." 1John 4:1-3. This text does not say that "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ" did come in the flesh," but "is come;" that is, that He comes and dwells in our mortal flesh. This is indeed the central truth of the Gospel, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Eph.3:17; John 14:23, Gal.2:20.

Satan, in his false gifts, does not exalt Christ. A person who had been a spirit medium said to the writer: "The name of Christ is never mentioned in prayer in the circles, and in the public prayers of Spiritualists they "implore the great spirit, never naming Christ." In contrast with such, in the true prophet it is Christ first, last, and all the time.

Another rule given by the apostle John which applies to false prophets reads: "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." 1John 4:5. This shows that false prophets speak in a manner to please the carnal heart, which agrees exactly with the description given of false prophets by the prophet Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain; they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise Me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." Jer.23:16-17.

FULFILMENT OF PREDICTIONS

Another rule for prophets is found in Deuteronomy: "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? when a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it pre-sumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Chapter 18:21-22. Then, in the case of a true prophet, the opposite is understood, - his predictions must each come to pass when the time arrives for their fulfilment.

The Lord calls attention to the accurate fulfilment of prophecy as a proof that the word was spoken by Him:

"I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. . . . I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I showed it thee; lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them." Isa.48:3-5.

MIRACLES NOT PROOF

Another feature respecting false prophets is presented in Deuteronomy in these words: "If there arise among you a prophet. or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he speak unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Chapter 13:1-3.

The above texts are proof that the workings of "signs" and "wonders," and even miracles, is insufficient evidence of a true prophet; for in other portions of the Scriptures

we learn that even Satan himself will work miracles in the last days through his false prophets. 2Thess.2:9; Rev.16:14. The great test in Deuteronomy, thirteenth chapter, is not the signs that these prophets proclaim and perform, but whether they follow the Lord God in their teachings, or seek by their wonderworking to lead away from His law and truth.

It has often been asserted that the evidence of a true prophet is the working of miracles. In the case of a few of the prophets we have a record of the working of miracles, but this is never laid down in the Scriptures as proof of a true prophet; for in the case of John the Baptist, Zacharias, his father, prophesied of him thus: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest." Luke 1:76. After the fulfilment of John's mission, the Saviour said of him, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." Luke 7:28. Yet of him it was said by those believing on Christ, "John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this Man were true." John 10:41. So here is positive testimony that John was a true prophet, and yet performed no miracle. How, then, could the sign of a true prophet be the working of miracles?

THEIR FRUITS

There is another rule that should be examined in this connection, found in the words of our Saviour in His discourse upon the mount. Says he: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Matt.7:15-20.

If there were to be no true prophets through the Gospel age, it would have been a much shorter way to dispose of the subject to say, Beware of prophets. Instead, there is set before us the characteristics of true and false prophets, the kind of fruit being the strongest proof of the character of the prophet. As to the fruit of the true prophet, Paul says, in his letter to the Ephesians, that these gifts have been given for "the perfecting 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 the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Chapter 4:12-13.

In the light of this rule, the true gift of prophecy will point the sinner to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Then it would follow him up, and call him to a higher standard of Christian life and action, exhort to purity and holiness, abase the proud, and lift up the weak and desponding. As the instruction from said gift is received it would cause one to fear that he had not followed Christ as closely as he ought, cause him to search his heart more thoroughly, to read the Word of God more studiously, to pray more, to be less worldly, and more devoted to God, to be more strict in his daily life, in his walk and conversation, in fact, lead him to the Word of God instead of from it. It would plainly, yet kindly, reprove sin, rebuke wickedness, and expose wrongs and hypocrisies.

The gifts, and especially the gift of prophecy, have a part to act in bringing the church into "unity" and harmony. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." In fact, the gathering of a people from the confused elements of earth, and the various nations of the world, to move forward as one, is one of the best evidences of a genuine work of the Lord.

The true gift of prophecy will not give any revelation to take the place of the Scriptures; yet, while it may shed light on the Scriptures, leading the people into the

"unity of the faith," its great work will be that of counsel, and instructions how to live, act, and move in these last days of peril.

CONCLUSION

The question may arise, What need have we of the gift of prophecy; we have the Old Testament, the words of Christ and His apostles, and the Revelation? Did not Christ forbid more prophesying when he said, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev.22:18)? We reply, Should the Lord bestow the gift of prophecy upon a person for the instruction and guidance of His people, it would not be an addition to the Book of Revelation.

After the Lord had spoken from Sinai, and given the law to His people, with statutes and judgments, they might have said, We have the Lord's word now, and do not need prophets. The Lord knew best, and, as we have seen, He multiplied visions and similitudes by His prophets for the instruction of that people. This did not add to, nor take from, that already given them; but it did show them where they were being led astray by circumstances peculiar to their time. These revelations shed also a clearer luster on the truths they had already received, and made bright the light relating to the promised Messiah and His glory.

Of the time in which we live the Lord has said: "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Rev.12:12. In the "perilous times" of these last days will not the Lord fulfil His promise to keep His people from "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev.3:10)? Thus the gift of prophecy, when manifested, will be adapted to the peculiarities of this time. It will not be something to take the place of the Bible, but to show how the people now are liable, by Satan's devices, to be drawn away from the Bible, and from the Lord.

With the subject of the gifts opened before us in the Scriptures, with the fact so plainly manifest that the gift of prophecy is to be connected with the last work of God's people in probationary time, and with rules placed in our hands by which to test such gifts, is it not important that the mind be divested of prejudice, not "despising" such a gift, but, on the contrary, looking for a word of this character which is to be developed in these last days?

In the light of Scripture, a message is to go through the world proclaiming the law of God, in connection with which will be found the gift of prophecy - a message which will gather a people into the unity of the faith from all nations, people, and tongues. How important, then, to be in harmony with such a work, and thus be found blameless in the last great day, prepared to stand at our Lord's appearing!

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