

# **The Holy Spirit - God's Abiding Witness in The Church**

**By Vernon L. Barr**

*"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (JOHN 14:16).*

*"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) .*

## **Jesus Gives Parting Instructions to His Church**

Jesus took the last Passover Supper with His "called out ones," or His church. He made known to them the betrayal that awaited Him; told them of His coming death and resurrection and instructed them to love one another as He had loved them (John 13:34).

The members of His church were troubled when He told them of the things that awaited Him. Jesus moved at once to comfort them, saying, *"Let not your heart be troubled"* (John 14:1). In the verses that follow He promised the Father would give them another Comforter who would abide with them forever, and in verse 26 He explains that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, when He came would take up His abode with them, and be their teacher, and would bring the commands of the Lord Jesus to their remembrance. The Holy Spirit was to abide with the church forever.

## **Churches Err When They Cry for the Holy Spirit to Come Down**

Jesus gave parting instructions to His disciples as a local church. Any church errs when it cries long and loud for the Holy Spirit to come down in power, and even so does an individual Christian err when he so prays. Children of God are in-dwelted by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). You don't cry for One who already in-dwells your heart to come and live with you. Some cry for the Holy Spirit to come and baptize them and fill them full of power.

The Lord did not promise that the Holy Spirit would abide in man-made organizations calling themselves churches. This is the reason there are so many so-called churches that are cold and powerless. The Holy Spirit does not indwell them as Comforter and endue them for the Master.

### **The Holy Spirit to Live Forever in Christ's Church**

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His church to abide in it, and to be her leader, teacher, comforter, power, and that He would be with her FOREVER. Any church which He indwells and endues is a powerful church.

The Holy Spirit came and took His place in the church on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1-26). The Holy Spirit has been living and abiding in every one of the Lord's true churches since that day, and will abide therein until Jesus comes again. That is what the Lord meant when He said to His church, "*And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:20). Should the church ever fail to exist in the world, the Holy Spirit would have no official dwelling place; but the Son of God promised to be with her in the person of the Holy Spirit until the end of the world.

Members of the Lord's churches need to crucify the flesh daily and surrender daily to the Holy Spirit, that they might do the will of the resurrected Christ who is the Head of His church.

*"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). Jesus had already suffered the agonies of Calvary, and had triumphed over the grave. He gathered His blood-washed church around Him and tells them that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His church. He reminds them of His promise to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to abide in His church forever. The Holy Spirit was to be their power in witnessing unto lost souls.

*"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8). Jesus, about to ascend to His Father, gives His church parting instructions, and reminds its members of the promise of the Father as recorded in Joel 2:28, 29. In Acts 1:4, the Master tells them they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father as He had told them, and in Acts 1:5, He reiterates the promise of John the Baptist, namely: *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."* All these scriptures refer to the one promise of sending the Holy Spirit to the church to abide with it forever, and Jesus told His church it would not be many days until it would receive the promise. The promise is to "YE." He talks to them as a collective unit, showing that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised to the church and not to individuals as such. The Holy Spirit's coming to baptize the church was to enable the members of the Lord's true church to witness with power to a lost world and not to cause them to put on an outward show, and to boast about having "IT." For a church member to talk in a language that none present can understand, or for one to act unseemly or indecently, and out of order in worship is surely an abomination to the Lord. He is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). People who thus act, instead of having power with God to win souls to Christ, are often ridiculed by many of the unsaved people of the world, and the unsaved often refer to their pretended worship as a "SHOW." Usually, churches which thus act are dominated by women, and some good men and women who are deceived. God teaches that women are not to usurp authority over men in church worship.

### **The Holy Spirit Comes and Baptizes the Church**

If you will turn to Acts 1:13-15 you may read about the group whom the Lord referred to as "YE." He bade them tarry in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Comforter. They are in an upper room in Jerusalem carrying out the instructions of their risen Lord. When we read the first four

verses of Acts 2, we find this same group of disciples receiving the promise of the Father: namely, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we reach verse 47 of the same chapter, we find the Lord adding to His Holy Spirit baptized church "*such as should be saved.*" The Holy Spirit came to represent Christ in the church while Christ is in Heaven preparing a place for His own.

Acts 2:2 teaches that occupants of the room were buried by the Holy Spirit, because the whole room was filled. Verse 4 of the same chapter teaches us that the individual members of the church filled again and again with the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit were not one and the same thing. The members of the church were filled again and again with the Holy Spirit. The church at Jerusalem nor any other church was ever baptized with the Holy Spirit again. When the Holy Spirit came to take up His abode with the church, He came to abide forever. Hence, there has been no necessity for the church to be baptized again. The miracles that happened when the Holy Spirit came to the church were outward manifestations of God's fulfillment of His promises concerning the Comforter.

### **Do You Speak in Tongues?**

Acts 2:4 records the fact that the members of the church spoke with other tongues, but it was not an unknown jabber, as some people practice today. Seventeen different nationalities were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). Verse 8 teaches that every person who was present there that day understood God's messengers as they spoke: "*We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*" (verse 11)

These Galileans were speaking in the tongues of the different nationalities, and the people were hearing and understanding. God performed a miracle and caused his people who spoke one language or tongue the language or tongue of these people. God honored the message and about three thousand souls were saved. Attend a meeting of the modern

day tongue-talkers and observe that pandemonium reigns, and disorder prevails. Such are not soulwinners, but proselyters.

In Acts 2:16, Peter tells those present that what they are witnessing is a literal fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29. So the promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit to the church happened just as Jesus told them it would.

Paul reprimanded the members of the church at Corinth on one occasion for allowing people to speak to the church in a tongue not understood by the members. He said, "*Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice. I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me*" (I Cor. 14:11). In I Corinthians 14:5, Paul told the church that he wished they all spoke with tongues. The writer has many times wished that he might speak with men who speak with other tongues in order that he might preach the gospel to them that they might be saved. God in His Word, I Corinthians 12:6-12, teaches that the Lord gave different gifts to different people, and He also teaches us in I Corinthians 12:28-31, that every Christian does not have the gift of tongues. In I Corinthians 13:8, the Lord tells us that the gift of prophecy, tongues, and direct knowledge apart from the Bible would cease or vanish away. He also plainly tells us in verse 13 of the same chapter that the three gifts—faith, hope, and charity abide, or remain, and that the greatest of these is charity—love.

### **Unknown Tongues Forbidden**

Paul tells the church at Corinth, in I Corinthians 14:28, that it is to allow no one to speak in an unknown tongue, except there be an interpreter there to tell the church what is being said. God forbid that this writer should ever refuse to have a God-called preacher from France who speaks and understands only the French language or tongue to come and preach the Word of God to the church he pastors. But, I would certainly insist, as do the Scriptures, that he be given an interpreter. The church must be edified.

### **Paul Spoke with Tongues**

In I Corinthians 14:39, Paul instructs the church to forbid not one to speak with tongues. I would not oppose one speaking in tongues such as were taught in I Corinthians 14. I would that all members spoke with different tongues, that they might preach the gospel to people of different nationalities and different tongues whom they contact in life. In I Corinthians 14:8, Paul thanked God that he spoke with tongues more than any of them. He did not mean that he spoke louder and longer than any of them, but he meant that he spoke more different languages than any of them. Paul was a highly educated man, and no doubt could speak several languages or tongues. According to Acts 9, Paul did not speak with tongues when he was converted. Paul had power with God and with men, and won many to Christ. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul did not resemble in any respect these modern day tongue-talking preachers, either in his message or his actions. Paul spoke with tongues, but not in an unknown jabber. Notice I Corinthians 14:27: *"If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret."* In this verse Paul tells the church that no speaker should use more than three languages in one message, each in order or by course, that is, one at a time, and that each language should be interpreted by an interpreter. In modern day tongue-talking meetings, there are sometimes as high as five or six who speak at the same time in their unknown tongue. No one present seems to know what they are saying, not even the speakers themselves. In some of their meetings they have an interpreter.

In I Corinthians 14:28, Paul tells the man who speaks in an unknown tongue to keep silent. If he cannot be understood by the church, he is told to speak to himself and to God. I Corinthians 14:10 teaches that there are many kinds of voices, or tongues, in the world and that all of them have their meaning in their place and are understood by people who speak those tongues, and certainly God UNDERSTANDS all languages or tongues. We may be assured that the Apostle Paul did not take the position of modern day tongue-talkers.

**Baptist Sunday School Committee of the American Baptist  
Association** 214 E. Broad St. Texarkana, Ark.-Tex.

Reprinted, October, 2009