



בשורה *Besorah!*

During the preparation of this issue, the festival of Pentecost – Shavuot – has been celebrated. We've dealt with many aspects of this holiday and its symbolism in previous issues, but let's remember that this Feast of the Lord is rooted in the metaphor of agriculture and harvest. It is interesting to note that it is within this context that we find the injunction, 'The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God', alongside the prohibition, 'Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother's milk.' (Ex 23:19) This was actually a warning against participation in pagan fertility rites during harvest times, not simply an embargo on eating cheeseburgers! The overall lesson we can derive from this is that we're not to use the world's ways as a formula for procuring a harvest.

I'm sure we're familiar with the events that took place on this holiday, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the early believers in Jesus, as He'd promised. When speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said He would send

the Comforter (John 14-16) and, 'being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have 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)

The opening verse of the letter to the Hebrews tells us that God 'at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets'. We can think of the many men during Israel's long history that God used as prophets - from Abel to John the Baptist. Separately, their lives and messages were as individual facets of a single, prophetic gemstone. As mortal human beings, they were finite and imperfect but were used by the Lord to present and manifest different aspects of the whole message and type of the Lord.

The next verse in Hebrews (1:2), however, shows that God 'hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son'. The time of fragmentary revelation was past. Yeshua –



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Jesus – is the ultimate revelation. There can be nothing further! Since that is true, Jesus is referred to as a Priest forever (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17) and the author of Hebrews refers to the new era as ‘the last days’!

We see this being referred to elsewhere in the New Testament:

Heb 9:26 reads, ‘For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.’

And 1 John 2:18 says, ‘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.’ (Emph. mine)

There are many mentions of the ‘last days’ in the Old Testament, among which are Gen. 49:1 (Jacob’s blessing of his sons), Jer 23:20 (God’s judgement of false prophets), Ezek 38:16 (regarding Messianic prophecy), Is 2:2 and similarly Mic 4:1 (the exaltation of the Lord’s house and Jerusalem in the last days) and Daniel 2:28, which is slightly different from Daniel 2:29 (hereafter) and reveals the whole panorama of history! According to the Jewish canon of interpretation, ‘the last days’ denote the days of Messiah.

Since that day of Pentecost (Shavuot), recorded in Acts 2, the apostles knew that the days of Messiah – the last days – had begun, as evidenced by Peter’s confident declaration of Joel’s prophecy, ‘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.’ (Act 2:16, 17) By the way, it is also interesting to note that the whole of Joel’s prophecy is replete with agricultural and harvest metaphors!

Understanding that the last days are bound up with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the author to the Hebrews exhorts that the readers give more earnest heed to the Gospel, as it was confirmed ‘with signs and

wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will’. (Heb 2:1-4)



In reaching Jewish people, we need the aid of the indwelling Holy Spirit, anointing us, empowering us, teaching us, bringing to remembrance all that Jesus has said (John 14:26) and

testifying of Jesus (John 15:26). On that Shavuot, Peter stood up and declared the peoples’ sin, under the authority and anointing of the Holy Spirit and 3,000 were saved. Act 4:13 tells us that, ‘when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus’. While there is nothing inherently wrong with learning and study, what’s needed in reaching souls is beyond apologetics and methods, especially now.

It is recorded that between 1809 and 1905, there were 60 known missions to the Jewish people in the UK and Ireland! Yet in 1905, A E Thompson, describing 100 years of Jewish missions, laments:

‘The Church herself has barred the door against the Jews, effectually, if not

intentionally. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Word of God concerning the present and future place of Israel in the divine plan and covenant have been the chief causes of this unhappy result. The inherent dislike that the Gentile feels to the Jew, until grace has filled the heart, has played its part. If pressed to finality, the cause is found in the lack of a real obedience to God and love to humanity, which never precede, but always accompany the *baptism with the Holy Ghost* (emphasis the author's). If the modern Church was as full of the Holy Ghost as it is of worldliness, mission work among the Jewish people would be more successful.'

If this was the case in 1905, how much more is it true of today's church? The very scarcity of actual Jewish missions in the UK and Ireland today suggests, to me, that the Church has waived God's order in bringing the Gospel 'to the Jew, first' (Rom 1:6), and has contracted a particular spiritual barrenness to itself as a result.

Isaiah 40:9 reads, 'O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!' The Hebrew language of this verse makes clear that this is not just a pronouncement of correct words, but a DEMONSTRATION! As already mentioned, when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Shavuot, 3,000 were saved! Joel's prophecy, as quoted by Peter (Act 2:18), goes on to say, 'And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.'

Helen Shapiro has travelled extensively in the UK and abroad, giving her testimony and bringing the Gospel these many years, since coming to faith in Jesus, in 1987. Possibly, many of you have attended her outreaches as well as listened to/watched her recordings. There is one vital aspect of her story that I would like to draw out here: Helen's musical director had obtained a book that was to lead her to the Lord, but *waited for over a year before giving it to her!* He was obedient to the restraint and timing of the Holy Spirit. In the meantime, Helen was able to see how the Lord was real in his life while the Lord was busy moving in hers, clearing and preparing the ground. When she was finally handed the book, Helen was ready to receive it and its message!

Zechariah 4:6 reads, 'Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts'. With something as important as the harvest of souls, we dare not use humanistic wisdom or worldly ways.

Also, the mention here of the 'LORD of hosts' suggests that a spiritual battle is involved. We have always needed the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. But as we enter further into these dark, last-of-the-last days, we increasingly need fresh in-filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit to reach the lost. Perhaps we each need to know more of the 'tarrying', first? I know I do.

May the Lord bless and keep you,
Chrissy

