

Companion Bible, Appendix 183

183. "THIS IS THAT" (Acts 2:16)

This Is Appendix 183 From The Companion Bible

"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." there is nothing in the words to tell us what is "this" and what is "that". The word "this" is emphatic and the word "But", with which Peter's argument begins, sets what follows in contrast. This shows that the quotation was used to rebut the charge of drunkenness (v. 13)

So far from these signs and wonders being a proof that "these men" were drunken, "this", said the apostle is "that" (same kind of thing) which Joel prophesied would take place "in the last days". Peter does not say these were the last days, but this (that follows) is what Joel says of those days. He does not say "then was fulfilled", nor "as it is written", but merely calls attention to what the prophet said of similar scenes yet future.

Therefore to understand what Peter really meant by "this is that", we must turn to the prophecy of Joel. And in order to understand that prophecy, we must see exactly what it is about.

Is it about the Christian Dispensation? or
The Dispensation of judgment which is to follow it? or
Is it about the Jew and the Gentile? or
Is it about the church of God?

The Structure on p. 1224 gives the scope of Joel as a whole, while that on p. 1227 gives that of the last member B (p. 1224) in which occur the "signs" to which Peter points in connection with "this is that". From this it will be seen that the prophecy of Joel links up with the last clause of the "song of Moses" in Deut. 32:43 (see Rev. 15:3), which ends

“And (He) will be merciful unto His Land and to His People.”

So Joel 2.18 begins:

“Then will Jehovah be jealous for His Land, and pity His People.”

“THIS”, therefore is “THAT”. It is the subject-matter and remote context of Acts 2:16. It concerns Jehovah’s Land and Jehovah’s People, and has consequently nothing to do with the church of this Dispensation. Peter calls “the house of Israel” (v. 36) to the very repentance spoken of in the call to repentance of Joel (1:14 – 2:17; see A, Structure, p. 1224).

But the key to the correct understanding of Peter’s quotation lies in the word “afterward” of Joel 2:28. The question is, after what? This we can learn only from Joel himself. Peter does not explain it, nor can we understand it from Peter’s words alone.

The Structure (p. 1227) shows us that the whole subject of 2:18-3:21 is,—evil removed from the Land and the People, and blessing bestowed on both; and these are set forth alternately. In 2:28, 29 we have spiritual blessings connected with the temporal of the previous verses, introduced thus:

“And it shall come to pass AFTERWARD, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh,” &c. After what? The answer is AFTER the temporal blessings of vv. 23-27. It is important to note that the temporal precede the spiritual blessings. The Holy Spirit was not poured out on all flesh at Pentecost: only on some of those present. None of the great signs in the heavens and on the earth had been shown. No deliverance took place in Jerusalem: both Land and People were still under the Roman yoke.

Thus, from a careful study of the two passages, it will be seen that there is a wide divergence between the statements of apostle and prophet on the one hand, and the general belief of

Christendom, which the majority hold so tenaciously, not to say acrimoniously, that “the church” was formed at Pentecost (see App. 181 and 186), on the other.

There can be no mistake about the meaning of Joel’s word “afterward”. It is not the simple Hebrew word ‘ahar (אחֵר)=after (compare Genesis 5:4, etc.), but the compound ‘aharey-ken (אַחֵרֵי־כֵן)=after that (as Genesis 6:4, etc.).

It is therefore certain that the word “this” in Acts 2:16 refers to what follows, and not to what precedes; to the future events predicted by Joel, and not to those then taking place in Jerusalem.

As Joel speaks of no gift of tongues, “this” cannot refer to these Pentecostal tongues, the outstanding cause of all the wonder and excitement.

None of the things detailed in vv. 17, 19 came to pass. “This” therefore could not be the fulfillment of Joel’s prediction, as the “pouring out” was only on the apostles and those associated with them.

To sum up: As we have seen, there is in Acts 2:16 no fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy either expressed or implied, and Peter’s argument narrows down to this, viz. that a charge of drunkenness can no more be sustained against “these” than it can be against those in the yet future scenes spoken of by Joel, when the wondrous spiritual blessings will be poured out on all flesh AFTER THAT, i.e. after all the temporal blessings spoken of have been bestowed upon Israel’s Land and Israel’s People.