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The Abiding Meaning of Pentecost

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Reading: Acts 2:1-36; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 16:28; Acts 2:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25.

Acts is pre-eminently a book of principles; and it is just here we so often go wrong in looking for the repetition of the form by which those principles were expressed; forms of expression change, but the principles abide.

Though the Lord may do a fresh thing, He will not necessarily use the same form, but He will do it on the same principles; these principles are eternal, changeless; they abide for ever.

We are so often wanting a repetition of Pentecost in the form it took then, of manifestations and demonstrations on the outside. The Lord will do a new thing; and things basic to His activity then will be basic to His activity always. Principles, and not forms, are the things for which we are to look.

The basis of everything at Pentecost centred in and related to *one thing*, the enthronement of the Lord Jesus in heaven in the full virtue of His universal triumph. So far His universal triumph has not reached its full end: "Sit thou on my right hand UNTIL..." (Ps. 110:1). He sits there in virtue of His universal triumph; and that triumph in this age is working out to its full issue; "until..."

1 Cor. 15:25,26: "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The *last* enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He must reign until - His reign has now begun!

Everything that took place at Pentecost centred in that and related to that enthronement of the SON OF MAN.

Acts 2:22, 32-36: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, *a Man* approved of God... this *Jesus* did God raise up... being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured forth THIS, which ye see and hear... let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made HIM both LORD and CHRIST, *this* Jesus whom ye crucified." That is the centre, pivot and heart of all that took place at Pentecost.

Too often our attitude suggests that the Lord Jesus is hardly equal to the situation, and that principalities and powers, and the Devil have the dominion and authority, or that it is a very big fight with an almost doubtful issue!

Pentecost represents the beginning of the heavenly sovereignty of the Lord Jesus, and some of them saw the Son of Man coming into His kingdom ere they tasted of death. Jesus said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1).

Pentecost presents a crisis and a climax, connected with which are quite a number of things. In Acts 2 see the different connections with the Old Testament Scriptures and the climax to them; link Acts 2 with Ephesians 3:8,9: "To make all men see what is the dispensation of the MYSTERY which for ages hath been hid in God... to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Let us trace the connections and the climaxes:-

1. As to the Old Testament Scriptures;
2. As to the Lord's Person and work;
3. As to the training and preparing of His instrument - the Church.

Firstly, the climax in relation to the Old Testament. Notice how it is taken up in this record in Acts 2, and read Luke 24:26,27,44: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself... and he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me." (A.R.V.)

Pentecost Linked with all the Old Testament Scriptures,

and was the climax to all that had been written. The Holy Spirit came with the full virtue of everything that had been written in the Old Testament concerning Christ to make them real and to fulfil them; to bring those fulfilments into the personal experience of the believer. The Holy Spirit's advent was to make all the Old Testament a manifested fulfilment in the Person of Christ Jesus.

In this record of Acts 2 there is a breaking up and opening of the meaning of the Scriptures. Joel; what was the burden of the Word to Joel? "The Day of the LORD." "But this is that which hath been

spoken through the prophet Joel." "THIS is that," the day when the Lord came into His own. We speak of having our day, the Lord comes into His day. Pentecost is the Lord coming into His day, He is enthroned; and this Day of the Lord is in two parts; the former took place at Pentecost, and the latter part is in the Book of Revelation.

Pentecost was the introduction of the "Day of the Lord" on the GRACE side of His sovereignty, and in the Apocalypse it is the JUDGEMENT side of His sovereignty - ONE DAY, but in two halves; and as surely as the Lord Jesus has commenced His reign in grace, so surely He will take the rod of iron to smash the nations in judgement who resist and reject His reign in grace.

The Day of the Lord is in our hearts now, He IS SOVEREIGN LORD; and so He is offered to the nations in grace, but also we have a message of authority, and if there is a refusal of His grace, there must be an acknowledgment of that sovereignty in judgement; for everything shall confess Jesus Christ IS LORD.

"Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9,11)

In another part of the same record the link is with David and Solomon. With David and Solomon you have introduced a revelation of grace, glory and wonder; it needs the two persons to illustrate the reign and work of the Lord Jesus; and you come into Pentecost where it has its fulfilment and spiritual realisation.

David and Solomon are types of the Person of the Lord Jesus, in His work and reign He is David and He is Solomon, but He transcends them both; He takes up all that is typical in them and fulfils it in His own Person; Pentecost is the climax to the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Christ.

Now as to the Person, life and teaching of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh.

PENTECOST WAS A RECOGNITION AND A PROOF OF ALL CHRIST CAME TO BE, AND ALL HE TAUGHT, AND ALL HE DID.

All the spiritual value of that comes by Pentecost into its full vindication.

His claim to sovereignty is established by the moral and spiritual results of the Holy Spirit coming into the life of a child of God and transforming it, by causing it to know in experience (not by intellectual argument) the life of His sovereign triumph, that inward reigning in life by Christ Jesus. All that the Lord Jesus taught and did is vindicated by the Holy Spirit inworking into the life of the believer the victory of that resurrection life of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus was vindicated by a mighty experience of the Holy Spirit! It is the spiritual and moral value of the Person, and the bringing of the fruits of that by the Holy Spirit into the life; it is the change the Holy Spirit makes in the moral life that is the vindication of the Lord Jesus. You cannot divorce moral responsibility and spiritual experience, there is no vindication thus, but chaos and contradiction. Pentecost is the climax to the Person, work, and teaching of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, as it gives spiritual and moral value to those in whom He dwells; i.e., proved in experience by the Holy Spirit.

Why did the Holy Spirit come? To make experimental in the life, by the same Holy Spirit, all that Jesus is for the believer. This is the progressive and constructive work of the Holy Spirit, the transforming of men and women.

PENTECOST WAS A CLIMAX IN RELATION TO THE TRAINING AND PREPARATION OF AN INSTRUMENT.

The first chapter ends with the presentation of that instrument; the completion of the Apostolate with the inclusion of Matthias. An instrument had been trained and prepared for the continued work of the enthroned Lord. This preparation is in three parts:

1. In the days of His flesh;
2. The forty days after His resurrection;
3. The ten days after His ascension.

The First Part of the Training - In the Days of His Flesh

One year after He started His public ministry, He called and had in training for about two years those whom He chose. What were the chief features of that period of training? First, a seeing and a hearing without understanding; a very real thing. As we read the Gospels we see it was a time of laying in of a subconscious store of not understood deeds and words. Oh! but did not the Holy Spirit work on that afterwards? What does the Holy Spirit coming into our life mean? An explaining of who Jesus is; "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you," and until He comes words have not that potent force; "the Spirit giveth LIFE."

Second, being allowed to participate in the works and supernatural powers, and being given flashes of spiritual revelation; "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Only flashes, immediately passing, but a knowing something of "the powers of the age to come."

Do get the principle of this. Very often the Lord antedates things for us, and then we find them go down into death; but this is training; and has to be in order to get us, our *flesh-hold* out of it; it is a principle of training, and so the Lord brings us into spiritual co-operation with what He is doing.

Pentecost is necessary to put things into another realm, where the "I" is utterly out and the Lord is utterly in. Pentecost is the climax to this. This was all accompanied by and headed up to a complete breakdown and personal failure on the part of the disciples, they failed Him all along the line; see them with the Syrophenician woman, distraught with trouble, crying unto them, "Have mercy on me!" and they "besought him saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us."

Again, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?" "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" Bargaining to get more than they gave up! and caring not for the others, only let us be first; ambition for a place of prominence; this is not the spirit of Him who emptied Himself, and humbled Himself unto the death of the cross!

Now Pentecost comes to rule them out utterly; it is no longer themselves but HIM; now they can follow to the death, now they can forgive, the personal has gone, no longer are their interests the predominant thing even in the things of God; but solely and utterly HIS GLORY at any cost.

Pentecost demands that ground, speaks of that ground - we are finished! There is no place for mere soul-force here; soul-force in the things of God is a denial of the Holy Spirit; He is the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:2)

It is no longer our efforts, our achievements, we are out of it, and it is henceforth, The LORD did it! That is Pentecost.

The Lord is seeking to get an Instrument, by and through which to present the Lord Jesus to the nations as "PRINCE and SAVIOUR." (Acts 5:31.) And there must first be a realisation of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus in the life before there can be such a presenting of Him to the nations.

Contradiction in life brings weakness in testimony, and there can be no ruling in prayer through being in touch with the Throne. Where there is any contradiction, authority in prayer is paralysed. All this is preparation and training to gain an instrument; an instrument for the enthroned Lord, to meet His need and to establish His sovereignty in the earth.

The Second Part of the Training - The Forty Days After the Resurrection

This is another phase of their training; note the feature of this. It was an establishing in their experience of what He said He was - Resurrection in PERSON.

In the days of His flesh, He had claimed power over His life, "no one taketh it away from me... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father" (John 10:18), and for forty days He was establishing in their experience what He said He was, and all He had claimed to be. It would have been a catastrophe without those forty days, they would have lost the reality of the *living presence* of the Lord.

It was also the establishment to them of all He had promised in relation to His resurrection; "I will never leave you." "I am with you always - all the days." "Because I live ye shall live also." He had made many promises on the ground of resurrection, and came back and established them all; and theirs was a faith in a risen, living and present Lord, and not only in a historic Jesus.

Next, He established the fact that He is *Lord of men*; and we see the inclusiveness of His claim. All forces that could be used of men were brought in by them to put Him out of existence; but He came back! Man cannot get rid of the Lord Jesus. He is Sovereign of men.

Back of men is the Devil, he is involved in all this, and he has exhausted himself and resorted to his last weapon, Death. The answer to that is the Resurrection: "I am... the LIVING ONE; and I became dead, and behold, I am ALIVE FOR EVERMORE, and I have the keys (authority) of death and Hades." (Rev. 1:18.)

HE HAS ESTABLISHED HIS SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL, MEN, DEVIL AND DEATH; established it in every realm.

This was the Testimony being brought home those forty days; HIS SOVEREIGNTY in all these things. He was making them know the *literalness* of His Person in resurrection to be equal to that in the days of His flesh; He was not a spirit, but literally as real in Person as before His death. Pentecost is the climax to the literalness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Next, the emancipation from the limitation of time and space. Still training an instrument for future usefulness! He is no longer bound by limitations of time, and He is seeking to bring home to them that, though not seen, His absence is never to be taken for granted. He is there all the time, and there is no time when He is not with them!

Next, the establishment on the ground of their world commission. Forty days is the period of probation which ends in a demand to assume responsibility. After forty years in the wilderness, the Israelites were commanded to occupy the land.

The Third Part of the Training - The Ten Days After His Ascension

Probation and training issue in the taking up of responsibility. Ten is the number of responsibility. See the boards of the Tabernacle ten cubits high and covered with gold. Here you get the type and teaching concerning man's responsibility towards God; man is only able to meet that responsibility (but he is able to meet it!) on the ground of redemption and in the power of the Divine nature.

Ten days were spent in praying, entering into this thing by prayer, busy with no other burden! And oh! with all the revelation He has given us, should it not bring us to our knees in prayer? Pentecost did not come one day short of full prayer preparation; forty days of revelation and then ten days' prayer; a clear manifestation of Himself and His new thing; and the first carrying of that responsibility in ten days of prayer.

And what was the result of that praying? A thrusting out by and in the power of the mighty Holy Spirit, resurrection revelation, a seeing the fields white unto harvest, and then a giving of themselves unto prayer, until sent forth of the Spirit. Vision, prayer, go; yes, that is the Lord's order.

Here is a threefold preparation, and Pentecost is the climax to that preparation, and the ground upon which the Holy Spirit comes.

"Ye are witnesses of these things but tarry ye... until ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:48,49.)

"He was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen; to whom he also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me... ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:2-5.)

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem these all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."