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THE PROPHECY, PROMISE, AND POWER OF PENTECOST

"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).

One of the most amazing aspects of the Word of God is the unerring precision with which prophecy is fulfilled. The holy men who penned the sacred chronicles never miscued. There was no chance for miscalculation because it was dictated by the Divine Mind.

Another remarkable thing about prophecy is the high regard and respect that Jesus Christ had for it. He was always keenly conscious of what the prophets had said about Him. Every word from His lips proved this. He moved with the air of One Who realized to the fullest degree that He came not to destroy but to fulfill.

His esteem for prophecy in the unfolding of the plan of redemption is seen as He submitted to the Baptism of John with the words: "Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

When He was a child, Joseph took Him into Egypt that it might be fulfilled which was spoken: "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Returning to Palestine, they dwelt in a city of

Galilee called Nazareth, because it was said of Him, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

The tragic drama of His arrest, trial and crucifixion is punctuated with those thundering predictions out of the past. Turning to Simon Peter in the garden, He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?"

He died quickly before the soldiers arrived to hasten His departure by breaking His legs, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, "A bone of him shall not be broken."

The colorful Isaiah, (almost a thousand years before Jesus died) exclaimed in glowing language, "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Fulfilling this with dauntless precision, two wealthy men begged His body from Pilate and laid Him in a rich man's tomb.

These and many other like Scriptures prove beyond a doubt the divine accuracy and authority of prophecy.

Just as the unfolding of the Messianic pattern conformed to the work of prophecy, just so the ministry and mission of the Holy Ghost in the church follows the prophetic dictates.

Joel emphatically proclaims: "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Not only in direct prophecy is the dispensation foretold, but in types and shadows it is most evident. It is seen in the Jewish feast days, in the thundering clouds and fire of Sinai, in the seasonal rains of Palestine, which are termed in Old Testament language as the former and latter rain.

The giving of the Law on Sinai, written by the finger of God on tablets of stone, was the official ushering in of a new and glorious dispensation. The Ten Commandments were the nucleus of a moral code by which the conduct of a nation was regulated for a thousand years.

The Feast of Pentecost (thus identified because it came fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits) was observed every year by the Jewish nation. This feast looked back to Sinai and forward to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, when the ushering in of a new dispensation was made. In this – another Sinai of fire, filled with the power and glory of the upper room – a new day had come.

It was not a moral law, given on tables of stone written by the finger of God. It was a Gospel of Grace, written by the Holy Ghost on the fleshly tables of their hearts. It was not the voice of Jehovah that caused the mountain to quake. It was the presence of the Holy Ghost in gushes of glory-like wind speaking through the mouths of men in tongues of fire of the wonderful works of God.

Traveling down the long road of Old Testament prophecy you come at length into the refreshing, expectant atmosphere of the preaching of John the Baptist. He cries out with an urgency that thrills, "There cometh one after me – he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

Picking up the echo of John's prophecy, Jesus highlighted His ministry with frequent promises of the soon coming of the Holy Ghost. He exerted every effort to lift the eyes of His followers beyond the dark hill of Calvary to that glorious upper room.

Finally, as a last effort to rouse their lagging

faith He said, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

The statement, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come," indicates that all the foregoing ages had waited for this hour. It was a time appointed, upon a people selected for an object purposed.

Thousands of theologians have produced as many volumes explaining what really happened on the day of Pentecost, but I think it is safe to take Peter's analysis and let it go at that. He did not arrive at his conclusion from the sidelines – he was in the midst of it. The folly of many would-be scholars in their treatment of Pentecost is they take the vantage point of the spectator, rather than the glorious position of the participant.

Peter heard the rushing, mighty wind. He saw the cloven tongues of fire; he heard and took part in the manifestation of tongues. He saw the physical demonstrations of the people. He felt the surging billows of the power of God. He remembered the Scripture Jesus Himself had said, "Out of your heart shall flow rivers of living waters." Joel had said God would make no difference in class or age when He poured out His Spirit. Peter finally decided that everything that was happening before his eyes and in his heart coincided exactly with the prophet's message. So he stood up and cried, "Men and brethren, this is not what you think. These men are not drunk, but this is that, which was spoken of by the prophet Joel."

The fire, wind, and physical manifestations of that day all gave evidence of Pentecostal power being released into this world. Fulfillment and power was the keynote of that entire phenomenon.

The Spirit-filled disciples, caught in the grip of that compelling, overwhelming power were

reminded that Jesus had said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." He had commanded that they tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. In the same breath Jesus had spoken of power and Pentecost.

Power is one of the most fascinating words. The search for power, the passion for power is deep in the human heart and is as old as sin.

Underlying much of the exploits of all men in all time is that longing for power. The building of the tower of Babel, the pyramids, the city of Babylon, the rocket ship, the H Bomb, and the Vanguard to the moon are all prompted by the desire for power.

The power of Pentecost is not sought after by carnal man, and it has never been that prized possession that God wants it to be.

It is not physical power, not the power of eloquence, nor logic. It is not the mental power nor military power. This power of Pentecost is spiritual power. It is not power that you can use, but power that uses you. It is:

Power to witness for Christ in a hostile world.

Power to live like Christ in a world that nailed our Saviour to a Cross.

Power to build a spiritual kingdom in a world that is dominated by Satan.

Power to build a church on the Rock, where the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Power not only to bring lost men to heaven, but power to bring heaven down to men.

Power to fulfill that last Great Commission, to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

Power to preach where sin is blackest.

Power to sing when the night is darkest.

Power to shout when Hell is raging.

Power to be sweet when others are bitter.

Power to smile when others frown.

Power to do right when it is popular to do wrong.

Power to be a saving leaven in a world that is corrupt.

Power to be salt in an earth that is decaying.

Power to be a light in a world that's as dark as hell itself.

Power to keep alive the torch of truth and lift it high in a world where night has fallen.

Pentecost gives power to perpetuate all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until He comes again.