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"THIS IS THAT"

"But 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 on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:16-18).

According to Webster's dictionary, a miracle is "an extraordinary event manifesting a supernatural work of God." I believe in miracles. I believe a miracle cannot be explained. I believe God reserves the right to exercise His divine prerogative to interfere or interrupt natural law and natural phenomenon.

I believe that the Holy Ghost may set a precedent any time He so desires as He works to unfold God's plan of redemption through the ages. He has done so a thousand times in the past and He may continue to do so in the present and in the future.

God may follow a certain pattern in His work of redemption, or He may throw the old pattern away and create a new one as it pleases Him.

The record indicates that in bygone years God has on occasion followed a timetable in His dealings with man; that He has allowed His movements to be governed by certain hours, dates and seasons. He was specific in giving Moses the pattern in the mount. The Passover lamb was to be

slain on the evening of the 14th day of the first month. They were to "count seven sabbaths" from the feast of First Fruits, and then observe the feast of Pentecost.

Coming up out of Egypt's bondage beneath an arch of blood, that band of slaves made camp in the shadows of Sinai. God called Moses up into the mountain where he stayed forty days in communion with God.

The multitude stood and looked on. They heard the rumble of thunder, saw the black cloud, saw the fiery, forked lightning. God had come down to write a law on tables of stone.

A new age had begun. Here was a people of destiny, a nation born in a day. They needed a governor, a law, a code of living. This law God gave to Moses with the instructions that the people were to write it on their doorposts, and on their gateposts. They were to diligently teach it to their children and to keep on telling the story from generation to generation, forever.

They were to tell about their deliverance from Egypt, they were to relate the momentous events of the Passover, the miracle of the Red Sea crossing. They were to tell how God came down at Sinai to talk with Moses and to give him the Law. They were to tell about the unexplainable fire, the cloud, the thunder, the lightning which spoke of God's presence. They were to commemorate this occasion every year by the observance of the feast of Pentecost at the designated time.

This feast was kept for a thousand years. Famine came, wars raged, slavery and captivity took away their freedom, but every year they kept this feast day.

Opening the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles are these words: "And when the day of

Pentecost was fully come. . . ." What implications are involved here. Luke, the writer, reaches back through the ages. The pendulum swings back to Sinai. The piled predictions of all the past ages no longer towered proud and forbidding, but fell at the feet of an amazed people in a blinding flash of light and glory.

"This is that!" Oh, the memories that came flooding in upon them when this announcement was made.

When the year of Jubilee arrived, the bugle was sounded throughout the land. Somehow *this* announcement was a bugle call that made the entire universe quiver with a spontaneous and universal shout of victory.

Jerusalem was astir. Hebrews from every nation under heaven had come back one more time. They had been coming for a thousand years. The aged and infirm were there. The young and strong were there. On this occasion, the news of a strange prophet had brought thousands more. They had heard of His crucifixion and resurrection, and with a desire to see for themselves they had swarmed into Jerusalem.

How they must have talked of old times, discussing the promise of Messiah, wondering if this could indeed be the one for whom they had long waited. As they heard the story from eye witnesses of His trial, the cruel scourging, His princely bearing, His suffering, His death, and received reports from those who had seen Him in person since His death—alive, talking with them, walking with them, eating with them—no doubt many believed. Perhaps those who were versed in the writings of the prophets spent much time in research, comparing this Man with the prophecies of Messiah.

All types and shadows, every dying lamb on a Jewish altar, every sacrifice, feast, and offering had found fulfillment in the dying of the Lamb of God on the cross of Calvary. But it took this day to complete it. Of that morning Luke writes: "When the day of Pentecost was fully come. . . ." What a day! What a morning!

A new day had dawned. A new society had come out of slavery. A new band of people had been sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb. Another group of slaves from the brick yards of Egypt had been brought out of bondage. They were beginning a new life and they must have a new law, another Sinai. They must have some power from another world to guide them.

Jesus was gone back to heaven. They saw the cloud receive Him as He went up and they needed another leader, another teacher, another comforter. This was the day for Him to come.

It was a great day in Jerusalem. It was a great day in heaven. For ten days they had been coming and going, praising and blessing God. Jesus had told them to tarry, and tarried they had, waiting on the Promise of the Father. Excitement was running high in the upper room.

In heaven, things were moving rapidly. Jesus had been back now for ten days. He had been marshalling the heavenly hosts to arrange for the great coronation of the Third Person of the Godhead to be enthroned in the holy hearts of the church.

He had the assurance that His Father had answered His prayers concerning His followers, preparing their hearts for the fulfillment of this promise and all was now ready.

Three worlds are involved: Heaven, earth, and hell. The stage is set. The clock of the cen-

turies has struck. It's nine o'clock, the time for the morning sacrifice. The feast of Pentecost is on.

Suddenly, out over the towering spirals of Solomon's temple, up above the skyline of that city of David, a sound is heard. Like an approaching tornado it moves in, whirling around a certain building, penetrating the walls, then it is inside the upper room and things begin to happen.

What was this wind? It was no ordinary wind, of that we can be assured. Although it is not clearly spelled out in the text, still there is evidence throughout God's Word which would seem to substantiate my theory.

The Bible gives information leading to the belief that Satan's Kingdom is in the air. We know:

He is not where God is.

He is not yet cast down to earth, even though one day he will be.

He is the prince of this world.

He is the prince of the power of the air.

In the dark days of the tribulation, Satan is seen being cast down to the earth. The mighty angel in Daniel had a fight with the prince of Persia and had to call upon Michael to help him get the answer to Daniel's prayer.

Hence, Satan and his emissaries, his hoards of evil spirits, have their headquarters somewhere up above this earth in the air. At that final hour when the Bride goes up to meet the Lord in the air to dwell with Him for a season, Satan's kingdom will be driven out of the air to this earth. This takes place just preceding the great tribulation.

When the Second Person of the Godhead entered this world as Bethlehem's Babe, what happened? Gabriel came in person to prepare Mary

for His coming. The stars of the heavens moved from their orbits to swing down near the earth to guide men to the manger.

The night skies of Judea were alive with a multitude of the heavenly hosts singing, escorting, and paying tribute to this royal Personage. One angel stood before the shepherds to say, "Fear not, He is here."

The angels gathered about the manger bed that night to keep Satan and his demons back from the sacred scene.

Angels were present at the scene of the Resurrection to give instructions to Christ's followers. They were present at His ascension to give witness to His second coming.

Why not conclude that this mighty wind was a heavenly vanguard sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Holy Ghost.

May we not suppose that Jesus, Himself organized this inaugural parade, according to rank: Angels, cherubims, and the archangels, Michael and Gabriel.

The average distance of the sun from the earth is 93,000,000 miles. It is one of our near neighbors. On out there beyond the sun are other shining stars and suns so far away till the distance is measured in light years.

Sound travels 1,090 feet a second in the air. Light travels 186,284 miles a second.

Somewhere beyond all the plenary heaven was where Jesus went, where God dwells, and where the Holy Ghost must come from.

These angels had a long way to come, and they must be there on time. They had to get there for the early morning sacrifice.

Faster than sound they came, faster than light they traveled, down by twinkling stars, whirling

moons, and shining suns they came, clearing the atmosphere of Satan's opposing force, making way for the mighty Holy Ghost. They were the vanguard of the Holy Ghost. The speed of this vanguard sweeping down from that heavenly world may have created the effect of a rushing mighty wind.

What about the tongues of fire? What part did this have in the coming of the Holy Ghost?

Coming out of Egypt and during the long forty-year trek in the wilderness, the children of Israel had evidence of God's presence with them—a cloud by day and fire by night.

When Moses kept his father-in-law's flock on the backside of the desert, he saw a bush on fire. The fire was a symbol of God's presence.

The Bible states that at the giving of the law on mount Sinai, "the Lord descended upon it in fire" (Exodus 19:18).

Thus, fire seems to signify the presence of God himself.

When an earthly king rides to his coronation, the most royal personages on earth ride in with him to pay him honor.

We have evidence that God comes down to earth on occasion. In the Creation, we read that He took of the dust of earth to form man. In the Garden of Eden, it is recorded that in the cool of the day God came down to walk with man. At Babel, He said, "Let us go down." Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God said "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do . . . I will go down."

May we assume that on the Day of Pentecost, God came down for a personal inspection of each individual? The Bible account would support this theory for it says that the "cloven tongues like as

of fire . . . sat upon each of them." Not a spot or stain was on them. They were the trophies of Calvary, the product of redemption. The bush was not consumed.

Immediately following, we're told, "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

There are those who support the idea that religion is a thing of the intellect alone, a decision of the mind. But when the Holy Ghost came, God addressed Himself to the ears—the mighty wind; He addressed Himself to the eyes—the cloven tongues of fire; He addressed Himself to the feelings—the other tongues. Thus, it is apparent that man's total being is involved in the experience of Pentecost. It is not something to be reasoned out or explained, it is something that must be personally experienced by the individual before it can be fully understood.

The Holy Ghost came. How do we know it?

The angels announced the birth of Jesus. But the Holy Ghost spoke for Himself. He employed every earthly language to preach the wonderful works of God.

Before returning to His heavenly home, God, together with the unseen vanguard of royal spectators, must have lingered, listening as the Holy Ghost spoke of the wonderful works of God.

It couldn't be said in one tongue, so He employed every language.

The crowds thronged together, the populace of Jerusalem stood around in amazement as that royal Visitor from the heavenly world spread the glorious message of redemption to every man present, for each heard the story in his own tongue.

The rushing, mighty wind has passed on, perhaps accompanying the Father in His journey back to the courts of heaven. We may not see the cloven tongues of fire now. But the Holy Ghost came to stay. In the words of Jesus, "He shall abide with you forever."

That day 2,000 years ago, the gates of hell gave way before the mighty Holy Ghost. They still give way before His power.

Around the turn of the century, the latter rain of Pentecost fell. During recent years copious showers of Pentecost have brought forth an abundant crop, spreading this glorious experience to people throughout the world. An estimated ten million Pentecostals believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues as they did on the day of Pentecost.

In Italy and Russia, the Pentecostals have the highest growth rate of any religious group. In France and Norway and some other European countries the Pentecostals represent the largest of the free churches.

In Latin America Pentecostals outnumber the traditional Protestants four to one, and in some areas the rate of Pentecostal growth is from three to five times the population increase. One out of two Puerto Rican Protestants is a Pentecostal, and in New York City, Spanish speaking immigrants have founded 250 Pentecostal churches.

Pentecost spread like a prairie fire, leaping denominational boundaries so that men and women in many of the traditional Protestant churches and even some in the Catholic church have received the Pentecostal baptism as they did on the Day of Pentecost. These facts sound as if they came right out of the pages of Acts, for on the Day of Pente-

cost, three thousand souls were added to the one hundred and twenty who initially received the experience in the upper room. A few days later, five thousand more were added. The next biblical account reveals that multitudes believed.

Peter emphasized that the promise was not only for his generation, he said, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

This is that! "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Joel prophesied that it would take something out of the ordinary to involve men of all walks of life in this greatest of all tasks. We must have the Holy Spirit to give us vision, to give us unction, to make our testimonies effective. He foretold that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, both men and women, rich and poor, old and young. All could be recipients of the Holy Ghost and become exponents of the truth.

The power of Pentecost is the need of the day. The church of Jesus Christ needs a re-baptism. Pentecost is needed to convict men of sin. Pentecost is needed to give men power to live overcoming Christian lives. Pentecost is needed to give men the power to witness. Pentecost is needed to help men fulfill the Great Commission to take the gospel message to all the world. Pentecost is needed to fill men with a spirit of sacrifice, with zeal, with a determination to accomplish the mission assigned to them by Jesus Christ.

*Oh, spread the tidings 'round,
Wherever man is found,
Wherever human hearts
And human woes abound;
Let every Christian tongue*

*Proclaim the joyful sound:
The Comforter has come!*

*The long, long night is past;
The morning breaks at last;
And hushed the dreadful wail
The fury of the blast,
As o'er the golden hills
The day advances fast!
The Comforter has come!*

*Lo, the great King of kings,
With healing in His wings
To every captive soul
A full deliverance brings;
And thro' the vacant cells
The song of triumph rings:
The Comforter has come.*

*Oh, boundless love divine!
How shall this tongue of mine
To wand'ring mortals tell
The matchless grace divine—
That I, a child of hell,
Should in His image shine!
The Comforter has come!*

*The Comforter has come!
The Comforter has come!
The Holy Ghost from heav'n,
The Father's promise giv'n!
O spread the tidings 'round,
Wherever man is found:
The Comforter is come.*

—Wm. J. Kirkpatrick