

PURPOSE OF PENTECOST

By

Curtis Dickinson

The sound of rushing wind! Fiery flames darting about near the heads of the startled men! The miracle of speaking so that they were heard in a multitude of languages at the same time! “And they were all amazed and were perplexed, saying unto to another, What means this?” (Acts 2:12).

Then answer to this has been buried in the confusion of claims generally known as “Pentecostalism” and more recently called “the Charismatic movement”, a religion emphasizing subjective faith and speaking in “tongues.” The exciting miracle of men speaking in a language they had not learned, and being heard in many languages at once, has been so exploited by the sensation-mongers that the greater event of Pentecost is generally ignored.

What means this? The apostle Peter is the logical one to answer, since it was Peter to whom Jesus had said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of Heaven...” (Matt. 16:18–19).

Peter was familiar with the promises of God. He had promised to David a kingdom that would stand forever (II Sam. 7:11–16). Isaiah prophesied that the “house of the Lord” would be established (Isa. 2:2–3) and that Christ as a prince would sit on the throne of David (Isa. 9:6–7). Daniel foresaw a kingdom that was never to be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). John the Baptist preached that the “kingdom is at hand” (Matt. 3:1–2) and Jesus had preached the same thing. Peter had been present when Jesus said, “There are some here that stand by who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). Now Peter, to whom were given the keys of the kingdom, stands up and begins to unlock the mystery of what had happened. Peter quoted the prophets, then gave the application.

Concerning Christ’s resurrection, Peter said that it was in fulfillment of the prophecy of David in Psalms 16:8–11 where David said, “because thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.” The prophecy could not apply to David himself, Peter argues, because David “both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day.” Furthermore, David prophesied in another Psalm (Psa. 110), “Jehovah said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion; Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” Jesus himself had quoted this Psalm to show that He was the Messiah and that He was ready to take the reigns of Power and rule (Matt. 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42–43). Peter, in explaining David’s prophecy said, “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.” Peter then declared that the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit that day was the evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Christ’s rule. “Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of

the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this, which you see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens, but he said himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, 'til I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet'. Peter had been asked about the meaning of the miracles of wind, fire and language, He concluded his sermon by saying, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). The conclusion can be nothing else but the fact that God had raised up Jesus to place him on David's throne and to be David's Lord in the seat of universal power, at God's right hand.

From the date of Pentecost the apostles no longer spoke of a coming Kingdom, but proclaimed it as a present reality and Christians were translated "into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13).

Philip went to Samaria "preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ..." (Acts 8:12). Paul at Ephesus was "preaching boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and preaching as to the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). It was this kind of preaching, that Jesus Christ is Sovereign Lord of His kingdom, that brought the church under persecution. The Empire of Rome was built upon the false claim of the Lordship of Caesar, knowing that Jesus is Lord, forced imperial authorities to a last desperate assault on the body of Christ through two and a half centuries of bloody persecution. The Empire was broken in pieces by Christ's rod of iron" (T.R. Ingram).

It was this affirmation, that Jesus is the King and that the Kingdom was present under His Lordship, which infuriated the Jews against the church. For centuries they had prevented the prophecies, holding that God would set up another kingdom like that of David, only greater, with the Jews actually in power over the world. When Christ refused to do so, saying "My kingdom is not of this world," they rejected him as the Messiah, while rejecting His kingdom. Wherever Paul went preaching the resurrection and the Lordship of Jesus, the Jews were dogging his trail. To deny the resurrection was to deny that Jesus is Messiah and Lord. For a dead Christ could not be King. Failing to stop the spread of Christian faith, the Jews then sought to infiltrate the church, and "Judaize" it by teaching circumcision and other Old Covenant concepts. The books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews were written to refute the Judaizers. The idea of an earthly Utopia, the day of a golden age, is Jewish, and stems from their insistence that Jesus was not the Messiah, that the Messiah is yet to come, and that when He comes he will set up an earthly kingdom.

In support of this materialistic hope, there are great religious movements, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, Christadelphians, British Israelites, the Armstrong cult and popular teachers such as Billy Graham and Oral Roberts, and numerous others. One basic tenant of their claims is that Christ does not NOW reign, but will come to establish a Kingdom and reign for a thousand years. Such teaching is exploited by Zionists for strictly political purposes. It leads to a multiplicity of decisive speculations and false fears and hopes concerning future events. Like the Sadducees and Pharisees, who were united on only one issue, that of denying that Jesus is Lord, attention is turned to an imaginary future world government rather than to the present power and glory of Christ as King.

If Jesus is King and Lord, then we can understand that “all Things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). If He is not King then when He comes again it will be for judgment as He Himself, and the apostles taught. The apostles did not look to some future kingdom, but spoke of the Kingdom we have already received, of the citizenship we already have (Heb. 12:28, Phil. 3:20). For the future they look to finality: Resurrection, Judgment and destruction of the ungodly, a new heavens and new earth. God’s love was fully exposed in the cross, not in some future Utopian millennium. In the Hebrew letter we are told how we have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, and to God the judge of all, to Jesus, to the general assembly of innumerable hosts of angels, the church, and the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12:22–24). And in doing so, we are “receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:28). This applied to Christians of the first century as well as to all Christians since.

Christ is indeed coming again, but not to live on this earth and establish a temporal kingdom. He is coming to raise the dead, to give immortality to His saints, to judge and destroy the wicked, and dwell forever with His own (John 5:27–29), II Thess. 1:7–10, Rev. 21:1–8).

The miracle of Pentecost, including the “tongues” in which men spoke, was not to encourage believers to indulge in sensational activities that tantalize and gratify fleshly feelings. The miracle of “tongues” itself enable men to hear in their native language the glorious fact that Jesus had been crowned Lord and King, that the Kingdom is established, and that men may enter it according to Peter’s command: “Repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).

The issue confronting the world is the same today as then: the Kingdom of Christ, which now exists under His Lordship, or a kingdom of the future? Christ is Sovereign Lord, according to prophecy; or else the prophecies are yet to be fulfilled, and He is not yet Lord.

Christians are to walk after the spirit and not after the flesh (Rom. 8:3–4). Christians are strongly warned against reverting to the Old Testament system (Gal. 3:23–25, 5:3–9, 5:1, Col. 2:16–17, Heb 10:11–14). Christians are not waiting for a coming Kingdom, but rather “waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” in the day of Christ’s coming when he gives immortality to all saints (Rom 8:23). At that coming it will be the consummation of the wedding between the church, the bride, and Christ, the bridegroom. This will be nothing less than total and eternal happiness in seeing Him as He is and being as He is (I John 3:2). Certainly it will not be a time of warfare, building of temples, forced rule of rebellious peoples and all else that goes with the projected earthy kingdom as proposed by the Jew’s religion.

Pentecost was the day that Jesus was publicly proclaimed to be Christ and Lord, as evidenced by miracles. It cannot be repeated and does not need repetition. Christ is King eternal, and can never be crowned King again. Unto Him has been given “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Christians of faith have no use for the traditions and interpretations of Scripture which hark back to the Old Covenant and a Kingdom of earthly dimensions. We have no hopes of a materialistic Utopia. We are already citizens of His Kingdom, having been “delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love” (Col. 1:13). He now has

universal reign, being immovably established “on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8:1).

It is in view of His established Kingdom and His Sovereign reign that we have peace and joy in believing, remembering His words, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Not only has God exalted Jesus to the seat of power, but He “made us alive together with Christ”, and “raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19–20, 2:2, 5–6).

What happened at Pentecost never happened again and will never happen again. “What means this?” It means that Christ fulfilled the law and the prophets, the Kingdom is established, the doors opened by the keys of Peter, and that we live under the glorious sovereignty of Jesus, for “God has made him both Lord and Christ.”

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