

Doctrine of the Lost Power

Acts 2:1-13

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.”

Introduction

In many churches of Christ there is a lost power despite much religious activity. Like the experience of the Jews of old it is possible for there to be pomp and ceremony without knowing much about spiritual power. When spiritual power is present people are converted, the sick are healed, confession of sin is made, spiritual harmony reigns, spiritual gifts are used, love for God is prevalent, and compassion for others is present.

It is obvious that in some congregations spiritual power is non-existent. The services are sterile and barren. People stay away in droves. All that is needed is for some one to shut the doors, turn off the lights, and put up the For Sale sign.

In other congregations, spiritual power is present but weak. Like a flickering lamp there is the realization that a power surge is necessary or the gospel light will yet go out. It does not take much really for a ministry to be destroyed. Satan knows a thousand ways to attack the church of Christ. That is why every Christian is told to put on the whole armour of God.

If a church finds itself in need of power, it should not be a surprise. Jesus has said that without Him, His disciples could do nothing. That is why the Lord told the disciples that they were to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. And so the disciples waited.

Expectantly they waited. It was going to happen. The Holy Spirit was going to come. Excitedly they waited. There was an eagerness in the hearts of the Twelve as a child awaits Christmas morning or a bride her wedding day. Without loss of hope the disciples waited. Despite the passing of each day the faithful few knew that the Father had promised something wonderful and the Father would not disappoint them. What the Father promised was the POWER of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission given by His Son (Acts 1:8). That same presence and power of the Holy Spirit is needed to day. In light of that consider the following.

First, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is plainly associated with receiving spiritual power (Acts 1:5 cf. 1:8).

Second, the purpose of the spiritual power was to become effective witnesses of Christ (1:8b).

Third, with the promise of Christ in mind, the disciples remained in Jerusalem. They would pray.

Unity characterized their prayer life and they prayed for power. They would supplicate. The disciples would plead with God to do what He has already promised to do. There was to be an intense emotional crying out to the Lord even by those who were closest to Him.

Fourth, from this we learn that the physical proximity of Christ does not merit special favors apart from spiritual graces. Mary had to pray as well as the Lord's brothers and sisters.

Finally the great day arrived. Pentecost came. Historically, Pentecost was the great Jewish feast that was celebrated 50 days after the Passover. The purpose of Pentecost was to commensurate the fact that Israel was once special to God and was uniquely provided for. Pentecost was therefore identified with the celebration of the end of the harvest season.

The Law provided that no work was to be done on Pentecost and sacrifices were to be offered. This explains in part the large crowd that was gathered in Jerusalem. Little did the people realize that something wonderful was about to take place.

Upon 120 men and women the power of the Holy Spirit was to come. The advent of the intense presence of the Holy Spirit was preceded with a sound from heaven as of a rushing wind. Next came a visible manifestation in the form of divided flames of fire and rested upon each as a unique ability to speak in foreign languages was given. Babel was being reversed (1:6).

In all of this activity two things must not be forgotten. The power or baptism of the Holy Spirit came. The gospel was effectively preached. The purpose of Pentecost was not to start a new dispensation, nor to teach entire sanctification. The purpose of Pentecost was not to begin the church age or to speak in tongues. The purpose was to provide power for God's children.

Pentecost Repeated

The greatest need in the church today is for the Holy Spirit to come in great power. This endowment, this special anointment, this baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon the church in Jerusalem on a day called Pentecost. When it happened, great power was given so that the gospel could be preached. The experience at Pentecost can be repeated. This is proven by the following considerations.

1. Pentecost was not the beginning of a new dispensation, for Pentecost was not the first time that Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14) for His ministry and when He was taken away, the disciples could only do what He did through the same power of the Holy spirit (John 14:22; Acts 4:8; 4:31; 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24).
 - John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost (Luke 1:15).
 - Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit before Pentecost (Luke 1:41) and so was Zacharias (Luke 1:67).
 - The Spirit that came upon Jesus, Elizabeth, Zecharias, and John was the same Spirit that empowered Elijah (Luke 1:17) who lived before Pentecost.
 - In Exodus 35:30, 31 we are told that Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God.
2. Pentecost was not the beginning of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the bodies of Christians. In John 14:16, 17, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would dwell with His disciples and be in His disciples. Many New Testament passages teach this is a present reality. The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9, 10).
3. The indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost is taught in such passages as John 7:37-39; John 20:19, 22). Jesus literally breathed upon His disciples the Holy Spirit.
4. Even though the disciples had received the indwelling Holy Spirit they were still commanded to wait until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).
5. Pentecost was not the beginning of the Church.
 - Nowhere does the Bible teach that the Church began at Pentecost. To argue that it does is to argue from silence.

- 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 does not teach that the Church began at Pentecost. Nothing is said in this passage about the origin of the Church. What is taught is that every person who is born again is placed into the body of Christ. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:5) so that there is power to win souls is far different from being baptized into the body of Christ. Between Acts 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 there are three kinds of baptisms pictured and three agents.

The Agents of Baptism

- John baptized converts in water.
- Jesus baptized the disciples in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- The Holy Spirit baptized the Christians at Corinth into the body of Christ.

Three Kinds of Baptism

- To be immersed, or covered, or buried, or overwhelmed in water, physically, is one kind of baptism.
- To be immersed, or buried, or covered, or overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit poured out upon a Christian, is another kind of baptism.
- To be immersed, or covered, or buried into the body of Christ is still another kind of baptism.