

Pentecost

by T. Austin-Sparks

Pentecost is the absolute corollary of the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ, bringing down the meaning of those realities to be experienced in individual believers and the Church.

Scripture: Acts 2:1

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Christ's Return", "Pentecost"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of Pentecost as the culmination of Christ's resurrection and exaltation, transforming the Church's dynamic and expanding its horizons beyond local limitations to a universal mission. He highlights that Pentecost is not just an event but the means through which believers experience the fullness of Christ and His holiness, as the Holy Spirit empowers the Church to fulfill its purpose. The sermon also points to the coming again of Christ as the ultimate horizon, linking all doctrines and the hope of believers to His return, which will complete the cycle of redemption and establish His eternal kingdom.

Transcript

The next peak on this skyline which is the Divine Horizon is Pentecost. What a link in the mountain-chain setting for the significance of Christ "Pentecost" is! It is necessary to hold strongly in mind the fact that Pentecost stands very closely related to the whole Horizon, and is not something in itself. We must see that

Pentecost is the Absolute Corollary of the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ

Facts though these may have been, and wonderful truths, yet, apart from Pentecost, they would be objective and in Heaven. Pentecost means that all the meaning of those realities is brought down here to be experienced in individual believers and the Church. What Christ risen and glorified meant became the dynamic of the Church by Pentecost. The advent of the Holy Spirit made all that concerning Him the immediate Horizon of the Church.

1. It was the Dynamic of Christ's Release

It is not difficult to see how the horizon of the Church expanded with and from Pentecost. Dynamic is the right word. Dynamite might even be better, for it was by sheer force that the limitations collapsed. All the narrower horizons of nationality, racialism, geography, and religious exclusiveness began to fall, or had

their continuance doomed by Pentecost.

Christ is greater than all these, and the Holy Spirit will not countenance or tolerate anything that makes Him smaller than He is. Give the Holy Spirit a chance and see what He will do with limitations placed upon Christ. Resist Him, and He will move on and leave you to your littleness.

If we resort to expedients to make the Church missionary, or to stimulate missionary interest or zeal, we begin at the wrong end. Time and energy will be unnecessarily wasted. Let Christ, crucified, risen, and exalted come in the power of the Holy Spirit and the result will be that everything will expand to the dimensions of Christ.

Before Pentecost it was the local - Jerusalem.

After Pentecost it was universal - "the uttermost parts".

It is a reversing of Pentecost when the course changes from the universal to the local unless it is to bring the local into the universal.

2. It was the Dynamic of Christ's Holiness

Symbols of the Holy Spirit are fire, wind, water. All these speak of cleansing. Fire was especially characteristic of Pentecost. So much has been made of the zeal, power, and wonder of Pentecost that it has been overlooked that fiery judgment of sin was very present. The Holy Spirit through Peter brought home to men's consciences guilt and responsibility for the death of Christ.

The death of Christ was in no sense a merely local matter. It related to universal sin. It was "the sin of the world" that "the Lamb of God" bore away. In Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the world was represented, just as Jew and Gentile were officially represented at Calvary. Responsibility for Christ was laid at the doors of the whole world on that day. Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit came He would convict the world of sin and judgment because of its attitude toward Himself. So, all men were, and are, charged with sin and judgment until they 'repent' and thus confess. This is exactly what happened under the power of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit brought Christ as universal holiness, the bearer of, and cleanser from, sin to be the only horizon of salvation. The prophet Malachi had prophesied that "the Messenger of the Covenant" would "sit as a refiner... and purify the sons of Levi" (3:1-3). There is no salvation without the sense of sin.

In the 'Revelation' the sins of the churches are judged by Him "whose eyes are as a flame of fire", and this is related to "the seven spirits of God", i.e., the Holy Spirit in spiritual fulness and perfection.

The least spiritual church of Paul's letters was Corinth; it was the most carnal, and the emphasis is on holiness, and judgment upon its absence.

Holiness is separation unto God. It is that which is suitable for fellowship with God. Christ in His holiness is the Horizon of union with God, and this is effected by the Holy Spirit.

3. Pentecost is the Dynamic of Fulness

"They were all filled". But remember, this was a testimony to Christ, for the Holy Spirit ever and always works in relation to Christ. It is Christ - God's Son - who is to "fill all things". To be filled with - or by - the Spirit is to be filled with Christ. Do not make the Holy Spirit or 'Pentecost' the beginning and the end. Do

not make the Holy Spirit a fenced-round and separate Object. His work is to fill all things with Christ.

To this end the ascended Lord by the Holy Spirit, gave gifts among men. "He gave some apostles" whose chief function was related to the expansiveness and universal dimensions of Christ. He gave "...some, pastors and teachers", whose function related to the intensiveness of Christ; His increase in believers.

The universal features of Pentecost are not difficult to see; indeed, they are difficult to miss. Read the account again with this thought in mind and the whole event will be seen to be dominated by it. Pentecost makes Christ the Horizon of salvation, sanctification, expansion, and consummation.

For the present, all that is left to point out is

The Horizon of His Coming Again

This is not a treatise on the 'Second Coming', but just an emphasis upon this inclusive meaning.

The 'Coming Again' of the Lord Jesus is the consummation of the cycle of His whole mission. There is a very real sense in which Christ's return horizons everything related to Him.

That is surely shown in the fact (which may surprise some people) that the 'coming again' of Christ is referred to in the Scriptures more times than any other matter. In type, figure, symbol, analogue, parable, song, metaphor, prophecy, narrative, doctrine, exhortation, warning, and appeal, this matter takes pre-eminence.

From the first intimation in Eden of the final bruising of Satan, to the full and ultimate accomplishment in the 'Revelation', His coming a second time is implicit in all the Scriptures. This, of course, is true of His first coming and His Cross, but they are gathered into the 'coming again' to find their justification and vindication there. Every fundamental doctrine is bound up with the 'coming again': redemption, sanctification, conduct and walk, suffering, glory. In the 'coming again', redemption will be completed and the Cross vindicated.

At His coming all the doctrine concerning the Church will find its completion and realization. The Elect Body will be exalted to function in joint-rulership with Christ over the world. The present world-rule of Satan will be overthrown and replaced by this Church chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world for this "eternal purpose". The earth will be delivered from the bondage of corruption; the bodies of believers will be released from the law of corruption.

This 'Blessed Hope' is the Horizon of the suffering and the storm-beaten Church. It has been so from the beginning.

The Horizon of believers is not what is happening, or is going to happen on the earth, but His coming, which is as certain as the dawn!

'Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices,

Glad in His coming who hath sworn, I come.

Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,

He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,

Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.'

(F. W. H. M.)

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