

Lucio # 1

The Birth of The Church

I just want to join with what several have expressed so far with thanksgiving first to the Lord for His mercy and grace in allowing us to be here. I have been increasingly in the past weeks having a sense of such grace, such mercy that is given to us just by the fact that we can gather together in a time such as this, to be before the Lord in such an hour as the one in which we live. What grace, what mercy, brothers and sisters. So, I just join with what several brothers have already said in thanking the Lord for that and committing this time with the expectation that we may see Him together.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Indeed Lord, that is the desire of our hearts as we have this time together. We bow down before You. Oh, how merciful You are! How gracious You are in taking the initiative, Lord, of gathering us together, of having a desire to reveal Yourself that far exceeds any desire in our own hearts. What a loving Lord! So, our prayer, Lord, as we read together Your Word, as we meditate on it, our prayer is that You would reveal Yourself to us through Your Word by Your Holy Spirit in such a way that You would capture our hearts even tonight. Lord, would You speak that living word? The power is not with us, Lord. It is in Your Word, it is in Your Holy Spirit, and we pray, Lord, as we turn to You, would You break the bread of life even now to us? We pray for Your own glory. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

John 7:37-39: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Acts 2:1-4: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

Verse 12: This is the question of the crowd as they are witnessing something truly amazing, and I am jumping the whole part of what they are saying in the tongues of the languages from the diaspora that were there. They could identify what they were saying in their own countries where they were from. Of course, they were amazed, and they asked this question: "And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"'"

Verse 13-21: "But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'"

Verse 22-28: ""Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

"For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been so exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, 'SIT AT MY RIGH HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL, FOR YOUR FEET.'

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.'"

I John 1:1-3: “What was from the beginning (that which was from the beginning), what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

2:18a: “Children, it is the last hour; ...”

Introduction

As we begin this time, I am sharing on the heavenly vision expressed in the church, but before we get to that, I want to read for you a sentence from your handbook which is on page 2. I think many of you are familiar with this but just one sentence. I am reading it because in a way it has helped me find the burden for my time and it reads as follows:

“Our collective burden is that we must have divine revelation and vision that captures us in the beginning and keeps us to the end.” Vision that captures us in the beginning and keeps us to the end. So, as you may have noticed, we read this verse from I John where both beginning and end are mentioned.

Especially I John 2:18a which reads: “Children, it is the last hour; ... ”The beginning of the Lord determines His end.

It may sound a little strange or paradoxical that in the context of the last hour he begins the epistle with that which was from the beginning. But if you really look at this carefully, this reveals an essential principle with God, and the principle runs like this; His beginning determines His end. Are you getting the picture here? The two things are put together in the epistle—beginning and end. Why? The beginning of the Lord determines His end. If you want to reverse that, the end of the Lord is secured by His beginning. And somehow, the first epistle of John concentrates on this. I want to read a second quote, and this one is important.

Brother T. Austin Sparks, speaking of this matter, says this, “God never departs from His initial and original position. God never accepts anything less; He does not deviate, He does not abandon, He does not forfeit or sacrifice one iota of His original position and intention. It remains the standard by which God governs everything right to the end, and in the end, God will sovereignly work in relation to His beginning.”

I do not know how this sounds to you, but to me when I read this, the impression I get is that this matter of which was in the beginning in connection to the end is of utmost important. It is really, really something that somehow our eyes must be open to this. We could say especially in the time that we live, what matters the most is that we are found rooted and established in that which was from the beginning. And this is the overall burden of my sessions. But as I have already told you I have something that is more specific than that as the theme that was given to me which is, “The Heavenly Vision Expressed in the Church.”

The Book of Acts

As I considered this matter, somehow my heart turned to the book of Acts, because in the book of Acts you have those three things in the theme that was given to me. You have heavenly vision expressed, and what a mighty expression it is in the church! That is everywhere in the book of Acts from the beginning to the end. So somehow this came to my heart as I considered the matter. Perhaps a second reason why the book of Acts is very natural to me is because the expression, “heavenly vision,” as you know from your handbook and from yesterday’s session is found in the book of Acts, chapter 26, and nowhere else in Scripture. So, it is not my intention to go through the whole book of Acts but to somehow concentrate on the beginning of the book of Acts, especially chapter 2. That chapter has something to do with that which was from the beginning. You could say that in Acts chapter 2, the day of Pentecost, which I am sure that most of us are quite familiar with, was a mighty beginning of the heavenly vision expressed in the church. And this is my more specific burden for this time.

Oftentimes, it has been said, “The day of Pentecost is considered or referred to as the birth of the church. Something starts; something of the Lord starts that day in a quite definite way. And I think it is crucially related with that phrase, “That which was from the beginning.” It marks a starting point in several things, the birth of the church, the beginning of a mighty expression of something that has been seen, and that is right to the end.

That Which was from the Beginning

Now I think it is important for us to clarify one thing regarding that expression or that phrase, “that which was from the beginning.” What exactly does that refer to? And let me point this out to you, which again I am sure that most of you are quite familiar with, but nevertheless, I want to point it out to you. I think it is hard for us to miss that there is a similarity between the beginning of the gospel of John and the beginning of his first epistle. In the gospel it reads, “In the beginning was the Word,” referring to the Person of Christ. He, the Person Himself, that is the beginning in the gospel. But in the first epistle is that which was from the beginning, not He was from the beginning, but that which was from the beginning. It is quite similar, and yet a significant difference. The first epistle of John refers to, it includes the Person, absolutely for sure, but it is the Person of Christ plus all that came in through His incarnation and through His finished work, that which was from the beginning. And this is precisely, as I was meditating on this matter, what was happening on the day of Pentecost. Somehow that which was from the beginning, all the virtue of the incarnation and finished work of Christ was being crowned in the day of Pentecost in the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit. It was a mighty beginning of the Lord. And brothers and sisters, I repeat, my sentiment, the sense that I have with this study, what matters the most in the last hour is that we may be found rooted and established in that which was from the beginning.

So having said that, I would like to look at some of the things that were happening on the day of Pentecost, especially in connection with this scene. How is the heavenly vision seen in that chapter, and I believe the whole chapter, in a way, is the heavenly vision. Of course, it is not a doctrine; it is through what was happening, through that specific critical event in history.

Through the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit we can see what the heavenly vision is, but more than that we see the beginning of an expression that runs through the book of Acts. And it is of course seen in the church, the medium, if you will, of the expression of the heavenly vision. So that is my prayer and my burden for this time, that we may see again. I am so conscious that perhaps for many of you this is very familiar territory. And I do not think it matters at all. I think our brother said last night, (I am sorry I am beginning to mix up who is saying what. So please do not take it in a wrong way.) it was a matter of seeing afresh; it does not matter how many times we have seen it. Oh, how we need to see afresh that which is from the beginning, and we would like to do that from the vantage point of the day of Pentecost.

The Day of Pentecost Represents a Beginning of the Last Days

Now again, I believe that it is important for us to recognize that the day of Pentecost represents a beginning. In many senses, the birth of the church is the beginning of a new dispensation, a new age, a new day begins at that time and has been running ever since. Let me put it very clearly. It is a dispensation in which we live right now. It has not expired; it is still going on, and this is the day in which we live, and that started on the day of Pentecost, characterized by the Holy Spirit being poured forth upon all flesh and resulting in vision and revelation.

Let's go back to one verse in chapter 2, and hopefully we can see those things.

Acts 2:17: Now notice this is the beginning of the quotation from Joel that Peter is making: "AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;'"

So, there are three things here in the quotation that have been given us as an explanation of what is happening. It is as if Peter said, "No, no, nobody is drunk here. I am going to explain to you what is happening." The Lord said, "In the last days ..." It is as if Peter is saying, "Those last days are beginning now. It is a new page in the divine economy. It is a new era; the last days are starting right now.

And then the Lord says, "What is the characteristic of the last days? I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind, on all flesh." That is the main characteristic that is happening right there. And what is the result of that? "Your sons and your daughters will prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

A Day Characterized by Vision

Brothers and sisters, the day of Pentecost is with the giving of the Holy Spirit, and I am going to emphasize one of the aspects. It begins a day that is supposed to be characterized by vision. There are three things that are being said here. In some way, it seems that vision underlies all of that because you cannot understand prophecy as vision in our church. Vision is being communicated oftentimes in prophecy. The book of Isaiah is the book of the Prophet Isaiah, because the vision of Isaiah is a book of prophecy. Prophecy in a way is the

communication of something that has been seen from the Lord, and this is the characteristic of the day that is beginning in which we live to this day. The Holy Spirit is given resulting in vision.

Well, I think a word of clarification is in order. I do not know what you understand when you read that, “your young men will have visions.” I am sure that often and for many believers perhaps that implies necessarily something supernatural, something extraoral, some sort of ecstasy. But in Scripture oftentimes, that is not necessarily the case. Of course, it may happen. There may be an experience like Saul’s on the road to Damascus, and he sees something, but most of the time vision in Scripture is not necessarily accompanied by anything that is supernatural or ecstatic in nature. Instead, it seems as if the meaning of vision in Scripture is revelation. It is something that is seen with the eyes of our hearts. It is a spiritual understanding which captures us and lays hold of us. So, I am going to refer to the passage that pretty much everybody has mentioned so far. It does not hurt for us to read it again because you see here exactly what is meant by vision in the Word of God.

Ephesians 1:17-18a is a very famous prayer of Paul: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know ...”

Then he ended with three things in that specific prayer that we ought to know. I am not going to go over the three specific things here because I want to concentrate on the principal. His prayer is about us having vision, “having the eyes of our heart enlightened.” There is not necessarily anything ecstatic in what has been prayed for here. Oh, but it certainly implies of that Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and when that is given to us, we see something; there is a spiritual understanding that comes in. It is very interesting that Peter’s quotation of Joel itself makes the argument for the permission of that vision because in that event on the day of Pentecost many things were happening. There is no question of that, but ecstatic vision was not one of them. Nobody saw what Saul saw on the road to Damascus. Oh, but it was a day of vision, wasn’t it? What a day of revelation in that spiritual sense was the day of Pentecost!

Do you realize that Peter was having the eyes of his heart enlightened on that day? Do you realize that suddenly it was as if Peter got a new Bible. Scriptures came alive to him, and he quoted Scripture after Scripture, explaining everything that was happening. No, no, no, it is not what you are thinking. Let me explain it to you. He quotes Psalm 16, then he quotes Psalm 110, and he alludes to another Psalm. It was Scripture after Scripture. Peter was just the spokesman, the spokesperson that day. All the eleven stood with him along with the 120, and they all have that same spiritual understanding. What was happening that day? Oh, God is making Jesus Lord and Christ. That is the reason why the Holy Spirit came down and the church, His body, was being born.

Now we want to go slowly over this, but if you put those two things together, you have the heavenly vision. I am so grateful that Brother Peng, in sharing with us yesterday said, and I really like what he said: “The heavenly vision (and this is a very loose quotation, don’t take it personally.) is something to the effect that it is a vision in two parts, Christ, the Head, the

church, His Body, the two parts of the heavenly vision. Oh, that vision was not in an ecstatic way, not supernaturally, but it was given by revelation that day.

Brothers and sisters, I want to emphasize this. This is the day in which we still live today, the day of the Holy Spirit that began on the day of Pentecost, a day characterized by spiritual vision.

Peter's Message is an Explanation of the Vision

Someone will ask: "What exactly is the nature of that vision? What is the spiritual understanding that Peter had and everybody else, but he was the spokesperson. What is the nature of that vision on that day? Essentially, his message is an explanation of the vision. I do not know if you noticed that, but I want to go as quickly as I can over what he is saying under that spirit of wisdom and revelation that he received from the Holy Spirit. It is like the prophecy of Joel who was the first one to experience that.

"Your young men who have vision." Oh, he is having that vision right there. What is the explanation? And again, as you probably know this already, I mentioned this but let me be a little more explicit about it. His whole message is answering a question. When the multitude saw what was going on, they said, "What does this mean?" And the whole message is an explanation of what this means. And they basically wanted to be very simple in dividing that message.

The "What" of This is Happening

There are two parts to it. First, he speaks about what is happening, and the "what" of what is happening, and the quotation of Joel addresses that. The Holy Spirit was being given; it was a new day; the last days were beginning right then. It was a day characterized by vision; that is the "what," but even more important it is as if Peter says, "Wait a second, that is not all. I want to tell you why this is happening. Why is the Holy Spirit being poured down." Oh, that is the essence of his message on that day of Pentecost. It is as if he is saying, "The pouring of the Holy Spirit is not an isolated event, something that is happening out of the blue. No, it is something that is happening with a vision; there is something behind it." And when you read carefully, what is the content of that message? What is the reason for the Holy Spirit to be given? It is all to do with the Person of the Lord Jesus. It has all to do with this finished work of the Person and work of Christ. That is the vision that Peter had; that explains the day of Pentecost.

The "Why" of This is Happening

So, if you go quickly over that in trying to break it down, where do you see that matter? Well, Peter starts saying, and this is verse 22: "'Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—"

Let me just start from there. Here is the first part of that explanation. You know why this is happening; you know why the Holy Spirit came. It is all because of Jesus, the Nazarene. He lived as a Man a perfect life, attested by God before you, approved by God, a life in everything

pleasing to God. That is the first, the very basis of why this is happening. But then in Acts 2:23 he says:

“this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”

He lived a perfect life, but paradoxically He was nailed to a cross by godless men. This is just the human side of things, but on the divine side of things He was delivered according to the plan or counsel and the foreknowledge of God. In other words, His death is not something beyond explanation. Let me put it that way. The only explanation for the death of such a Man, approved by God, attested by God, must be that of a vicarious death. He was not dying because He had to die but because He voluntarily laid down His life. “No one takes it from Me,” John 10:18a: ““No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. ...” That is the explanation of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 24: ““But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

So, he begins the whole thing stating that: “This is the reason why the Holy Spirit is coming because of that Man who lived a perfect life, and died, not because He had to; He died of something that was according to the plan of God, and because of that, God raised Him from the dead.”

Now he makes a statement that is quite bold, if you know Peter. He says, “It was not possible that He should be held by death.” I find this statement something amazing, and if you think about it, essentially what is behind this is something that we all perhaps are familiar with. Death is the wages of sin as we know from Scripture, but in His perfect sinless life, there were no such wages to be paid. There was no reason for Him to die except if His death was a death on behalf of others, and that is the explanation. And because of that, it was essentially Peter’s argument. God had to raise Him from the dead. There was nothing that justified our Lord Jesus being held by death. It was impossible! Such a perfect life should be raised from the dead, and this is the reason why all of this is happening.

Harmony with Psalm 16

Peter goes ahead, and he pulls from Psalm 16. I am not going to go through the whole explanation of that Psalm, but essentially, he goes point by point. In Psalm 16 you have those three points, the life of Christ, the perfect life that He has. Listen to the first sentence that he quotes in verse 8: “For David says of Him: ‘I saw the Lord always in my presence.’”

Brothers and sisters, this is the life of our Lord Jesus on earth, someone that saw the Father always before Him, a life lived completely in fellowship with the Father, cloudless communion. That is the life of Christ. Because of that the Psalm continues. There is such a confidence in the Lord that even if He is going to go into death, listen to this: “Moreover My flesh also will live in hope,” and this refers to when He dies because, “You will not abandon My soul to Hades nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” This is our Lord Jesus, a perfect life before the Father,

that even going through death in absolute confidence and rest that the Father who raised Him up will not allow Him to undergo decay.

In a way you could say that resurrection in this message of Peter is kind of a central point. He mentions it twice. First, He gives you reasons for resurrection, a perfect life that only died because it was according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. There was no other reason for Him to die. Even though that happened through the hands of godless men, those are the reasons leading to resurrection. God had to raise Him from the dead, but then He states also the consequences of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 2:32: Peter said, ""This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses."

Verse 33: ""Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

This in a way is an explanation of why the Holy Spirit has been given. Jesus lived a perfect life, died, rose from the dead, therefore God exalted Him. Resurrection is not the end. He ascended to heaven and was enthroned. Because of that He received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and then He poured forth what you see and hear. It may sound a little strange because, Who was receiving the Holy Spirit here? You see that primarily it was not the 120 disciples; it was not the church; that is not what Peter was saying.

The Pouring Forth of the Holy Spirit

He says, ""Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

Brothers and sisters, in a way, this is a very comprehensive answer that Peter is given as an explanation. You know why this is happening, why we are in a new day starting now of the Holy Spirit being given? It is because of Jesus, because of the Person and the finished work of Christ. This is the heavenly vision. This is kind of using what our brother said to us. This is part one of the heavenly vision and the most important part, no question about it. The source of it all is our Lord Jesus, and the reason the Holy Spirit has been given that day. It is as if Peter is saying, "Everything is absolutely centered on the Lord Jesus, it is that which was from the beginning."

Well, I think we should ask another question on this matter. So far, we have seen the reason why the Lord Jesus received the Holy Spirit Himself and poured it forth. But what is the purpose of that pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, or the anointing that has been given?

Two Reasons Why the Lord Jesus was Being Anointed

Peter quotes another Psalm which is the most quoted in the New Testament, and that is Psalm 110. And as he quotes, he gives you off the bat two reasons why the Lord Jesus is being anointed in that day.

Psalm 110:1 "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.""

Why was the Lord Jesus being anointed that day? He was being anointed as King, as Lord. The Father is saying, "Sit down," it is the enthronement of the Lord Jesus that was happening right now. The evidence of that enthronement is that He was being anointed. As you know that is the evidence of the kings in the Old Testament. They would be anointed with oil. There were three offices anointed with oil, but that is not evidence. When Kings like King David and King Solomon sat on the throne, they were anointed with oil, and that was the evidence that they were kings.

Our Lord Jesus that day was being anointed, and Peter was having that revelation, that vision given to him. This is what was happening. This is the reason for the Holy Spirit to come down, He was anointed as King. God the Father said to His Son, "Sit at My right hand." He was enthroned.

In Psalm 110:4 there is a second reason for His anointing, a second purpose for Him being anointed. "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.""

He was not only being anointed King; He was being anointed High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Now, I think this is also perhaps in order for a little word of our education of this matter. You know that Peter ended the whole message saying, "Let it be known to the whole house of Israel that this Jesus whom you crucified, God has made Him Lord and Christ."

Something very specific was happening there. He was being made both Lord and Christ. So, the question that may sometimes cross our minds is this: "Does it mean that in the days of His flesh while on earth He was not Christ?" And of course, that was not it; He was Christ in a sense even before this day. So, if you remember, for instance, in the day of His baptism, there was the voice from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." What is happening? The Holy Spirit comes down like a dove and rests and abides on Him. He does not just come and go back, no. He comes to rest and stay upon Him. He was anointed, but that anointing was a specific anointing for the days of His flesh. It is an anointing to enable the ministry of the Lord Jesus on this earth. The anointing on the day of Pentecost was an anointing that enabled His ministry as King and Priest. That is the first purpose for this anointing of the Holy Spirit on this day.

Head and Body Joined Together - the Birth of the Church

There is another one that perhaps is even more crucial for what you see in the book of Acts, and even what we are considering here in my session. As we said, the day of Pentecost presents the birth of the church. Now, it is interesting because in Peter's message he said absolutely nothing about the church. There was no word said about it, but if you read carefully, he is most likely alluding to yet another Psalm, a third one. Oh, if you put that Psalm together side by side with what he said on the day of Pentecost, then we see that something of the

utmost significance was happening on that day, something was being born. He is not saying it or indirectly perhaps he is, and perhaps we should read again this verse that we just read, but I am going to read it again side by side with Psalm 133.

Acts 2:33: "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

Harmony with Psalm 133

This is what Peter is saying. Now if you turn to Psalm 133, I believe there is in a way a very comprehensive explanation of what is happening on the day of Pentecost given to us in that Psalm.

Psalm 133:1-3: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever."

Brothers and sisters, I hope you see the parallel between what Peter is saying and what the Psalm declares. Peter says that the Lord Jesus was exalted and He Himself has received the promise of the Spirit, and therefore He poured forth what you see and hear.

Now compare this with Psalm 133. The oil is being poured on the head of Aaron, the high priest, and that oil flows down from the head to the beard, from the beard all the way down to the edge of his robes. Do you see that the Psalm gives us the picture of the high priest being anointed, the head being anointed, and that same anointing is coming down all the way to all the body, to the edge of the garments.

The Mighty Expression of the Heavenly Vision in the Church

Brothers and sisters, this is what happened on the day of Pentecost. It is not just our Lord Jesus personally being anointed, which He was for sure as King and High Priest, but that same oil that was poured on His head came all the way down to the edge of His garments, head and body joined together under the same anointing, which is the birth of the church. Therefore, this is the vision, this is the heavenly vision, Head and body anointed, and the mighty expression of the heavenly vision in the church began on the day of Pentecost, as we all know. If you need a refresher, you should read your book of Acts because what an expression of the Lord Jesus we find in that book. It is the fulfillment of what our Lord said in John 7:38 that we read together.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From His innermost being rivers of living water will flow.'"

That was the experience corporately also for the whole church that began in that day, and what a mighty river it was! It started that very day when the three thousand were saved. It is a river that is almost unstoppable; it goes forth, and whatever that river reaches, whatever it touches, what you see is life. There, the Lord commanded His blessing, life forevermore, the expression of the heavenly vision in the church, through the church.

Brothers and sisters, that was the vision in the day of Pentecost. That was the revelation being explained, first to Peter. And he is telling all of us and all those people there, and this is what happened in that wonderful book of Acts. Of course, it started in Jerusalem that very day. Three thousand were added, but then we know it was from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth. The river, the expression of that heavenly vision of Christ Himself, was going forth through the church.

Now it is more than just people being saved. I am not trying to minimize that, but there is more in that expression. For instance, we cannot go through everything. I just wanted to give you a taste of this wondrous thing that we see in the book of Acts, just an example. As soon as those three thousand were saved and baptized, what happened? How did they start living together, and you know the story. Let me read one verse.

Acts 2:44: “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;”

You see here an expression. It is more than just a doctrine or a new movement, but it is something that captured lives to the degree that now you see the same character of Christ, you see there that they had everything in common. It is not just what is mine, what is yours. There is something born of the Spirit, something born of that heavenly vision being seen and experienced, something is expressed, a togetherness. If you think about it, the very first message on the day of Pentecost is completely amazing. Just compare that with the gospels because it says, “But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, ...” Do you see any of that in the gospels? All the time you are seeing, “I am better than you; I deserve more of the throne than you.” Think about it. The very night that our Lord was in that upper room He was about to give His life, they were discussing with one another, “Who is the greatest?” That is what we are in ourselves, brothers and sisters. Do you see something change in that day? Something being born that day? It is not just the disciples who were changed by that mighty anointing that came upon them. Yes, that was happening, but it is more than that; a new corporate man was born—Christ and the church.

It is interesting because Psalm 133 also speaks of the matter that they are considering, expression, something that is flowing. It is like after that anointing came upon Aaron down to his beard, to the edge of his robes, it says, and this is the result.

“It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.”

It was the expression of that heavenly vision through the church. That is what came in on that day of Pentecost, the beginning of the rivers of living water set in motion that day.

The Holy Spirit Comes to Disclose and Glorify Christ

Now let me try to impress one thing. I think we need to emphasize this, and I trust that the Lord can clarify this matter for us because what we are seeing on the day of Pentecost is nothing more, nothing less than that heavenly vision. Again, it is not a doctrine, it is not a teaching; it is the heavenly vision being expressed in a historical way, in a unique way. It is something that came as historical as Calvary. In the day of Pentecost, it was the beginning of that expression,

and the Lord Jesus again is the object of that vision. He is the focal point of everything that is happening in chapter 2. It may sound like a paradox because it is the day when the Holy Spirit was being given. So perhaps you would say, "So the Holy Spirit is the focal point," and here is something that is a mystery, and I say it even with trepidation because I do not know if I am the only one that has that trepidation, but it feels so strange that we are talking about a divine Person, equal with the Father, equal with the Son, Who is the Holy Spirit. But all that which is said in Scripture, we know that He did not come to draw people to Himself. That is what I say with trepidation because, yes, He is a divine Person, nothing less than that, whom we adore, we revere as God Himself, equal with the Father and the Son. And yet He is not here to draw attention to Himself.

Why was He given, brothers and sisters? It is so clear. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus in the upper room in that last night when He said, "The Holy Spirit will come to glorify and He will take from what is Mine, and He will disclose it to you." Do you see why the Holy Spirit has been given? So you see that the focal point of that revelation is that He comes to disclose Christ Himself? And this is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost. That is the substance of what Peter is saying. The Holy Spirit is what was happening, but the reason of it is the heavenly vision—Christ, the focal point of everything that was happening.

We Are Living on that Same Day of the Spirit

Brothers and sisters, whenever the Holy Spirit is in His proper place, whatever He is in charge of in an unhindered way, oh, that mighty expression that you see in the book of Acts repeats itself. It continues, I should say. That is the wonder of what was happening that day. I should read a verse for you as I have said it a couple of times, but I want to make this a little more explicit.

Brothers and sisters, we are living today on that very same day of the Spirit. So how do we know that? If you go back to the quotation of Joel, and I am reading from the quotation itself not from the prophet.

Peter finishes that quotation, referring to something that is not happening on the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, yes, the last days are beginning, the Holy Spirit was being poured forth, and there was vision. All that is fulfilled, but then he says this, speaking of the same prophecy.

Acts 2:20: "THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME."

You see that this was never fulfilled that day, but it is part of what was beginning that day, and we are still in the age of the Holy Spirit. So, I do not know how this sounds to you, but it gives me great encouragement. Maybe in this last hour, perhaps you oftentimes are tempted to think, "Well, the days are different, the problems are so different, we are up against such odds, or whatever it may be." Brothers and sisters, the Lord is the same. The Holy Spirit that was given is still the One that characterizes the age in which we live until the great day of the Lord. That is His return. We are in these days. The expression of that heavenly vision is something that yes,

we can hinder it, and I shall go through that the next time we are together, if the Lord allows. But brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit is still the same One that was given that day. He is still the same One that enables vision and expression.

The Holy Spirit is an Absolute Key in Vision and Expression

I would like to say just a few more things before we complete for tonight. The first one is the following: I think we should recognize that in this matter, which is the theme assigned to me of the heavenly vision expressed in the church, there is an absolute key in this matter. In both the matter of vision and of expression, it is the Person of the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Person of the Holy Spirit there is neither vision nor any expression of that. He was given precisely to enable that vision. He was given to give us that Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and He is the One like those rivers of living water. You remember the explanation of the Lord, “He who believes in me, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water, of this He said referring to the Spirit of those who believed in Him were to receive.” The Spirit is the One that enables that expression of those rivers of living water to go out of the church. He is the key for both vision and expression, and the paradox is that with Him being the key, He is not the focal point, He is not the One drawing to Himself. When the Holy Spirit is given His proper place, He always glorifies the Lord Jesus. He always causes us to see Him, and our Lord Jesus will be expressed, He who is the heavenly vision.

So, in a way the hymn that we sang this morning, I think applies here. Luke is saying, “The sight is glorious; see the Man of sorrows now from the fight returned to glory. Every knee to Him shall bow.” I think everything about that hymn is happening right there on the day of Pentecost. Oh, those 120 were seeing that glorious sight, the Lord Jesus victorious, being anointed Lord and Christ, being made Lord and Christ, and out of that vision an expression begins right there.

Limitation in the Expression

Now, perhaps the question that we may have: “Why don’t I see this experience in my life? Why don’t I see this experience corporately where I gather? Why do we see so little of this if we are going to be honest?” Yes, oftentimes that is the case. Brothers and sisters, it is not because there is any change in this dispensation, we are still in that age. It is not because there is any lack of the Holy Spirit. If there is any limitation in that, it must be on our side.

The Book of Joshua vs The Book of Judges

There is something in us, and what comes to mind frankly is a type, a picture that we have in the Old Testament. And I just mention it. I do not want to go into the details with you, but you remember there are two books in the Old Testament side by side, the book of Joshua and the book of Judges. And boy, what a contrast! I always remember that Brother Sparks said that he likes to read the book of Judges in a specific way. He read it always very, very fast and after that he went running to the bath because that is the sense you get. Listen, think of the children of Israel in the book of Judges. Were they not the possessors? Wasn’t Canaan theirs? Absolutely! The Lord gave it to them.

The book of Joshua is the opposite; it is the book, when during the ascendancy and things were in the normal spiritual condition, when they were possessing their possessions, they were living a normal Christian life, and there was such an expression, if you want to use it as a type, because in that togetherness, they went marching and conquering enemy after enemy. Nothing could stop them. Why? Because the Captain of the Lord's host was in charge, isn't He? You remember how the book, very close to the beginning in chapter 5, Joshua had the vision of that Man with the sword drawn? He is the Captain of the Lord's host, and Joshua bows down before Him. There is a submission.

Make that Man represent the Holy Spirit. Oh, that is the picture of the church in its normal condition. I think a good title for the book of Acts could be, "The Book of the Wind Blowing Wherever It Wishes." Won't you agree with me that the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts can blow wherever He wishes. He was blowing on the day of Pentecost. It begins that way, that mighty rushing wind. But in the whole book the Holy Spirit is sovereign, the Holy Spirit can direct, and He was being obeyed, He was being recognized. He was being submitted to. No wonder there is such a mighty expression. But when the Holy Spirit is not listened to, guess what? Oh, the expression will suffer, and if you take the type of the book of Joshua, there you have a picture of the expression of the heavenly vision as it should be, but the Captain of the Lord of hosts was in charge.

Submission to Self – Spiritual Poverty

In the book of Judges, what is the key verse? The last verse of the book, Judges 21:25: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Is the Lord in charge here? Is the Holy Spirit in charge here? Is there any wonder that they are in such a mess? In such poverty? No, listen, it is not a matter that they do not have the land; it is theirs. It was always theirs since the Lord gave it to them, but they simply did not possess their possessions. Brothers and sisters, I feel that in this matter there is a spiritual principle that applies. I am really impressed with what the Lord says. I will repeat it to you.

Conclusion

He says in the book of John 7:39: "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; ..."

Brothers and sisters, since we believed in the Lord Jesus, we came into that experience into that which began on that day of Pentecost. When there is a problem, well it is like the book of Judges, it is not that Canaan is no longer mine, it is still mine, but I am distracted in some way, hindered in some way, not submitting, not giving the Holy Spirit His proper place, and the expression will suffer. So, this is the day of Pentecost, the beginning of the heavenly vision being seen and being expressed, and the whole book of Acts will tell us that story as we would like to continue. So, my prayer for this session that we have is that the Lord may give us a fresh vision of what is our inheritance and our birthright. I would like to emphasize that. That is your birthright if you belong to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is given to you, those rivers of living water. They ought to be flowing, and not just individually but in the church together. So, the question

is: Are we possessing our possessions? Are we possessing what is ours since we believed in the Lord?

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we are so grateful as we consider these things. Indeed, what a wondrous vision that the Lord Jesus has lived such a perfect life, and He died and rose again and now is exalted, triumphant, and has received the Holy Spirit awarded for it. Oh, what a glorious vision! What a sight that is indeed glorious! So, our prayer, Lord, is that our eyes may be opened afresh to see what our possession by Your grace is and that You lead us, not just to see but to enter, to respond, to allow Your Holy Spirit to sovereignly have that place where He leads us into all that is of Christ. We pray these things for Your glory in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.