

I Know What I Saw

In 1987, I was an eyewitness to Pentecost. I heard the rushing mighty wind and saw the fire fall. Nothing can confuse me, persuade me or convince me otherwise.

I know what I saw, not in an upper room in first-century Jerusalem, but in a tiny church on the west side of Indianapolis, Indiana. I saw and heard Pentecost as an experience – alive in it's most stunning fullness.

I came as a sinner, not without reservation and not without some fear – expecting nothing. As the service started and the group (I remember around 20 people) started to pray, the Holy Ghost fell in power. They began weeping and praying in tongues, some even collapsing on the floor in wracking, soul – wrenching sobs of intercessory grief. The music started and a worshipful chorus was heard above the outburst.

Those who would make Pentecost seem faraway and distant and regulate it to a status of a past era, deny the reality of it. They nullify the apostolic priority. The reality is this: He who came in power in the Upper Room has not abandoned us to our own devices. He is still the Holy Ghost, and He still does what He did. Every believer must be filled personally, not by some obscure theory or smoky thought. That conviction followed by the revelation of the Holy Ghost is the Pentecostal earthquake that has shaken the church and the world.

Even Peter could not have seen the results that have sprung ever since that day he stood and uttered the words –

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Peter could not have seen foreseen people living, worshiping, and ministering under that same power – unbroken and undiluted by time. It never occurred to Peter, even years after his words, that the experience was optional. Peter even stated.

Acts 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Pentecost was power and light to that early group believers. They thought nothing of a non – Pentecostal experience with it's dry, dead bones. They had already lived under the legalism of the day.

Martin Luther never saw a Pentecostal church, but a biblical one. John Wesley did try to create Methodism in England, but rather renewal.

The believers at Azusa Street did not immediately see a new Pentecostal church, but a church empowered and sanctified. We have to realize that we are not bringers of some new revelation, but keepers of the flame that has not been extinguished by formalism, corruption, and the ecclesiastical pride that has decided form is greater than power.

We are the living breathing reminders of the power that is not optional, but utterly indispensable. The joyful, exploding, and exuberant image of that church gave me a

visual image that my natural eyes could see. The church was saying, “Look on us!” not “Listen to us!”

How we talk and do not talk about what we do reveals a lot.

It is dangerous to believe that the church is somehow automatically filled. In Acts 8, Peter and John arrived at Samaria and immediately prayed for a city full of new converts “to receive the Holy Ghost.” Did they waste their prayer if all the new believers were filled by virtue of what had happened in the Upper Room? I think not.

We still echo the question, “Have you received since you believed?” just as Paul asked.

I knew that I had not received. I knew that in order to receive I had to believe. The gift of God’s power and its physical evidence had to be made manifested in my belief. The baptism of the Holy Ghost was and is still just as important as it has ever been.

Pentecost was not produced by the church. Pentecost produced the church and all its doctrines. All the writings of all the men did not bring down power from on high. Souls on fire filled by the Holy Ghost uttered words of power. To the apostles, the issue was not who and how many agreed with them, but upon whom and how many the Holy Ghost filled.

We have been told to teach sound doctrine. What I heard that day was sound doctrine. And it is sound doctrine that has refreshed my soul all these years. It has kept my ear attentive, my soul thirsting, and my needs met. Doctrines cannot save us anymore than depraving oneself of food can stave off starvation.

It is the experience of Pentecost that is missing in the churches and the world.

“Have you received since you believed?” Pentecostal preaching gives us a connection to Azusa Street, to Paul – to God. It made and still makes me hungry for holiness and power.

We can all agree on the initial evidence and if no one speaks in tongues – what good is the agreement.

A believed – in Pentecost is good, but it was a received Pentecost that turned the world upside down.

I wanted the tongues, not knowing that it was actually the Spirit that gave the tongues. When I received the Spirit, I knew that the tongues were a manifestation of that Spirit. I then had to anoint the sick, listen to the prophesying, and watched as authentic deliverance was accomplished.

I tell everyone I meet about what I saw and what happened to me. I pray I have a shine in my eye, a blaze in my heart, and a word on my tongue.

In 1987, I came to that church as an unbeliever, hopelessly mired in guilt and suicidal depression. My beliefs were founded in the opinions, desires, and beliefs of other people.

I longed for the holiness and power that I viewed in front of me. The grace that I had ignored, discounted, denounced, and denied was suddenly mine. My heart was changed – I know what I saw.

Nothing was settled by persuasion, but by my own experience. And that experience after all these years is still just as fresh.

I pray and still preach – “Make sure you say – I know what I saw! “