

DISCOVER- ING OUR HISTORY

DISCOVERING OUR HISTORY

June 28, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: The church of Jesus has stood firm throughout the ages, built upon the foundation that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Congregational reading: Matthew 16:13-21

Scriptures: Matthew 16:13-21; Acts 1:4-11; John 16:2; 2 Thes. 2:3

Matt. 16:13-23 NKJV When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, **“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”** 14 So they said, **“Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”** 15 He said to them, **“But who do you say that I am?”** 16 Simon Peter answered and said, **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** 17 Jesus answered and said to him, **“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.** 18 **And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.** 19 **And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”** 20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. 21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Acts 1:4-11 NKJV And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father,

“which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Nature is set up to facilitate the conception of physical life, birth, growth and development, and eventually death – the so-called “cycle of life.”

Now, let us consider another organism, spiritual in nature, conceived, birthed and developed by God Almighty, and not subject to death and decay, as are physical organisms. We are speaking of the church – the body of Christ – the ‘ekklēsia’ – the ‘called out ones’.

When Jesus asked the disciples what people were saying about Him and what they thought of Him, Peter (by revelation), stated: “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus identified this truth as the “rock” upon which His Church would be built, and this Church would be able to withstand any and all attacks by the devil and his angels.

To understand how we came to be where we are today, as a result of Jesus' assertion to Peter, a few biographical sketches will be helpful. They will illustrate the fact that the hand of God has been at work throughout NT times to build, expand and preserve His church; and the gates of hell have *not* been able to prevail against it!

John 16:2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

(The apostle Paul is certainly an example of that type of thinking!)



Emperor Nero 37 - 68

Nero became the Emperor of the Roman Empire in 54AD at 17years of age. He was a wicked ruler and in 64AD much of the city of Rome was consumed by a fire he was accused of ordering. His efforts to counter the accusations failed, so he turned on the Christians as his scapegoats. He tortured and killed them to such an extent that public opinion turned totally against him and many came to faith in Christ as a result of this persecution. (It is likely that both Peter and Paul were executed during Nero's reign.) At 31, as he feared being beaten to death at the Forum, he ordered one of his associates to kill him.

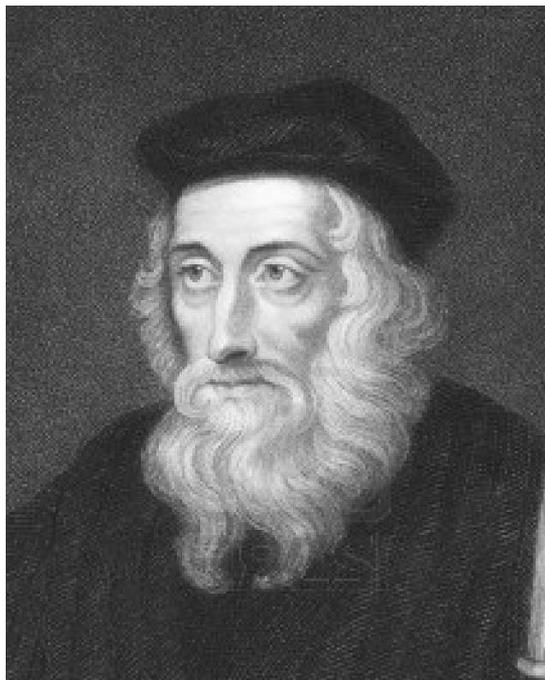


Emperor Constantine 272 - 337

In 317AD, Constantine and Licinius (Caesars of the western and eastern regions of the Empire respectively) enacted the Edict of Milan, decriminalizing Christian worship. This came on the heels of Diocletian's reign (he being the worst of the emperors in persecuting Christians). Before the pivotal battle that established him as Emperor of the western region, Constantine is reported to have looked up to the sun and seeing above it a cross of light accompanied by the words "In This Sign Conquer!" He had his soldiers paint crosses on their shields and they went on to victory. He sponsored the Council of Nicea in 325AD that established the doctrine of the Trinity (v. Arianism), along with the formation of the Roman Catholic Church.

2 Thes. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

Depending on the sources one reads, the time between the fall of the Roman Empire in 476AD and the Reformation of the 16th century represents the "Dark Ages" of the Church. During this time, many corruptions entered into Christian practice as leaders in the dominant Roman Catholic Church sought after ecclesiastical power, political power and of course, money. Education was not readily attainable by the majority in society and the printing press for cheap and rapid dissemination of information was not invented until 1440. This left ministry and religious instruction in the hands of the privileged few in the priesthood. Religious abuses were rampant.



John Wycliffe 1320 – 1384

John Wycliffe was an English priest, philosopher and Oxford professor. He is often called the “Morning Star of the Reformation” as his was one of the first and most influential voices against purgatory, the sale of indulgences, and the doctrine of transubstantiation – practices and doctrines that had come into play during the “Dark Ages”. The Church had him fired from Oxford because of these teachings, which actually freed him up to accomplish his life’s greatest work – leading the team that translated the Bible into English to make it accessible to commoners. The following quote gives a little insight into his motivation:

“God's words will give men new life more than the other words that are for pleasure. O marvelous power of the Divine Seed which overpowers strong men in arms, softens hard hearts, and renews and changes into divine

men, those men who had been brutalized by sins, and departed infinitely far from God.”

He died of a stroke in 1384, but the powers that be were still so incensed against him that 30 years after his death, they exhumed his bones, burnt them and threw the ashes into a nearby river.



Martin Luther 1483 - 1546

Martin Luther was a man with a great desire to please God, but found he was far too sinful to succeed in this venture. The Lord gave him the insight that we do not succeed by doing copious good works, but by living in faith in Christ: “the just shall live by faith!” This understanding opened him up to a wonderful freedom in worship, preaching and scholarship as he understood God’s great gifts of grace, righteousness and salvation; all apart from human effort and work. He is called the father of the Protestant Reformation, a movement that shook the Church, political institutions, educational establishments and civil society

at large.



John Wesley 1703-1791

John Wesley was a committed, devoted Anglican priest who, from his student days, was appalled at the huge gap between the sacrament of Christian baptism and profession of faith, and the apparently godless lives Christians actually lived. He began to preach about and seek after a deeper life in the Holy Spirit that would cause Christians to be radically transformed into the image of Christ. He developed a ‘method’ (from which the name “Methodist” derives) of chairing weekly meetings for he

and his colleagues to discuss their Christian walk, challenges, successes and sinful failures. They would fervently pray for each other that the Lord would strengthen and empower them to radiate godliness and show the world that His Spirit could cause them to live lives of “entire sanctification” to God.



Edward Irving 1792 - 1834

Although not widely discussed in Pentecostal circles, there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Great Britain during the 1830s, roughly 70 years before the highly celebrated events in Topeka, Kansas. The lynchpin for this revival was Rev. Edward Irving, an ordained minister and pastor in the Church of Scotland. He “was committed to the vivid and vital preaching of Christ’s true humanity....

Irving's efforts to restore Christological balance to the church of his time resulted in a backlash of opposition, culminating in his deposition from the ordained ministry of the Church of Scotland in 1833".¹ In 1830, however, some of the people in western Scotland who had heard him preach began to apply the principles he taught, and a young woman by the name of Mary Campbell was miraculously healed of tuberculosis and began to speak in tongues. The command to rise and be healed had come through a letter from her friend James MacDonald, who wrote the letter shortly after his own sister Margaret had received divine healing through his prayers. Upon hearing the news that his preaching had been instrumental in building the faith of these believers to receive and exercise the gifts of the Spirit, Irving began early-morning prayer meetings in the Presbyterian Church he was then pastoring in London. Not long after, manifestations of the Spirit: tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy began to be experienced in the large church "with nearly two thousand people present".²

¹ Ibid., 41-2

² Ibid., 44



Charles Fox Parham 1873 - 1929

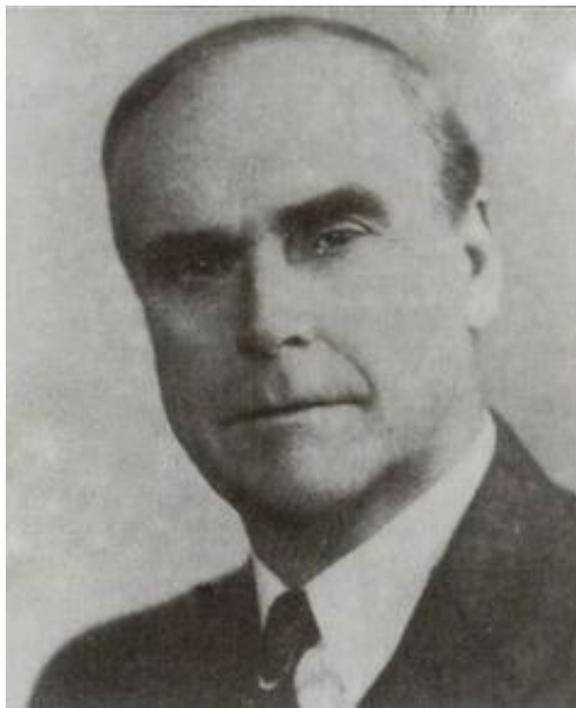
Charles Parham was quite sickly in his youth, but after receiving dramatic healings from God, he began evangelizing, pastoring, preaching and teaching about the miraculous power of God. He established a Bible College in Topeka, KS and assigned his students the task of studying the Book of Acts to see what distinguished the early church and gave them the power they so evidently had. They determined that the source of their power was nothing less than their baptism in the Holy Spirit! The students began praying for a similar baptism, and on Jan 1, 1901, Agnes Ozman was the first in the college to receive

this baptism, and she began speaking in tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. Now, the Spirit revival had migrated from Great Britain to America.



William J. Seymour 1870 – 1922

William Seymour, the son of former slaves, was the pastor of a small 'holiness' church in Houston, TX when a friend arranged for him to attend a short-term Bible college Charles Parham had come to conduct in the city in December 1905. He quickly embraced the doctrine of Holy Spirit baptism as taught by Parham and by April 1906 he had begun services with a small group of Spirit filled believers at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles, CA. This revival meeting continued night and day for a number of years, attracting pastors, missionaries, church members and non-Christians from around the world to come to receive their 'personal Pentecost'.



Frank Ewart 1876 - 1947

Frank Ewart was born in Australia but had his most productive years of ministry in America. In 1913, he was exposed to Canadian R. E. McAllister's preaching on baptism in Jesus' name. Within the following year, he and his friend Glenn Cook refined their biblical presentation of this doctrine, along with restating and emphasizing the doctrine of the oneness of God. In 1914, they re-baptized each other in Jesus' name and he was extremely influential in launching this new branch of Pentecostalism, of which we are a part. In 1945, he was one of the founding leaders of the newly formed United Pentecostal Church.

This 20th century recapture of the doctrine of the indivisible oneness of God and His physical incarnation in Jesus Christ has brought us right back to His original statement: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the

gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:21 KJV).

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TIMELINE:

33AD: Jesus Christ: “Upon this rock I will build My church.”

64AD: Emperor Nero: Intensive persecution by the state begins.

**3rd century: Emperor Constantine: Christianity decriminalized.
Council of Nicea: Roman Catholic Church founded.**

5th – 15th century: “Dark Ages” of the Church.

14th century: John Wycliffe: Translated the Bible into English.

16th century: Martin Luther: Protestant Reformation begins.

18th century: John Wesley: Quest for “entire sanctification.”

19th century: Edward Irving: Holy Spirit outpouring in Great Britain.

**20th century: Charles Parham: Holy Spirit revival in Kansas
William Seymour: Azusa St. spearheads global Spirit revival.
Frank Ewart: Champions Jesus’ name baptism, Oneness theology. Birth of the U.P.C.I. in 1945.**