

PENTECOST
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Lights come up. On the right side of the stage, a man's voice is heard in increasing volume. He is standing, partially facing a large map on the wall to which he gestures on occasion with a pointer. In the center of the stage, a woman dressed in businesslike attire sits behind a news anchor's desk with her head turned to watch him. On her head is a headset / microphone. On front of the desk is written the slogan, "Hour of Power". When the stage is fully lit, we hear him giving a weather report...

Weatherman: *(fading in)* ... and you will be glad to hear folks. We may be entering our last day of rain. Extreme precipitation has been reported all across the nation. Perhaps all across the world. Unusual rainfall in such unlikely places as Australia and Ethiopia. More important to local listeners? We can still expect rain through tomorrow, here in *(name of local city)*. But experts agree we can expect it to end soon. They say that the time of revivals is over. Back to you, Joyce...

As the lights in the middle of the stage brighten, light on the weatherman dims. He quietly picks up his things and exits off stage. As the anchor woman speaks, another scene is set up in the dark in the same area previously occupied by the weatherman. Each time a scene to the right or left side of the stage fades, this is the case....

Joyce: *(Turns brightly to face front)* Thank you, John! For you viewers who have just tuned in, you are watching the "Hour of Power." Our mission is to explore relevant issues of our days ... and your lives. Sit back and relax while we take you this evening on an exploration of Pentecost, or to be more precise, the experience of Pentecost. It is a phenomenon sweeping not only our nation, but our world. Tonight, we go on a journey to boggle your mind. Thanks to new advances in temporal displacement, we can explore origins and continued existence of this experience. And for that, of course, we need to visit the beginning. Can you hear us, Franklin? *(She turns her head to the left side of the stage as center lights fade to dim)*

Lights come up on a scene of a man in Biblical robes, flowing beard, etc.. He holds a scroll, gesturing as he speaks....

Prophet: You generation of mockers! How long will you plague me? You prattle and demand answers? When shall the end of time be? You will know when it shall befall thee. In the last days sayeth the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh! Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. So is it now the last days?

Lights come up abruptly on the center desk and fade on the prophet. Joyce touches headset, interrupts prophet.

Joyce: Mike! What's going on? You're supposed to have Franklin in Jerusalem at the upper room. Who was that?

Mike: *(Always a disembodied voice from offstage)* Sorry Joyce, Thought we had the computer set for the beginning of Pentecost. Went too far back in time. Got some prophet from Old Testament times. I reset the computer for a geographical *and* a power target. Should have your man now.

Light comes up on the right side of the stage. A reporter in modern day clothes interviews Peter outside the upper room...

Franklin: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is Franklin O'Hara of the Hour of Power. Coming to you live from Jerusalem, just fifty some days after the crucifixion of Jesus. Until yesterday, the crucifixion, and the strange events surrounding it, were still the main topic of conversation. But after today *(laughs)*, they definitely have something new to talk about. I have with me Peter, one of the original disciples of Christ. Good afternoon, Sir. *(He turns to a baffled Peter, dressed in Biblical robes, looking around)* Sir! Sir! Over here. What are you looking for?

Peter: To whom do you speak? Verily, the crowd presseth and waxeth ever larger, but we are not found near them.

Franklin: I know you have faith, Peter. Take it from me, on faith. The whole world will know of your words here today.

Peter: Then his commandment is truly ours to obey. Know ye that he spake, commanding us to witness, beginning in Jerusalem, but then unto the whole world?

Franklin: Well, no I didn't

Peter: This then is the time to speak! Concerning the one whom ye knew as Jesus. From before time began, he was ordained to be Christ. Yet, as though he had done no good in your midst, him ye took and crucified with bloody hands. YOU denied that he was the Messiah!

Franklin: Now wait just a minute! I had nothing to do with the crucifixion. When did I ever deny ...

Peter: *(Focused intently on Franklin)* Is he then your Lord and Savior?

Franklin: Well, uh, actually... I've never really thought or done...

Peter: Know you not that all who deny him, crucify him afresh. Or that if thou art ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of thee?

Franklin: *(Somewhat dazed)* How did we get here? Listen, I just want to ask about what happened here today.

Peter: Be not ignorant. This is the promise that was spoken of. The Comforter. The Holy Spirit, God himself has come down as he said He would. He is within us. We believed on him, as the scriptures said. Doth not his living water flow from our bellies? This is salvation!

Franklin: *(Bewildered)* What is salvation?

...Static begins to build up starting now...

Peter: That men everywhere should repent of their sins, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and be filled with the baptism of the Holy Ghost! This is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel...*(Static is pretty loud by now)* .. that in the last days, sayeth the Lord, I will pour my Spirit out on all...

Static builds up and drowns Peter out. That part of the stage begins to darken.

Joyce: *(In darkened center of stage)* Franklin! We already heard that prophecy! Wrap it up quick. We can't hold the transmission!

Franklin: Peter! Is the experience of the Holy Ghost still for people like me?

Peter: *(Advances toward Franklin)* Why not see for yourself? God hath given us authority over sin through the laying on of hands.

Franklin: *(Backing away)* Mike! Get me out of here, Mike! *(Lights on that side of the stage go completely out and stay out while Peter and Franklin exit)*

Joyce: *(In slowly brightening center stage)* Mike! Did you get Franklin back? Is he okay?

Mike: *(As an offstage voice)* We got him back Joyce. Don't know yet if he's okay. He seems happy enough. But I can't understand a word he's saying.

Joyce: Well, get us set up with Ann and Polycarp. Then get Franklin to our staff doctor.

Mike: No problem, boss. Here's Ann now. I'll take care of Franklin

The scene on the other side of the stage lightens to reveal Ann, standing with microphone in hand, next to an old man in robes. Ann is looking around...

Joyce: Ann! Can you hear me? *(Ann nods, still looking around)*. Ann! Can you tell our listeners where you are? And why this gentleman is important to the experience of Pentecost?

Ann: I'd love to Joyce. I'm standing in Smyrna in 156 AD. According to our research, this preacher beside me is Polycarp. He is the last great Christian leader, personally taught by any of the disciples. I believe his mentor was John. Is that correct, Sir?

Polycarp: He was a friend and a brother. I wept when he went to our Savior.

Ann: Yet, you still preach the same message of the apostles. After all of these years. What motivates you?

Polycarp: It is the very gospel of Jesus Christ. I am commanded to preach it. And I shall, till my last breath leaves me.

Ann: I admit to being curious. My research team indicates you weren't exactly a popular preacher at this point.

Polycarp: If you ask if my message is well received, I say nay. *(Becomes impassioned)* Do you think for a moment, one such as I, filled with God himself, could do naught save rise against the pagan heathenism perverting our churches? There is but one Lord. There will never be another.

Ann: Are there many who feel as you do?

Polycarp: There are others who hold to truth. But they are few.

Ann: How is it then, so many have come to hear you preach? There must be fifty thousand in this arena. Even Billy Graham, in my time, does not draw this kind of a crowd.

Polycarp: *(Grimly)* They are here to witness my testimony for my faith. *(Raises his voice to address the crowd)* Know ye this, all who are assembled! I worship Christ alone! *(Lowers voice again)* This is the final testimony. A true believer has no fear of death. It is not final.

Ann: *(Panicking)* Sir! They're letting lions in at the far end. We must find a way out of here!

Polycarp: *(Looks into the distance, smiles)* No child! Yonder comes my deliverance from this feeble body. My passport to glory and to Christ. Leave? Never! Do you fear?

Ann: *(Sobbing)* I'm terrified.

Polycarp: Do you not know my Lord?

Ann: *(Crying)* I guess I don't. *(Lights begin to dim on the scene)* Oh to be assured of my salvation.

Polycarp: There is yet time. We shall pray together. Cheat Satan of one more soul before death takes us! *(She kneels and Polycarp lays his hands on her. The stage goes dark)*

Joyce: *(Extremely tense as lights come back up on the center stage. Polycarp and Ann have exited)* Mike! Get her! Now!

Mike: *(His voice)* Way ahead of you. We have a fix on ... We have her! Poor Polycarp. He's gonna think the rapture took place.

Joyce: What do you mean by rapture?

Mike: Uh... we can talk about it after the show. The important thing is we got Ann. She's safe. Even if she isn't sound.

Joyce: *(Sharp)* She hurt?

Mike: No. She's acting drunk. And this is really weird, Boss. She's babbling in the same language as Franklin. I know. To the doctor, ASAP.

Joyce: *(Taps pen nervously on desk, turns to audience)* I'm really sorry about all of this. I don't know what you viewers must be thinking. We don't normally have problems. It seems the experience of Pentecost is safer from a distance. I'm almost afraid to continue with our lineup. I am not sure what our liability covers in regards to conversions. *(She sits frowning for a moment, sits up with hand to headset, listening intently. ... She then shrugs, and looks again at audience)* The front office assures me. Choices made or not made by any individual regarding religion are solely the responsibility of the individual. I guess we'll continue. Mike! Do you have a fix on Michael Servetus? In 1553?

Mike: Coming at you, Joyce!

Stage across from the previous scene lights up to reveal a reporter facing two men. One has his hands bound behind him. The other wears judicial robes and a powdered wig.

Joyce: Can you hear us, Arthur?

Arthur: *(Light on stage center dims and goes out)* Coming through loud and clear. I hope I'm doing the same. I seem to have landed right in the middle of the trial of Servetus. Folks, this is exciting stuff! History in the making! Listen!

Prosecutor: *(Paces)* And with this final piece of evidence, I will prove. Not only has this man denied infants the protection of baptism. From his heretical lips has flowed denial of the very Holy Trinity. I read from a letter to Abel Poupin. Is this your handwriting? *(He shows the letter to the bound man with a flourish)*

Servetus: It is my letter. I am ashamed of no revelation given me by God.

Prosecutor: *(Slaps him in the face)* You may scream out your blasphemy as you burn. For now, you will remain silent as I read words to seal your fate. *(Reads aloud from a scroll in hand)* "Your gospel is without the one God, without true faith, without good works. For the one God you have a three-headed Cerberus, for faith a fatal dream, and good works you say are vain shows. Faith in Christ is to you mere sham, affecting nothing; man a mere log, and your God a chimera of enslaved will. You do not acknowledge celestial regeneration by the washing with water, but treat it as an idle tale, and close the kingdom of heaven against mankind as a thing of the imagination. Woe to you, woe, woe!" *(Addresses Servetus)* Are these your words?

Servetus: It is my letter. I am ashamed of no revelation given me by God.

Prosecutor: *(Growls)* His own mouth condemns him. Burn him where he stands!

Arthur: Wait! I mean hold! Stop! Whatever! I want to talk to this man for a moment.

Prosecutor: Speak quickly then, Stranger. He will soon be silenced. To forever vanish from the knowledge of men.

Arthur: *(Speaks to Servetus)* What have you done that's so terrible?

Servetus: *(Smiling)* Pointed out that they have perverted the gospel of Jesus Christ. That they have denied his name. That they have denied men access to the cleansing power of baptism. That they have denied the power of the Holy Spirit within. By making it a god without and remote. That without a return to the truth of scriptures, they will surely stand before God and burn in hell. ... For some reason that upset them. *(Smiles again)* So they will stand me here and burn me.

Arthur: That doesn't seem to bother you much!

Servetus: All they can touch is my body. And in the last great day of time, I shall be at their judgement.

Arthur: *(Looks around)* Where are your followers? It's not right that you should die alone.

Servetus: As far as I know, I stand alone in my belief. Even Calvin. He has not only forsaken me, but betrayed me. What a privilege to die like my Lord.

Arthur: But even he had one follower to die with him.

Servetus: Of all men here, only you do not desire my death. Will you follow me in Christ and also die for him?

Arthur: When I was a child, I felt the power of God. In a tent revival that came through our town. I believe your gospel is correct. That you are a man of God, Sir.

Prosecutor: Have a care, stranger!

Arthur: I do not fear you. Nor do I fear any death you can give me. I see Christ clearly for the first time. *(Removes belt with beeper attached as the prosecutor moves toward him)* I repent of my sins, Lord. Receive my spirit I pray. And give me your Spirit that I might be resurrected in that day!

The prosecutor grabs Arthur. Servetus shouts out "Hallelujah!" The belt comes off and lights instantly go out onstage. While they are out, the three from that scene leave. Joyce speaks in the dark.

Joyce: *(Voice shaky)* Mike? Please tell me you got Arthur back. Even speaking in other tongues would be fine.

Mike: *(Distraught)* Joyce. ... Without the beeper, I can't get a geographical fix. He's gone! I'm sorry!

Joyce: What will we tell his wife and children? We'll never see him again?

Mike: *(Lights come back up in center of stage. They reveal Joyce holding her head between both of hands, aghast)* Joyce! I'm sure the only way we'll ever see Arthur again will be by joining in his life and death for Christ. You asked what I knew about the rapture? If we follow the plan of salvation given Peter, we are promised we'll be caught up to be with God when he returns. To rule and reign with him forever.

Joyce: What's wrong with you, Mike?

Mike: I was afraid to say anything. But that just seems stupid, in the face of these interviews. I went to a Pentecostal church last week to research this piece. While there, God filled me with the Holy Ghost too. I'm sorry, Joyce. It's not a phenomenon to be analyzed. It's communion with God himself! I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner.

Joyce: *(Sits in silence for a few seconds, slowly begins to shake her head)* Mike? ... Ladies and gentlemen? *(Looks up at the audience)* We have an interview set up at a powerful outbreak of the Holy Ghost. At the turn of the century in a little church on Azusa St. But given what's been happening, I'm recalling that reporter. I can't lose any more staff. *(Thinks for a moment)* In fact, we'll just move to our last interview for this show. It's only fitting I take the same risks my reporters do. So I'll personally interview a local pastor, Rev. *(name of pastor)*. He has offered to address the relevance of the Pentecostal experience. In the past, but more importantly, now. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Rev. *(name of pastor)*

Local pastor walks on stage. Joyce greets him, then both are seated in chairs by desk, with Joyce's chair nearest exit.

Joyce: Welcome to our show, Rev. *(name of pastor)*. ...Don't say a word yet. *(Turns to the audience)* Just in case I no longer speak English when he finishes. *(Laughs nervously)*, I want to thank you for watching our show thus far. This has been the "Hour of Power", exploring for you the phenomena of the Pentecostal experience, not only in history, but now. *(Turns back to preacher)*. Okay, Reverend. Can you tell our listeners *(Her voice softens)* and myself. Is this experience of salvation real today? *(Hands him the microphone)*

As the pastor takes the microphone and begins to preach, Joyce fades away off stage. The lights go up, leaving the Pastor alone to preach.