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Scripture is interpreted through Scripture (Professor Dimitra Koukoura, School of Theology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

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Equally typical is the interpretation of the Passion and the Resurrection during the walk to Emmaus: Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures...They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’... Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled’. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’ (Luke 24, 25-7; 32; 44-8).



On the day of Pentecost, Saint Peter was the first to preach the resurrection of the Lord in public and his sermon was the first of the Church. Clearly it hasn't been preserved in all its fulness, but from what survives we can see the similarities with the teaching of Jesus.

He starts with a passage from the prophet Joel (2, 28-32) which Peter quotes in order to interpret to the large crowd of Jews the natural and supernatural events which accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit- the loud noise, the strong wind, the tongues and fire and the ability of the Apostles to speak in various languages: No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'. (Acts 2, 14-21).

Saint Peter goes on to witness to Jesus, Who did, indeed 'show portents and signs', in accordance with the prophecy, with the authority He had from God the Father.

Peter stresses the verdict of the trial, the Lord's death and His resurrection from the dead (ibid, 2, 22-4).

The Lord's resurrection is interpreted with Psalm 15, verses 8-11, of which Jesus is the fulfilment: For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence'.

Following on from this is a reference to Psalm 109, verse 1, which is important testimony concerning the person of Christ. He is the son of David on His mother's side, but the Lord of David on His Father's: For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool"'

The sermon at Pentecost concludes with a portion of dialogue and Peter's exhortation to the Jews to repent and be baptized, so that they can be partakers in the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him' (Acts, 2, 27-9).

Finally, the invitation to repent and the certainty of salvation are the fulfilment of the prophecies of Joel ('Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved', 2, 32) and Isaiah ('Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them', 59, 19), since salvation will be extended to all nations.

Saint Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost follows the hermeneutical principle of 'Scripture interprets Scripture', bearing testimony to the death and resurrection of Jesus and exhorting his audience to repent and be baptized. It's of a nature at once interpretive, missionary and instructional.

(to be continued)