

Chapter 23

Spoken by God through His Prophetess

We had occupied our new little white church for about a year when we found that because of God's "adding-to" our space was again filled to overflowing. I have ever been conscious from the first day of my ministry that it was God who gives the increase, so we asked God what to do. In prayer one day He led me to envision a new wing on the building. After I had prayed, I told the prayer group what God had shown me, and that I could see how very conveniently it could be done provided we could find funds to defray the cost. At this, one of the women in the group stood up and said simply, "You put the wing on, and I'll pay for it."

So work began immediately on the plans. When the erection of the new wing was completed, we had space for an additional hundred persons. Yet it was not long before I saw this space rapidly filling up because of God's continued increase. I foresaw that in a short time the problem of facilities would again be facing us. When I again went before the Lord and asked Him what His orders were for the future, the Lord showed me what He wanted. He told me to "build an armory." I was stunned. Ministers expect to be told to build a church, or a tabernacle, or a temple, but why should God instruct a minister to build an armory? I was in great confusion of mind. Again I called upon God to ask Him what He meant by an armory. He replied, "A place where soldiers get equipment." Well, that sounded good, but I still could not conceive what sort of place He meant. I asked "How large a place, Lord?" and the answer came back, "To seat 3,000 people."

It was too much for me. I was filled with fear and consternation, for I was sure it could not have been God who spoke these strange things to me. So I waited for a while and then went before God again. I pleaded with Him until I could again hear His Voice. But He was merciful and assured me again with an assurance which I never again lost. It was He who was speaking; it was to be an armory, and it was to seat 3,000 people.

Yet I was afraid and ashamed to tell anyone what God had told me. I felt if I repeated it, it would sound like conceit, ambition, or the ranting

of a mad person. So for the time being I hugged the secret to my heart. I resolved to continue to pray until I should unmistakably hear the Voice of the Lord say to me, "Rise up and build!"

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During this time, God gave me a vision. It seemed as though I were walking alone in a dry and parched country, carrying a small wooden bucket which was filled with water. Suddenly I became aware that there was a terrible drought upon the land in which I was. I realized the great preciousness of the water I was carrying and the importance of careful guardianship of the little bucket and its scarce contents. As I walked along, slowly and cautiously, contemplating the great responsibility that was mine as the custodian of this small but precious burden, I became aware of a deep rumbling somewhere in the distance ahead of me - a sound as of distant thunder. I stopped and lifted my eyes to discern the source of the noise and saw what seemed to be a great cloud of dust approaching me.

As I watched, there gradually emerged to my view a tremendous herd of cattle, thundering toward me at great speed. It came to me that these cattle were conscious of the water in the little bucket I was carrying. They were stampeding in a mad rush to gain possession of it. Terrified, I breathe up a prayer to God, saying, "Lord, what shall I do? These cattle evidently know I have this water, and though there isn't enough for even one of them, they will kill me in an effort to obtain it."

An answer was returned to me: "Wait until they reach where you are standing, then leap to one side and let them pass." I followed these instructions. When the cattle had sped by, carried forward by their own momentum and the headlong pressure of their fellows, I realized immediately that in my carefulness I had not spilled a single drop of the precious water in the bucket. This gave me great joy because I was aware that this water was very scarce and priceless.

As I stood there, thanking the Lord for my deliverance and that of my valuable charge, I heard another great noise similar to the first. I looked up to see another herd of cattle stampeding toward me from a direction opposite to that from which the first had come. These cattle were like the first in appearance. They were red, sleek and shiny, seemingly fat and well-fed. But it was obvious that they were shuddering from great thirst, for their eyes were staring wildly and their tongues were hanging out their mouths. They, too, seemed to have knowledge of the water I carried and were bent upon taking it from me.

Again I cried out in fear for I knew not what to do. Again the same voice replied: "Jump over where you were the first time to the other side."

I obeyed the instructions. Again the herd of cattle swept harmlessly past me. I was made aware for a second time that I had succeeded in saving the water that had been entrusted to me without spilling a drop. Then for yet a third time, I heard the now familiar rumbling in the distance. As I lifted up my eyes, I saw still another stampeding herd of cattle coming toward me - just like those in the first and second instances. They were well-fed and sleek but with their tongues hanging out of their mouths wanting the water I was carrying. It was an awful sight. Yet in spite of my horror, my heart ached for the terrible thirst these poor cattle were suffering, but I knew that the little bucketful of water would not have quenched the thirst of even one of these great beasts.

So I cried out in supplication. Again the voice came to me in answer, this time saying: "Look over the precipice." I had not been aware that my last leap had carried me to the brink of a high precipice. With great trepidation and a fear of the awful height, I looked over the edge. Far, far below, at a depth to which I could barely see flowed a wide and wonderful river of crystal-clear water. It was flowing rapidly, dashing itself against the walls of rock and breaking up into spray that resembled diamonds in the brilliant sunlight. So tumultuous, cold, and clear seemed this blessed stream, so plentiful its cascading billows that I said to myself in great yearning, "Oh, if I could only reach that river, there will be more than enough water for all these thirsty cattle."

In spite of the precipitous nature of the banks above the river, I determined to try to reach it. So I started down, slipping and sliding and all but tumbling down the steep embankment. As I did so, I heard a great commotion on either side of me. I then became aware that the herds of cattle were sliding down with me. We all reached the river together.

In my eagerness, I felt a wonder as to the source of this flowing water. I raised my head to look up and beyond toward the distance from which the current flowed. Far away in the distance I saw "El Shaddi" - "The Breasted One," (the Lord) - whose supply is enough. The water flowed from His breast.

Then I saw the cattle drink and drink, and become at last satisfied and refreshed. As I saw them go away no longer parched and thirsty, I

realized that they too had become “Breasted Ones” and would go forth to satisfy the thirst of the people.

This was the end of the vision. After it, I was sure that God some way somehow would allow us to discover a river (a spiritual river) that would bring satisfaction and feed the hungry until they, too, would be able to go forth and feed others. And, indeed, the day did come when people came from all the corners of the earth to the “river” at Bethesda. They were satisfied and went away convinced that they, too, had something to give - bread for the hungry and drink for the thirsty.

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Another confirmation to build the “armory” came one evening in a prayer meeting. One of our deacons stood up and shared a night vision He was sure was from the Lord. He had seen a huge brick structure on the corner of our property. In trying to convey the great size of the building, he went on to relate how he saw cars parked for many blocks in all directions surrounding the tremendous structure. He was most insistent in trying to impress us strongly that God had given him a vision, but his efforts were unnecessary because everyone knew that it was a visitation from the Lord. I, above everyone else, was aware that God was merely confirming to my heart once again the call to build the “armory.”

At this time we still had not had the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our people. There were only a few of us who had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We had been praying for a long time that God would send us an outpouring beyond what we were experiencing, for we were constantly receiving blessings from the Lord in souls being saved, bodies healed, and a continual increase in numbers. Yet the Holy Spirit was not manifested unto us.

Finally, God heard our prayers and caused Brother and Sister Alvin Branch to be sent to us with a special ministry.¹⁶ They had a house trailer which they parked in a vacant lot next to the church. They said God had definitely sent them. It was unfortunate that at this very time a very famous evangelist of the hour, Jerry Owen, was holding meetings at

¹⁶ This took place in 1937.

the Berea Tabernacle in Detroit. His ministry was very spectacular; he claimed to see Scriptures written on the walls. People came from far and near to see and hear this strange phenomenon.

It surely looked as if Brother and Sister Branch had come to the city at the wrong time, but “God’s ways are not out ways.” They were confident that God had sent them to accomplish a mission. They showed a very kind and lovely spirit. They encouraged everyone who wished to hear Jerry Owen to go and attend his meetings. But for those who wanted to stay, they would be happy to minister to them.

God mightily blessed their stay with us. Their ministry was so rich and good. The saints were built up and strengthened from the Word of God. The last day of their stay with us will always be an outstanding day in my memory. In the last service, Sister Branch stood up and prophesied. I had never heard prophecy before. What she said gripped my heart with such a confirmation that it has had a settling and establishing force in my life. As she stood there, she prophesied what she was seeing in her vision. She prophesied the Armory into existence. She spoke of a huge brick structure which she could see on the corner of the property, and she told of its size. She told of the multitudes that would be coming and going, being blessed of God. She prophesied that God was sending the greatest revival of all history to this place. As a sign that all this would come to pass, she made another prophecy:

“As we leave here, God is going to pour out His Spirit, and people will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.”

That night, one young lady received the Baptism. This was the first Baptism we had had in the church, but within ten days, sixty more were baptized in the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ It was a common occurrence to come to the church in the morning and see the people slain under the power of God, receiving the glorious Baptism in the Holy Spirit. We heard children speaking in other tongues, down between the seats, glorifying God. From that day to this, God has never withheld this outpouring.

The Revival was on. Soon with the coming into existence of the Armory, all that was prophesied would be realized. God said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . Without Him was not anything made that was made.”

¹⁷ It was during this time that Patricia Beall Gruits at the age of 14 received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(John1:1,3) God spoke everything into existence, and I feel confident that the Armory of Bethesda Missionary Temple became a reality because it was spoken by God out of the mouth of His Prophetess.