
Pentecostals

Origins

It is generally accepted that the modern Pentecostal movement began in 1906 with the Azusa Street Revival. A preacher called William Joseph Seymour, preaching in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Azusa Street in Los Angeles, claimed that a new outpouring of the Spirit would occur, like that on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, if the congregation prayed for one. Both he and the congregation then allegedly began speaking in tongues. The belief that Holy Spirit gifts were being given spread rapidly, and by the end of that year thousands were claiming to have spoken in tongues. It is thought that the great San Francisco earthquake, which happened in that year, may have encouraged people to turn to this particular movement. Seymour had previously listened to the teaching of Charles F. Parham, who had taught about speaking in tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Parham had founded the Apostolic Faith Movement. In 1901 at a Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, it is claimed that Parham and his followers had received the Holy Spirit, leading to the ability to speak in tongues.

In the nineteenth century there had also been instances of people claiming to have Spirit gifts. In the 1870s there was a group known as the *Gift People* or *Gift Adventists*, who claimed to have Spirit gifts. There were also cases in Britain and Europe. However, it was not until the Azusa Street Revival that this doctrine gained momentum.

Today

The Pentecostal movement is growing rapidly. There are around 250 million Pentecostals worldwide, although not all such churches use the term 'Pentecostal'. The Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea, has 250,000 attending each week. The emphasis on personal experience, spontaneity, empowering the individual and its ability to adapt to local customs and cultures, help to drive the popularity of Pentecostalism. It continues to attract the poor in the developing world.

What the mainstream says

- The Bible is inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- There is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Regeneration by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man.
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is evident in speaking in other tongues and in the operation of the spiritual gifts and ministries.
- The Christian can live a godly life by the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- There will be a resurrection of both the saved and the lost, those who are saved to eternal life and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation.
- There is a need to minister to people in every area of life, which includes not only the spiritual but also the social, political and physical.

(Source: <http://pentecostalworldfellowship.org>)

Suggested initial Scriptural approach

The words of John provide a guiding principle for discussing with those who claim to have a Spirit gift: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 Jno. 4:1). By showing that the beliefs of the Pentecostals differ from the Truth—for example, God and the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ—it can be concluded that their claims to gifts, which have in any case been "done away" (1 Cor. 13:10), are without foundation.