

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

ANSWERING DENOMINATIONAL DOCTRINES “The Pentecostal Religion”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18). Welcome to our study on answering denominational doctrines. In this series of lessons we are taking the Scriptures and examining the doctrines of various religious groups for the purpose of seeing if they follow and hold up to the teaching of the Bible. As we examine these, we want to specifically look at their integrity. We want to see if they are holding true to the teaching of Christ. And we want to see if, in their origin and design, they are the church about which we read in the New Testament. It is possible to know if any of these denominations is the church of the New Testament because in the New Testament we find the pattern for God’s church.

Today we are discussing the Pentecostal religion. So let’s begin by asking, “When did the Pentecostal religion start?” The Bible tells us that the New Testament church started in the first century. So when did Pentecostalism start? History records for us that it began New Year’s Eve at the turn of the century in the year 1900. Is that the time frame for when the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was prophesied to begin? Not according to Scripture. In the first century Jesus said, “I will build My church.” According to Acts 2, that church was established in the first century. But to help us see that the church and the kingdom had long been in existence before Pentecostalism arrived on the scene, let’s notice the words of Jesus in Mark 9:1—“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” Here Jesus was talking to His disciples, and He wanted them to know that some of them would not die until they had seen the kingdom “present and with power.” What is the kingdom? Following Matthew 16:18, where Jesus said that He would build His church, He said to Peter, “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.” The church and the kingdom are one and the same organization. Because Jesus said, “I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power,” we then can know for a fact that the kingdom/church of Christ, about which we read in the New Testament, began in the first century on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. This is very important. We know that Pentecostalism does not meet that design because its beginning was over nineteen-hundred years too late. Thus, it cannot be the church about which we read in the New Testament.

Who started the Pentecostal religion? How did it come about? The Assemblies of God official statement says that “the beginning of the modern Pentecostal revival is generally traced to a prayer meeting at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, on January 1, 1901.” However, the Bible says that the New Testament church began, not in Kansas, but in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:5 the Bible says that “there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven,” which explains where these people were at that time. Then, in verse 47 we read that the people who had been saved

on that occasion were “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Where did the New Testament church start? It was not in Topeka, Kansas. Rather, it began in Jerusalem in the first century on the Day of Pentecost after the preaching of the Gospel. Pentecostalism did not begin at the right time or in the right place. So how, then, did the movement get started? History records that, as one writer put it, in Topeka, Kansas, “a band of earnest hungry-hearted Christian people, being hungry for more of God, called a fast that lasted twenty-one days. During this time they prayed earnestly for a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which to their joyful surprise came at midnight on New Year’s Eve 1900.” There were people who wanted “more of God.” But instead of turning to the Bible as God’s Word to see how to grow a closer relationship with the Lord, they called for “a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit” (and then were surprised when it allegedly took place!). This does not fit at all with God’s scheme of redemption that we find in the New Testament.

Who founded Pentecostalism? There is not just one person’s name attached to the founding of Pentecostalism. Instead, Pentecostalism’s own literature records the founders as being around 300 preachers and “laymen” from about twenty different states. There were a variety of different people, all claiming that they were the founder of the religion. Yet Jesus did not say that 300 preachers from twenty different states would found His church. Rather, He said that **He** would found the New Testament church. Look once more at what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18—“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.” Jesus founded the church. “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Jesus founded His church in the first century at Jerusalem. If any church does not fit that design and origin, then it cannot be the church about which we read in the New Testament.

Another question that we might ask is, “Where is the headquarters of the Pentecostal religion?” The official headquarters is located in Springfield, Missouri. Where is the headquarters of the Lord’s church? There is no earthly headquarters. The headquarters of the church of Christ emanates from the throne of God itself in Heaven, which is where the church’s Head (Jesus Christ) is. Notice what Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus: “Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Jesus is reigning from Heaven. He is still the Head of the church. And that church has no earthly headquarters. Christians do not go to any locale on Earth to find the church’s headquarters, but instead look to Heaven. And we look to the Word of God for our laws and for God’s teachings. The Pentecostal religion does not match the church as God set it up to be in the New Testament.

Who is the head of the Pentecostal denomination? It does not have a single head, but does have a type of democratic organization that is foreign to the Scriptures. There is an Executive Presbytery, a General Presbytery, and a General Council that decides on matters related to the church, and by-laws. Those by-laws state:

“The Executive Presbytery shall consist of the general superintendent, the assistant general superintendent, the general secretary, the general treasurer, the executive director of the Assemblies of God World Missions, and the executive director of the Assemblies of God U.S. Missions....”

The by-laws go on to list many other people. What can we learn from this? Such an organizational structure is not found in the Bible. The hierarchy that is found in the New Testament has Christ as the Head of the church. God, in His infinite wisdom, has already decided regarding matters of doctrine for the church. Yet, to allow expediency and function-

ality, God placed elders as overseers of the church (Acts 20:28ff.). Deacons are servants to the church, and all Christians stand on level ground. There is no “Big Me” and “Little You” in the church. There is no “clergy/laity” system. We all stand on level ground at the foot of Christ’s cross. There is no “executive presbytery.” Where do we read about that in the Bible? It is not there. But notice what we do find. In Colossians 1:18 we read, “He [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Who deserves the preeminence? Who is the “executive in charge”? Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on Earth” (Mt. 28:18). He is the Preeminent One.

By what authority does the Pentecostal religion operate? Its authority is supposedly the Bible and any revelation it allegedly receives through the baptism of the Holy Spirit that is deemed to be in accord with the rest of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals say, “The Bible is our authority.” But then they also say, “We received such-and-such a revelation” or “the gifts of the Holy Spirit also told us....” Wait a minute. The Bible says differently. The Bible says that **it** is the sole authority on all matters concerning God and how to get to Heaven. Notice in 1 Corinthians 4:6 what we are taught. Paul said, “These things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” The Scriptures teach that we are not to “think beyond what is written.” Someone says, “I got a revelation from God last night.” How do we know that such a person received a revelation from God?” “The gifts of the Holy Spirit told me so-and-so.” How do we know that the gifts of the Holy Spirit imparted such information to a person? We can **know** what we have in the Bible, which says that we are not to “think beyond what is written.” The Scripture says that we not to add to or take away from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). The Bible says in Proverbs 30:6, “Do not add to His word, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.” If we are to stay only with the Bible because it is the once-for-all delivered faith (Jude 3), and if it has everything we need for “life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3), then we do not need any additional revelation. We have everything we need within the pages of the Bible. We do not need additional revelation. Nor do we need “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” No one currently could prove whether such things were true or not. But can **know** what is in the Bible, and we can **know** that it is from God and that it is our sole, final authority.

Now let’s examine some of the doctrines of the Pentecostal religion. One of the main doctrines that sets Pentecostals apart from other denominationalists is their belief that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is still available for people today. The position of the Assemblies of God is stated clearly in Article V of their Fundamental Statements of Truth: “All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church.” Think about that for a moment. Was Holy Spirit baptism “the normal experience of all in the early Christian church”? From such a statement it would seem that Holy Spirit baptism occurred in “every occurrence.” Do you know how many times the New Testament records Holy Spirit baptism as actually happening? Two times! It occurred in Acts 2 when the doors of the kingdom were opened to the Jews. Then it occurred again in Acts 10 when the doors of the kingdom were opened to Gentiles. Holy Spirit baptism was not “the normal experience of all Christians.” Rather, it was something that occurred on two special occasions when the doors of the kingdom were opened, first to Jews, and then second to Gentiles. We need to realize that the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not happen to everyone. We can see this clearly from Scripture. For example, how can we prove that the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 fell only on the twelve apostles, and not the other 120 people who also were assembled? One

of the main arguments made by Pentecostals is that on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 20, all 120 people mentioned were baptized by the Holy Spirit. Thus, we need to look no farther to see that such is what we should expect today. From Acts 1:13 we can see that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised. We see it coming in Acts 2. But who were the recipients of Holy Spirit baptism? According to Acts 2:43 wonders and signs were done “through the apostles,” not the 120. Those 120 people are not mentioned as having the same powers as the apostles. A proper understanding of the word “flesh” will disprove the Pentecostal’s theory in this regard. That word, Pentecostals suggest, means “all humanity” (meaning Jews and Gentiles alike), and found its fulfillment in regard to the Jews in Acts 2 and in the regard to the Gentiles in Acts 10. Even more amazing is the fact that Pentecostals say that everyone should expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit “in fire.” Do they really understand what the “baptism of fire” is? In Matthew 3:11-12 John said that the baptism of fire is the baptism of Hell itself. People will be immersed in the fires of Hell. And that is what the Pentecostals say that all Christians should expect?! We need to realize that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not something that continues to occur today.

Another of the major tenets of Pentecostalism’s teaching is the practice of modern-day miracles. The Assemblies of God believe unequivocally that God still performs miracles today. They state,

“This conviction grows out of a firm belief that the miracles recorded in the Bible were historical events—not myths or folk stories. There is no indication in Scripture that miracles have ceased or will cease in the present world order. Because there are confirmed instances of miracles happening today, we must conclude with certainty that God still performs miracles.”

Wait a minute. Can we be sure that there is nothing in the Scripture which says that miracles were going to cease? Furthermore, if some person somewhere says that he or she experienced “a miracle,” how can we confirm that such actually was the case? Oftentimes it is the case that such people were simply tricksters who were trying to dupe people—only for their own gain—into thinking that their “miracle” was real! Does the Bible teach that modern-day miracles are still occurring? We need to realize that 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 clearly teaches that miracles were going to cease in the first century.

“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.”

What is “the partial”? It is the miracles (including tongues, supernatural knowledge, etc.). All those things were to cease when “the perfect” came. The Greek perfect here is *teleios*, which means “complete, full, or lacking in nothing.” It does not mean “perfect” in the sense in which we often use the word. Rather, the idea is that of “completeness.” We know that Jesus was perfect, but He had already come by the time that Paul wrote this passage in 1 Corinthians. We know that His Second Coming pertains to “when He comes again,” not to His initial coming. So what was “the perfect” that was yet to come? James 1:25 helps us understand this when it speaks of “the perfect [same Greek word] law of liberty.” Miracles were for the purpose of confirming a man as speaking from God. Imagine a scenario in which you had two people who both stood up to say, “We have a message from Jesus to which you need to submit.” Yet their messages were opposed to each other because they do not say the same thing. How could a person in the first century (who did not have a completed Bible) know which person was lying and which one was telling the truth? If one of the men could perform miracles (such as healing the sick or raising the dead), but the other man could not, then it would be obvious as to which man was telling the truth because

miracles confirmed that a man was God's spokesman. Once the Bible was completed, we then could use it to check people's claims. We no longer live in the age of miracles. They have ceased. Tongues have ceased. Miraculous knowledge has ceased. We now have the completed will and word of God. Let me ask you this. Would you rather having something "partial," or would you rather have something "full"? If the boss said to you next week, "I know that it's payday, but I think I'll give you a partial check rather than a full check this week," what would you think about that? You'd say, "No way! I want the full check because I worked for it and I deserve it." Did you know that miracles in the Bible are described as "partial"? They are spoken of as something in a state of infancy, not one of maturity. Fortunately, however, we today have the fully revealed Word of God. We no longer need the partial because we have God's complete will from the mouth of Jesus and His disciples.

Another teaching held by those in the Assemblies of God is that speaking in tongues is something that every Christian should do today. Pentecostals believe that a manifestation of the Holy Spirit for us today is one's ability to speak in some "heavenly language" that the Spirit has inspired within the person. Pentecostals support this doctrine by saying,

"First let us examine the Scriptures. On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell upon the assembled believers and 'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues' (Acts 2:4). Later, as Peter was preaching at the house of Cornelius, 'the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message' and they were 'speaking in tongues and praising God' (Acts 10:44, 46). Again, as the apostle Paul was ministering to the Ephesian disciples, 'the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied' (Acts 19:6). These Scriptures clearly show that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit."

Remember that we've already seen that the baptism of the Holy Spirit happened only twice. Is it the case that "all spoke with tongues" in Acts 2? No, it is not. Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and spoke in tongues. Not everyone did that. In Acts 10, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household just as it had on the apostles in Acts 2, but it is not the case that every time people obeyed the Gospel, the Holy Spirit fell on them. What do the Scriptures really teach about tongue speaking?

First we need to understand that tongue speaking was simply having the miraculous ability to speak in a known language without ever having studied it. In Acts 2:5-12 we see that when the apostles spoke, those present "each heard them in their own language." Wait a minute. I thought that tongue speaking was "a heavenly language." No, it is not. Tongue speaking is the ability to speak a known language without having studied it. Tongue speaking is not some sort of "heavenly language." That is not said anywhere in the Bible. Furthermore, the Scriptures teach that the ability to prophesy or preach is of greater value to others than tongue speaking. Tongue speaking is not "the most important thing." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 that preaching the message of God with clarity was of more importance than tongue speaking. In fact, the Scriptures teach in 1 Corinthians 14:6-19 that tongues had to be interpreted by someone in order to be of value. Someone had to understand what was being said so that he could tell others who could not understand it—or what was being said would be of no value. But here's what often happens. Someone "speaks in tongues" today, but no one has a clue as to what is being said because there is no interpreter present. That is in direct contradiction to the Scriptures. Tongues were for believers, not unbelievers. It was Christians in the first century who had the ability to speak in tongues. Plus, tongues were intended to be for a limited time. According to 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, tongues were to cease. Pentecostalism affirms that the baptism of the Holy Spirit proves that a person is a child of God. If a person has not experienced that, then he or she is not a child of God. How many people have (they thought) obeyed the Gospel, but

never were able to speak in tongues, so others looked down on them? To be true to the Scriptures, we need to understand that there is an example of someone who had the Holy Spirit without measure, yet never did a single miracle. I can prove that tongue speaking is not a sign of a person's being a child of God.

Look in Luke 1:15, which says of John, "He will be great in the sight of the Lord, shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." Now look at John 10:41—"Then many came to Him [Jesus] and said, 'John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.'" John had the Holy Spirit without measure, yet never performed a single miracle. Thus, a person still can be right with God, just as John was, without producing an outpouring of the miraculous. This clearly proves that the Pentecostals' theory of tongue speaking is not true according to the teaching of the New Testament.

So how can we help those who believe that a person must have experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit in order to be right with God, or that a person must be able to speak in tongues? We must help people understand that such things were limited to the first century during the infancy of the church, and were specifically for the purpose of confirming the Word. Today, however, we have everything we need in God's Word. Obeying the Gospel is first and foremost an intellectual decision that is based on the truth of God's Word. Jesus said, "You can **know** the truth [not feel], and the truth will make you free." I recently heard someone say, "I wouldn't trade the feeling I've got in my heart for all the Bibles in the world." How sad that is! We are not talking about feelings. We're talking about facts from the Word of God. We must realize that the giving of the Holy Spirit, and the ability to perform miracles, had a specific purpose that ended when the Bible was finished. Let me illustrate. In Mark 16:20 we see the purpose of miracles. "They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs." Miracles were intended to confirm the Word. If two people stand up today to claim that they both have a message from God, we can know which one is right because we can check their statements against the Bible. In the first century people did not have that privilege. But they could know that the one whom God confirmed was speaking on His behalf. Miracles have ceased.

God's plan of salvation is simple. The church today is active and vibrant thanks to the Word of God. How to become a Christian is something that is clearly taught throughout the Book of Acts. What must a person do to become a child of God? I'm thankful today that the Bible makes God's plan of salvation so simple. In Acts 18:8 we read that many of the Corinthians, "hearing, believed and were baptized." Baptism in water is where God puts the emphasis. We must hear God's Word. We must realize that the Bible is God's final authority. Whatever it says, we must do. We must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world (Acts 8:36-37). We must repent and change our lives (Acts 2:38). We must make the good confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Rom. 10:10; Mt. 10:32-33). And we must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Saul was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). Peter made it so clear in Acts 2:38 when he said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Jesus taught us that baptism in water is the point in time when we can know that we are children of God. We do not have to worry. We do not have to wonder. We do not have to seek after signs or bow to tricksters who are out for money. We can know that we are right with God because the Bible says so. If you have been involved in the Pentecostal movement, perhaps you have been duped into thinking that you weren't really a spiritual person. Maybe

someone told you that you ought to be able to do miracles. Realize today that you can become a Christian simply by obeying the Gospel, and that that will make you right with God. We pray that God will help you to do that.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE PENTECOSAL RELIGION”

1. What important statement did Jesus Christ make in Matthew 16:18 about His church?
2. According to material presented in this lesson, when did the Pentecostal religion begin?
3. According to Mark 9:1, was Christ’s church in existence in the first century A.D.?
4. According to material presented in this lesson, where did the Pentecostal religion begin?
5. According to Acts 2, where did Christ’s church begin?
6. According to Pentecostalism’s own literature, who founded the Pentecostal religion?
7. According to Matthew 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 3:11, who is the founder of the church about which we read in the New Testament?
8. According to material presented in this lesson, where is the headquarters of the Pentecostal religion?
9. According to passages such as Hebrews 1:3 and Matthew 28:18, where is the headquarters of Christ’s church?
10. According to material presented in this lesson, where does the Pentecostal religion get its authority?
11. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what does the Bible contain?
12. Why, in light of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:20-21, is the Bible to be accepted as the church’s only source of authority?
13. What did the apostle Paul say in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that Christians must **not** do?
14. What do Proverbs 30:6 and Revelation 22:18-19 command Christians **not** to do?
15. According to the by-laws of the Assembly of God (Pentecostal) Church, the church is governed by an Executive Presbytery, a General Presbytery, and a General Council that decide on matters concerning the church. Where in the New Testament is such an organizational structure authorized?
16. One doctrine of the Pentecostal religion is that “all believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” According to the New Testament, how many times did Holy Spirit baptism actually occur in the first century?
17. Another doctrine of the Pentecostal religion is that miracles are still being performed today. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 about the cessation of miracles?
18. What is the “perfect” of 1 Corinthians 13:10?