

# Understanding Pentecostalism

## *The Roots of Pentecostalism*



Charles Fox Parham  
1873-1929



William J. Seymour  
1870-1922

### The Azusa Street Revival Los Angeles, CA 1906-1909



### *Three basic works of grace in the life of a believer* (per Parham & Seymour)

1. Salvation
2. Sanctification
3. Empowerment

## **Largest denominations within Pentecostalism**

- **Assemblies of God**  
Founded: 1914  
Membership: More than 2,860,000  
Congregations: 12,360  
[www.ag.org](http://www.ag.org)
- **Church of God (Cleveland, TN)**  
Founded: 1886  
Membership: More than 1,000,000  
Congregations: 6,650  
[www.churchofgod.org](http://www.churchofgod.org)
- **The Church of God in Christ**  
Founded: 1907  
Members: 5,500,000  
Congregations: 15,400  
[www.cogic.org](http://www.cogic.org)
- **Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.**  
Founded: 1907  
Members: 1,800,000  
Congregations: 2,550  
[www.pawinc.org](http://www.pawinc.org)
- **United Pentecostal Church International**  
Founded: 1945  
Members: 646,304  
Congregations: 4,358  
[www.upci.org](http://www.upci.org)

## **Terms and phrases helpful to know for understanding Pentecostalism**

- **Baptism in the Holy Spirit:** A central, post-conversion experience in which a believer is filled with or "immersed" in the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals believe this event empowers them for service, witness, and spiritual gifts.
- **Initial evidence:** For many Pentecostals, speaking in tongues is considered the primary physical sign that a believer has received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- **Continuationism:** The belief that all spiritual gifts described in the New Testament are still active and relevant today, continuing beyond the apostolic age.
- **Cessationism:** The belief that speaking in tongues and some miraculous gifts as described in the New Testament have ceased. (Pentecostals do not hold this view).
- **Oneness Pentecostalism:** A non-Trinitarian branch of Pentecostalism that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. Adherents believe in one God who is revealed in three different "modes" (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and they baptize only in the name of Jesus

Christ. Early church fathers like Tertullian and Councils like Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) condemned this non-Trinitarian belief as heresy and incompatible with biblical teaching.

- **Speaking in Tongues (Glossolalia):** Often considered the initial evidence of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This can manifest as speaking in an unknown heavenly language or in a human language previously unknown to the speaker.
- **Interpretation of Tongues:** The supernatural ability to interpret a message given in tongues for the edification of the gathered church.
- **Prophecy:** A supernatural revelation from God delivered to the church in the common language, often for encouragement or spiritual guidance.
- **Laying on of Hands:** An action intended to confer power, blessing, or healing to a recipient by invoking the Holy Spirit.
- **Charismatic Movement:** Beginning in the 1960s, this movement incorporated Pentecostal beliefs and practices concerning spiritual gifts into mainline denominations, like Catholic and older Protestant churches.
- **Anointing:** The presence of the Holy Spirit's power and blessing in a believer's life.

#### **Questions from South Main about Pentecostalism**

- What do Pentecostals believe that Baptists do not?
- Do Baptists embrace the Holy Spirit as much as other denominations?

#### ***Distinctives to Think Through***

- Modalists (Oneness Pentecostals) vs. Trinitarians
- The need for Baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as a second work of grace in the life of the believer (see Acts 18:1-7 and chart on page 4).
- Some Pentecostal leaders and churches embrace titles and gifted roles of leadership more than other Christians do, such as apostle, prophets, etc. (see Ephesians 4:11-13)
- The role of women as ministers and pastors has not been a non-issue for many Pentecostal churches (see Joel 2:28-29).
- The complexity of the role faith has for healing.

Christ. Early church fathers like Tertullian and Councils like Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD) condemned this non-Trinitarian belief as heresy and incompatible with biblical teaching.

- **Speaking in Tongues (Glossolalia):** Often considered the initial evidence of receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This can manifest as speaking in an unknown heavenly language or in a human language previously unknown to the speaker.
- **Interpretation of Tongues:** The supernatural ability to interpret a message given in tongues for the edification of the gathered church.
- **Prophecy:** A supernatural revelation from God delivered to the church in the common language, often for encouragement or spiritual guidance.
- **Laying on of Hands:** An action intended to confer power, blessing, or healing to a recipient by invoking the Holy Spirit.
- **Charismatic Movement:** Beginning in the 1960s, this movement incorporated Pentecostal beliefs and practices concerning spiritual gifts into mainline denominations, like Catholic and older Protestant churches.
- **Anointing:** The presence of the Holy Spirit's power and blessing in a believer's life.

#### **Questions from South Main about Pentecostalism**

- What do Pentecostals believe that Baptists do not?
- Do Baptists embrace the Holy Spirit as much as other denominations?

#### ***Distinctives to Think Through***

- Modalists (Oneness Pentecostals) vs. Trinitarians
- The need for Baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as a second work of grace in the life of the believer (see Acts 18:1-7 and chart on page 4).
- Some Pentecostal leaders and churches embrace titles and gifted roles of leadership more than other Christians do, such as apostle, prophets, etc. (see Ephesians 4:11-13)
- The role of women as ministers and pastors has not been a non-issue for many Pentecostal churches (see Joel 2:28-29).
- The complexity of the role faith has for healing.