

DEFINITION OF PENTECOSTALISM

Adapted from a Wikipedia.org article



Pentecostalism or Classical Pentecostalism is a renewal movement within Protestant Christianity that places special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The term Pentecostal is derived from Pentecost, the Greek name for the Jewish Feast of Weeks. For Christians, this event commemorates the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus Christ, as described in Acts 2.

Like other forms of evangelical Protestantism, Pentecostalism adheres to the inerrancy of scripture and the necessity of accepting Christ as personal Lord and Savior. It is distinguished by belief in the baptism in the Holy Spirit that enables a Christian to live a Spirit-filled and empowered life. This empowerment includes the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing—two other defining characteristics of Pentecostalism. Because of their commitment to Biblical authority, spiritual gifts, and the miraculous, Pentecostals tend to see their movement as reflecting the same kind of spiritual power and teachings that were found in the Apostolic Age of the early church. For this reason, some Pentecostals also use the term Apostolic or Full Gospel to describe their movement.

Pentecostalism emerged in the early 20th century among adherents of the Holiness movement who were energized by revivalism and expectation for the imminent Second Coming of Christ. Believing that they were living in the end times, they expected God to spiritually renew the Christian Church and the evangelization of the world. In 1900, Charles Parham, an American evangelist and faith healer, began teaching that speaking in tongues was the Bible evidence of Spirit baptism. The three-year-long Azusa Street Revival, founded and led by William J. Seymour in Los Angeles, California, resulted in the spread of Pentecostalism throughout the United States and the rest of the world as visitors carried the Pentecostal experience back to their home churches or felt called to the mission field. While virtually all Pentecostal denominations trace their origins to Azusa Street, the movement has experienced a variety of divisions and controversies. An early dispute centered on challenges to the doctrine of the Trinity. As a result, the Pentecostal Movement is divided between trinitarian and non-trinitarian branches.

Comprising over 700 denominations and a large number of independent churches, there is no central authority governing Pentecostalism; however, many denominations are affiliated with the Pentecostal World Fellowship. There are over 279 million Pentecostals worldwide, and the movement is growing in many parts of the world, especially the global South. Since the 1960s, Pentecostalism has increasingly gained acceptance from other Christian traditions, and Pentecostal beliefs concerning Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts have been embraced by non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches through the Charismatic Movement. Together, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity numbers over 500 million adherents.