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Online Newspaper

## THINGS PENTECOSTALS DON'T KNOW

— About The Relationship Between First-Century Pentecost & Modern Pentecost —

#pen-8 — Online **NEWS**paper "PENTECOST" series. Each article builds on the aggregate foundation of all the previous ones.

Zealots argue that modern pentecost was the revival of First-Century Pentecost. By now, you should have more than enough evidence to confirm that it wasn't and isn't that at all: It was/is the revival of Corinthian pentecost. Huge differences. Along with the *formerly* lost house of Israel, those zealots may "...have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

Together, now, we have toured historical and Biblical records to learn why, how and when *The Magic Twins* came on the scene, but we have yet to explore the growing-up of that first *Twins* on the American Continent. That train is just about ready to leave the station.

The modern pentecostal movement in the U.S.A. was built, primarily, on the attraction of good, but economically challenged people who were typically not well educated.

Don't get angry with me, here; it's a purely objective observation. Other religious groups continue to thrive among people like that. The list is a lot longer than this one, but the examples that come to mind include the Moslem, Hindu & Roman Catholic faiths.

Leaders of the movement perceived a need to break away from that stereotype. They

## Corinthian Pentecost

marketed the use of "more sophisticated" terms for some of their practices. An example of that is the word, *glossolalia*. It sounds more dignified than *tongue-talking*; doesn't it.

The multi-denominational "Charismatic" movement sprang up during the 1960s. Proponents billed it as *more sophisticated* than classic pentecost. That was the needed *lubrication* for its infiltration into some of the mainstream denominations that would, otherwise, have quickly rejected it.

By the early 1970s, many people and organizations that were affiliated with classic pentecost began to identify as "Charismatics," too. It sounded and felt...well, *special*.

That era from the middle 1970s through the 1980s (and perhaps into the 1990s, in some regions) featured the *calming down*, *smoothing out* and *dressing up* of the modern pentecostal stereotypes.

Pastors of some of the larger pentecostal churches quietly (i.e.: They'd never admit to it.) selected and carefully coached a few folk who'd be permitted to exhibit their *gifts* of highly-polished, single-tongued *glossolalia* in church services.

Savvy pentecostal preachers and lay church leaders began to adopt corporate "dress for success" guidelines, too. They wanted to replace the *downtown* stereotypes with an *uptown* flair of dignity and respectability.

It helped! Many of them gained the coveted peer-group acceptance. That enabled them to rub friendly shoulders with non-pentecostal clerics and such as that. The Charismatics had unwittingly cleared the path for that success.

Then along came christian television with a fanfare. Wildly successful telethons and such helped to market the glitzy image of a *new and improved* pentecost. Viewers could easily get the impression that all evangelicals are pentecostal.

Christian TV showcased some of the finest examples of pentecost-styled music, too. That had been the most effective drawing card in the pentecostal arsenal for decades. Perhaps you are aware that Elvis Presley's music was heavily influenced by his pentecostal upbringing. Jerry Lee Lewis and several others are examples of it, too.

But the new forum brought problems, too: choreographed, Vaudeville-style demonstrations of divine healing, distastefully

made-up female hosts and long parades of charlatan dog-n-pony shows. And who could forget the mascara...especially the mortar-mix of it with crocodile tears. And there was the big hair, regal clothing and gaudy jewelry.

That aside, these two things are readily observable:

> TV marketing clearly helped modern pentecost gain *critical mass* before the end of the 20th Century.

> Entertainment sells: That wonderfully uplifting music can be contagious!

Many of the Baby Boomers who had abandoned the pentecostal churches of their parents found that they just couldn't resist the nostalgia when they heard that music...maybe while channel-surfing.

Some reasoned, "It looks like pentecostal people may've gotten a little more dignified. Maybe I'll visit the First Church, uptown, with my live-in boyfriend and just see how it *feels*. Besides, maybe I owe Mom and Dad that much at least. Lord knows they tried.

While much of organized Christianity is not fairing well, postmodern pentecost is clearly a marketing success. Evidence of God's blessing? or...well, you know.

