

Threefold Cord of Apostolic Identity – New Birth

Ecclesiastes 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

The gospel message is how our lives are changed by God's power!

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The gospel will not work if you take away from it or add to it.

Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

The gospel has three parts – death, burial, and resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ **died** for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was **buried**, and that he **rose again** the third day according to the scriptures:

The word "gospel" means "good news" and comes from the Greek word "euaggelion." Have you ever wondered why, when the gospel message was preached the very first time, the question of the people hearing is was "**What shall we DO?**" We don't normally ask that when we receive good news, because "news" to us is passive. But the word "euaggelion" is a circular word – it means "a sacrifice given in thanks for good tidings."

Euaggelion was commonly used in the Graeco-Roman culture as a technical term for "news of victory." The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice ... we are victorious!" By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, **euaggelia (SACRIFICES) are offered**, the temples are garlanded, a celebratory race is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices and the one to whom the message is owed is honored with a wreath ... [thus] euaggelion is closely linked with the thought of victory in battle. (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) This is a convicting definition - here a pagan messenger radiantly announces good news of an earthly victory and there is a huge response. How much more should we respond to the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death on our behalf? **THAT IS WHY THEY ASKED "WHAT SHALL WE DO?"!!!**

- Jesus died, He was buried, and He rose again.
- We repent, we are baptized, and we receive the Holy Ghost.
- This is our "euaggelia" (thanksgiving sacrifice) for the GOOD NEWS!
- THERE IS NO "GOSPEL" WITHOUT A RESPONSE FROM YOU!

That's why in the very first church service in church history, after the very first sermon preached by one of the Apostles, after the very first time someone ever asked "what shall we do?" and at the very first "altar call" in the church age, Peter said to OBEY the Gospel by doing three things:

Acts 2:36-38 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the **Holy Ghost**.

OBEYING THE GOSPEL = REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, HOLY GHOST

Why did Peter preach this message? Because it was the very LAST instruction that Jesus left with His disciples before He ascended!

Luke 24:45-51 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that **repentance** and **remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send **the promise of my Father** upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Jesus said, "I will be crucified, be buried and then rise again" ... and because of this I want you to go out and preach REPENTANCE, BAPTISM ("remission of sins") in My name, and the baptism of the HOLY GHOST ("the promise of my Father").

THE VERY LAST THING JESUS DID ON EARTH WITH HIS DISCIPLES WAS TO EMPHASIZE HOW TO OBEY THE GOSPEL – AND PETER PREACHED THIS VERY SAME MESSAGE IN ACTS 2:38!

There is only ONE salvation message, regardless of what various denominations say! It is not that WE are right and THEY are wrong; it is that the BIBLE is right and EVERYONE ELSE is wrong!

THE FIRST STEP IN THE NEW BIRTH IS REPENTANCE.

Repentance is not just “accepting” the good news, and it is not just feeling “sorry” for your sins – it is offering yourself as a “sacrifice” in thanksgiving for the Gospel – it is being sorry enough to change!

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

Repentance is not a “feeling” – it is a “turning around” or an “about face” – an inward change of attitude leading to an outward change of action. Unless both of these occur, repentance has not taken place.

Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Repentance is essential for salvation. God has already done His part – the “good news” has been announced. Now it’s up to you, not God!

Luke 13:3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Many people today think they are saved by “accepting Christ as their Saviour” or “asking Jesus into their heart” or by “believing in Jesus” – MANY TIMES THIS IS NOT EVEN REAL REPENTANCE, BECAUSE REPENTANCE IS BEING “SORRY ENOUGH TO CHANGE!”

But even for those who really repent, many people stop there and go no further – this is the theological equivalent of leaving Jesus on the cross! **Paul told us that the next part of the gospel was Jesus’ burial, and Peter told us that our next step is baptism in Jesus’ name!**

THE SECOND STEP IN THE NEW BIRTH IS BAPTISM.

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. **He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;** but he that believeth not shall be damned.

THERE ARE NO DELAYED BAPTISMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT!

- **Acts 2:41** – “the same day”
- **Acts 16:33** – “the same hour”
- **Acts 9:18** – “immediately”
- **Acts 10:48** – “he commanded them to be baptized”
- **Acts 22:16** – “why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash

away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”

Matthew 28:18-19 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

John 5:43 – “I am come in my Father’s name”

Matthew 1:21 – “thou shalt call his name Jesus”

John 14:26 – “the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name”

WATER BAPTISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS:

- Day of Pentecost – Acts 2:38-41 – “name of Jesus Christ”
- Samaritan Believers – Acts 8:16 – “name of the Lord Jesus”
- Cornelius’ Household – Acts 10:48 – “name of the Lord”
- Disciples of John – Acts 19:5 – “name of the Lord Jesus”

Matthew didn’t write his gospel until AD 62 – he is making a theological statement about the Oneness of God that has been confirmed by thirty years of the church baptizing every convert in the name of Jesus Christ!

WHAT IF I’VE ALREADY BEEN BAPTIZED A DIFFERENT WAY?

Acts 19:3-5 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

WE PUT ON CHRIST WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED!

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

WE ARE BURIED WITH CHRIST WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED!

Romans 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

WE ENTER INTO COVENANT WHEN WE ARE BAPTIZED!

Colossians 2:11-12 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Baptism is an ANNOUNCEMENT OF COVENANT, not by YOU, but by GOD! It is not just YOU saying “I belong to Jesus” – it is JESUS saying “YOU BELONG TO ME – WE ARE IN COVENANT!”

BAPTISM IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION!

John 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

But the church doesn't have power to forgive sins – only Jesus does! So what does this verse mean? Whoever we BAPTIZE has their sins remitted (“washed away”); whoever we don't baptize still has their sin!

PAUL COMPARES BAPTISM TO CROSSING THE RED SEA ...

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

ONCE ISRAEL CROSSED THE RED SEA, PHARAOH AND THE ARMIES OF EGYPT COULDN'T GET THROUGH THE WATER!

- **The devil cannot LEGALLY bring up your past.**
- **God declares that He has FORGOTTEN your past.**
- **Only YOU can choose to go back to your past!**

THE THIRD STEP IN THE NEW BIRTH IS THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

The new birth experience is designed to let your old life die (repentance) and be buried (baptism), and to give you a literal new life by the power of the Holy Ghost. The point of the resurrection is not just that Jesus got up from the grave, but that I can get up out of the deadness of my old life!

- Jesus' being put to death was an act of men.
- Jesus' burial was an act of men.
- But Jesus' resurrection was an act of God!

- Repentance is my action in response to the Gospel.
- Baptism is my action in response to the Gospel.
- But the Holy Ghost is God's action in response to my obedience!

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Jesus rose from the grave in a glorified body – He didn't need the stone rolled away to get out of the tomb. But the stone was rolled away as a SIGN to us that He had actually, literally risen from the dead. The Holy Ghost is God's Spirit – it encompasses much more than merely speaking in tongues. But speaking in tongues is given as a supernatural SIGN to us that we have actually, literally received the Holy Ghost. Some say you can receive God's Spirit without speaking in tongues, but that's not what the Bible teaches! Every Christian in your Bible spoke in tongues!

Pentecost – “fifty” (seven weeks plus one day) – commemorated the end of the wheat harvest and the giving of the law

Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 10:16-17 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Acts 2:1-4 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:12-18 ¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, **What meaneth this?** ¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ **But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;** ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

v.12-13 – some were amazed, some doubted, some mocked (**these are still the standard responses to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost!**)

WHAT MEANETH THIS? THIS IS THAT! What you are seeking is what Joel prophesied! Joel just said that God's Spirit would be poured out – he never even mentioned "speaking in tongues." It was Peter who connected the dots from Joel's prophecy to Isaiah's prophecy ...

Joel 2:28-29 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Isaiah 28:11-12 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

1 Corinthians 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

THIS (speaking in tongues) IS THAT (outpouring of God's Spirit)!

- When the church began on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).
- Simon the Sorcerer observed "evidence" when the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-20).
- Paul had this experience (Acts 9:17-18), for he spoke with tongues more than anyone in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:18).
- Believers who had only experienced John's baptism were re-baptized and spoke with tongues (Acts 19:1-6).
- Cornelius' household, who were gentiles, spoke with other tongues when they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:44-48). **There wouldn't be any Gentile Christians today if it hadn't been for speaking in tongues – that's the only reason the Jews let us in the church!**

Acts 10:44-48 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

YOU DON'T RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST THROUGH YOUR HEAD, BUT THROUGH YOUR HEART! YOU MUST BE HUNGRY FOR IT!

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The "BELLY" bypasses the "BRAIN" ☺ because it is a work of God!

A study a few years ago by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that there may be a neurological parallel between what worshipers experience when they speak in tongues and what actually transpires physiologically in the brain. Scientists took brain images from worshippers as they were speaking in tongues and as they were singing. Comparing the two images, the researchers discovered that the frontal lobes (the willful, thinking part of the brain) were quiet, as were the language centers. Scans of people practicing meditation or participating in other spiritual practices differed sharply.

Radiology investigators observed increased or decreased brain activity - by measuring regional cerebral blood flow with SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography) imaging - while the subjects were speaking in tongues. Their study is titled, "The Measurement of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow During Glossolalia: a Preliminary SPECT Study." Co-authors are Nancy Wintering, Donna Morgan, and Mark Waldman.

We didn't start out with as much "class" as we think we have today! First, it was 120 people about 2000 years ago who worshipped so intensely that they appeared drunk to onlookers! We are their descendents!

Acts 2:15-16 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

Next, it was 60 people about 100 years ago in a decrepit old building at 312 Azusa Street in the industrial part of Los Angeles. The revival they had ran non-stop in day and night prayer meetings for over three years! By mid-May 1906, anywhere from 300 to 1,500 people would attempt to fit into the building. People from a diversity of backgrounds came together to worship: men, women, children, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, rich, poor, illiterate, and educated. People of all ages flocked to Los Angeles with both skepticism and a desire to participate. Worship at 312 Azusa Street was frequent and spontaneous, with services going almost around the clock. The Los Angeles Times and other newspapers were not kind in their description:

“Meetings are held in a tumble-down shack on Azusa Street, and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal. The night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the “gift of tongues” and be able to understand the babel.”

“There is a disgraceful intermingling of the races ... they cry and make howling noises all day and into the night. They run, jump, shake all over, shout to the top of their voice, spin around in circles, fall out on the sawdust blanketed floor jerking, kicking and rolling all over it. Some of them pass out and do not move for hours as though they were dead. These people appear to be mad, mentally deranged or under a spell. They claim to be filled with the spirit. They have a one eyed, illiterate, Negro as their preacher who stays on his knees much of the time with his head hidden between the wooden milk crates. He doesn’t talk very much but at times he can be heard shouting, ‘Repent,’ and he’s supposed to be running the thing ... They repeatedly sing the same song, ‘The Comforter Has Come.’”

Little could the subscribers of the Los Angeles Times have guessed that in years to come, historians would say that the Azusa Street revival gave birth to modern Pentecostalism and became the most significant revival of the twentieth century in terms of world evangelism.

THIS (speaking in tongues) IS THAT (outpouring of God’s Spirit)!

The Church and its doctrines did not produce Pentecost; Pentecost produced the Church and all its doctrines. It was not merely the preaching of the Apostles that brought down power from on high; rather, men full of the Holy Ghost spent the rest of their lives trying to explain, articulate, and invite others into the power God had given. They were not mere Pentecostal apologists defending some creed out of a sense of duty to the prophet Joel; they were souls on fire whose doctrinal utterances on Spirit baptism came out of their own experience.

Experiential Pentecost, not doctrinal Pentecost, is the apostolic model. The right doctrine will always follow the right experience.

Pentecostal preaching of DOCTRINE may ensure that we BELIEVE in the Holy Ghost. But only Pentecostal preaching of spiritual HUNGER ensures that we will RECEIVE the Holy Ghost. A believed-in Pentecost is good, but it was a received Pentecost that turned the world upside down. And it still works that way!