

LESSON EIGHT

ORGANIZATION

A. THE NEED FOR PROPER ORGANIZATION:

During the early years of the Pentecostal Revival of the twentieth century, there were many missions and assemblies scattered around in various towns and cities. There was no accepted basis of organizational structure, and each minister administered the affairs of the church as he felt the Holy Spirit directed. The need for an accepted form of organization soon became apparent.

Brother Fred Foster in his book, "Think It Not Strange" has given several reasons why organization became necessary. We give some of the reasons here:

1. Funds were sometimes misused.
2. Ministers not having proper ministerial ethics and principles sometimes divided congregations.
3. Such ministers often took advantage of churches trusting them.
4. For Bible Schools and the training of young ministers it was necessary to have organization.
5. Missionary effort needed the support of many congregations.
6. Missionaries went to the foreign field as independent missionaries, but governments required a recognized means for support before entering their countries and purchasing of property, etc.
7. It was soon apparent that there was a need for a statement of doctrinal belief.

B. EARLY HOLINESS ORGANIZATIONS:

In the early years there were several small organizations, mainly among the Holiness groups. We shall content ourselves with just the mention of a few.

1. **THE APOSTOLIC FAITH:** This was the name of the groups led by Brother Parham in the south, Brother Seymour in Los Angeles and Sister Crawford in Portland, although there was little or no organizational connection.
2. **THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST:** This group was founded in 1897 and became Pentecostal in 1907 under the leadership of C. H. Mason. This was a colored church and it grew under the strong leadership of Brother Mason.
3. **THE CHURCH OF GOD:** This body was started in 1886 under the leadership of Richard Spurling. In 1908 this church group became Pentecostal under A. J. Tomlinson.
4. **THE FIRE BAPTIZED HOLINESS CHURCH:** This group began in 1880. They believed in an experience beyond salvation and sanctification, which they called the baptism of fire. In 1907 they became Pentecostal under the leadership of J. H. King.

5. **THE PENTECOSTAL HOLINESS CHURCH:** It was founded in 1898 and accepted the Pentecostal doctrine and experience in 1908. They merged with the Fire Baptized Holiness Church in 1911 in a convention in North Carolina.

C. THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD:

Because of the need of organization, Howard Goss and E. N. Bell called together a conference of ministers and laymen, which convened in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in April 1914. About 120 ministers registered as delegates.

Here the Assemblies of God were founded with E. N. Bell as the first General Chairman. It was a very loose type of organization with the sovereignty of the local church maintained, and the doctrinal position was simply stated that the Holy inspired Scriptures were the all-sufficient rule for faith and practice.

D. THE NEED FOR A ONENESS ORGANIZATION:

The Assemblies of God started as a Trinity church. However, with the revelation of the Oneness Truth many of the leaders (including E. N. Bell) had been baptized in Jesus Name. This naturally created much discussion and division of thought.

In 1915 there was a General Council of the Assemblies of God in St. Louis to deal with the matter. Two speakers were chosen to present each side of the issue. A. C. Collins and Jacob Miller defended the Trinity tradition, and Bell and Haywood were chosen to present the new revelation. After the preaching the decision was to wait one year.

During this year the Oneness truth was attacked bitterly. In the General Council, which assembled in St. Louis in October 1916, a statement of fundamental truths was drawn up which came out strongly for the Trinity doctrine. Because of this there was a parting of the ways and 156 ministers and many assemblies were expelled from the Assemblies of God.

This division brought about the beginning of several Oneness Churches, a few of which we shall name here.

1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLIES:

This church was founded at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, during the Christmas holidays of 1916. Daniel Opperman was chosen chairman and Howard Goss was chosen the Secretary.

2. THE PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE WORLD:

In the beginning this was a small group of Oneness people in Portland, Oregon, who organized in 1914. They had proper government recognition for military exemption for their ministers. Because of this the General Assembly of the Apostolic Assemblies merged with them in 1917.

3. THE PENTECOSTAL MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE:

This was started in Chicago in 1924 at the invitation of Pastor A.D. Urshan. Actually this church was not founded until 1925 in St. Louis. L. C. Hall was chosen as General Chairman and Howard Goss was chosen Secretary-Treasurer. This was actually a ministerial alliance, which continued for years.

4. THE PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF JESUS CHRIST:

In 1931 a merger took place between the Apostolic Churches of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. This did not prove successful owing to many internal problems and some of the brethren revived and went back to the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World.

In 1938 a convention of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ was held in Columbus, Ohio. W. T. Witherspoon was selected to be General Chairman and S. R. Hanby was chosen to be Secretary- Treasurer.

5. THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH INCORPORATED:

In 1931 the Pentecostal Ministerial Alliance felt that they needed a stronger organization in order to propagate the gospel. In Little Rock they formed the Pentecostal Church, Incorporated. B. H. Hite was chosen to be Chairman and W. E. Kidson was chosen to be Secretary-Treasurer.

E. THE UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH:

In September 1945, in St. Louis, the United Pentecostal Church was founded. It came about by a merger of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ and the Pentecostal Church Incorporated. Much preliminary work had gone into the preparation for this merger. The three men chosen to lead this new body were Howard A. Goss, Superintendent; W.T. Witherspoon, Assistant Superintendent; and Stanley Chambers, Secretary-Treasurer.

At the time of the merger there were 1800 ministers and 900 churches. As of the beginning of 1987 there are over 7000 ministers and 4500 churches. This merger was certainly ordained of God and the United Pentecostal Church has experienced great growth.

LESSON EIGHT

SELF HELP TEST

A. State the date of the founding and the first chairman of each of:

1. Assemblies of God _____
2. Pentecostal Assemblies of the World _____
3. Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ _____
4. Pentecostal Church Incorporated _____
5. Church of God in Christ _____
6. Pentecostal Holiness Church _____
7. United Pentecostal Church _____

B. In what year was the United Pentecostal Church established?

C. Compare the size then with the present.