

# How Deception Happens

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Today I want to focus on the easiest ways that Pentecostals end up in deception. I've written before about the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, to point out its errors, as well as to answer its arguments, but today I specifically want to look at how people fall into deception and how they keep themselves there. Obviously the ways are boundless, but I've chosen some of the commonest that I've heard. These are often easy mistakes that I've noticed while speaking with many Pente believers myself. They are the things that get them hooked. They are the things they return to even after you have pointed out the facts to them. I believe it's not hard to be fooled by a few of these methods, so don't think you're an idiot if you have. Don't think God can't use you at all if you've fallen for an error. But once you have seen it, you know, you need to leave it behind. The Lord cares that we know the truth and live it. So let's look at these several traps that snare the Pente followers:

- Lumping all Healing together
- Lumping the issue of miracle gifts with the issue of miracles
- Monopolizing Spirituality
- Disregarding scripture and objective truth in general
- Ignoring the Natural World and Providence
- Putting trust in the fools on television
- Calling everything good a miracle

## **1---Lumping all healings together**

I think the classic case of falling into the Pente movement blindly is the willingness to put all kinds of healings in the same category. This kind of conflation will fool someone nearly every time, unless you see it for what it is. I am asking you to see it for what it is.

The miracle gift of healing which existed at the founding of the Church included healing major organic illnesses either immediately or in a very short time. Lepers were cleansed, blind given sight, lame made to walk all with a word or a touch. This is the miracle gift of healing. However, many Pentes want to qualify as the same gift very different things; things like their pain decreasing, symptoms lessening, conditions improving temporarily, sick patients healing over time alongside medical treatment. This simple lumping of everything into the same category so

blurs the miracle gifts that virtually anyone could then think they had the gift. Unfortunately for the fooled, it is a deception.

For the gift to have continued, it should match what we read about in the New Testament – immediate healings of major organic illnesses done regularly by believers. If you don't see that, then the gifts are not with us. So we need to clearly understand what the miracle gift of healing is. A clear understanding of what it is will lead us to the truth on this subject – that the gift has ceased.

## **2---Lumping the issue of miracle gifts with the issue of miracles**

Another common one that Pentecostals jump to, and do seem to sincerely get confused by, is the treatment of miracle gifts and miracles as the very same thing. This is another kind of blending that will bamboozle anyone if they don't see it for what it is. The question of the miracle gifts is not the same as the question of miracles. The miracle gifts were regular miracles done through believers. Gifted believers did miracles as a matter of course. In contrast, other miracles are not specifically tied to a person with a regular gift, and no one I have ever heard of denies that God can do miracles today. However, if you cannot distinguish between miracle gifts and miracles, then any supernatural event will convince you that the gifts have continued. This is a deception. Miracles can and do indeed occur today. However, miracle gifts are no longer given to believers because they were for the founding of the *Kahol* (Church). It is important you can keep these two subjects separate in you care to know the truth about the gifts.

## **3---Monopolizing Spirituality (Thinking they are the only ones who believe God acts today or heals today)**

One of the slyest ways of bending the will into believing the Charismatic claims is the constant monopolization of spirituality that Pentecostals often do. They paint a picture that THEY are the only ones who believe that God acts today. This is patently false. Virtually every orthodox believer also believes that. They furthermore project an image that they are the only ones who believe in God's healing power, when in fact Cessationists certainly believe that God heals in this very day, just NOT that He does it through miraculous gifts given to believers. He does it on His own as He wills. He still uses prayer for those purposes as well, just not regularly through gifted believers. By claiming or implying to be the ONLY part of the *Kahol* which believes in an acting and healing God, the Pentecostals lure in quite a few gullible fish. Have you been lured that way? You need to remember, of course God still heals. Cessationists believe that too.

On the subject of the false monopolizing of spirituality, another area they do this is in the personal relationship with *Adonai*. Charismatics seem to claim it for themselves, and suggest that others have a lesser relationship or none at all. This is completely false. Don't accept it for a minute. Cessationists are born-again believers, and they have the Holy Spirit living in them, just as any believer does. They pray. They experience God act in their lives. They love God and rely on Him daily. They even find significance in dreams and coincidences sometimes; they just don't call it prophecy because it's not. It's more like spiritual intuition. You see, ultimately the outward sign of having that personal relationship is NOT what Pentes want it to be; it's not emotional highs, alleged spiritual highs or the alleged miracles they claim at their meetings. Rather, the outward sign of having the Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit. It's also an obedient and holy life. THAT is spirituality. You don't have to be Charismatic to have that fruit. In fact, I'd say it can help if you are not.

#### **4---Disregarding scripture and objective truth in general for feelings and "experience"**

On a similar vein, Pentes keep many fooled or too complacent to care by placing feeling and experience above objective truth and Holy Scripture. They seem to be at war with reason. By making feelings and experience number one, they make often blunt attempts to shut down critical thinking, a crucial skill which would allow nearly anyone to see through their fakery. Moreover, they shut down good interpretation of the Bible and strong reliance on it, because either one would threaten their non-biblical forms of worship and their terrible and truly threatening teachings which they have allowed in.

The Pente movement has indeed allowed in almost uncritically not just oddball teachings but heretical ones. The shutting down of the mind and the lowering of esteem for scripture allow these false doctrines to flood in and flourish. No one will challenge them. So lives get ruined. Souls and eternal destinies threatened. Pentes often will criticize those who turn to the scriptures or to objective truth for being so "critical." This shutting down of the mind keeps the masses deceived. Are you one of those whose mind has been shut down in this way? There is always time to turn it back on again. Examine the truth for yourself. Respect that the truth can be known. Respect that God IS truth and His Word perfect. Then I sincerely believe you will be released from the seductive elevation of personal experience. You'll also learn how unbiblical are many of the Pente doctrines. To love truth is to love God.

## **5---Ignoring the Natural World and Providence:**

Brethren, this error covers some territory of a few others I write on here, but I think it deserves its own section. It's definitely its own thought. Charismatics frequently keep themselves convinced that we have walking Moseses and Elijahs today by ignoring that much of what God does in our lives actually falls within the natural world, as well as the less than miraculous, but still extraordinary world called PROVIDENCE. Let's not forget about the natural world. A believer does not need to call every correct prediction a prophecy, or every good event a miracle, when the natural world and providence easily explain them. We may have correct understanding of the future or deep knowledge of a stranger due to the reason and intuition that God gave us. It's really that simple. We can make correct predictions with reason and intuition too. Biblical prophecy, in contrast to our best imaginings, was ALWAYS correct. Our intuition is not, but sometimes it is, and that's good. It's a tool that God gave us. Likewise, extraordinary events in our lives which seem set up by God need not be called a miracle, but can easily be called providence, which refers to God's acting through history to establish His will.

You see, God really acts and speaks to us through the creation He made all the time. It's His creation after all. We don't have to call every correct sense we have new revelation from God. We don't have to call every way that God reveals Himself "special revelation." He reveals Himself in the natural world all the time, and it is not the same as biblical revelation. For example, Romans 1 tells us we can even know the attributes of God through the natural world. This alone should be enough to let us know that we don't need to stick our correct inferences in the category of biblical prophecy. To give you one more example, I like many have had dreams that communicated a spiritual message to me. I've even had one that portrayed events that would occur in the coming year. Do I have to call any of them new revelation from God? No, of course not. What's wrong with calling them for what they are – the human mind and imagination. I know it doesn't sound as dramatic or as important, but it's still good. Often, it even teaches us important things. The natural world does that all the time. I simply cannot stress that enough.

So I hope you can see that ignoring God's action in the natural, or mistaking it for something else, is a big trap for people to fall into the Charismatic belief system. Try to start calling those things for what they are. They are still from God. They are still sometimes incredible. They're just not what Charismatics make them out to be. Your mind, even when you have help from God in using it, is still your mind.

## **6---Putting trust in the fools on television (and other popular media)**

Sad to say it, but even sincere believers, and mature ones, can fall for the huckster performers like the ones you see on TV. I also include the hucksters you don't see on TV, but are busy mesmerizing people elsewhere. Good and sincere believers can put their trust in the wrong men. Once they've put their trust in them, they can be easily manipulated by them. More than once I have heard a friend or acquaintance tell me the admiration they have for the televangelists, for the fake healers. It truly shocks me, and saddens me. But just as I would point a Mormon to examine the character of the founders of Mormonism to see what kind of people they were, I would also ask the Pente to examine these performers to really see if they are worth trusting. These are men who do outright fakes on stage. They have people hop up from wheelchairs who do not even need one. They have people throw away canes who do even use one. They even do sleight-of-hand tricks to convince an audience of their fake miracle. They are simply dishonest. That's why when someone comes along and asks for good documentation of miracle healings, they simply cannot provide it; because miracles have not been occurring.

I realize that description covers quite a wide berth of people, and everyone's technique might vary some, but these men use deception either way. Even the subtler methods are deceptions to get people fooled. These are techniques such as bringing to the stage only people they know have mild conditions rather than severe conditions, so the audience will see them do more and be convinced that a healing has occurred. Examine these men and their methods. You will find they practice both subtle manipulation and outright trickery. It doesn't make you stupid to get fooled by a con man. But it makes you a fool if you refuse to care.

## **7---Calling everything good a miracle**

If we peruse through the miracles of the Bible we notice one thing quickly. Nearly all are incredibly grand and defy reasonable, naturalistic explanation. In the times of Moses, we have the daily manna, and the visible presence leading Israel in the desert. These are truly great and unexplainable occurrences. From Elijah and Elisha we have healings of organic illnesses such as leprosy and the raising of the dead. In the New Covenant we see lepers, blind, lame and deaf healed in an instant. We see resurrections. We see Yeshua walking on water. All of these things are acts of God so great and so beyond the ordinary that God used them to confirm His messengers and to confirm the Savior of mankind. People could look at these events and know with greater certitude that God was behind them and that His messenger truly had credibility. They were able to achieve this because of their greatness, because they could not be explained by ordinary means.

However, many believers today -- and this is especially true among Pentes, for whom the word miracle is as common as water -- look at everything good as a miracle. If they received a check in the mail just when they needed money, they call it a miracle. Well, is receiving a check in the mail at a beneficial time truly as unexplainable as the parting of the Red Sea? Does it transcend the natural order as do other great miracles in the Bible? It is easy to see that it does not. Others will call it a miracle if they heal from an illness, ignoring the fact that it happened over months and with top medical care. Others will call the lessening of symptoms of a disease a miracle, but there is nothing miraculous about lessened symptoms even if it comes from God. Healing a leper with a touch is a miracle. Having your inflammation decrease is not. It simply does not compare to miracles in the Bible generally. So why use the same word to describe it?

By calling virtually anything good a miracle, Pentes hold themselves in their deception. They elevate their own experiences to those in the Bible, then they can look and say -- there are lots of miracles in my life too! But this is simply dishonest. Not only that, but by comparing more ordinary events with those truly incredible ones in the Bible, Pentes downgrade the Word of God and they downgrade the power of prophets. They profane these things. The Pentecostal who fairly and sincerely wants to know the truth, will really stop and examine what a miracle is in the Bible. If he desires to stay in his deception, of course he will not. No one who wishes to remain deceived cares much what the Bible teaches anyway. However, a real examination of the nature of biblical miracles is one good way to lead a Pente believer to the truth.

### **What do You Believe?**

I think it's fair to say that all of the above are tricks of the mind. They may be unintentional. They may be intentional. But they harm the comprehension of truth and we should avoid them. But if we avoid them, what are we looking at? What do we see now in dropping these blinders? Let me tell you this. If you believe that God acts today, that does not make you a Charismatic. If you believe God still does miracles in this day, that does not make you a Charismatic. If you believe it is good for us to pray for the sick, you are not a Charismatic. If you use your spiritual "intuition," that does not make you a Charismatic. If you sense a personal presence of God in your being, that does not make you a Charismatic. NONE of that makes you Charismatic. The real defining traits that make you Charismatic are that you believe that God still bestows gifts on believers whereby they regularly do true miracles, such as cleansing lepers with a touch. That is what makes you Charismatic.

With that in mind, I want to invite you to join in with the rest of the Body of Messiah. By that I mean the Church that from a very early point in history recognized that these unique gifts had ended. We are born again. We have a personal relationship with God. We trust in Him for our salvation. We are filled with the Holy Spirit. We desire to be His children who experience His perfect divine life daily. And we do believe in miracles. We do use our spiritual intuition. I think many of you in the Charismatic movement know that this is where you belong, but have been making excuses, both for the movement and for yourself. So as always, I invite you to see through some of the mind games that go on, and take a clear look at the truth. The clear truth is an assembly led by the Holy Spirit and giving its life over to the life of God, day by day. Emotional highs and theatrics are rare. True joy is daily.

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