



Speaking in Tongues

The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

By: A. Reuben Hartwick

The Assemblies of God Constitution and Bylaws, Article V, Statement of Fundamental Truths, reads as follows:

Paragraph 7: The Baptism in the Holy Ghost

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 15:7-9). With the baptism in the Holy Ghost come such experiences as an over-owing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

Paragraph 8: The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost

The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28), but different in purpose and use.

Definition of Terms

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an endowment with power from on high for life and service. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). In Matthew 3:11 the term is first used by John the Baptist. In Acts 1:5 Jesus used it and said, “in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Peter used it when reporting the events with the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house. “Then I remembered what the Lord had said ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:16). It is different from and subsequent to the new birth. The Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Christ baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). In the above two references, a different member of the Trinity acts and the believer is baptized in a different element.

Initial Physical Evidence

What is the first or initial thing that happens to one who is baptized in the Spirit? What is the first physical, noticeable, observable sign? What is the first physical evidence or proof that one can confidently say, “I have received the Promise of the Father?” To each of the above questions, the answer is “speaking in tongues.” However, we need to remember that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is more than the initial physical evidence — it is a continuing experience. Its purpose is also to enrich and edify the individual in his relationship to Christ in personal devotion and adoration of our blessed Savior. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is NOT an end in itself; it is not a goal, but a gateway to a Spirit-filled and empowered life. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul exhorts us to “be filled with the Spirit.” The continuing evidence is the Fruit of the

Spirit being manifested in the Christian's life in a fuller way.

What was the usual evidence when the Spirit came upon a person in the Old Testament? In Numbers 11:25-26 the seventy were chosen by Moses and "when the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied." On Eldad and Medad "the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp." In 1 Samuel 10:6, Saul was told that the Spirit would come upon him and he would prophesy and be turned into another man. David wrote in 2 Samuel 23:1-2, "the Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; His word was on my tongue." Still in the Old Testament economy, but recorded in the New Testament, Elizabeth (in Luke 1:41-42) was filled with the Holy Spirit and she spoke out with a loud voice in what has been called her Beatitude. On hearing this, Mary in verse 46 exclaims, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." This has been called her Magnificat. Around the birth of the Savior numerous peoples broke out spontaneously in words of praise. The shepherds returned from the stable singing their Doxology. Aged Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple and said, "Sovereign Lord, . . . you now dismiss your servant in peace. . . ." (Luke 2:29) in his Nunc Dimittis. In each of these instances, speech was evident when the Spirit came on them.

Glossolalia

The word glossolalia is made up of two Greek words: glosso meaning "tongues," and lalia meaning "speech." Consequently, we use the term, "speaking in tongues." On the Day of Pentecost what the disciples were saying was understood by about 15 different peoples in their own dialect or language. This was not an ecstatic "out of the body" experience. They were aware of their surroundings. Though an unknown language to the speaker, glossolalia can be a recognized or unrecognized language to the hearers. In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul writes, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels. . . ." He also says of speaking in tongues, "Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God" (1 Corinthians 14:2). Consequently on the Day of Pentecost, the visitors to Jerusalem heard the newly Spirit-baptized disciples "declaring the wonders of God" (Acts 2:11). Jesus had said in John 16:13-14, "When he, the Spirit of Truth comes, . . . He will bring glory to me. . . ." Glossolalia is not used for evangelizing, since later that same day, Peter preached his famous sermon — perhaps inspired speech taking the form of a word of prophecy — in the language that all of them understood (Acts 2:14).

Biblical Occurrences

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a distinct and subsequent work of God apart from salvation. Jesus said in Acts 1:5, "in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." They were already regenerated. "You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). Jesus promised in John 15:26-27 "I will send . . . the Spirit of truth." On Resurrection Sunday, as recorded in John 20:19-22, He "breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Did they receive the Spirit then? On Ascension Day Jesus was still promising the coming of the Spirit: "stay in the city until. . . ." (Luke 24:49). In Acts 1:1-4 we read, "wait for the gift my Father promised . . . in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." The disciples were told by Jesus before His ascension to tarry in the city of Jerusalem UNTIL they were endued with power from on high to be witnesses. It was a command, not an option.

The Book of Acts records a number of occasions where the Holy Spirit came upon believers. On the Day of Pentecost there was a wind and tongues of fire that were never repeated. In Acts 4 there was an earthquake that was not repeated. But there are repeated instances when the believers spoke in tongues. On the Day of Pentecost, the multitude gathered and heard the believers speaking in tongues. The conclusion of some who heard was that they were drunk. Peter refuted the charge that this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy recorded in Joel 2. At the Gentile Cornelius' house in Caesarea, eight years after the Day of Pentecost, the believing Jews were surprised that the Gentiles were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45). The Jews who came with Peter were not surprised that the Gentiles could be converted. They expected that would be the result of Peter's preaching since there were proselytes in Judaism. (One of the first deacons in Acts 6 was a proselyte.) At Caesarea there were two experiences with only a short time between salvation and the reception of "the like gift." "God bare witness" by giving them the Holy Spirit. Acceptance of the gospel preceded the receiving of the Spirit.

At Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 19:1-7, 20 years after the Day of Pentecost, there was another case of subsequence. Paul found a group of believers (verse 2) whom he asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Who were they? These were disciples of John the Baptist. Paul knew the Holy Spirit is necessary for salvation, BUT had

they been empowered since they believed? He then laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. This was a subsequent experience.

In the city of Samaria, Acts 8, Philip the evangelist had preached Jesus to the people. They believed and were baptized in water. Word came to the apostles in Jerusalem of the revival, so Peter and John went down to pray for them to receive the Spirit “because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them” (8:16), though they were saved and baptized in water. Simon, the sorcerer, saw that through the apostles something observable happened; so he offered money if they would grant him the power to produce similar results. What did Simon see? We can assume he observed them speaking in tongues.

In Acts 9, after Saul/Paul’s salvation experience on the Damascus Road, he was praying for three days when Ananias was commissioned to go and pray for him. Ananias remonstrated, but was persuaded to go when the Lord informed him, “he [Saul] is praying.” He entered the house, addressed Saul as BROTHER, and said, “The Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” The evidence is not given in Acts 9, but in 1 Corinthians 14:18 where Paul states, “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.” When did he begin to speak? Probably when Ananias prayed for him to receive the Spirit. Reasonably, if a pattern has been established, the occasional absence of reciting every element of the pattern is really strengthening the pattern since it is assumed that the readers will make appropriate inferences from the established pattern.

Doctrinal Basis

Our view on any doctrine must be based not on experience, but on Scripture. The experience must be judged by and conform to Scripture. The truth of tongues as the initial, physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism is based on Scripture. All we say and do as Pentecostal/charismatics must be judged by Scripture.

We believe Acts, which is sacred history, intends to teach the doctrine of tongues as the initial physical evidence. Some say it is incorrect hermeneutically to use such narrative history as a doctrinal basis. They claim doctrine can be based on only more overtly didactic material, such as the epistles. HOWEVER, the virgin birth, a cardinal doctrine of all Evangelicals, is related only in historical narrative in the gospels (Matthew 1 and Luke 1). In Isaiah 7:14 it was prophesied that “the virgin shall conceive and bear a son.” This is quoted in Matthew 1:23. Luke calls Mary a parthenon, which it translated as “a virgin.” In the epistles, however, this event is asserted the law. . . .” (Galatians 4:4). Roger Stronstad’s *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* justifies this historical narrative for doctrine as follows:

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction” (Romans 15:4). Thus, to cite but one example of Paul’s methodology, the experience of Israel in the wilderness “happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). If for Paul the historical narratives of the Old Testament had didactic lessons for New Testament Christians, then it would be most surprising if Luke, who modeled his historiography after the Old Testament historiography, did not invest his own history of the origin and spread of Christianity with a didactic significance.¹

Typologically, Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth is the same as former rejections of the prophets. As Moses transferred the Spirit on the seventy, including Eldad and Medad, God anointed Jesus with the Spirit; Jesus in turn would baptize His followers in the Holy Spirit. Again, we must base our conclusion on Scripture and not experience. Experience must be judged by Scripture, not Scripture by experience.

The disciples were told in Luke 24:49 to tarry until they were endued with power from on high. How were they to know they had received? By faith or by a sign? The disciples left the upper room knowing they had tarried until they received. Peter boldly declared to the assembled crowd that what they had observed was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy which they, too, could experience. Peter did not lay hands on them in Cornelius’ house, yet he knew they had received the “like gift.” Paul knew the Ephesian Christians had received when he laid hands on them “for they spoke with tongues.”

Tongues In History

We can also ask, is there evidence for the presence of glossolalia in church history subsequent to New Testament times? Reports of glossolalia appeared among the Waldensians of Northern Italy, the Jansenites in the Lowlands, the Huguenots of France, and the Quakers of England among others.² Even a 1944 edition of Encyclopedia Britannica (Volume 22:283) suggests that “glossolalia recurs in Christian revivals of every age. ”

Verse three of the hymn “O Sacred Head Now Wounded,” generally attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux of the 12th Century, reads:

What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest Friend,
For this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?
O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never, outlive my love to thee.

Do you ever feel like that? You want to express your love for the Lord, but find words inadequate? Your English is not expressive enough. As the Psalmist wrote, “deep calleth unto deep.” Unfortunately, in Bernard of Clairvaux’s day, the Church was so interested in forms, ceremonies, Crusades, and material things that there were few who taught spiritual things. In our day we have been instructed by faithful pastors and teachers that the endowment with power is the privilege of all believers, even as Peter said in Acts 2:39, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Toward the end of the last century, there was the preaching of an experience of empowerment that was called the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In The Collected Writings of Edward Irving, he had written: “Beyond all question ... speaking in tongues was the sign of the Holy Ghost in the person who so spake ... as the tongue or word of man is the sign of the mind within him; so, when another Spirit, the Spirit of God, enters into him, He signifieth His presence by another tongue from that which the person himself useth.”

Unfortunately, Irving was not correct in all his views and practices in his Caledonian Chapel of London, but the above was his sentiment on this subject. Although there is little evidence that he himself ever did speak with tongues, he taught it and encouraged others in his church to speak.³

The question at the close of the 19th century centered around the sign/evidence that one had received the Spirit about whom such men as A.J. Gordon, A.B. Simpson, Charles Finney, and D.L. Moody preached. Reuben A. Torrey wrote:

“The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and subsequent and additional to His regenerating work. A man may be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and still not be baptized with the Holy Spirit. In regeneration there is an impartation of life, and the one who receives it is saved; in the Baptism with the Holy Spirit there is an impartation of power and the one who receives it is fitted for service.”⁴ Charles F. Parham’s assignment to his students at Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, was to ascertain how a New Testament believer knew he had received the Holy Spirit. His students presented him with the result of their inductive study of the New Testament that was that speaking in tongues was the Biblical pattern. As a direct outcome of this study, Agnes Ozman, a student, received the expected tongues on January 1, 1901.

Conclusion

A pattern has been established in the Book of Acts which is: 1) OBSERVABLE-by saint and sinner alike, 2) UNIFORM-they spoke in tongues, 3) VERBAL-they were declaring the wonderful works of God, and above all, it is 4) SUPERNATURAL-nothing is done by the recipient. Considering the biblical, doctrinal, and historical evidence, all believers should be earnestly seeking to be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

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Notes

1. Roger Stronstad, *A Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 7. For additional study consult: Donald Lee Barnett and Jeffrey P. McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues* (Seattle, WA: Community Chapel Publications, 1986); Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Critique of James D. G. Dunn*, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984); Harold Hunter, *Spirit-Baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (University Press of America, 1983); Gary B. McGee, ed., *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); Watson E. Mills, *Speaking in Tongues: A Classified Bibliography* (Costa Mesa, CA: Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1974); Siegfried Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987); and John Sims, *Power with Purpose: The Holy Spirit in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1984).
2. From a sympathetic observer, see the writings of Stanley M. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) and *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989); also see, Ronald Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984) as well as Cecil M. Roebuck, Jr., ed., *Charismatic Experiences in History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985). For evidence found in the Patristic writings of the church fathers consult the multivolume *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983, 1985), especially writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Gregory of Nazianzen.
3. Page 545. See also Mrs. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving, Minister of the National Scotch Church, London. Illustrated by His Journals and Correspondence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1862).
4. Reuben A. Torrey, *What the Bible Teaches: A Thorough and Comprehensive Study of what the Bible has to Say Concerning the Great Doctrines of which it Treats* (New York Fleming H. Revell, 1898-1933) 271.

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