

# *Glossolalia*

**SPEAKING IN TONGUES  
AND INITIAL  
PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

BY DR. TIMOTHY LAURITO



# Glossolalia

## Speaking in Tongues and Initial Physical Evidence

By Dr. Timothy Laurito

Congratulations on seeking to either receive or advance your ministerial credential with the Assemblies of God! As a credential applicant with the *Rocky Mountain Ministry Network*, you will be expected to demonstrate a general understanding of our *Statements of 16 Fundamental Truths*. Two of those truths concern the baptism in the Holy Spirit and what is called the “initial physical evidence” of that baptism. The purpose of this article is to assist you in preparing for your credential exam and interview concerning these two essential truths by giving you a better scriptural, theological, and practical understanding of these central Pentecostal doctrines.

Within the article, you will discover a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues which focuses on how speaking in tongues is connected to initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism and its necessity for the Church today. By systematically examining the events of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the miracle with the Samaritan believers (Acts 8), the Spirit baptism of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10), and the outpouring of the Spirit on the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19) this article will offer a Pentecostal theology of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence.

Whether you are just beginning your ministry or have many years of experience, you will benefit from this no-fluff apologetic of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit baptism. Open your spirit and prepare to both learn and experience!

\*The following is a chapter from the book *Speaking in Tongues: A Multidisciplinary Defense*. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers, [www.wipfandstock.com](http://www.wipfandstock.com). The book can be purchased at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1666713872>



## 1. The Day of Pentecost

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:1–12)*

The Day of Pentecost serves as a critical instance of research for a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues. Not only because it is the first occurrence but because it emphasizes speaking in tongues to be the initial physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism and relevant for the church today. Upon the arrival of the Day of Pentecost, the disciples were waiting at Jerusalem to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the commands of Christ (Acts 1:4). The pilgrimage festival of Pentecost (Weeks) was the second of the three great harvest festivals of Judaism, taking place between Passover and Tabernacles. In the Old Testament, Pentecost is referred to as the Festival of Weeks and was a

celebration of the wheat harvest.<sup>1</sup> This Feast would occur seven weeks after Passover on the sixth day of Sivan (Ex. 23:14–17). F. F. Bruce summarizes the importance of this feast by stating:

The day of Pentecost was so called because it fell on the fiftieth day after the presentation of the first sheaf to be reaped of the barley harvest, that is, the fiftieth day from the first Sunday after Passover (πεντηκοστῆς being the Greek word for “fiftieth”).<sup>2</sup>

In describing the supernatural phenomenon that took place on this occasion, Luke divides the celestial visitation of the Spirit into three distinct but simultaneous events. These events include a sudden hurricane-like sound originating from heaven (Acts 2:2), the individual appearance of fire-like tongues on all the believers (Acts 2:3), and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which resulted in Spirit-directed speech in other tongues (Acts 2:4). The first two signs of the Spirit's arrival were visible, external forces. However, the last sign of speaking in tongues was an internal force making itself visible and signified the Spirit's indwelling within the disciples. This distinction is important because, while the hurricane-like sound and the fire-like tongues are never repeated in association with Spirit-baptism, the internal sign of Spirit-indwelling (as evidenced by speaking in tongues) is repeated throughout the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke is quite clear that, upon receiving the Holy Spirit, *all* the disciples gathered in the Upper Room, where both filled and spoke with other tongues (Acts 2:4). It was *the* external sign of speaking in tongues that signified the Spirit's internal infilling. Stanley Horton says, “Only one sign was a part of the Pentecostal baptism. All who were filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. That is, they used their tongues, their muscles, they spoke.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, Luke plainly describes that the visible sign of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, 97.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 49.

<sup>3</sup> Horton, *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit?* 143.



Holy Spirit's arrival on the Day of Pentecost was the disciple's ability to speak boldly in an unknown tongue through the direction of the Spirit.

## **Speaking in Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence**

While not universally accepted by all within the Pentecostal movement, the classical pentecostal position of initial physical evidence means that Pentecostals expect speaking in tongues as the external marker of the reception of Spirit baptism. From a classical Pentecostal perspective, this outward sign is speaking in tongues. The earliest reference to speaking in tongues being called the "initial evidence" is in the Statement of Fundamental Truths of the Assembly of God, composed and adopted in 1916.<sup>4</sup>

We should not overlook the fact that the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was the first external sign to the diaspora Jews at Pentecost that something supernatural of the Spirit had occurred. Because Luke places the disciples' speech as being before the gathering crowds, this suggests that it was speaking in tongues that served as the "sign" to others that a Spirit-indwelling moment had occurred.<sup>5</sup> The speaking in tongues of the disciples on the Day of Pentecost not only served as the catalyst which brought about awareness of the Spirit's arrival, but it served as a *visible* testimony to His work of Spirit-baptism. Since this is the case, it is logical to conclude that Luke intends that the initial sign of the Spirit's indwelling those at Pentecost was that they spoke in other tongues. Carl Brumback agrees with the clarity of the Acts 2 text:

There can be no question in any unprejudiced mind that the fact which this narrative sets before us is, that the disciples began to speak in various languages. All attempts to evade this are connected with some forcing of the text, or some far-fetched and indefensible explanation.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The 1916 Statement of Fundamental Truths can be found through the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center.

<sup>5</sup> Mills, *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossolalia*, 62.

<sup>6</sup> Brumback, *Tongues*, 43.

Without question, speaking in tongues was not simply one of many signs of Spirit-baptism but was *the* sign to the gathered crowd that something supernatural had occurred. Just as with other divine acts, there is a physical evidential component to the event of Pentecost, namely speaking in tongues.

At this point, it is critical to note that the revelatory work of the Spirit within humanity does not happen independently of human awareness of that work. That is to say, God has designed that the experiential workings of divine presence through the Spirit be done in such a way that humanity is cognitive of this action. Therefore, any attempt to strip the externally visible sign of speaking in other tongues is to miss a significant factor in Luke's description of the Day of Pentecost. The manifestation of speaking in tongues as an external sign of the Holy Spirit's arrival is but the first instance of the biblical precedence for speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is abundantly clear that Luke intended his readers to understand that Spirit-baptism was available too—and indeed, should be experienced by—every believer.

From a Pentecostal perspective, the Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, not as the source of salvific work but rather as the source of power for effective witness. For this reason, Pentecostals describe Spirit-baptism as an experience distinct from conversion, which unleashes a new dimension of the Spirit's power. One which is repeatedly marked in Luke's account by the presence of speaking in other tongues.

## **Speaking in Tongues as for the Church Today**

In contrast to the Pentecostal view that all spiritual manifestations of the Spirit are still in operation today, some Christians hold to a cessationist belief concerning the work of the Spirit. Cessationism teaches that the spiritual gifts outlined in scripture have now ceased their operation within the church and are no longer needed. Jimmy Jividen outlines the position of the cessationist by stating, "The *glossa* (tongue) gift in the New Testament—along with other

miraculous signs—served their purpose and passed away. What is passing for the *glossa* gift today is no more than a psychological phenomenon which finds expression in ecstatic utterances.”<sup>7</sup>

The cessationists argues that the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not a subsequent work to salvation for the disciples, but it was an inextricable part of salvation for the disciples. Merrill Unger argues for this position:

The baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost was not a second experience of power, but a vital and inseparable part of the so great salvation Jesus purchased by His redemption on the cross. Hence the only relation of Pentecost's tongues to the baptism of the Spirit is that those saved so spoke, the baptism being a part of their salvation not an experience subsequent to it.<sup>8</sup>

However, this position originates from a false assumption that the church was “born” on the Day of Pentecost. A closer examination of scripture reveals that the church began much earlier than the events that took place in Acts 2.

After the resurrection of Christ, Jesus appears to the disciples who were hiding behind closed doors out of fear. He said, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). These words of evangelistic commission to the disciples, were immediately followed by Christ breathing on them and commanding, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained” (John 20:23). This passage presents an ecclesiological paradigm for the origins of the church beginning before the Day of Pentecost from two distinguishing aspects.

First, it is evident that the purpose of Christ breathing (ἐνεφύσησεν) upon the disciples was to accomplish a supernatural work of the Spirit. Consequently,

---

<sup>7</sup> Jividen, *Glossolalia*, 144.

<sup>8</sup> Unger, *New Testament Teachings on Tongues*, 29.



this very same Greek word is used in the Septuagint, as God breathed the breath of life into Adam (Gen. 2:7). Moreover, just as in the case of Adam, this supernatural breathing was not merely a symbolic act. Rather, it was an actual impartation of the divine Spirit of God. Since Christ had been crucified, risen, and glorified, the regenerative life of the Spirit—made possible through faith in Christ—was now able to be administered to Christ's disciples.

To further substantiate the salvific nature of Christ's breathing on the disciples, we see that Christ prophesied that when the Spirit did come, He would dwell within them, "that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). The glorious transition of the Spirit from being *with* the disciples to being *within* the disciples predates the work of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. This well-defined depiction of Spirit indwelling, post-resurrection and pre-Pentecost, reveals an undeniable regenerative work of the Spirit within the disciples which precedes their Spirit-baptism on the Day of Pentecost.

Secondly, it is quite clear from the words of Christ that the reason for breathing (ἐνεφύσησεν) Spirit-life into the disciples was for salvific purposes. The life of the Spirit being breathed into the disciples enabled them to now be facilitators of Christ's atoning work of salvation. Yet, how can this be possible if they were not first recipients of that atoning work themselves? The obvious answer is that since this event immediately follows the resurrection of Christ, it is logical to assert that this moment of Christ breathing upon them was in fact a regenerative moment for the disciples, as previously ascertained. From these two indicators, an ecclesiological case can be made that the church was already in existence prior to the Spirit-baptism which took place on the Day of Pentecost.

At this point, it should be noted that simply because the disciples experienced a subsequent work of the Spirit prior to Acts 2, this does nothing to diminish the work of the Spirit upon regeneration. Instead, Spirit-baptism should

be seen to facilitate the continual deepening of the Spirit's work in the believer's life. The Pentecostal's insistence that Luke teaches a subsequent work of the Spirit after salvation in no way suggests a minimizing of the salvific work of the Spirit.

In attempting to minimize the significance of the disciples salvific experience in John 20:22, James Dunn writes, "We cannot simply assume that the Gospels and Acts are all bare historical narratives which complement each other in a direct 1:1 ratio; nor can we assume that Luke and John have the same emphases and aims."<sup>9</sup> While this argument is valid in some cases, it is invalid when comparing John (John 20:22) and Luke (Acts 2) because the emphases and aim of both writers are to explain the impetus of the Spirit's arrival. In both cases, the biblical author is seeking to explain the operation of the Spirit in the life of the followers of Christ. Additionally, some critics argue that biblical narratives teach us only about God's actions in the past, and they are not meant to provide us with models for our responses to God. However, this is clearly not the way that Jesus or the Apostles viewed the function of biblical narratives. Both Jesus and the Apostles used Old Testament narratives to teach essential truths regarding faith and obedience to God.<sup>10</sup>

The fact remains, the cessationist position concerning the ceasing of spiritual manifestations is not consistent with what the early church believed. Peter preaching to the questioning crowd that had gathered in response to the Spirit's work on the Day of Pentecost states:

*For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: "And it shall be in the last days, God says, "That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions,*

---

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics*, 23.

*and your old men shall dream dreams; Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:15–18).*

These words of explanation regarding the outpouring of the Spirit reveal that Peter believed that Spirit-baptism was intended to be for all the church, both past and present. There is no hint that Peter views the events of Pentecost as being intended to be available for a limited few, for a limited time, at the beginning of church history.

While the Spirit's initial arrival was obviously a one-time event, His impact and influence were never intended to be limited to the early church. To confirm that the working of the Spirit must continue past this time to the return of the Lord, Peter prophetically recites the words of the prophet Joel:

*It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (Joel 2:28–31).*

It is evident that both the prophet Joel and Peter view these signs as being in reference to eschatological (end-time) events. This connection signifies that the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit (as manifested on the Day of Pentecost) have a purpose for the entirety of the church age and not just the early days of the Apostles.

Roger Stronstad addresses Peter's understanding of the continual function of the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

As Luke's history of the spread of Christianity shows, as a being baptized in the Holy Spirit kind of experience, new disciples, will



continue to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Clearly, Peter understood it correctly. The Father's promise given through John the Baptist about being baptized in the Holy Spirit is for the first generation of disciples, their children, namely, the second generation, and, indeed, for all who are afar off.<sup>11</sup>

As such, Luke's account of the early church reveals that being baptized in the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by speaking in tongues, was intended to continue throughout the generations of the church. Starting with the events on the Day of Pentecost, each Lukan account of Spirit-baptism builds an unmistakable pattern that reveals a divine purpose for the use of speaking in tongues. To this point Amos Yong writes,

This gift of the spirit was promised by the Father (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4) to empower witness to the world about God's deeds of power (Acts 2:11). Even as Acts 1:8 structures the arc of the narrative so that the spirit-empowered witness travels from Jerusalem (Acts 2:1–5:11) through Judea (Acts 5:12–8:3) and Samaria (Acts 8:4–25) and on to the ends of the earth (Acts 8:26–28:31), effectively arriving in Rome (Acts 28:11–31), literally the edge of the known world from an Israel-centered point of view, the initial pentecostal outpouring was given...what we have here is a primordial form of reverse mission, the unexpected phenomenon whereby the local Galilean messianists not only proclaim the good news to the world at their doors but are transformed by the witness that comes in and through these other languages.<sup>12</sup>

Luke's description of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost introduces a Lukan theology on the purpose and function of

---

<sup>11</sup> Stronstad, "On Being Baptized in the Holy Spirit," 173.

<sup>12</sup> Yong, *Mission After Pentecost*, 172.

speaking in tongues. Since the purpose of the Spirit's arrival at Pentecost was not soteriological, the events establish a clear biblical precedent for speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. Additionally, Peter's explanation of this event reveals that speaking in tongues is meant to remain a sign of Spirit-baptism for the church today. While the historical advent of the Holy Spirit's emergence at Pentecost was a one-time event, the results of this event were never intended to be limited to one generation of people or group. This is evident by the fact that from the first time the Spirit was poured out, speaking in tongues was present, and this pattern continues to be repeated throughout Luke's account.

## 2. What Did Simon See?

*Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. (Acts 8:14–25)*

Of the accounts that Luke provides concerning the subject of speaking in tongues, the case of what took place with the Samaritan believers has been the subject of much discussion and debate. The narrative compels the reader to address the chronological separation between the salvific faith of the Samaritans and their reception of the Holy Spirit. Stronstad explains the importance of these issues:

Not only did their faith fail to affect the reception of the Spirit, but their baptism likewise failed to be the locus of their reception of the Spirit. This is a vexing theological problem for many



interpreters, for it contradicts their theological presupposition concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the Samaritan case presenting the problem of Spirit reception after salvation, Luke also, unlike any of the other three accounts of Spirit-baptism (Acts 2, 10, 19), chooses not to disclose the specific manifestation of the Spirit. This ambiguity has resulted in an ongoing attempt to understand what precisely Simon saw when Peter and John prayed for these converts to be baptized in the Holy Spirit? Thus, while Luke provides undeniable evidence that some outwardly observable manifestation occurred in association with the Samaritan disciples receiving the Holy Spirit, he remains silent on what was apparent to all those who observed. However, Luke's silence does not mean we cannot arrive at an accurate understanding of what took place in Samaria.

This section will examine Luke's development of the events at Samaria. The analysis reveals that these believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit *after* their conversion and that the manifestation of the Spirit was speaking in tongues. Furthermore, this section on the events in Samaria will further establish the importance of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism and as a relevant spiritual manifestation for the church today.

## **Speaking in Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence**

From Luke's account, there can be no doubt that a visible manifestation occurred among the Samaritan believers, which indicated that they had received the Holy Spirit. However, Luke is silent on what that manifestation was. The issue then debated by scholars in this account is this: What was the visible manifestation that Simon saw the Samaritans receive?

It is first essential to understand the immediate context of what Simon had already witnessed when asking this question. As a recent convert to Christianity

---

<sup>13</sup> Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 72.

(possibly at the same time as the other Samaritans), Simon has already wondered at the signs and miracles that Philip performed during his preaching (Acts 8:13). Simon, who was previously a magician and well-versed in the enchantment of sorcerous wonders, knew that what Philip was doing had its origin in the supernatural. However, what happened to the Samaritans through the ministry of Peter and John was different. This new miracle created a lustful desire within Simon to possess its potential for himself.

Some have suggested that what Simon saw (and thus desired) was simply the Samaritans prophesying or exhibiting ecstatic utterances. However, these explanations seem wholly inadequate when one considers that Simon was willing to pay money for the power to give this manifestation that he saw to others. Prophecy would not have been a novelty to Simon, and ecstatic utterances would hardly have been worth Simon's money since he already knew how to mesmerize a crowd (Acts 8:9–11). Furthermore, if we compare the amazement of the crowd on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:12) to how Simon marveled at what he saw the Samaritans receive, it is logical to assert that the outward visible manifestation exhibited by the Samaritans that Simon saw and desired was to speak in tongues. F. F. Bruce also arrives at this same conclusion by stating, "The context (of the Samaritan case of baptism in Holy Spirit) leaves us in no doubt that their reception of the Spirit was attended by external manifestation such as had marked His descent on the earliest disciples at Pentecost."<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, some have argued that because Luke is silent concerning speaking in tongues in this text, this serves as proof that this spiritual manifestation should not be required as a sign of Spirit-baptism. This argument suggests that if Luke intended to teach evidential tongues as normative, why does he not present tongues as the immediate result of Spirit-baptism in the case of the Samaritan's Spirit-baptism? Yet, an argument from silence in this

---

<sup>14</sup> Bruce, "Book of Acts," 181.

particular case does nothing to weaken the overall pattern of speaking in tongues throughout Luke's accounts of Spirit-baptisms in Acts. Addressing this objection, Stanley Horton writes,

Luke often does not explain everything when it is clear elsewhere. For example, he does not mention water baptism every time he tells about people believing or being added to the Church, but it is clear that the failure to mention this is not significant.<sup>15</sup>

Luke's silence regarding speaking in tongues in the case of the Samaritan believers does nothing to negate its overall importance. Neither does it refute the biblical pattern of speaking in tongues being the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism throughout Acts (Acts 2, 10, 19). Instead, the context justifies the presence of speaking in tongues since the temporal separation between conversion and Spirit-baptism—as is clearly evident in the Samaritan account—fits the other narratives of Spirit-baptism. Therefore, when taken in context of the entirety of Luke's narrative it is not ambiguous what happened to the Samaritans when they received the Holy Spirit. They spoke in other tongues.

While Luke does not set out to produce a theology of Spirit-baptism in his account, which deliberately sets out to demonstrate that “tongues” is the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism, this reality, however, fails to render the doctrine invalid given the fact that within his narrative Luke continually portrays speaking in tongues as accompanying Spirit-baptism. In other words, Luke's purpose for his account is not primarily to set forth a systematic theology of any particular doctrine. However, this reality should not prevent Christians from drawing theological truths from Luke's narrative account of how the Spirit worked within the Acts of the Apostles.

Therefore, while speaking in tongues is not explicitly mentioned in the Samaritan case, the pattern of events is consistent with the other instances of

---

<sup>15</sup> Horton, *The Book of Acts*, 106.

the Spirit's indwelling. Speaking in tongues can be inferred.<sup>16</sup> Luke's focus on speaking in tongues shows the phenomenon is an expression of Spirit-inspired speech that miraculously unites a diversity of people together in prayer and praise. This pattern is replete throughout his account of the Acts of the Apostles. Therefore, while speaking in tongues is not mentioned explicitly in the Samaritan case, the Samaritan Spirit-baptism brought about unity in prayer and praise to these diverse people, pointing to speaking in tongues being evident. The wonder of the Samaritan Spirit-baptism for Luke was not in their glossolalic speech but in the fact that a despised group like the Samaritans are commissioned and empowered for the same mission as the Jewish disciples.

### **Speaking in Tongues as for the Church Today**

As we have already shown, Luke distinguishes the Holy Spirit that the Samaritans received from the hands of Peter and John as different from their initial faith in Christ. Consequently, it is apparent that the Apostles of the early church believed it was a necessity for these believing Samaritans to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Apostles commissioned Peter and John to travel up to Samaria for the expressed purpose of seeing the Samaritans baptized in the Holy Spirit. The outward manifestation that the Samaritans received can be logically shown to be speaking in tongues. This leads to an important contemporary question; is there anything within Luke's account of the Samaritans Spirit-baptism that points to speaking in tongues not being for the church today?

Some cessationists have supposed that, since the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, speaking in tongues could only be acquired through the administration of apostolic operation and thereby must have ceased after their departure. Yet, if this had been the divine means for the dispensation of speaking in tongues, then it would seem to follow

---

<sup>16</sup> Holdcraft, *The Holy Spirit*, 96.

that the Apostles would have received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost first and then laid their hands on the rest of the 120.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, there is no evidence in scripture that suggests that the Spirit's baptism should only come through some apostolic process. Furthermore, if Spirit-baptism is nothing more than a "salvation" experience, then by claiming an apostolic process was required, then nobody but the original apostles could receive salvation.

This cessationist position lacks both biblical and historical support. There is no biblical text which requires that Spirit-baptism should be imparted through the apostolic laying on of hands. While there are certainly instances where God uses this process, to require such a process to Spirit-baptism is to add a cessationist pretext to the biblical text. No additional evidence to the inaccuracy of this cessationist point is needed than the fact that Spirit-baptism as evidence by speaking in tongues is still widely witnessed today without the use of apostolic administration.

To state that the apostolic means of the Samaritan's receiving the Holy Spirit is evidence for its cessation after the apostolic period is to make a connection that neither Luke nor any of the other New Testament writers intended to make. Simply put, no evidence from this passage points to a cessationist perspective on speaking in tongues. Because of this reality, the obligation to prove the cessation of speaking in tongues from scripture rests upon the cessationist and not upon the Pentecostal. The clear biblical pattern of Spirit-baptism reveals that it should continue throughout the entirety of the church age.

A Lukan theology of Spirit-baptism reveals the Spirit's work of breaking down religious and cultural barriers in order to facilitate His missional advancement of the church. Frank Macchia sums it up powerfully by stating:

Glossolalia in this context is to be seen as an unclassifiable language that points to the hidden mystery of human freedom

---

<sup>17</sup> Nelson, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, 69.



before God that cuts through differences of gender, class, and culture to reveal a solidarity that is essential to our very being and that is revealed to us in God's own self-disclosure. It is the lowest common denominator between people who might be very different from one another, revealing a deep sense of equality that cannot be denied and that challenges any discrimination based on gender, class, or race.<sup>18</sup>

The work of the Spirit in Samaria is consistent with the unifying portrayal of a Lukan theology of Spirit-baptism, which portrays its purpose of missional empowerment and not about a salvific experience. Those who receive the Spirit-baptism in Luke-Acts are *already* abiding in a right relationship with God before the occurrence of Spirit-baptism. The cessationist perspective fails to consider the context of scripture accurately; when the context is taken into account, the cessationist argument is refuted. As such, there can be no valid argument for denying that the Samaritan account supports the fact that the ministry of Spirit-baptism is still present and relevant for the church today.

In Acts 8, Luke's account of the Samaritans being baptized in the Spirit helps establish a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism and empowerment relevant to the church today. There is no evidence within Luke's account that would advocate for Philip's gospel message being either incomplete or misunderstood by the Samaritans. That is, the Apostles did not go to Samaria to correct or clarify the doctrine of salvation so that regeneration could occur.<sup>19</sup> As such, the sole purpose of the Apostle's journey to these believing Samaritans was for them to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And while Luke does not mention speaking in tongues specifically in this instance, speaking in tongues can be logically inferred. First, the results of the Samaritans' Spirit-baptism are consistent with the Day of

---

<sup>18</sup> Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words," 66.

<sup>19</sup> Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 208.

Pentecost. Second, Simon witnessed something different in these Samaritans that he had never seen before. The one thing that fits these descriptions is speaking in tongues.

### 3. The Gentile Spirit-Baptism

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. (Acts 10:44–48)*

The third passage of scripture in which Luke mentions speaking in tongues is found in Acts 10:44–48. Luke sets up this account by explaining that the Spirit's work of baptism took place in the midst of a great cultural divide that stood between the Jews and Gentiles. No two other people groups had more social, political, and religious barriers than these. However, the Spirit-baptism of Cornelius and his household would establish a new precedent for the early church that would enable the fulfillment of Christ's mission (Acts 1:8). Through the divine outpouring of Spirit-baptism on these Gentiles, the early church became open to the full inclusion of Gentile believers as coequals under Christ.

Luke identifies the Roman Gentile Cornelius as a "God-fearer" and a "devout man" (Acts 10:2). Cornelius believed in God, but he could not practice faith in unity with Jewish believers due to cultural barriers. The wonder in Acts 10 then is not that Gentiles can become believers but that they are admitted as members of the church without the normal process of conversion to Judaism by circumcision first.<sup>20</sup> The most conclusive verification for the Apostles that Cornelius and his household could be accepted into the church was the fact that they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by speaking in tongues.

---

<sup>20</sup> Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 84.

Without this external sign, Jewish Christians could debate the validity of the Spirit's work among these Gentiles. However, the unmistakable visible and audible sign of speaking in tongues made what the Spirit had done undeniable to both the Apostle Peter and the entire Jewish Christian community. Gentiles had the same Spirit, for their faith in Christ had resulted in the same subsequent work of the Spirit (Acts 10:45–47).

This section makes the case that the manifestation of the Spirit Cornelius experienced continues to support the Lukan theology of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism. This section will also determine that the passage supports speaking in tongues as a relevant aspect for the church today.

## **Speaking in Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence**

Classical Pentecostals defend speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism by arguing that the historical narrative of Acts should be read both historically and theologically.<sup>21</sup> Luke is not only providing his reader with a historical account of events within the church, but he is also laying out a theological foundation for the church to be built. It is no accident that Luke links the events of Acts 2 to what took place with Cornelius in Acts 10. Luke connects the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost to the outpouring of the Spirit given to the Gentile believers. It is evident that for Luke, the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was a sign that validated the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Not only this, but in examining Luke's narrative, it is clear that speaking in tongues was overwhelming evidence to the other apostles. This one supernatural sign provided all the proof these Jews needed to believe their experience was authentic.<sup>22</sup> It proves that the early church had an inseparable connection between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues. Therefore, when we examine the fact that the Apostles saw speaking

---

<sup>21</sup> Keener, *Acts: Volume 2*, 1729.

<sup>22</sup> Brumback, *Tongues*, 170.

in tongues as the definitive proof that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit, we should not be quick to overlook this as supporting evidence for the classical Pentecostal perspective of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism.

Furthermore, Luke emphasizes speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon the Gentiles, stating that the Spirit “fell upon *all* (author's emphasis) those who were listening to the message” (Acts 10:44). Not only did these Gentiles experience Spirit-baptism as evidenced by tongue-speech, but it was the universal nature of speaking in other tongues that became definitive confirmation to the early church that these Gentiles had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Luke shows that Peter also identified the universal nature of speaking in other tongues to be consistent with the pattern of Spirit-baptism that took place at Pentecost (Acts 10:47). The simple fact remains that Luke wants his audience to understand that speaking in tongues was the vital evidence that affirmed to Jewish believers that the manifestation of the Spirit had also fallen upon the Gentiles.

So strong was this evidence to the early church that even cessationist Watson Mills admits, “There was no valid argument that could be lodged in light of what had happened: the tongues experience was evidence that God's Spirit had overturned Jewish particularism and opened the church to the Gentiles.”<sup>23</sup> It was unmistakable that what Cornelius and these Gentile believers received was the same as what the Jews received on the Day of Pentecost. Together, this all aligns with the Pentecostal understanding of speaking in other tongues as the normative evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling within a believer.

The importance of speaking in tongues and its association with Spirit-baptism in Acts 10 can also be seen in Luke's describing what these Gentiles received as “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This characteristically Lukan phrase is also used in (Acts 2:38) to refer to the action of the Holy Spirit in baptizing those who

---

<sup>23</sup> Mills, *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossolalia*, 71.

have been saved.<sup>24</sup> In distinguishing between repentance that leads to salvific faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Robert Menzies points out, “Luke always attributes forgiveness (ἄφεσις), which is granted in response to faith/repentance, to Jesus—never to the Spirit.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, to argue that what Cornelius received was only salvation is to ignore Luke’s usage of the term “gift of the Spirit.” As in Acts 2, Luke is clearly trying to describe something distinct from and subsequent to the work of salvation occurring in the believer’s life. The decisive sign of Spirit-baptism upon Cornelius and his household (similar to Pentecost) was their reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit was through the visible sign of their speaking in tongues. Without the physical evidence of Spirit-inspired tongue-speech, the Jewish and Gentile unification into the church does not happen either as quickly or peacefully as it did. But having witnessed these Gentiles speaking in tongues—if it was a sign of Spirit-baptism—there could be no argument made for not accepting them as part of the Jesus community.

It is also essential to consider that when Peter retells the supernatural events that took place to those in Jerusalem, he believes that speaking in tongues such a normative pattern that he proclaims, “the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15). Therefore, by the witness of the Apostles and the testimony of their experience with Cornelius and his household, it is evident that what occurred through their speaking in other tongues should be seen as the same baptism of the Holy Spirit that indwelt the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Moreover, if those present were persuaded that what the Gentiles had received was an equivalent Holy Spirit experience, then speaking in tongues must be the unmistakable initial evidence of Holy Spirit baptism.

Some have backed away from supported speaking in tongues as initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism out of fear that such a position creates a division of Christian “classes.” However, Spirit-baptism is not about making those

---

<sup>24</sup> Ervin, *Spirit Baptism*, 78.

<sup>25</sup> Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 217.

who speak in tongues "better" than Christians who have never spoken in tongues. Spirit-baptism does not make one more saved or "better" than the one who is not Spirit-baptized. Instead, the emphasis is not comparative—the one who is Spirit-baptized versus the one who is not—but the point is that Spirit-baptism makes the one who is baptized "better" by missionally equipping them with "power from on high" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In other words, initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism does not create a problem of classification of Christians, but as pictured in the Acts of the Apostles, speaking in tongues empowers the church to be united in mission and equipped for service.

## **Speaking in Tongues as for the Church Today**

Since Luke is clear that it was through the baptism of the Holy Spirit—evidenced by speaking in tongues—that the Apostles accepted Gentiles as believers, some cessationists have argued that this was the primary purpose of speaking in tongues. And since that "revelation" has been fulfilled, speaking in tongues no longer has any relevance for the church today. As one such cessationist writes, "Since the purpose of tongues in Acts 10 was to authenticate a new revelation to the early church, and since the biblical significance and theological implications of this new revelation have been inscripturated, it is apparent then that the gift has served its purpose."<sup>26</sup> Yet, if this were true, it would seem to follow that the account of Cornelius and his household would have been the last time in scripture where we see the practice of speaking in tongues in association with Spirit-baptism. But the events of Acts 10 do not conclude the New Testament account of speaking in tongues, nor does it even complete Luke's reports of speaking in tongues as part of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the events of Acts 10 reveal a consistent partner in Luke's narrative in which he portrays the continual working of Spirit-baptism that is evidenced by speaking in tongues.

---

<sup>26</sup> Marbell, "The Purpose of Speaking in Tongues in Acts 10:1-48," 63.



Having witnessed Cornelius and his household's glossolalic baptism in the Holy Spirit, Peter is quick to affirm their status as members of the church, removing any doubt to the validity of what they had received. Peter says, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit *just as we did* (emphasis mine), can he?" (Acts 10:47). The evidence of speaking in tongues proved to be the distinguishing feature which revealed to the early church that these Gentiles were already a part of the church. Stanley Horton states, "Peter recognized this as further confirmation that these Gentiles believers were not only accepted by God but were made part of the church."<sup>27</sup> Throughout his narrative, Luke highlights the fundamental fact that baptism in the Holy Spirit is for all peoples, in all ages.

Affirming this point, John Wyckoff writes, "Pentecostals believe that distinctive experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, such as Luke describes, is crucial to the contemporary church."<sup>28</sup> Historically, Pentecostals have argued that baptism in the Spirit is a separate experience from conversion. Even when it is granted that Spirit-baptism and regeneration can coincide, Pentecostals preserve a logical distinction of progression of both experiences.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, just as Luke writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, depicts the baptism of the Holy Spirit being intended for all believers, Pentecostals maintain that this biblical pattern still applies to the church today. Suppose the early church believed and accepted that speaking in tongues could be for all believers. In that case, it follows that the biblical pattern set forth by the early church was of a continuation of Holy Spirit baptism as evidenced by speaking in tongues and not the cessation of Spirit-baptism. The connection between Acts 2:4 and 10:46 implies that tongues played a significant role universally in the early church, which Luke's account of the baptism of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon Cornelius and his household continues the consistent pattern for the Lukan

---

<sup>27</sup> Horton, *The Book of Acts*, 135.

<sup>28</sup> Wyckoff, "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit," 448.

<sup>29</sup> Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 94.

theology of speaking in tongues. This account supports the function and purpose of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism, a baptism extended to the Gentiles. As followers of God, these Gentiles' faith was confirmed to the Jewish community of Christ-followers through the fact that upon receiving Spirit-baptism, they spoke with other tongues (Acts 10:45–47).

Additionally, this account of speaking in tongues provides support for the relevancy of glossolalic activity for the church today by serving as a unifying agent within the early church. As the means of uniting the Jews and Gentiles, Spirit-baptism was instrumental in revealing that all people can become a part of the church. As such, it can be logically concluded that the Lukan theology of speaking in tongues includes the phenomenon as a critical, active aspect of the church which is not meant to be discontinued.

## 4. Paul and the Ephesian Disciples

*It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. There were in all about twelve men. (Acts 19:1–7)*

The fourth and final occurrence of speaking in tongues in Luke's account of the early church takes place among some disciples of John the Baptist living in Ephesus. Because this account also includes the Apostle Paul, it provides us with a unifying understanding of Lukan and Pauline theology concerning the purpose and function of speaking in tongues. These events occurred near the end of Paul's missionary ministry, over twenty years after the original outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.<sup>30</sup> The fact that these events take place over two decades after Pentecost suggests that Spirit-baptism was never intended to be only for the "first" generation of Christ-followers. Instead, Spirit-baptism according to a Lukan theology supports a continuationist perspective of their operation within the church today.

Luke records that Paul enquires about the pneumatological experience of these Ephesian disciples and quickly learns that they are unaware of the Holy Spirit's arrival. However, Luke describes these Ephesians as both disciples and believers, clearly indicating that they understood salvation through repentance (Acts 19:4). But through Paul's words, they now responded in salvific faith to

---

<sup>30</sup> Holdcraft, *The Holy Spirit*, 97.

Christ and were baptized (Acts 19:5). The sequence of events described by Luke shows that these Ephesian believers received the baptism of the Holy Spirit *after* they had received saving faith. If the Holy Spirit's regeneration work was all they could receive, then Paul should have been satisfied once they believed and were baptized in water. However, it is clear that Paul was not content until these new Christians received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> Without question, the Apostle Paul understood the functions of soteriological appropriations (Romans 8). By laying his hands on the Ephesians, the purpose was not salvific but was for what immediately transpired, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, without question, these Ephesian believers were regenerated prior to their baptism in water, and that their glossolalic Spirit-baptism was subsequent to their salvific faith. In Acts 19, Luke emphasizes the fact that Paul did not lay his hands on these Ephesians to receive the Holy Spirit until he was confident of their faith in Christ.

## **Speaking in Tongues as Initial Physical Evidence**

Just as with the other Lukan accounts of Spirit-baptism, the external visible proof that the Ephesians had been baptized in the Holy Spirit was that they spoke in other tongues. The pattern of Lukan theology of speaking in tongues is repeated within the Ephesian Pentecost because when the Holy Spirit came upon them as part of Spirit-baptism, they began to speak with tongues and prophesy (Acts 19:6).

The above notwithstanding, some theologians have argued that Luke's recording of these disciples speaking in other tongues upon receiving the Holy Spirit does not imply that tongues must accompany Spirit reception in every individual instance.<sup>32</sup> This argument is based solely on the Samaritan case in Acts 8, for in all other instances of Holy Spirit baptism, the manifestation of speaking in

---

<sup>31</sup> Linzey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit*, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Keener, *Acts: Volume 3*, 2823.

tongues is clearly stated (Acts 2, 10, 19). Further, while Acts 8 does not explicitly state that those who received the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues, the narrative strongly points to the presence of speaking in tongues that any objective reader can logically infer its existence. To dismiss the evidence of speaking in tongues accompanying Spirit-baptism in each of the other accounts because it is not explicitly stated in one is to err on the side of the exception rather than the distinct biblical pattern that Luke sets forth.

Cessationist Watson Mills argues that the speaking in tongues at Ephesus was simply Luke's way of showing that God's approval rested upon the experience of these people, and it was not Luke's intention that subsequent generations of Christians formalize the events into a religious directive that was superior to any other manifestation of Spirit possession.<sup>33</sup> However, to minimize Spirit-baptism to simply "God's approval" is to mischaracterize Luke's explicit portrayal of the purpose and function of speaking in tongues. The repeated evidence of those who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that they spoke in other tongues. As such, the Pentecostal understanding of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism is consistent with the Lukan description of its arrival.

Interpreting Luke's connection between Spirit-baptism and speaking in tongues fairly recognizes that tongues were not an occasional option but a reoccurring definitive pattern that the Holy Spirit established.<sup>34</sup> Speaking in tongues is not presented as evidence of Spirit-baptism randomly, but it is the supernatural connection between human recipients and Spirit empowerment. At its core, speaking in tongues encompasses an encounter with a divine Person, whose purpose for sending the Spirit is to transform humanity into His missional partners in advancing God's kingdom (Acts 1:8). The classical Pentecostal position that speaking in tongues serves as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism is not so much a sign that we are in possession of the

---

<sup>33</sup> Mills, *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossolalia*, 73.

<sup>34</sup> Holdcroft, *The Holy Spirit*, 105.

Spirit but that the Spirit is in possession of us.<sup>35</sup> Having submitted to Spirit-inspired speech, supernatural empowerment for witness flows naturally from this human-divine phenomenon. As such, the Pentecostal views evidential tongues not as the “goal” of seeking Spirit-baptism but merely as the sign that supernatural empowerment has occurred. The “goal” of Spirit-baptism is that the life of the believer would be empowered for witness by being “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:29).

Further, the classical Pentecostal sees a vital connection between the evidential tongues doctrine and the widespread supernatural manifestations that brought about the tremendous growth of Pentecostalism throughout its history. Having read Luke’s accounts of Spirit-baptism in the Acts of the Apostles, Pentecostals have sought the same power and experience that marked the early church. Through this unique reading of Acts, Pentecostals have maintained an expectation of Spirit-empowerment, resulting in a dramatic shift within Christendom. The fact that the modern Pentecostal movement became an exploding missionary movement marked by miraculous signs should not be considered a mere coincidence. Classical Pentecostals maintain that Luke does not present evidential tongues merely as an arbitrary sign but as centrally connected to the missional purpose of Spirit-baptism.

## **Speaking in Tongues as for the Church Today**

Within this final Lukan account of speaking in tongues, a biblical framework for understanding the purpose and function of speaking in tongues as the initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism has been presented. Furthermore, since Spirit-baptism aims to aid in the missional work of the church, it is logical to conclude that Spirit-baptism (and by necessity speaking in tongues) is just as essential for the church today as it was in its infancy.

---

<sup>35</sup> Macchia, “Question of Tongues as Initial Evidence,” 121.

When the Apostle Paul layed his hands on these twelve Ephesian disciples, they were immediately baptized in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. Thus, speaking in tongues should not be viewed as an arbitrary sign; it signifies the Spirit's fullness and empowerment for a universal mission. Speaking in tongues is inseparable from the church's foundational assignment.<sup>36</sup> Yet, some have tried to cast doubt on the unified nature of Luke's accounts of speaking in tongues. Frank Beare attempts to negate the importance of speaking in tongues in connection with Spirit-baptism with his following words:

It is sufficient to note that that glossolalia is not regarded by any New Testament as a normal or invariable accompaniment of the life of grace, and there is no justification in the classical documents of the Christian faith for holding it to be a necessary element in the fullest spiritual development of the individual Christian or in the corporate life of the church.<sup>37</sup>

However, if it was *not* Luke's intention to show speaking in tongues as the vital connector to Spirit-baptism and associate it with the church's call to missional engagement, then Luke was unsuccessful in depicting the cause of the first-century church's empowerment. Instead, a biblically-based Lukan theology of speaking in tongues provides us with a connection between Spirit-baptism and Spirit-empowerment, which offers us a foundation to understand the church's exciting and diverse charismatic structure.

The work of the Holy Spirit is a central theme within Luke's accounts. Coupled with how Luke clearly outlines His movements, it is unmistakable that a proper Lukan theology of Spirit-baptism is that it is for those who have already experienced the regenerative work of the Spirit. Therefore, as the repeated signifier of Spirit-baptism, a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues is also that it is the unique indicator that a person has received supernatural empowerment for service and mission. In addition, a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues reveals

---

<sup>36</sup> Keener, "Why does Luke use Tongues as A Sign of the Spirit's Empowerment?" 183.

<sup>37</sup> Beare, "Speaking with Tongues," 231.



the precise pattern of its necessity throughout various times and people groups. As such, it is reasonable to assert that speaking in tongues should not be limited to a particular generation or people group but continue throughout the entirety of the church age.

Some even within Pentecostalism would like to move away from connecting speaking in tongues as the initial sign of Spirit-baptism. This shift from traditional Pentecostal doctrine hinges on the belief that while tongues may serve as “one” sign of Spirit-baptism, it should not be viewed as the exclusive sign. The case for this position rests upon the fact that there is no explicit teaching within the New Testament that requires speaking in tongues as the sign of Spirit-baptism. The lack of a biblical imperative that explicitly commands Spirit-baptism to be evidenced by speaking in tongues does nothing to negate the clear Lukan pattern established within the Acts of the Apostles. To throw out the testimony of Luke's accounts of Spirit-baptism—which are evidenced by speaking in tongues—simply because the rest of the New Testament does not lay out a systematic theology of the doctrine does nothing to invalidate the clear testimony of Luke's record of Spirit-baptism within the early church. To declare a doctrine invalid simply because the New Testament writers do not offer an explicit systematic defense of the doctrine is an inappropriate approach to scriptural truth. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere explicitly laid out by the New Testament writers in any systematic way. However, this fact should not cause us to doubt the clear biblical revelation of the Godhead existing as one essence made up of three distinct persons.

When looked at objectively, the problem is not that Luke was unclear with his writings on speaking in tongues, but it is the presupposition on the part of those who would like to marginalize its value for the church today. Stronstad writes on the charismatic Lukan theology that can be found in the New Testament:

To interpret Luke's charismatic theology as dispensational, abnormal, and secondary, however, reveals more about the

attitudes of contemporary interpreters and the theological and ecclesiastical traditions they are defending than it does about the activity of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. The witness of the Gospel of Luke is that by the empowering of the Holy Spirit Jesus was a charismatic. Similarly, the witness of the Acts of the Apostles is that the disciples were a charismatic community. Thus, in the theology of Luke the church is charismatic.<sup>38</sup>

A careful investigation of Luke's accounts of speaking in tongues leads to only one conclusion. Speaking in tongues is meant to be an active part of the orthodox Christian faith. The evidence points to it functioning both as the initial physical evidence of Holy Spirit baptism and as a source of empowerment for ministry purposes to continue through all generations of the church. The evidence is substantial and based upon the complete scriptural narrative of Luke's writings and offers a logical determination for a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues.

---

<sup>38</sup> Stonstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 97.

## Conclusion

The four occurrences of speaking in tongues in Luke's account of the Acts of the Apostles reveal a thoroughly charismatic community of believers who experienced and expected speaking in tongues to accompany Spirit-baptism. Because Luke appears to center his entire narrative around charismatic workings within the early church, it is no surprise that he records the presence of speaking in tongues from the beginning (Acts 2) to the end (Acts 19) of his account. Therefore, it is evident that Luke intends to depict the Spirit's empowerment of the church to include the external evidence of miracles, prophecies, healings, and speaking in other tongues.

Significantly, a Lukan theology of speaking in tongues reveals that this charismatic work of the Spirit is separate from the initial salvific work of the Spirit. This subsequent work of the Spirit shows that Luke believes that the purifying work of the Spirit (salvation) is not equivalent to his empowering work (Spirit-baptism). A classical Pentecostal perspective of Spirit-baptism recognizes the importance of the Spirit being practically "evidenced" in this present world. While some within Christendom have sought to make the working of the Spirit this mysterious force that is detached from any discernable experience, the Pentecostal pushes back against such ideas by pointing to a Lukan theology of the Spirit which testifies to the evidential nature of the Spirit's work in the lives of believers.

## Bibliography

- Beare, Frank W. "Speaking with Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament evidence." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.3 (1964): 229–246.
- Bruce, F. F. "Book of Acts," in *NICNT*, ed. Gordon D. Fee, rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- Brumback, Carl. *Tongues: Rescinded or Rejected?* Siloam Springs, AR: Offspring, 2013.
- Dunn, James D G. *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970.
- Ervin, Howard M. *Spirit Baptism: A Biblical Investigation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987.
- Holdcraft, L. Thomas. *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation*. Abbotsford, Canada: CeeTeC, 1999.
- Horton, Stanley M. *The Book of Acts*. Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1981.
- . *What the Bible Says about the Holy Spirit?* Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 2007.
- Jividen, Jimmy. *Glossolalia: From God or Man?* Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1971.
- Keener, Craig. "Why does Luke use Tongues as a Sign of the Spirit's Empowerment?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15.2 (2007): 177–184.
- . *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Volume 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- . *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Volume 3*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- . *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016.
- Linzey, Verna M. *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit: The Reception of the Holy Spirit as Confirmed by Speaking in Tongues*. Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2004.
- Macchia, Frank. "Sighs too deep for words: Toward a theology of glossolalia." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1.1 (1992): 47–73.

- . *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- . "The Question of Tongues as Initial Evidence: A Review of Initial Evidence, edited by Gary B. McGee." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1.2 (1993): 117-127.
- Marbell, Bernard E. "The Purpose of Speaking in Tongues in Acts 10:1-48" *Th.M. diss.*, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1988.
- Menzies, Robert P. *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2004.
- Mills, Watson E. *A Theological/Exegetical Approach to Glossolalia*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1962.
- Nelson, P.C. *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. Fort Worth, TX: Southwestern, 1942.
- Polhill, John B. *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Vol. 26. B&H, 1992.
- Stronstad, Roger. "On Being Baptized in the Holy Spirit: A Lukan Emphasis" in *Trajectories in the Book of Acts: Essays in Honor of John Wesley Wyckoff*, edited by Paul Alexander, Jordan Daniel May, and Robert G. Reid, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010.
- . *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Unger, Merrill F. *New Testament Teachings on Tongues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1971.
- Vondey, Wolfgang. *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2018.
- Wyckoff, John W. "The Baptism in the Holy Spirit" in *Systematic Theology*, ed. Stanley M. Horton. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1995.
- Yong, Amos. *Mission After Pentecost: The Witness of the Spirit from Genesis to Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.
- . *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.

## About the Author



Whether through books, sermons, podcasts, or biblical resources, Dr. Laurito is committed to equipping this generation to fulfill their Spirit-inspired destiny. As an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God, Dr. Laurito has conducted numerous conferences, crusades, and seminars throughout the

United States and nine countries worldwide.

Dr. Laurito earned a M.A. in Apologetics from Luther Rice Seminary, a M.Div. equivalency from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a D.Min. from Southwestern Assemblies of God University. He currently serves as Assistant Pastor at Faith Tabernacle Assembly of God and Adjunct Professor at Northpoint Bible College and Graduate School.

Dr. Laurito and his family live in the Dallas metroplex. You can follow his work at [www.timothylaurito.com](http://www.timothylaurito.com).