

The Orderly Procession of the Spirit and the Gift of Tongues

Joseph Herrin (07-04-2013)



The Day of Pentecost

I deemed it expedient to post a second writing on the Holy Spirit, and tongues as a sign, after receiving numerous e-mails on the preceding post. When writing on a particular topic I often discover many of the arguments that cause people to stumble at truth as responses begin to come in. This affords me the opportunity to address the specific objections, many of which I acknowledge come from sincere individuals who have had error delivered to them by other Christians.

One of the sincere objections that was raised is that there are numerous accounts in the book of Acts where the impartation of the Holy Spirit to groups of men is attended with signs and wonders, one of the most common signs being speaking in tongues. Why, one might ask, do we have recorded on multiple occasions visible manifestations, and speaking in tongues when the Holy Spirit was received by men, if Yahweh did not intend to establish a doctrine that these things will always accompany one another? This writing will endeavor to answer this question.

Bear in mind that these events are all recorded in the book of Acts. This is a book wholly unlike the books that follow it which primarily consist of apostolic epistles. The book of Acts is NOT a doctrinal treatise like the book of Romans, or I and II Corinthians, or Galatians. Rather, it is a narrative retelling of events that occurred from the time of Christ's ascension, detailing the spread of Christianity throughout the world.

This distinction is important to keep in mind, for many of the events recorded by Luke in the book of Acts are unique, historical occurrences. They were not intended to be taken as a pattern for the churches to repeat. For example, on the day of Pentecost, there was the sound of a rushing mighty wind heard throughout the city. There were tongues of fire which distributed themselves over the heads of the 120 men and women gathered in the upper room. ALL of those gathered experienced the Holy Spirit falling upon them, and they ALL began to speak in tongues and prophesy.

Luke clearly did not intend for his narrative of this experience to be taken as a template for the

manner in which every annual Pentecost celebration should be observed, nor as a pattern to be repeated every time someone received the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is never again a record of a similar event occurring. The sound of a rushing mighty wind was heard only on the day of Pentecost. The same is true regarding the appearance of tongues of fire above the heads of the saints.

A narrative of an event is very different from an instructional epistle that was intended to be shared among the churches. Apostolic letters were given as universal guidelines for all disciples of Christ. That the apostles' instructions were intended to inform the believers of the universal practices of the church is often stated within the body of the text.

I Corinthians 7:17

This is my *rule* for all the churches.

I Corinthians 11:2

Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and *hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you...* But if one is inclined to be contentious, *we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.*

II Thessalonians 2:15

So then, brethren, *stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.*

II Thessalonians 3:6

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Yahshua Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not *according to the tradition which you received from us.*

It is evident from these Scriptures that the epistles which make up a large portion of the New Testament were given to establish rules, traditions, practices, and ordinances among all members of the body of Christ. What Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers applied equally to the saints in Thessalonica, in Phillipi, and in Colossae. Nor were these merely the instructions of Paul, for we find him using expressions such as “**WE** have no other practice,” and “whether by word of mouth or letter from **US**.” These instructions were attested to by the other apostles and elders appointed by Christ as overseers among His flock.

The book of Acts is not the same type of writing. We have no record of Luke being numbered among the apostles. We are only told that he accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys, and was a helper to those that were engaged as apostles and teachers. Neither did Luke write the book of Acts in the same way that the epistles were penned. Paul frequently began his letters by declaring his authority in Christ, for his letters were written as a spiritual father instructing children. Following are some examples, though not an exhaustive list.

Romans 1:1

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Yahshua, *called as an apostle*, set apart for the gospel of God...

I Corinthians 1:1

Paul, *called as an apostle* of Yahshua Christ *by the will of God...*

Galatians 1:1

Paul, *an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Yahshua Christ, and God the Father...)*

Ephesians 1:1

Paul, *an apostle of Christ Yahshua by the will of God...*

Colossians 1:1

Paul, *an apostle of Yahshua Christ by the will of God...*

It was necessary that Paul establish his credentials and authority at the beginning of his letters, for he was establishing doctrine and delivering to the churches traditions, practices, rules, and ordinances that they were to follow. This is very different from the introduction Luke provides at the beginning of the book of Acts.

Acts 1:1-2

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Yahshua began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

“The first account” Luke refers to is *The Gospel of Luke*. In this gospel Luke focuses on the life of Yahshua, beginning with a virgin becoming pregnant and the Son of God being born. Luke now labors to set forth a second account which begins at the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God, as he follows the work of the apostles in laying a foundation for a new work of God among mankind. This is not an instructional book like the epistles. It is a historical account. Those who read it should bear this distinction in mind.

If a person wants to know what the Christian’s attitude and beliefs should be in relation to the gift of tongues, they would do well to look for such information in the epistles. The apostle Paul did not overlook this subject. He wrote at length on the topic in I Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. What he set forth there applies to all the churches.

The book of Acts, on the other hand, reveals occasions when men spoke in tongues, while providing no instruction, no rules, and no ordinances related to the employment of tongues among the body of Christ. What Acts does provide is very valuable, if one discerns the reason that selected events were recorded by Luke. These are not random events strung together by the author. They were set forth with careful design, and specific purpose.

In Luke’s account of *The Acts of the Apostles*, he relates four separate occasions when the Holy Spirit was given to groups of men. At every occasion there was some outward manifestation. There were differences, for, as it was already mentioned, we never read again after the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost of there being a sound of a rushing, mighty wind, nor of tongues of fire manifesting above

the heads of believers. Nevertheless, on each of the four occasions Luke cites, there was SOME obvious, observable, manifestation. Furthermore, on each one of the occasions, there were apostles present. This latter fact should provide the reader with a clue to Luke's purpose in setting forth these specific acts of God.

During Pentecost, all of the original apostles were present (Judas Iscariot had been replaced by Matthias). Following are the other three accounts of the Holy Spirit being given. Note specifically the presence of apostles at each event.

Acts 8:14-18

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 Yahshua. 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...

Acts 10:1-5, 44-48

Now there was a certain man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people, and prayed to God continually. About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in to him, and said to him, "Cornelius!" And fixing his gaze upon him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now dispatch some men to Joppa, and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter... While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon 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 Yahshua Christ.

Acts 19:1-7

And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, and 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." And 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." And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Yahshua. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. And there were in all about twelve men.

These accounts are the sum total of passages in the New Testament that link together the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Some, not discerning the purpose Luke had in mind in sharing these specific events, have wrongly concluded that what is set forth occurs every time a man

or woman receives the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore discover the common thread connecting these accounts that we might discern what made these experiences significant and unique.

You may have wondered about the title of this writing. What is meant by the phrase “The Orderly Procession of the Spirit”? Yahweh determined by His own counsel that the salvation provided through His Son should be revealed to mankind in a specific order. Paul sums it up succinctly in the following words:

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, *to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Paul was not expressing some personal prejudice by saying that salvation was delivered “to the Jew first.” Paul was a Jew, but his statement was not based on national pride. Paul was merely affirming that which Yahweh ordained. Yahshua declared the proper order of salvation during His years of ministry. When Philip approached the Lord and told Him that some Gentiles wanted to speak with Him, we find that Yahshua made no effort to comply (John 10:20-23). Yahshua’s actions were in keeping with the words He spoke to the Syro-Phoenician woman who had a daughter horribly oppressed by a demon.

Mark 7:27

He was saying to her, "Let the children be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

What Yahshua was declaring was that Yahweh had established an order for salvation to be given to mankind. It was to the Jew first. Christ’s entire ministry was focused on the Jewish people. Yahshua never sought out those who were not the natural descendants of Abraham, for He discerned the Father’s will in this matter. Yahshua declared, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). The Son of God gave similar instructions to His disciples.

Matthew 10:5-6

These twelve Yahshua sent forth, and commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

(On a side note, understanding the established order of the spread of the gospel, we find that the myths and fables which have arisen that declare that Yahshua visited England, or some other foreign land, in His childhood, are proven to be false. The Gospel of the Kingdom had to be declared first in Jerusalem and Judea before it could spread to the uttermost parts of the earth.)

Luke clearly understood this procession of the salvation of Christ. He understood that salvation, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, had to be rolled out to mankind in an orderly fashion determined by the counsel of Yahweh. Luke, in the first chapter of the book of Acts, reveals his understanding of this principle when he cites the following words of Christ.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and *you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

The remainder of the book of Acts is a forth-telling of the fulfillment of this Great Commission that was spoken to the disciples of Christ. The disciples, and all the original apostles, for a season, bore witness to Yahshua only to the Jews. For a number of years they did not venture beyond Jerusalem and Judea. The church was established there on the day of the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord. What we observe is that every time the salvation of Christ was carried to a new group of people, the Holy Spirit was given to them, and this fact was attested to by signs and wonders. Among these visible signs was the gift of tongues.

The first expansion beyond Jerusalem and the Jewish people was to the citizens of Samaria. The Samaritans were a mixture of Israelite and Gentile blood. They were considered half-breeds by the Jews, and were scorned. Yahweh had to drive the Jewish believers in Messiah out of Jerusalem through the instrument of a severe persecution, in order to induce them to take the gospel message beyond their own people. In Acts chapter 8 Luke tells us that a severe persecution arose. Saul, later to be called Paul, was one of the chief actors in the persecution.

As the persecution began, Philip, one of the seven deacons selected by the apostles, went down to Samaria and proclaimed the gospel of Christ there. This was the first time the gospel had been proclaimed to non-Jews.

Some have read the account of salvation coming to the Samaritans, noting that they did not immediately receive the Holy Spirit, and have formed doctrines of a second blessing. Luke is not writing to establish doctrine. He is being faithful to record that the impartation of the Holy Spirit to each new group of people was attended by visible signs, observed by the apostles, and it occurred in a public manner. The Father acted in this way to demonstrate to the Jews, and particularly to the Jewish apostles, that He was now giving His Spirit to men and women who were not Jews.

Acts 8:14-18

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 Yahshua. 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...

Although there is no mention of any specific manifestation of the Spirit in Samaria, we can conclude confidently that there was a visible manifestation. Simon the sorcerer observed the power of God being manifested with the laying on of hands of the apostles. He was so impressed by what he saw that he offered to purchase this power from them.

It was necessary that Yahweh provide a visible testimony to the impartation of the Spirit to the Samaritans, otherwise many of the Jewish believers would not have believed, or accepted, that

Samaritans had become partakers of the same Holy Spirit that was given to them.

Luke, understanding the procession of the Holy Spirit being given to men, provides an orderly account of the way in which this astonishing occurrence unfolded. The next to receive the Holy Spirit was a Gentile dwelling in Judea. Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a member of the Italian cohort. He was a convert to Judaism, being described as “a devout man, and one who feared God with his whole household.” Despite this man’s devotion to the God of the Jews, it was forbidden for Jews to enter the home of a Gentile, or to break bread with them. The Gentiles were considered unclean.

How deep-seated this belief in Jewish superiority was, is hard for Christians to comprehend today. That the Gentiles should be made partakers of the Holy Spirit was inconceivable to many Messianic Jews. Peter was typical in this regard. Yahweh had to speak to Peter through a vision, repeated three times, in order to break through his resistance. Peter saw a vision of unclean animals being lowered down from heaven on a sheet. The voice of God spoke and stated: “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unclean” (Acts 10:15). Yahweh then sent Peter to the home of this Roman centurion, and the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles gathered in his home.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon 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 Yahshua Christ.

Notice the words, “And all the CIRCUMCISED believers who had come with Peter were amazed.” Six Messianic Jewish men accompanied Peter. They looked on with astonishment when the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles. It was very necessary for there to be an outward manifestation to demonstrate what had occurred inwardly in the lives of these Gentiles. Without an outward manifestation, many of the Jews simply would not have believed that the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles.

Immediately following this event, we find that Peter landed in hot water with the Jewish Christians back in Jerusalem. They called Peter on the carpet.

Acts 11:2-3

When Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Peter, was still subject to intimidation by the Jews. He had previously denied Yahshua three times. Yahshua specifically chose Peter to face the wrath of the Jews at this time in order to cause him to stand and overcome where he had previously failed. Although Peter was a bit hesitant, and shifted the blame to God, he did stand firm, and did not deny what the Lord had done. Peter gave a defense of his actions, concluding with the words, *“If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave*

to us also after believing in the Lord Yahshua Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" The Jewish believers were mollified by these words, and dolefully acquiesced to Yahweh's judgment.

Acts 11:18

And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

To our minds, it seems strange that these Jewish believers in Messiah would "quiet down" when they learned that the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles. It would have been far more appropriate that they had gotten exceedingly louder as they began to rejoice that Yahweh's salvation was being granted to all mankind. So proud had the Jews become in their identity as Yahweh's chosen people, that it was with difficulty that they could accept the fact that Yahweh was now accepting others.

Notice a particular thing that Peter stated when giving a defense. He said, "*If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing...*" Yahweh did not repeat the sound of the rushing mighty wind, nor the tongues of fire. He did, however, repeat the sign of tongues and the gift of prophecy. This was so that the Jews would recognize that the Holy Spirit had been imparted to the nations in the same way that He had been imparted to them.

There was one more step to take however. Cornelius, though a Gentile, was living in the land of Judea, and was a devout follower of the Jewish God. It yet remained for the Holy Spirit to be given to gentiles outside of Judea, in pagan lands, and to men who were not converts to Judaism. When the persecution of Jewish Christians began in Jerusalem, the believers in Messiah spread across the Roman Empire, but they did not immediately begin sharing the gospel of their Messiah with the Gentiles. They still spoke only to Jews. This is revealed in the following passage.

Acts 11:19

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

These scattered Jewish believers, needed a sign from God that He was granting His Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. Here then we find the final procession of the Holy Spirit as He is given to Gentiles outside of the land of Judea. Once again, there were apostles present, and attesting signs were given that the Jewish believers might observe that Yahweh had chosen to give His Spirit to people they had previously considered unclean.

Acts 19:1-7

And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, and 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." And 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." And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name

of the Lord Yahshua. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. And there were in all about twelve men.

Luke has chosen these specific accounts to establish the fact that Yahweh was bequeathing His Holy Spirit to all the nations, even to the uttermost parts of the earth. This was a fact not easily accepted. Even among the Jewish converts to Messiah, we find that there was great resistance to the inclusion of non-Jews as fellow members of the body of Christ. Deep prejudices of many centuries were hard to overcome. In the book of Galatians we read of Paul having to rebuke Peter, Barnabas, and many of the Jewish believers, for their failure to openly receive Gentile believers.

Galatians 2:11-13

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

It is hard for Christians in America today, to perceive of the offense that had to be overcome in the minds of the Jewish believers in order for them to accept Samaritans, and Gentile believers, as equal members of the body of Christ. Having a very myopic point of view, and not perceiving the purpose of Luke's accounts, many have falsely assumed that these four accounts of the Holy Spirit being given, attended by signs and wonders, were set forth to establish a doctrine that there will always be an external manifestation when someone receives the Holy Spirit. This was not Luke's purpose at all, nor God's. These specific events were attended with outward signs so that the Jewish believers, and the apostles in particular, would recognize that the Holy Spirit was being granted to all nations.

There have been multitudes of men and women who have become partakers of the Holy Spirit in the ensuing 2,000 years who did not share any similar manifestation. There are even accounts in the book of Acts of men and women being born again of the Spirit and becoming believers in Yahshua the Messiah, who did not experience an outward manifestation. To list just a few, there were 5,000 saved in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts chapter 4, and there is no mention of any external signs and wonders occurring. There was Paul's conversion, and baptism by Ananias in Damascus. We are told that Paul regained his sight, and something like scales fell from his eyes, but there is no mention of speaking in tongues, or prophesying, occurring in conjunction with Paul's salvation experience. The same is true when Lydia came to faith in Christ.

Acts 16:13-15

And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

We are told only that "the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." Was

Lydia not a partaker of the Holy Spirit because she did not manifest outwardly the gift of tongues, or prophesy? Was not the presence of the Holy Spirit revealed in the generosity that immediately gripped her heart, and her offer of hospitality? There are many ways that the Spirit makes His presence known.

I would conclude this teaching by recommending to you a writing by Zac Poonen on the subject of the gift of tongues. I have found it to be a well balanced teaching, and believe it will be helpful to those who are seeking truth.

<http://www.cfcindia.com/web/mainpages/articles.php?display=article07>

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.