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ACTS 10: A GENTILE MODEL FOR PENTECOSTAL EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

One of the doctrinal heritages of the classical Pentecostals has been Spirit-baptism. Concomitant to this doctrine of Spirit-baptism is the position on the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance.¹

Historically, this issue has been one of the central foci of theological exchange between Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Germinated from this exchange has been the rejuvenated interest in the study of Luke-Acts. The central issue is whether Luke was a theologian or merely an historian? Is there a possibility of a distinct Lukan theology? Can we find didactic models in scripture to support our historic doctrine of Spirit-baptism and the doctrine of initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. More pointedly, can we secure our historical positions by turning to Luke-Acts?²

Among Pentecostals themselves, there has been a mixture of perspectives on the above concerns. The classical Pentecostals hold firmly to the necessity of the doctrine of initial physical evidences of

¹ For instance, the 7th and 8th of the Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God.

² The classical Pentecostal usage of Acts and its five incidents to defend its normative position of the initial evidence of tongues has been challenged by Evangelicals like James G. Dunn; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987); John Stott, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1964); Frederick Dale Bruner; Gordon Fee and others. See below for further bibliographic information.

speaking in tongues. However, we sadly have to admit to the fact that our past apology for our position has been rather weak and our quest for a viable defence has been lethargic. Resulting from this theological weakness, groups of neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics have emerged and created a watershed in the Pentecostal position of initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues.³ Most of these neo-Pentecostals do not necessitate speaking in tongues as initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.⁴

This "uncertain syndrome" has clearly affected many of our present Assemblies of God ministers. Many essentially pay lip service to the doctrine of initial evidence of speaking in tongues but pragmatically tend to avoid it. It is this concern to which this paper is addressed. The focus of this paper is a quest for the evidences in Luke-Acts to affirm the sign value of glossolalia as normative initial evidence for Spirit-baptism. To do this, the writer will endeavour to prove Luke's theological use of, and didactic intent for, the Jewish-gentile model as support for the doctrine of initial evidence of speaking in tongues as normative to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

I. SURVEY OF PAST AND PRESENT SCHOLARSHIP

A brief survey of past scholarship will enable us to have a better grasp of the materials to appraise the present theological arena on this issue. The past treatment of Luke by most Evangelicals has been as an historian. Much of the theology of the Spirit of Pentecostals on initial evidence of speaking in tongues finds its anchorage in Luke-Acts. Thus, in the past Evangelicals have largely dismissed the possibility of using the historical narratives of Luke for normative theology. Fee, further stress that unless we can prove didactic intent, narratives cannot be viewed as normative theology.⁵

³ This views can be seen in some of the key figures of the movements, like Don Basham, *A Handbook on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker, 1969) and Dennis J. Bennett, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1970).

⁴ Cf. William W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1971), pp. 319-320.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, rev. ed. (Michigan: Academia, 1993), pp. 94-112. In his recent book, Gordon D. Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991) reiterates his position on Luke-

The table was turned when recent scholars by way of redaction criticism began to view the gospel writers as being theologians in their own right.⁶ I. H. Marshall masterfully recaptured the value of Luke as both a theologian and an historian.⁷ This marks the moment of renewed hope for the possibility of developing a Pentecostal theology.

This hope was further fortified by the scholarship of Roger Stronstad, who strongly and ably argued for a distinctive Lukan theology. He skilfully established the charismatic activity of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament to Luke. Stronstad refers to the charismatic activity of the Spirit as an empowerment for service.⁸ Evangelical scholar David Hill has also alluded to the activity of the Spirit in Acts to inspired speech and prophecy.⁹ Robert Menzies in his doctoral dissertation has thoroughly and ably affirmed the nature of the Spirit's activity in the Lukan theological mindset in terms of the Spirit of prophecy and inspired speech.¹⁰

Alongside these positive new developments in the Pentecostal theological framework, other developments were taking place within evangelicalism. During this period of development, Evangelical scholars like James G. Dunn and Frederick Dale Bruner eloquently argued that the infilling of the Spirit at Pentecost and other experiences in Acts has to do with conversion-initiation and not subsequence.¹¹ An intense exchange of

Acts.

⁶ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Mary Ling and P. Schubert (London: SCM, 1965); Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971). Both of these scholars concede to Luke as a theologian but their problem is the tendency to discredit the historical reliability of Luke as a historian.

⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989).

⁸ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).

⁹ David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, New Foundations Theological Library (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), pp. 94-109.

¹⁰ Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup. 54 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Reexamination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (London: SCM, 1970) and *Jesus and The Spirit: A study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975); F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI:

opinions contra to Dunn's position was attempted by Howard M. Ervin.¹² Since then many Pentecostals have responded to Dunn's position.¹³ Fee, in an article in *Pneuma*, dealt with the issue of subsequence. He seems to empathize with the Pentecostal experience but he calls for the necessity of establishing a clear hermeneutical framework.¹⁴

Concluding from the brief discussions above, the writer observes the closing of the Evangelical-Pentecostal schism. The classical distinction between Pentecostals and Evangelicals is becoming rather hazy. With the conceding of Evangelicals to the possibility of a distinctive Lukan pneumatology, the Lukan emphasis of the Spirit as empowerment for service and the restoration of inspired speech and prophecy as argued by Menzies¹⁵ is gaining a fair hearing. What is left to demarcate the Pentecostals and the Evangelical? Thus far, much of these studies have established clearly the nature of the prophetic activity of the Spirit. The question still remains: Is inspired speech normative in Spirit-baptism? What, then, is the nature of inspired speech at Spirit-baptism? The evangelical sees a wide spectrum of possibilities for inspired speech. It can range from preaching to speaking in tongues. In the classical language of Pentecostals the inspired speech in Spirit-baptism is the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. Thus the onus of our task is to establish the normativity of the initial evidence of Spirit-baptism. Can we from Luke-Acts find such evidences?

Eerdmans, 1970).

¹² Howard M. Ervin, *Conversion-Initiation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).

¹³ Among scholars who have responded to Dunn's position are Roger Stronstad and Robert Menzies. Stronstad suggests a clear distinction between Lukan and Pauline theology of the Spirit, *The Charismatic Theology*, pp. 1-12, while Robert Menzies in his responses to Dunn even suggests that Pauline pneumatology did not influence the non-Pauline sector of the early church until after the writing of Luke-Acts, *The Development*, pp. 17-21, 310-11.

¹⁴ Gordon D. Fee, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Issue of Separability and Subsequence," *Pneuma* 7 (1985), pp. 87-99.

¹⁵ Menzies, *Development*, p. 309.

II. THE QUEST FOR A NORMATIVE MODEL FOR GLOSSOLALIA AS INITIAL EVIDENCE FOR SPIRIT-BAPTISM IN LUKE-ACTS

In an attempt to address the quest mentioned above, the writer would like to initiate a series of arguments to fortify the thesis. The primary focus of discussion and source of the writer will be Luke-Acts.

A. Luke's Intentionality

Since the work of Marshall on Luke as a theologian and historian, the possibility of a distinctive Lukan theology has been firmly established.¹⁶ Luke's theological intent with regards to pneumatology can be seen from the time of the infancy narratives. Luke projects an outburst of prophetic activity in his narratives.¹⁷ The prophetic theme of the Spirit is carried through to Luke's companion volume, Acts.¹⁸

Lincoln has said that Luke obviously emphasizes the Spirit as the catalyst in the origin of the church. The Spirit energized the church for mission.¹⁹ The extent of the mission of the church in Acts is seen in Acts 1:8. The phrase "to the end of the earth" presupposes a mission not only for Israel but also from Jerusalem to Rome.²⁰ Sugirtharajah may be right to say that one of the burning issues of the Lukan church is the matter of gentile missions.²¹ This fervour for gentile mission is also seen in Luke's quotation of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17-21). The citation from Joel of phrases like "all flesh" and "whoever calls on the name of the Lord"

¹⁶ Haenchen, pp. 91-98, has proved Luke as a theologian in his own right. Stronstad, pp. vii-viii, has established a distinctive Lukan theology of the Spirit from Paul, which is pivotal for Pentecostal theology. Marshall, *Luke: Historian*, p. 19, sees Lukan theology essentially from the perspective of soteriology.

¹⁷ This outburst of the activities of the Spirit in Luke-Acts has been established by Stronstad, pp. 36-38.

¹⁸ Stronstad, p. 4, has demonstrated the homogeneity of Luke-Acts. Marshall through the perspective of soteriology manages to string Luke-Acts into a single volume, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*.

¹⁹ A. T. Lincoln, "Theology and History in the Interpretation of Luke's Pentecost," *Expository Times* 96 (1985), pp. 204-205.

²⁰ Haenchen, p. 144.

²¹ R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Luke's Second Volume and the Gentiles," *Expository Times* 100 (1989), p. 179.

further supplements the above proposition of Lukan zeal for gentile mission.²² Gathering from research, there is a consensus among scholars that these phrases reveal Luke's anticipation of a gentile harvest.²³

Concluding from the above deliberation, it seems clear that Luke had a Jewish-gentile paradigm in his idea of the mission of the church. Is it possible then Luke intended to paint the two key Pentecost events in Acts to serve as a model for the church at large? Are the two events intended by Luke to serve as didactic material for the church with regard to Spirit-baptism?

B. Luke's Two Models of Pentecost.

Historically the first Pentecost has been unanimously accepted. However there is a growing recognition of the Cornelius account as the second Pentecost. The first began the Jewish Pentecost, the second the gentile Pentecost.²⁴ The importance of the second Pentecost is attested by the way Luke narrated the story at such great length. In fact, the reference of Peter's report to the Jerusalem council further highlighted the importance of the second Pentecost.²⁵ Therefore, the writer asserts that these two Pentecosts are pivotal to the overall plan of the book because of their emphasis. Luke could have chosen many other accounts to emphasize in his chronicle of the gentile mission. There were, in fact, gentiles that had already heard the Gospel before Cornelius. Thus, Luke's choice of the Cornelius account cannot be a mere arbitrary selection. The writer is of the opinion that Luke's choice was intentionally didactic and theological. Dibelius believed that Luke did not invent the Cornelius account but rather

²² Lincoln, p. 203.

²³ I. H. Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 61, 82, views that Acts 1:8 envisions a larger fulfillment beyond the Jewish community. He also believes that the phrase "all that are far off" in Luke's eyes has a gentile expectation. See also Lincoln, p. 205, and Sugirtharajah, p. 179. Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), p. 51, sees the phrase "all who are far off" in two options, namely the Jews of the diaspora or in the universal sense referring to gentiles.

²⁴ Marshall, *Acts*, p. 194, based on his assumption of the two Pentecosts, alludes that the manifestation of the gifts is incidental. Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 227.

²⁵ Harrison, p. 163

he edited it for an intention.²⁶ If Dibelius is right, Luke has intentionally edited the Cornelius account. We then have to ask the question why? Is Luke trying to portray something through these two Pentecost models? What is Luke trying to teach from these two accounts?

C. The Paradigmatic Similarity of the Two Pentecost

In our classical Pentecostal apology for the validity of the Spirit's baptism and initial evidence of speaking in tongues, we have followed Howard M. Ervin's five events that are recorded in Acts. The five events are: the first Pentecost (Acts 2); The Samaritan Pentecost (Acts 8); the Pauline Pentecost (Acts 9); the Cornelius Pentecost (Acts 10); and the Ephesian Pentecost (Acts 19). Could it be possible that, although Luke knows of the five events, he has intentionally edited the Acts 2 and Acts 10 account to portray his Jewish gentile connection and these two are to be a model for the universal church?

To substantiate this possibility, a proposed paradigmatic similarity of these two events are pivotal to our discussion.

DESCRIPTION	JEWISH PENTECOST	GENTILE PENTECOST
Commission of Expectancy	Acts 1:3-8	Acts 10:1-7; 30-33
Element of Faith	The disciples believed	Faith is seen in Cornelius: God fearer
Reception of the Spirit	Acts 2:1-13	Acts 10:44-48
Confirming sign of glossolalia	Acts 2:1-13	Acts 10:44-48
Peter's sermon	Acts 2:14-40	Acts 10:34-43
Prophecy	About Gentile Extension	Prophecy fulfilled

The similarities seen in these two accounts except for one or two minor differences of the sequence of events project the importance and connection of these two accounts. This may well be the missing link for the normative model of the doctrine of initial evidence of speaking in tongues for the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

²⁶ Dibelius, p. 119.

D. Luke's Theological Genius in the Two Pentecosts

It has been widely recognized that the Cornelius account was the beginning of a breakthrough in the gentile mission. In fact, it was in Acts 11:1-18 that the gentile inclusion was officially accepted. Peter's entrance into Joppa ushers in a new phase of his missionary career. Why Peter, in the inauguration of the gentile mission and not Paul? Is not Peter the one who is reluctant to reach the gentiles? Is Luke using Peter to highlight the fulfilment of the prophetic utterance of Acts 2? Is Luke asserting his theological emphasis through the ministry of Peter? It seems that Luke is using Peter, one of the key apostolic representative, to lend credibility to his theological proposition. It also seems Luke could have used Peter and the Cornelius account to emphasize the prophetic connection of the charismatic activity of the Spirit.

To further substantiate the above allusion, Luke at the outset of the book uses Peter to facilitate his arguments.²⁷ This principle of editorial suggestion of by David L. Tiede can also be applied to Acts 2 and Acts 10. Peter was the apologetical spokesman for the inauguration of the first Pentecost and he was also the one who defended the gentile Pentecost in Acts 11. The reception of the Spirit in both Pentecosts was endorsed because they were identical.²⁸ Peter, inspired by the Spirit in the first Pentecost, prophesied the forthcoming extension of the Gospel to "all that are far off." This finds its fulfilment and continuation in the Cornelius account.

Not only were the Pentecosts identical, they served as a sign for the authentication of the reception of the Spirit. Dibelius was right to say that the Cornelius incident of "speaking in tongues" was a sign of divine confirmation.²⁹ Like most scholars, Dibelius saw that the sign of the

²⁷ David L. Tiede, "Acts 2:1-47," *Interpretation* 33 (1979), p. 63, suggests that just as "Luke's first volume is structured upon an inaugural address by Jesus shortly after he has been anointed by the Spirit (Luke 4), so also the 'pouring out' of the Spirit community in Acts 2 is followed by Peter's address which serves as a keynote for the second volume."

²⁸ David Hill, pp. 96-97, argues that the second Pentecostal endowment is of the same character, evident by speaking in tongue and extolling God. See also Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 95, states that the speaking in tongues in Acts 10 and 11:15 is the same as in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

²⁹ Dibelius p. 114

reception of the Spirit has to do with salvation.³⁰ Marshall said that the incident was an evidence of God's acceptance of the faith of the gentile and sealed that faith with the gift of the Spirit.³¹ The irony here is that the scholars who take a position for the reception of the Spirit as a sign of reception of salvation would have to face the question of "is 'tongue' the initial sign for salvation or is 'tongue' the initial evidence for the baptism of the Spirit?" The logical construct would be if the Acts 2 reception of the Spirit has to do with salvation, tongues were an evidence of salvation, then it is normative for every one who receives salvation to speak in tongues.

The bones of contention among Evangelicals and Pentecostals are the question of the nature of the charismatic gift and the question of subsequence. Many Evangelicals have dismissed the similarity of the gift in these two Pentecosts. They have argued that the nature of the inspired speech in Acts 2 was a gift for proclamation. While the gift in the second Pentecost has to do with ecstatic utterance it does not deal with proclamation and understanding. Here they tend to inject the Pauline expression of glossolalia with Lukan glossolalia.³² The error of Evangelical brethren is to read Pauline theology into Lukan theology. If Luke's perception of glossolalia is allowed to stand by itself, we may see Luke's true insight to glossolalia. This would then naturally lead us to the next question: What is Luke's view of glossolalia?

It must be noted at the outset of this discussion that that Luke uses glossolalia as the sign for the reception of the Spirit. Luke's perception of glossolalia is that of inspired speech. In salvation the work of the Spirit is internalized. How would the Evangelical perception of conversion-initiation be verified? Thus Luke views the reception of the Spirit as not only salvation but it is also subsequent empowerment evidenced by glossolalia. The Evangelicals make a great deal of the difference between glossolalia and *dialektos*. Hill argued that Luke employs the two term synonymously, whether the inspired utterance was understandable or not to the audience.³³ To the crowd in Acts 2, the people who spoke in tongues did not understand what they were saying, and they saw it as

³⁰ Dibelius, p. 114

³¹ Marshall, p. 194

³² Harrison, pp. 52-53, asserts that the "tongues in Acts 2 is a symbol of speech of communication of the gospel, while the Acts 10 glossolalia is concomitant with a highly emotional state and therefore not objective." See Marshall, *Acts*, p. 194

³³ Hill, p. 97

inspired utterance or glossolalia. This is equally true in the Cornelius account. William Neil contended in recognizing Luke as theologian and historian that we should not be too concerned with the difference between the natures of "speaking in tongues." In Acts it refers to the same ecstatic utterance.³⁴ Neil further went on to say that glossolalia in the life of the early church was a continuous experience, and this experience has not ceased in its subsequent history.³⁵

In the issue of subsequence, Spirit-baptism has always been viewed by the Pentecostals as a distinct event. This is undoubtedly true. This fundamental truth which is the strength of the Pentecostal message is also their Achilles heel. Fee was right in saying that Pentecostals "tend to make the timing of the experience of significance to the experience itself, those who have opposed the Pentecostal position have also generally believed themselves to have dealt a crippling blow to Pentecostalism when they have argued exegetically against its timing."³⁶ The writer would concur with Fee's observation. Does subsequence necessitate a time interval between salvation and the reception of the Spirit? Can salvation and reception of the Spirit be a concurrent event and yet subsequent? The writer is of the opinion that the both events can happen in a single instance and yet be subsequent.

CONCLUSION

Gathering from the discussion the writer would like to submit that this paper is not exhaustive. The writer would be of the opinion that there are plenty of arenas for further research on this issue. However, we can see that there is clear evidence that the Jewish and gentile Pentecosts are pivotal to the Book of Acts. It is highly probable that Luke used these two accounts for a didactic purpose. The evidence is clear from the discussion that the central issue in the two accounts was the reception of the Spirit. The reception of the Spirit in the Cornelius accounts also marks the acceptance of the gentiles by God. The sign for the reception of the Spirit is verified by the manifestation of glossolalia. According to Luke's perspective, it is clear that the manifestation of glossolalia in the

³⁴ William Neil. *The Acts of the Apostles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 71-72.

³⁵ Neil, p.73.

³⁶ Fee, "Baptism in the Holy Spirit," p. 87.

two Pentecosts is inspired speech. Luke is not concerned with the way it was manifested, whether it was a known or an unknown tongue. Luke rather sees it as a sign of Spirit-baptism (the reception of the Spirit). Therefore, it is the writer's opinion that Luke in these two accounts undoubtedly has an eye on the sign value of glossolalia as an initial physical evidence of Spirit-baptism. In his Jewish-gentile emphasis he intends to show the approval of God towards the people who are saved as a universal church. Likewise Luke envisions that the outpouring of the Spirit in the two events serves as a normative model for Spirit-baptism with glossolalia as initial evidence.