

Liberals Who Say the Samaritans Spoke in Tongues

Many people throughout the theological spectrum assert, based on the argument of silence, that the Samaritans did not speak in tongues. But many, based on the Greek, do, including numerous liberal theologians. Their arguments are compelling. They have made wonderful contributions to the discussion, which support Pentecostals' arguments that tongues did not cease, but was and should be the norm for Christian experience. P.C. Nelson's reference to Dr. Hort's supportive statement is riveting.

Philip the evangelist was led by God to preach salvation to the Samaritans and perform miraculous signs. God delivered these Samaritans from evil spirits and healed numerous paralytics and crippled individuals. Consequently, many Samaritans were saved and baptized in water.

We know that the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit when they were saved, because Romans 8:9 says that if people belong to Christ, then they have the Holy Spirit. Luke challenges us with his terminology, however, when he says that the Holy Spirit had not come upon them. The confusion was caused when the Samaritans did not manifest the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues at the moment they were saved.

What was lacking became clear when Peter and John went to Samaria. The problem was resolved when Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans to manifest the indwelling Holy Spirit. Peter and John left, satisfied, because manifestations occurred. Most assuredly, these manifestations included speaking in tongues. The year was about AD 39.

Simon the sorcerer must have seen—clearly and obviously—something spectacular. Otherwise he would never have

offered money for the power to bring about the same phenomena, as John A. Schep states in *Baptism in the Spirit According to Scripture* (page 39). There must have been some sort of miraculous transformation such as happened to the 120 at Pentecost, including speaking in tongues. Peter rebuked Simon the sorcerer for attempting to purchase and market the power of God for profit.

But who has verified that the Samaritans spoke in tongues? We are indebted to P. C. Nelson providing such verification in *The Baptism in the Spirit* (pages 5-15) with a list of dozens of comments and interpretations which relate most specifically to the Samaritan's experience of speaking in tongues. Here are some of them:

- R. Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (with English notes)—“Dr. Hort, who holds that the reception of the Holy Spirit is here explained as in x. 44 by reference to the manifestation of the gift of tongues, points out that the verb is not ‘elabon’ (the aorist), but ‘elambanon,” and he therefore renders it, ‘showed a succession of signs of the Spirit.’”

- The Modernist Shailer Matthews and his Associate Professor George Holley Gilbert, who wrote the “Interpretive Comments in Acts” in the series in Matthews’ *Bible for Home and School*, agree with the commentators cited. Dr. Gilbert wrote that the “baptism in the name of Jesus was not considered a complete equipment for the Christian life. It marked the first stage.” The verses in Acts 8 suggest that “there was some visible manifestation on the part of those on whom the hands of the apostles had been laid. We may think of ecstatic speech or of some sign done by those who had

received the gift of the Spirit" (see 6:5, 8; 8:6). He adds that "Unless the gift of the Spirit had been accompanied with some extraordinary manifestation, something that could be seen, Simon would have had no grounds for making the offer of money."

- Lutheran Commentary (New York, 1906)—" 'when Simon saw.' Lit., when Simon had seen the effects of the communication of the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues, and the like" (comp.2:4; 10:46sqq.).

There is clear evidence as to the experience in Samaria. The following conclusions should especially be observed from the opinions Nelson quoted (pages 17-18):

1. All the commentators quoted agree that there was some visible, outward, miraculous manifestation or evidence of the presence of the Spirit.
2. Nearly all of them mention the speaking with tongues as almost certainly the manifestation, or one of the manifestations.
3. All agree that this experience was something in addition to, and subsequent to, the regeneration of these Samaritans.
4. None of them assert that this can in any way be interpreted as sanctification, and some of them

specifically declare that such an interpretation is untenable.

5. Most of them agree that the gift here mentioned was not for a select few but for all the true believers.

Several great expositors of the Book of Acts mention the working of miracles of some kind, or the manifestation of one of the spiritual gifts. Then why insist on tongues as the outward evidence at Samaria and also in our time? Why not the gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, of discernment or interpretation? Note the following points:

1. In each case where a manifestation is named in connection with the baptism with the Holy Spirit, tongues are named—at Pentecost, at Caesarea, at Ephesus.
2. Any outward sign or evidence of the infilling with the Holy Spirit should be easily recognized by the person himself and by those present. It should be evident any time and always— to conform to the Bible pattern.
3. The other gifts of the Spirit would not be discernable to the audience nor to the person who had received the baptism with the Holy Spirit—they all require special circumstances to be evident. The manifestation of tongues is possible anytime, anywhere, and whether any one is present or a thousand are present. P. C. Nelson states, “There is a divine wisdom in selecting this manifestation as the sign of the incoming of the Holy

Spirit. And what could be more appropriate or thrilling?
'Tongues are for a sign'" (Nelson, 27).

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