

THE BIBLICAL SIGN OF
— RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST —

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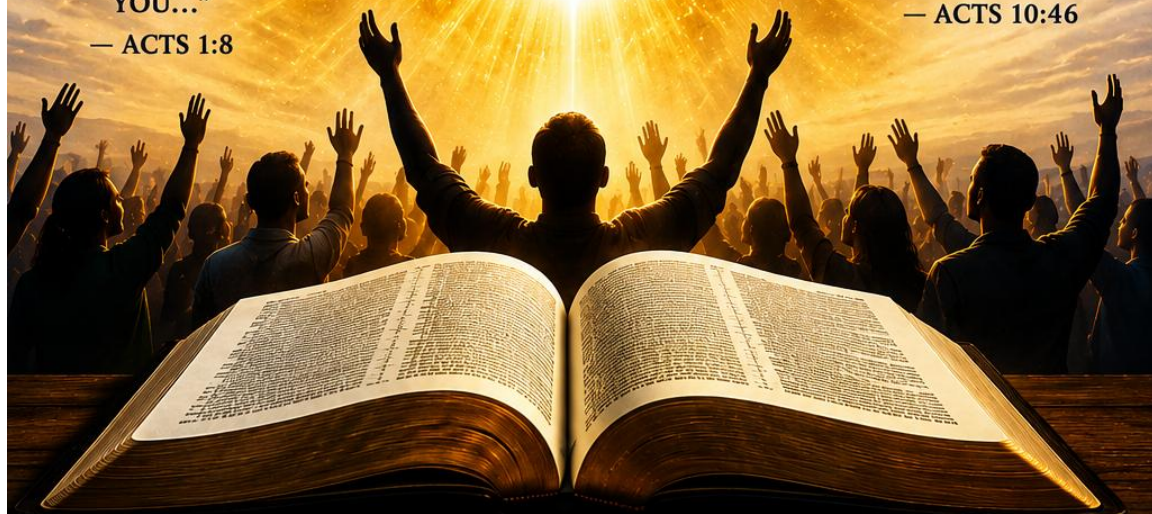
A BIBLE STUDY ON THE EVIDENCE, THE PATTERN,
AND THE POWER OF GOD

“YE SHALL
RECEIVE POWER,
AFTER THAT THE
HOLY GHOST
IS COME UPON
YOU...”

— ACTS 1:8

“FOR THEY
HEARD THEM
SPEAK WITH
TONGUES, AND
MAGNIFY GOD.”

— ACTS 10:46



EXAMINING EVERY ACCOUNT IN ACTS.
UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURE. EXPERIENCING THE PROMISE.

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Receiving the Holy Ghost

The Apostolic Pattern of Spirit Baptism

Introduction

Modern Christianity has drifted far from the Apostolic model established by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Many churches now teach that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have ceased, that speaking in tongues was only for the first century, and that believers should no longer expect miracles, signs, wonders, or the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. Rather than looking to the Book of Acts as the divinely inspired pattern for the New Testament Church, many have reduced the message of salvation to a single verse such as John 3:16 while minimizing or even dismissing the examples God intentionally preserved for us. In doing so, salvation is often presented almost entirely as a one-sided act requiring little more than intellectual belief, while the biblical call to repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and walking in newness of life is pushed into the background. The result is a Christianity that often bears little resemblance to the Apostolic Church described in Scripture.

The Book of Acts was not given merely as a historical record of the early Church; it was given as God's inspired model of how the Gospel was preached, how sinners responded, and how believers received the promised Holy Ghost. Again and again Luke records the same Apostolic pattern, demonstrating that the promise Jesus made was fulfilled in observable, supernatural ways. Nowhere do the Scriptures declare that this pattern was temporary, that it would cease with the Apostles, or that later generations were authorized to replace it with another plan of salvation. No prophet, apostle, church council, denomination, or theologian has been given authority to alter what God Himself established. Therefore, our responsibility is not to modify the Apostolic model to fit modern theology, but to return to the pattern revealed in Scripture. In this study we will allow Jesus, the Book of Acts, and the Apostolic Epistles to answer one simple but vital question: How does the Bible describe receiving the Holy Ghost, and what sign accompanies that glorious experience?

1. Jesus Promised There Would Be a Sign

Before anyone ever spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus had already prepared His disciples to expect a supernatural sign accompanying the coming of the Holy Ghost. The promise of the Spirit was never presented as merely an inward feeling or an invisible experience. It was a divine promise that would be recognized by unmistakable evidence. Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus demonstrated the power of God through miracles, signs, and wonders, and before leaving this world He prepared His followers to expect that same supernatural work to continue after His ascension.

Near the close of His ministry Jesus declared, "And these signs shall follow them that believe..." (Mark 16:17, KJV). Jesus did not merely promise forgiveness of sins; He promised signs. Christianity was never intended to be reduced to an intellectual belief system. God has always confirmed His work through visible demonstrations of His power, and Jesus assured His disciples that believers would experience that same reality.

Jesus also gave one of Scripture's greatest invitations: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37–38). John immediately explains, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive..." (John 7:39). Jesus was not speaking figuratively about a pleasant spiritual feeling. He was speaking of the Holy Ghost, a promise that believers would actually receive after His glorification.

Following His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They were not told to assume they had already received the promise. They were commanded to wait until it came.

Immediately before His ascension He repeated the command: "Wait for the promise of the Father... For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:4–5). Then He added, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). The coming of the Holy Ghost would not leave the disciples wondering whether anything had happened. They would know when the promise had been fulfilled because it would be accompanied by divine power.

Jesus therefore established three important truths before the Day of Pentecost ever arrived. First, the Holy Ghost was a promise to be received. Second, believers were instructed to expect a supernatural experience rather than merely an inward conviction. Third, Jesus promised observable signs that would accompany those who believed. He did not yet identify the specific sign that would accompany the initial reception of the Holy Ghost, but He prepared His disciples to expect that God would provide unmistakable evidence.

The stage was now set for one of the most significant events in biblical history. The promise had been made, the disciples had obeyed Christ's command to wait, and the world was about to witness the birth of the New Testament Church. The next chapter records exactly what happened when the Holy Ghost was first poured out and reveals the sign that accompanied its reception.

2. Pentecost: The Pattern Is Established

The Day of Pentecost marks one of the greatest turning points in biblical history. Everything Jesus had promised concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost now came to pass exactly as He had foretold. The disciples had obeyed His command to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. They did not manufacture the experience, nor did they claim it by assumption. They waited until God fulfilled His promise.

Acts 2 begins, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1, KJV). Suddenly there came "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," and cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them. These visible and audible manifestations announced that God Himself was acting. Yet the central event was still to come.

Acts 2:4 declares, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This is the first recorded occasion of anyone receiving the Holy Ghost under the New Covenant. Significantly, the Scriptures do not leave us wondering whether they had received the Spirit. God provided an unmistakable sign that accompanied their infilling: they spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

It is important to notice that these were already believers. They had followed Jesus, witnessed His resurrection, and obeyed His commandments. Nevertheless, Jesus instructed them to wait until they received the promised Holy Ghost. Their faith and discipleship did not eliminate the need for this experience; rather, they prepared them to receive it.

The miracle also captured the attention of Jews from many nations who had gathered in Jerusalem. Each heard the disciples speaking in languages they had never learned, declaring the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:5–11). Some were amazed, while others mocked and accused the disciples of being full of new wine. Peter immediately explained that this was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the outpouring of God's Spirit (Acts 2:16–21). What the crowd witnessed was not emotional excitement but the fulfillment of divine prophecy.

Some attempt to dismiss the Day of Pentecost as evidence that speaking with tongues accompanies the reception of the Holy Ghost by arguing that the disciples spoke known human languages understood by those gathered in Jerusalem. Although God did miraculously enable them to speak languages they had never learned, that fact does not invalidate the pattern established at Pentecost. It merely demonstrates one purpose for which God used tongues on that particular occasion. The relevant question is not whether the languages were understood, but whether speaking with tongues accompanied the reception of the Holy Ghost. The answer is unmistakably yes.

The remainder of the Book of Acts confirms that tongues were not limited to communicating the Gospel to a multilingual audience. When Cornelius and his household received the Holy Ghost, there was no international multitude present, yet Peter and the Jewish believers knew they had received the Spirit because **“they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God”** (Acts 10:46). Likewise, when approximately twelve disciples at Ephesus received the Holy Ghost, **“they spake with tongues, and prophesied”** (Acts 19:6). No diverse crowd required the Gospel to be proclaimed in several foreign languages. These later accounts demonstrate that although God may use tongues for different purposes, the accompanying sign of receiving the Holy Ghost remained the same.

Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 14 further confirms that tongues are not always intended to communicate with human listeners. He wrote, **“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries”** (1 Corinthians 14:2). He later added, **“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful”** (1 Corinthians 14:14). When tongues function as a public message to the church, Paul requires interpretation so that the congregation may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:27–28). These passages establish that tongues may function as a sign of receiving the Holy Ghost, as prayer or worship directed toward God, or as a spiritual gift requiring interpretation. The fact that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were understood by people from many nations therefore cannot be used to define or restrict every other biblical manifestation of tongues.

Peter then preached Jesus Christ—His death, burial, resurrection, exaltation, and Lordship. Convicted by the message, the people asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter answered with the now-famous Apostolic response: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). The promise was not limited to the one hundred and twenty in the upper room. Peter immediately added, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

The remainder of the chapter records that about three thousand gladly received the word and were added to the Church. They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. The New Testament Church was born with a clear Apostolic pattern: repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the promise of receiving the Holy Ghost. The first recorded reception of the Holy Ghost was accompanied by speaking with other tongues, establishing the pattern that will be seen repeatedly throughout the Book of Acts.

As we continue through Acts, the question is no longer what happened on the Day of Pentecost. The question becomes whether this same pattern continued whenever others received the Holy Ghost. The next chapters answer that question unmistakably.

3. Samaria: Simon Saw Something

After the remarkable events of the Day of Pentecost, the Book of Acts continues to demonstrate how the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem. One of the most significant accounts is found in Acts chapter 8, where Philip traveled to Samaria and preached Christ. The people received his message with great joy, many were healed, unclean spirits were cast out, and numerous miracles confirmed the preaching of the Gospel. The Samaritans believed the message and were baptized, yet the Scriptures make an important distinction—they had not yet received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:14–17 records that when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John. Upon arriving, they prayed for the new believers, "that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." This passage alone demonstrates that water baptism and the reception of the Holy Ghost were not treated as identical experiences. The Apostles expected those who had already believed and been baptized to receive the Holy Ghost as well.

This account also raises an important question that is often overlooked. Samaria is approximately **thirty miles from Jerusalem**, yet when the Apostles heard that the Samaritans had believed the Gospel and had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they immediately sent Peter and John to them. Why? If repentance, faith, and water baptism alone constituted the complete New Testament experience of salvation, there would have been no reason for two Apostles to make such a journey. They did not travel to preach Christ, for Philip had already done that. They did not travel to baptize the converts, for they had already been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. They traveled for one purpose: **that these believers might receive the Holy Ghost**.

This demonstrates how the Apostles themselves viewed the reception of the Holy Ghost. It was not an optional experience reserved for a select few, nor was it assumed to have occurred automatically when someone believed or was baptized. Peter and John regarded it as so essential that they traveled approximately thirty miles simply to pray that these new believers would receive the promised Spirit. Their actions speak just as loudly as their words. The Apostolic Church did not consider the conversion of these Samaritans complete until they had also received the Holy Ghost.

The account then introduces Simon, a former sorcerer who had astonished the people of Samaria with his magic. Although Simon professed belief and was baptized, he still viewed spiritual power through worldly eyes. Luke records, "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18). This single statement raises an important question: What exactly did Simon see?

The Bible does not explicitly state that the Samaritans spoke with tongues in this passage. Nevertheless, it is equally true that Luke intentionally tells us Simon saw something. Whatever occurred was visible, unmistakable, and powerful enough that Simon desired to purchase the ability to impart the Holy Ghost himself. If nothing outward had happened, Simon would have had no reason to react as he did. Invisible faith, inward assurance, or private emotion cannot be observed by another person. Yet Simon observed something so extraordinary that he immediately recognized the supernatural work of God.

When this account is read alongside every other recorded reception of the Holy Ghost in the Book of Acts, the most natural conclusion is that the same sign accompanied this event as well. On the Day of Pentecost they spoke with other tongues. At the house of Cornelius Peter knew the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost because he heard them speak with tongues. At Ephesus the disciples likewise spoke with tongues when they received the Holy Ghost. Acts chapter 8 stands directly between these accounts and describes an observable manifestation without repeating every detail already established elsewhere. The pattern remains remarkably consistent.

Peter sharply rebuked Simon, declaring that the gift of God could not be purchased with money. The power to impart the Holy Ghost was not a commodity to be bought or sold, but a sovereign work of God. Simon's request also reminds us that the reception of the Holy Ghost was never viewed by the Apostles as a hidden or uncertain experience. It was a genuine event that could be recognized when it occurred.

Acts chapter 8 therefore strengthens the Apostolic pattern rather than weakening it. While Luke does not repeat the exact words "they spoke with tongues," he leaves no doubt that an observable supernatural sign accompanied the reception of the Holy Ghost. The next major outpouring of the Spirit removes all remaining uncertainty, for in the house of Cornelius the Scriptures explicitly identify the sign that convinced the Jewish believers that God had also granted the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles.

4. Cornelius: God Repeats the Pattern

The conversion of Cornelius in Acts chapter 10 marks one of the most significant events in the history of the New Testament Church. Until this point, the Gospel had been preached primarily to the Jews and to the Samaritans. Cornelius, however, was a Gentile centurion who feared God, prayed continually, and gave generously to those in need. Although he was a devout man, God revealed that he still needed to hear the Gospel preached by the Apostle Peter. His sincerity alone was not presented as the completion of God's plan; he still needed to receive what Christ had promised.

God prepared both Peter and Cornelius for this historic meeting. Through a series of divine visions, Peter came to understand that God was opening the door of salvation to the Gentiles. When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house, he preached Jesus Christ—His life, death, resurrection, and Lordship. As Peter proclaimed the Gospel, something extraordinary happened. Before the sermon was even finished, God poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost upon everyone who heard the Word.

Luke records the event with remarkable clarity: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44, KJV). The Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were astonished because the Holy Ghost had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. The obvious question is this: How did they know the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost?

The Scriptures leave no room for speculation. Acts 10:46 provides the answer: "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." Peter and the Jewish believers did not merely assume that Cornelius and his household had received the Holy Ghost. They knew because they heard them speaking with tongues. The same supernatural sign that accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost now appeared among believing Gentiles.

This account is especially significant because it removed every doubt that the Gentiles had been accepted by God on the same basis as the Jews. Speaking with tongues was not simply a personal blessing; it served as God's unmistakable witness that He had poured out His Spirit upon all who believed, regardless of their nationality. The Jewish believers were convinced not because Peter announced it, but because they heard the same evidence they had witnessed in Jerusalem.

Peter's response confirms this understanding. He immediately declared, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47). Notice Peter's words: "as well as we." He recognized that the Gentiles had received the very same Holy Ghost experience the Apostles had received on the Day of Pentecost. There was no suggestion of a different or lesser experience. The pattern remained identical.

Years later, when Peter defended his actions before the believers in Jerusalem, he again pointed to this event. In Acts 11:15 he testified, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Peter's comparison reached all the way back to Pentecost. He identified the experience at Cornelius' house as the same outpouring that had occurred "at the beginning." Likewise, in Acts 15:8 God is said to have borne witness to the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Ghost just as He had given it to the Jewish believers.

Acts chapter 10 therefore provides one of the clearest passages in all of Scripture regarding the initial reception of the Holy Ghost. Unlike Acts chapter 8, there is no need to infer what occurred. The Bible plainly states that Peter and those with him knew the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost because they heard them speak with tongues. The pattern established on the Day of Pentecost had not changed; God simply extended the same promise to every nation. The next recorded account will show that this pattern continued even years later in the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

5. Ephesus: The Pattern Continues

By the time we reach Acts chapter 19, many years have passed since the Day of Pentecost. The Gospel has spread into new regions, churches have been established, and the Apostle Paul is carrying the message of Jesus Christ throughout the Gentile world. If the supernatural sign that accompanied the reception of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost had been intended only for the beginning of the Church, we would expect the biblical record to show that change. Instead, Acts chapter 19 demonstrates that the Apostolic pattern remained unchanged.

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he encountered about twelve disciples. Rather than assuming they had experienced everything God intended simply because they were already called disciples, Paul immediately asked them a remarkable question: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19:2, KJV). This question reveals an important truth. In the Apostolic Church, believing in Christ and receiving the Holy Ghost were closely connected, yet they were not treated as identical experiences. Paul expected believers to receive the Holy Ghost and therefore asked whether that experience had taken place.

Paul's first question is striking: **"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"** He was speaking to men whom Luke identifies as disciples, yet Paul did not assume that belief itself meant they had already received the Holy Ghost. If the Holy Ghost were received automatically at the moment of belief, the question would have been unnecessary. Likewise, if water baptism alone guaranteed that a person had received the Spirit, Paul could have begun by asking how they had been baptized. Instead, his first concern was whether the Holy Ghost had actually been received.

The order of Paul's questions is therefore significant. Only after learning that they had not received the Holy Ghost did he ask, **"Unto what then were ye baptized?"** (Acts 19:3). This suggests that something about their condition caused Paul to recognize that the expected evidence of Spirit baptism was absent. Luke does not tell us precisely what Paul observed, but the sequence strongly implies that Paul did not merely accept their profession of belief as sufficient proof that they had received the Holy Ghost. He expected a recognizable experience, and when that evidence was not apparent, he began asking questions.

The disciples replied that they had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost. Paul then asked about their baptism and discovered that they had received only John's baptism of repentance. Paul explained that John pointed people to Jesus Christ, after which these disciples were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:3–5). Once again, the biblical record shows the Apostolic emphasis upon complete obedience to the Gospel rather than partial understanding.

After their baptism, Paul laid his hands upon them, and Luke records the result with unmistakable clarity: "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). There is no uncertainty concerning what occurred. Just as on the Day of Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius, the reception of the Holy Ghost was accompanied by speaking with tongues. In this instance, the believers also prophesied, demonstrating that God may sovereignly manifest additional gifts while still preserving the same initial sign of Spirit baptism.

This distinction is important. The passage does not teach that prophecy replaced tongues, nor does it suggest that prophecy was the evidence by which Paul recognized they had received the Holy Ghost. Luke specifically records that they "spake with tongues, and prophesied." Speaking with tongues remains the consistent element found throughout the Book of Acts whenever the initial reception of the Holy Ghost is explicitly described. Prophecy accompanied the event, but it did not replace the biblical pattern.

Acts chapter 19 is especially valuable because it occurred long after the birth of the Church. The experience recorded here was not limited to Jewish believers in Jerusalem, nor was it confined to the unique circumstances surrounding Cornelius' household. Years later, in another city, among another group of believers, under the ministry of another Apostle, God continued to pour out the Holy Ghost in the same recognizable manner. This remarkable consistency argues strongly against the idea that the events of Pentecost were intended to be a one-time occurrence never to be repeated.

When the accounts of Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, and Acts 19 are considered together, a clear pattern emerges. Wherever the Scriptures explicitly identify the sign accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues is present. Where the sign is not specifically named, as in Acts 8, the text still describes an observable supernatural manifestation. Rather than presenting conflicting examples, the Book of Acts consistently reinforces the same Apostolic model.

The evidence is now overwhelming. Jesus promised a supernatural experience. The Day of Pentecost established the pattern. Samaria revealed an observable manifestation. Cornelius confirmed the same sign among the Gentiles. Ephesus demonstrated that years later the Apostolic Church still expected the very same experience. Before turning to the Epistles, it is worthwhile to step back and examine every recorded account together to see the remarkable consistency of the biblical record.

6. The Apostolic Pattern in Every Recorded Account

The individual accounts in the Book of Acts are powerful on their own, but their full force becomes even clearer when they are placed beside one another. Luke did not record a collection of unrelated spiritual experiences. He preserved a consistent Apostolic witness showing how the promised Holy Ghost was received as the Gospel moved from Jerusalem to Samaria, to the Gentiles, and into the wider world. The locations changed, the people changed, and the Apostles present were not always the same, yet the recognizable pattern remained.

Acts chapter 2 establishes the pattern at the birth of the New Testament Church. The waiting disciples were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was not a later interpretation imposed upon the event; it was the sign God Himself chose at the first outpouring. Peter then declared that the promise was not restricted to that generation, but was for their children, for those afar off, and for as many as the Lord would call.

Acts chapter 8 carries the Gospel into Samaria. The people believed Philip's preaching and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet Peter and John still prayed that they might receive the Holy Ghost. When the Apostles laid hands upon them, Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given and desired to purchase that power. Although Luke does not repeat the exact phrase that they spoke with tongues, the reception of the Spirit produced an observable supernatural manifestation. Nothing in the passage suggests a different kind of experience from the one already established at Pentecost.

Acts chapter 9 records the conversion of Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul. Ananias was sent to him so that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts does not describe the outward sign in that moment, so the passage should not be made to say more than it says. Nevertheless, Paul's later testimony is highly significant: he told the Corinthian church, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1 Corinthians 14:18, KJV). Scripture therefore confirms that Paul himself spoke with tongues, even though Luke does not narrate every detail of his initial infilling.

Acts chapter 10 provides the clearest interpretive statement in the entire record. The Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and his household, and the Jewish believers knew the Gentiles had received the Spirit "for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46). Peter later described this event as the Holy Ghost falling upon them "as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). The Gentile experience was accepted as genuine precisely because it reproduced the Pentecostal pattern.

Acts chapter 19 demonstrates that the pattern continued years later. Paul met disciples at Ephesus and asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" After they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul laid hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon

them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Pentecost was therefore not an isolated event attached only to the founding of the Church. The same sign remained present under Paul's ministry in another city and among another people.

Taken together, these accounts do not present multiple competing evidences of Spirit baptism. Wherever Luke explicitly names the sign accompanying the initial reception of the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues is present. Where he does not name it, the text either records an observable supernatural manifestation or, in Paul's case, later confirms that the recipient spoke with tongues. There is no recorded account in Acts in which the Holy Ghost is received and another sign is substituted for tongues as the identifying evidence.

The consistency of the record is not accidental. The Book of Acts was written to show the beginning and expansion of the Apostolic Church. If God intended later believers to recognize Spirit baptism by a different sign, this was the place to reveal it. Instead, Scripture repeatedly directs the reader back to the same supernatural evidence first given on the Day of Pentecost. The Apostolic pattern is not built upon one isolated verse, but upon the cumulative testimony of the entire historical record.

Having established the pattern in Acts, the study must now turn to the Epistles. Paul speaks extensively about tongues, but not every reference describes the same function. Unless these distinctions are understood, statements about the gift of tongues can be incorrectly used to deny the sign of receiving the Holy Ghost. The next chapter will therefore distinguish the three biblical modes of tongues: the initial sign of Spirit baptism, the congregational gift of tongues, and personal prayer in the Spirit.

Summary of the Recorded Accounts

Passage	Recipients	Evidence Recorded	Significance
Acts 2	Jews at Pentecost	Spoke with other tongues	The pattern established
Acts 8	Samaritans	An observable supernatural sign	The pattern extended to Samaria
Acts 9	Saul/Paul	Later testified that he spoke with tongues	Paul personally shared the experience
Acts 10	Gentiles at Cornelius' house	They were heard speaking with tongues	The same pattern confirmed among Gentiles
Acts 19	Disciples at Ephesus	Spoke with tongues and prophesied	The pattern continued years later

7. The Three Biblical Uses of Tongues

One of the greatest sources of confusion surrounding the subject of tongues is the failure to distinguish between the different ways the New Testament speaks about them. Many sincere Christians read Paul's discussion in First Corinthians and assume he is describing the initial reception of the Holy Ghost. Others conclude that because not every believer possesses the gift of tongues, speaking in tongues cannot accompany the reception of the Holy Ghost. These conclusions overlook an important fact: the New Testament describes three distinct functions of tongues. Once these are separated, the apparent contradictions disappear and the Scriptures harmonize beautifully.

The first and primary use of tongues is the initial sign accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost. This is the emphasis of the Book of Acts and the focus of this study. On the Day of Pentecost, those in the upper room were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). At the house of Cornelius, Peter knew the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost because he heard them speak with tongues (Acts 10:46). At Ephesus, when Paul laid his hands upon the disciples, they received the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues (Acts 19:6). In each account, tongues accompanied the initial outpouring of God's Spirit.

The second use of tongues is the spiritual gift described in First Corinthians chapters 12 through 14. Paul lists divers kinds of tongues among the gifts of the Spirit given for the edification of the church. Unlike the initial sign of Spirit baptism, this gift is not given to every believer. Paul asks, 'Are all apostles? ... have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?' (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). The obvious answer is no. Paul is speaking here about a ministry gift that functions within the gathered church and is often accompanied by the gift of interpretation. It should not be confused with the initial evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost.

The context makes this distinction clear. In First Corinthians 12, Paul discusses spiritual gifts distributed according to the will of the Spirit for the benefit of the body of Christ. His concern is the orderly operation of those gifts in the assembly. He is not revisiting the historical accounts in Acts that describe how believers first received the Holy Ghost. Conflating these two subjects has caused unnecessary confusion for generations of Bible students.

The third use of tongues is personal prayer and worship. Paul writes, 'For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful' (1 Corinthians 14:14). He also declares, 'I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all' (1 Corinthians 14:18). These statements reveal a private devotional use of tongues that edifies the believer's personal walk with God. Paul distinguishes this from the public exercise of the gift of tongues, which requires interpretation when the church is assembled (1 Corinthians 14:27-28).

Recognizing these three biblical functions removes much of the misunderstanding surrounding the subject. The Book of Acts answers the question, 'What accompanied the reception of the Holy Ghost?' First Corinthians 12 answers, 'How does God distribute spiritual gifts within the church?' First Corinthians 14 answers, 'How should tongues function in personal devotion and in public worship?' Each passage addresses a different subject while remaining perfectly consistent with the others.

This distinction also explains why Paul could teach that not every believer possesses the gift of tongues while the Book of Acts repeatedly records believers speaking with tongues when they first received the Holy Ghost. The gift of tongues is a ministry gift distributed according to God's sovereign will. The initial sign of Spirit baptism is part of the historical pattern established in Acts. Personal prayer in tongues is a devotional expression of communion with God. Confusing these separate functions has led many to reject what the Apostles consistently practiced.

Having established the biblical distinction between these three uses of tongues, we are now prepared to consider the most common objections raised against speaking in tongues as the sign accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost. Rather than relying on tradition or denominational teaching, we will allow Scripture to answer each objection in its own context.

8. Answering Common Objections

Having examined the promise of Jesus, the historical record of the Book of Acts, and the distinction between the three biblical uses of tongues, it is appropriate to consider several of the most common objections raised against speaking in tongues as the sign accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost. These objections deserve to be answered from Scripture rather than from tradition or personal experience. The goal is not to win an argument, but to allow the biblical record to speak for itself.

One common objection is that "not everyone in the Book of Acts spoke with tongues." The difficulty with this argument is that it asks Scripture to prove a negative. The Book of Acts does not record every detail of every conversion. Instead, it provides representative accounts. In every passage where the initial reception of the Holy Ghost is explicitly described, tongues are either directly stated (Acts 2, 10, and 19) or an observable supernatural manifestation is described (Acts 8). Nothing in Acts presents a contrary pattern.

Another objection comes from First Corinthians 12:30: "Do all speak with tongues?" As discussed in the previous chapter, Paul is addressing the gift of tongues within the gathered church, not the initial reception of the Holy Ghost. His subject is the distribution of ministry gifts, not the historical pattern established in Acts. Confusing these two subjects has led many to conclude that the Book of Acts contradicts the Epistles when, in reality, they address different questions.

Some argue that tongues ceased with the Apostles or with the completion of the New Testament. Yet no verse states that the sign accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost would cease during the Church Age. The Book of Acts presents the experience as the normal pattern for believers, and the Epistles contain instructions regulating the proper use of tongues in the church rather than announcing their end. If God had intended believers to expect a different experience, Scripture would reasonably be expected to say so.

Others maintain that speaking in tongues in Acts consisted only of known human languages and therefore has no application today. While Acts 2 unquestionably involved recognizable languages understood by the crowd in Jerusalem, the New Testament also speaks of praying in tongues and of tongues that require interpretation in the church (1 Corinthians 14). The Scriptures therefore describe more than one context in which tongues operate. Regardless of the nature of the language being spoken, the consistent point of this study is that speaking with tongues accompanied the initial reception of the Holy Ghost.

Some sincerely testify that they believe they received the Holy Ghost without speaking in tongues. Personal experience, however, must always be evaluated in light of Scripture rather than allowing experience to redefine Scripture. The Apostles consistently directed believers

back to the pattern established by Christ and confirmed in the Book of Acts. The question is not what someone has experienced, but what the Word of God teaches.

Finally, some ask whether emphasizing tongues places too much attention on the sign rather than on Christ. The answer is no. This could not be more directly about Christ Himself, because receiving the Holy Ghost is Christ coming to dwell within the believer by His Spirit. The focus of this study has never been tongues for their own sake, nor should the sign ever be exalted above the One who gives it. Tongues are significant only because God chose them as the accompanying sign in the biblical record. They point beyond themselves to the far greater reality that the promised Spirit of Christ has entered the believer and made His dwelling within. To speak of receiving the Holy Ghost, therefore, is not to move attention away from Christ, but to speak of the most personal and scriptural manner in which Christ comes to live within His people.

When the common objections are examined carefully, they do not overturn the Apostolic pattern. Instead, they usually arise from reading passages outside their context or from allowing later traditions to reinterpret the historical record. The Book of Acts remains unchanged. Jesus promised the Holy Ghost. The Apostles proclaimed the promise. Believers received the Holy Ghost. Speaking with tongues consistently accompanied that experience. The final chapter will summarize the biblical evidence and call readers to embrace the Apostolic pattern preserved in Scripture.

9. The Apostolic Pattern Never Changed

As we come to the conclusion of this study, one fact stands above all others: the Apostolic pattern concerning the reception of the Holy Ghost never changed. From the promises of Jesus through the ministry of the Apostles and into the doctrinal instruction of the New Testament, the Scriptures present a remarkably consistent picture. Rather than introducing conflicting methods of receiving the Holy Ghost, the Bible records one unified pattern that was faithfully proclaimed and practiced throughout the early Church.

Jesus first promised that believers would receive the Holy Ghost. He instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high and assured them that signs would accompany those who believed. The fulfillment of that promise came on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. This was not presented as an isolated miracle, but as the beginning of God's New Testament work among His people.

As the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem, the same pattern continued. In Samaria, something so visible and supernatural occurred that Simon the sorcerer attempted to purchase the ability to impart the Holy Ghost. At the house of Cornelius, Peter and the Jewish believers knew the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost because they heard them speak with tongues. Years later at Ephesus, Paul laid hands upon believing disciples, and they likewise spoke with tongues when the Holy Ghost came upon them. Different cities, different people, different circumstances—but the same Holy Ghost and the same recognizable pattern.

The Epistles do not replace this pattern. Instead, they build upon it. Paul explains the proper operation of spiritual gifts within the church and distinguishes the ministry gift of tongues from personal prayer in the Spirit. These instructions assume the continued work of the Holy Ghost among believers rather than announcing the end of His supernatural manifestations. Nothing in the New Testament teaches that God later established a different sign for receiving the Holy Ghost or authorized the Church to abandon the pattern recorded in Acts.

Throughout history, traditions, creeds, and theological systems have often displaced the simplicity of the Apostolic record. Some have taught that miracles ceased. Others have concluded that the Book of Acts merely describes what happened without establishing any pattern for future believers. Still others have substituted inward assurance alone for the observable evidence repeatedly found in Scripture. Yet none of these conclusions arises from the plain reading of the biblical text. They arise only after later interpretations are placed upon it.

The question every sincere believer must answer is not, 'What does my denomination teach?' nor, 'What has been my personal experience?' The question is, 'What do the Scriptures teach?'

If Jesus promised the Holy Ghost, if the Apostles faithfully proclaimed that promise, and if the inspired record repeatedly shows speaking with tongues accompanying the reception of the Holy Ghost, then those who desire to follow the Apostolic faith should not hesitate to embrace the same biblical pattern today.

God has never withdrawn His promise. Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost, 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39). That promise has never been revoked. It remains available to every generation of believers who come to Christ in obedient faith. The same Lord who poured out His Spirit in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and Ephesus continues to fulfill His promise today.

May every reader approach this subject with an open Bible and an open heart. Rather than measuring Scripture by tradition, let us measure tradition by Scripture. The Apostolic pattern has not changed, because the God who established it has not changed. His promise still stands, His Spirit is still poured out, and His Word remains the final authority for faith and practice.

Conclusion

Throughout this study we have allowed the Scriptures to answer a single question: What sign accompanied the reception of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament? Rather than beginning with denominational traditions or personal experiences, we began with the promises of Jesus Christ, followed the historical record preserved in the Book of Acts, and then examined the instruction given in the Apostolic Epistles. The result is a consistent and unified biblical testimony.

Jesus promised that believers would receive the Holy Ghost and that supernatural signs would follow. On the Day of Pentecost, that promise was fulfilled as the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The same pattern continued in Samaria, at the house of Cornelius, and in Ephesus. Whenever Scripture explicitly identifies the sign accompanying the initial reception of the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues is present. Where every detail is not repeated, the text still describes an observable supernatural manifestation.

The Epistles do not overturn this pattern. Instead, they explain how tongues function within the life of the Church. They distinguish between the initial sign accompanying Spirit baptism, the gift of tongues given to certain believers for ministry, and the believer's personal prayer and worship in the Spirit. Once these biblical distinctions are recognized, the apparent contradictions disappear and the harmony of Scripture becomes clear.

This study has not been written to exalt tongues. The emphasis of the New Testament is not tongues for their own sake, but the glorious promise of receiving the Holy Ghost. Speaking with tongues is significant because God chose it as the accompanying sign recorded in the Apostolic witness. Our confidence therefore rests, not in human tradition, but in the inspired pattern preserved by God in His Word.

Every generation of Christians faces the same choice. Will we measure Scripture by the traditions of men, or will we measure our traditions by Scripture? The Book of Acts has never been replaced. No inspired writer ever announced a new pattern for receiving the Holy Ghost, nor did any Apostle declare that the original pattern had expired. The promise Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost remains: 'For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39, KJV).

If you have not yet received the Holy Ghost, seek God with a sincere heart, believing His promises rather than the doubts of men. If you have received this wonderful gift, continue to walk in the Spirit and allow His power to transform your life daily. Above all, let the Word of God remain your final authority. The same Jesus who poured out His Spirit upon the believers recorded in the Book of Acts is still faithful today, and His promise has not changed.