

Part Four: WHAT ABOUT SPEAKING IN TONGUES?

Introduction:

1. Miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit enabled early Christians to do great and mighty works.
 - a. These spiritual gifts were given to reveal and confirm God's truths.
 - b. During the time of spiritual gifts, the New Testament was not fully revealed in a written form as it is today. Because of this, the disciples needed the gifts to teach the gospel.
 - c. Additionally, miracles of confirmation (signs) were needed to convince hearers that the disciples were spokesmen for God. One of the gifts of confirmation given by the Spirit was that of tongues—a sign to the unbeliever, 1 Corinthians 14:22.
2. There are many today who profess to speak in tongues like those in the Bible. But, is it really the same? Is the Holy Spirit still giving men tongues and the other miraculous gifts?

The Lesson:

I. What was speaking in tongues?

- A. Tongues were languages.
 1. Acts 2:4 describes how the apostles began to speak with other tongues.
 2. Jews from every nation were in Jerusalem and every man heard them speak in his own language, Acts 2:5-6. See also Acts 2:7-13.
 3. The apostles did not jabber with disconnected syllables coming from the mouth; they spoke languages, languages that could be understood, languages that men from the various provinces had learned.
 4. Biblically, speaking in tongues was the miracle of speaking in a language that had not been learned by the speaker. Thus it was an "unknown tongue" to those who had never learned that language, 1 Corinthians 14:2. The language, however, was known and understood by those whose native tongue it was, Acts 2:8.
 5. The gibberish and unintelligible sounds that some today call speaking in tongues is not like that found in the Bible.
- B. Tongues were a sign to the unbeliever, 1 Corinthians 14:22.
 1. This gift was used in Acts 2 to convince unbelievers of the truth spoken by the apostles, Acts 2:12, 33.
 2. While it is true that tongues could be used to teach the gospel to those who did not understand the common tongue (Greek), that does not seem to be its primary use. It was used as a sign to cause unbelievers to believe, Mark 16:17-20. In no place were tongues used as a sign that one is saved or that he is "close to God."
 3. Were the tongues of Acts 10:44-48 a sign? If so, what did it signify? _____

- C. Tongues was a less desirable gift than prophecy, 1 Corinthians 14:5.
 1. In an assembly where the language spoken was unknown, unless interpretation was given, the hearers were not edified by the gift of tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:5, 27-32.
 2. Read 1 Corinthians 14:18-19. Paul used tongues outside the assembly. Tongues has limited use in the assembly.
 3. What would happen if an unbeliever came into an assembly where languages were spoken that the unbeliever didn't know and no interpreter was present? They would think the Christians were crazy, 1 Corinthians 14:22-24.
- D. Tongues could be controlled by the speaker, 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

1. All things must be done unto edification, 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40.
2. Only two, or at the most three, could speak in an assembly, 1 Corinthians 14:27.
3. If no interpreter was present, he must keep silent, 1 Corinthians 14:28.
4. Like the tongue speakers, the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets, 1 Corinthians 14:32, indicating the gifts could be controlled.

II. The gift of tongues was only one of many spiritual gifts.

- A. All of the spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 were miraculous. A brief discussion of miracles is necessary to understanding spiritual gifts.
 1. Vine's Expository Dictionary, (Vol. III, p. 75,) defines miracle as "power, inherent ability, is used of works of a *supernatural origin and character*, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means."
 - a. If a thing could be produced by natural means, it would not be a miracle.
 - b. Not everything men call miracles are miracles. Can you think of some cases where men may use the word "miracle" to apply to things that are not miraculous? _____

 - c. Men use the word miracle very loosely because they just don't understand. As a result, the value of miracles is cheapened in the minds of many people.
 2. An event may originate with God, and yet not be a miracle. A miracle must supersede nature's laws. Consider the following contrast:
 - a. God delivered Peter from prison, Acts 12:6-11. Did he use a miracle here? Absolutely.
 - b. God delivered Paul and his shipmates, Acts 27:21-44. Though Paul was told by an angel that God would deliver them, God used no miracle in saving them. Deliverance came from God, but not by means of a miracle. Those who believe God cannot work except by a miracle limit God's ability and control over His creation.
 3. The gifts given by the Spirit were all supernatural in both origin and character. They were miraculous abilities given to men to carry out God's will in revealing His word. The gifts were not merely the response of God to prayer. They were not ordinary occurrences. They actually involved men possessing miraculous power from God. See Acts 8:6; Philip worked miracles.
- B. Miraculous gifts were needed to reveal and confirm the word of God.
 1. There are nine gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, all of which are miraculous.
 2. Some at Corinth argued over which gift was greatest. Paul explained that all the gifts were from the same Spirit, thus unity should prevail, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14.
 3. These gifts were used in the assembly to edify the church, 1 Corinthians 14:5.
 4. They served to reveal and confirm truth, 1 Corinthians 2:13; Ephesians 3:3-5; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4.
- C. Miraculous gifts were imparted by the laying on of apostles' hands.
 1. Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria "that they might receive the Holy Spirit," Acts 8:14-17.
 2. Phillip was already in Samaria. See Acts 8:4-13. Why didn't this preacher give them gifts by his hands? _____
 4. More evidence that gifts were given by the laying on of apostles' hands: Acts 6:6-8; 19:5-6; Romans 1:11.
 5. Imparting of gifts by the laying on of apostles' hands is not to be confused with the direct outpouring of the Spirit by Christ, John 1:33. The laying on of apostles' hands is not referred to as "the baptism in the Holy Spirit."

- D. Miraculous gifts were supposed to cease, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.
1. In the time of miraculous spiritual gifts, Paul said "we know in part, and we prophesy in part." 1 Corinthians 13:9.
 2. When you have "part" you do not yet have what? The complete, perfect, or whole. See 1 Corinthians 13:10.
 3. What is the "perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10? It is revelation. The gifts only gave partial revelation. But Paul looked toward a time when all of God's will was completely revealed to mankind.
 4. What abides when the gifts cease? Faith, hope and love abide. See 1 Corinthians 13:13.

III. How are the claims to tongues today to be explained?

- A. An emotional experience.
1. It is often necessary for those who speak in tongues to be whipped into an emotional frenzy in order to produce their phenomena. Many people think they need a sign that God has accepted them.
 2. They have been taught that tongues is such a sign. If they have tongues, it means they are close to God and are spiritual people. They do not, however, speak actual languages by the Spirit of God.
- B. A learned experience.
1. Most of us do not know "how tongues are supposed to sound." But, if we have been exposed to those who profess to speak in tongues and have learned the sounds from them, it would be easy—consciously or unconsciously—to reproduce those sounds.
 2. Some people are actually taught "how to speak in tongues" by repeating tongue-twisting phrases. It is worthy of note that this non-miraculous phenomenon is found among many religions, including both the Hindus and Muslims.
- C. The following questions may be asked of those who claim to speak in tongues by the Holy Spirit.
1. Do you speak a language known to others in the world? Acts 2:6, 8, 11.
 2. Are your tongues used as a sign to unbelievers? 1 Corinthians 14:22.
 3. Do several speak in tongues at once in your assemblies? 1 Corinthians 14:27.
 4. Do your people speak in tongues only with an interpreter? 1 Corinthians 14:28.
 5. Are your assemblies conducted in an orderly fashion? 1 Corinthians 14:40.

Conclusion:

1. The gift of tongues in the New Testament is to be understood as the miraculous ability to speak a foreign language that could be understood by those who had learned that language.
2. The gift of tongues was received in one of two ways: 1) It was received by some through Holy Spirit baptism; 2) It was received by others through the laying on of apostles' hands. In either case, its purpose was to reveal and/or confirm a message from God.
3. Modern tongue speaking is not Biblical tongue speaking at all and is a phenomenon common to some religions that do not profess Jesus as the Christ. The present practice of tongue speaking has no Biblical basis. In fact, most who claim to practice it violate plain passages of scripture when they do it.