

The Truth about speaking in tongues

"And these signs shall follow them that believe... they shall speak with new tongues."
(Mark 16:17)

Biblical and Historical Proof
by Eddie Jones

The Pentecostal phenomenon of "speaking in tongues" has created widespread controversy among modern Christendom today. Without the knowledge of the truth, which comes to an honest heart by divine revelation, many have misunderstood the purpose of tongues. Do not be confused by theories and ideas of men; learn the truth about this important subject.

The Bible teaches three principal ways in which tongues are manifested: as the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism, as one of the nine gifts of the Spirit in the church, and in a believer's personal devotion to God.

INITIAL EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Isaiah prophesied, "With stammering lips and **ANOTHER TONGUE** will he speak to this people." Isaiah 28:11. In the great commission, Jesus said, "And these signs shall follow them that believe ... they shall speak with **NEW TONGUES**." Mark 16:17.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the **SOUND** thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. As the sound of wind blowing is the evidence of its presence, so is the sound of speaking in tongues evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism.

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a **SOUND** from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind ... And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1-4. The initial evidence of the Holy Ghost, upon the 120 disciples, was witnessed by devout Jews, out of every nation. They said one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we

every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts 2:6-8. Then Peter preached, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel (See Joel 2:28); And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all Ghost, he (Jesus) hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:16-33.

Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. The Jews were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. **"FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAK WITH TONGUES ... "** Acts 10:45-48. Peter confirmed, " ... **The Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning.**" Acts 11:15.

The believers at Ephesus spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Ghost Baptism. **"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake in tongues, and prophesied."** Acts 19:1-6.

When the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostles' hands, there was a miraculous evidence of God's power which exceeded the miracles and signs already experienced. This prompted Simon the sorcerer to offer money to buy this power: that on whomsoever he laid hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. According to the Biblical signs that follow believers, and the experiences received at Pentecost, Caesarea and Ephesus, there should be no doubt that the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost with the same initial evidence of speaking in tongues. Acts 8:5-25.

The apostle Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues: **"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."** (Acts 9:17) **"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all"** (1 Corinthians 14:18).

History also proves that speaking in tongues was the evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism in the early church, and has not ceased to be a Biblical experience among believers today.

Encyclopedia Britannica, 1973 Edition, Vol. 22, p. 75 Tongue- speaking manifested itself early in the Christian experience. At Pentecost (Acts 2) the gift appeared as a sign of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which marked the character of the earliest Christians ... During later church history, glossolalia (speaking in tongues) occurred among the mendicant friars of the 13th century, little prophets of Cevennes, the Camisards, the Jansenists, and the Irvingites. Tongues were found also among the early Quakers, as well as among the converts of John

Wesley and George Whitefield ... In modern times glossolalia has been found chiefly among Holiness and Pentecostal groups.

The Saturday Evening Post, May 16, 1964, p. 32 - Praying in tongues has recurred at intervals throughout the Christian era, although it did not affect large masses until early in this century. Its advocates were quickly expelled from the established churches, whereupon they established the Pentecostal churches. For 50 years it remained the almost exclusive possession of the Pentecostal churches.

Christianity Today, October 16, 1987, p. 16 - "Pentecostalism has mushroomed into the largest Christian movement in the twentieth century."

Why did God choose tongues for the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism?
Note the following reasons:

1. **"Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counselor hath taught Him?"** Isaiah 40:13. God is sovereign to choose as He will without being accountable to anyone!

2. Such a marvelous experience as the baptism of the Holy Ghost demands a marvelous evidence. So God chose to speak through the believer in a language foreign to him as the outward evidence of the marvelous infilling of the Holy Ghost!

3. The tongue is the most unruly member of the body and full of deadly poison, which no man can tame. It is a world of iniquity and is set on fire of hell. Therefore, the tongue is capable of defiling the entire body. James 3:6. Before man can be fully sanctified, the tongue, which defileth, must be brought under control. Who can tame the tongue? James compares the tongue to the bit in a horse's mouth which gives the driver complete control. James 3:3. So whoever controls the tongue controls the person. How beautiful is this glorious truth! God chose tongues, as evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism, to symbolize His complete control of a believer. And this is important for the sanctification of the individual's body.

4. Although other signs were manifested at Pentecost, God chose tongues for the uniform sign of the Holy Spirit Baptism:

Acts 2:2-4

2 **And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.**

3 **And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.**

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 10:46

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God...

Acts 19:6

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Jesus said that this SIGN shall follow every believer of the gospel:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;" (Mark 16:16-17)

The Jews were convinced that the Gentiles at Caesarea had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAK WITH TONGUES. Acts 10:45-47.

GIFT OF TONGUES IN THE CHURCH

"For by ONE SPIRIT are we ALL BAPTIZED into one body." 1 Corinthians 12:13. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:4. The gifts of the Spirit are as follows: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. But by one and the selfsame Spirit, God divides these gifts severally to every man as He will. 1 Cor. 12:8-11.

Since the gift of tongues is a manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7,11), it cannot operate in a person without the Holy Ghost being resident within him. Therefore this gift is only given to believers who have been baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit evidenced by tongue-speaking.

The gift of tongues is different from the tongues as the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism. Compare the following:

1. These tongues differ in purpose. The gift of tongues, along with the gift of interpretation of tongues, has been given to some in the church to convey a message from God to the congregation as the need requires. 1 Cor. 12:7,27,28. But the tongues, as evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost, is the believer's personal experience with God, and is not designed to convey a message to the church.

2. Also these tongues differ in operation. The gift of tongues in the church is limited to two or three messages, and that by course; and one must interpret. 1 Cor. 14:27. But the tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism is an unlimited manifestation and requires no interpretation.

Paul said, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, EXCEPT he interpret, that the church may receive edifying." 1 Cor. 14:4,5. Certainly the apostle did not try to discredit or do away with the importance of tongues. Because, in comparison, he illustrated that the less honorable members of the body are necessary, and receive more abundant honor. 1 Cor. 12:22,23. Each gift of the Spirit has its proper time and place in the church, and when tongues are interpreted they become as important as prophecy. So Paul emphasized, " .. Let all things be done unto edifying." 1 Cor. 14:26. To edify the church, the gift of tongues must be coupled with the gift of interpretation of tongues. To avoid confusion, Paul gave instructions to follow for the use of tongues and interpretation of tongues in the church. (See 1 Cor. 14:27.) He also said, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church: and let him speak to himself, and to God." 1 Cor. 14:28. Paul said, "IN THE CHURCH I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. 14:19. It is better for the edification of the church to speak five words of understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown lest anyone misunderstand the importance of tongues, Paul concluded, "Wherefore brethern, covet to prophesy, and FORBID NOT TO SPEAK WITH TONGUES." 1 Cor. 14:39.

"Wherefore tongues are for assign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not ... " 1 Cor. 14:22. This Scripture deals with God's speaking to man. (See 1 Cor. 14:21.) Of course, the believer should know when the Lord speaks, whether by tongues or not. But as a proof to the unbeliever, or anyone who doubts the Word of God, tongues are manifested for a miraculous sign of His presence.

Paul asked the question, "Do all speak with tongues? , .." 1 Cor. 12:30. The context of this Scripture requires a negative answer, because Paul is discussing tongues as a gift of the Spirit only, and not as the evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism. (See 1 Cor. 12:28.) The gift of tongues is in addition to the tongues experienced with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (By the same rule, the gift of faith is in addition to the measure of faith given a person to be saved. Compare Rom. 12:3, 1 Cor. 12:9.) So everyone may not receive the gift of tongues. But in every case, where the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit Baptism is recorded, "ALL" spoke in tongues. (For examples see Acts 2:4, 10:44, 19:7.)

PERSONAL DEVOTION TO GOD

Tongues are also manifested in a believer's personal life of prayer and worship. They serve as a means of his secret communication with God in the Spirit. These tongues are not meant to be understood by men; therefore, they need no interpretation. "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." 1Cor. 14:2. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. 8:26. Paul said, "If I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." 1 Cor. 14:14,15.

These devotional tongues are also for the personal edification of the believer. They are for self-encouragement and uplifting of his spirit. Paul said, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself ... " 1 Cor. 14:4. So the apostle gladly stated, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." 1 Cor. 14:18.

How long will tongues continue to be manifested? "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." 1 Cor. 13:8-10. The phrase, "when that which is perfect is come," is translated from the Greek phrase "to teleion". The word "teleion" is a singular neuter term which refers to Jesus Christ. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 618, defines the phrase "to teleion" as used in 1Cor. 13:10 - "The perfect state of all things, to be ushered in by the return of Christ from heaven." Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then (when that which is perfect is come) shall I know even as also I am known." 1Cor. 13:12. When the church, having reached her state of perfection, stands face to face in the presence of God, there will be no need for prophecies, tongues and knowledge. But until that which is perfect (Jesus Christ) is come, that which is in part will remain. And as long as there remains prophecies and knowledge, tongues shall not cease. So Paul instructed the church to COME BEHIND IN NO GIFT, WAITING FOR THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. 1 Cor. 1:7.

Believe the Truth! The Pentecostal phenomenon is for you today! If you desire the greatest experience God has offered to mankind, I urge you to repent, and be baptized with water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in tongues! Acts 2:4,38,39.