

Speaking in Tongues and other Signs and Wonders

We must always be careful to be true to the text of Scripture as it is God's Word to us. Since Scripture is God's Word it is our authority. We must endeavor to understand the exact meaning and let Scripture interpret other Scripture. We must evaluate all things, including our personal experiences and the experiences of highly respected individuals, by Scripture. The Scripture is our final authority since it is the very breathed-out Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Scripture finds its source in God, not man, "...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Sadly, most people are content to evaluate simply by what they see or experience without first testing to see whether what is happening is from God or not (1 John 4:1). Let us look into the Scriptures for answers regarding the spiritual gift of tongues and other miraculous gifts.

Introduction Does the New Testament confirm that the *evidence that a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit* is that they speak in tongues? Does the Scripture teach that tongues is a *personally edifying experience*? Do we see *all believers seeking the experience* of this gift in the New Testament? Is tongues a personally edifying prayer language? Is this really what Scripture teaches?

- i. Out of 27 New Testament books only 3 mention *tongues*.
- ii. Only 7 chapters in the New Testament of 260 mention *tongues*.
- iii. Of 31,173 verses in the Bible only 22 mention tongues.
- iv. Miraculous power is not an indication of God's approval in someone's life - this is the "so what" argument. For example, Balaam (Numbers 22-24; see 23:5); Moses striking the rock in disobedience (Numbers 20:8-12); Samson (Judges 13-16); and Judas casting out demons (Mark 3:14-15, 16-19).

I. The *Biblical* Gift of Tongues

A. Tongues Predicted (Mark 16:17-19)

"And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:16-19).

Of the five signs mentioned in Mark 16 we know that four of them were fulfilled in the book of Acts through the apostles. That is one reason these are often called "apostolic sign gifts."

NOTE: It is important to note Acts 1:8 as we proceed in our study of the Holy Spirit through the book of Acts. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” It is these geographical areas that we see this amazing gift being used for the spread of the Gospel.

B. Tongues Fulfilled: Pentecost (Acts 2)

v.4 ‘glossais’ - translated tongues. Tongues is a known foreign language not learned by the speaker. Tongues is explained in verses 5-11. The wind and the fire are not explained (they are still mysteries), but the tongues are explained.

v.5 there were Jews from every nation at Jerusalem because of the feast. Every Jewish male over twenty had to attend this once a year.

v.6 ‘dialekto’ - translated language. What do all of these Jewish people from diverse nations hear? “each one was hearing them speak in his own language (*dialekto*).” They heard their own dialect from men who previously did not know their language.

v.7 These men are Galileans and should be speaking Aramaic. Instead each man hears...

v.8 “... his own native language (*dialekto*).”

v.9-11 - more than 15 geographical regions from where people have gathered.

v.11 “we hear them telling in our own tongues (*glossais*) the mighty works of God.”

Acts 2:5-11 explains the tongues of Pentecost. People from over 15 geographical regions covering approximately 3,700 km from east to west and some 1,600 km from north to south. At least 11 different dialects represented and each man hears the Gospel in his own dialect/language.

What are the tongues of Pentecost?

- (1) Those upon whom the Spirit came were Jews
- (2) The tongues were real languages unknown to the speaker but clearly understood by the hearers.
- (3) Peter preaches the first sermon in the church’s history and as he preaches (v.37) the people are cut to the heart. Jesus said when the Spirit comes He will, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11).
- (4) On the day of Pentecost two groups received the Holy Spirit. This is an important fact since only one of the groups is said to have spoken in tongues. 120 received the Spirit and spoke in tongues. 3,000 others received the Spirit but there is nothing said in Scripture about them speaking in tongues.

The Four-fold Pattern:

1. Jews are present
2. An apostle is present
3. The tongues are known foreign languages
4. People are saved

C. The Coming of the Spirit to the Samaritans (Acts 8)

This event happens three years after Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes upon a second group of people called Samaritans (half Jews and half Gentiles). Persecution had dispersed (scattered) the disciples, then...

Acts 8:4-6 “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.”

Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Acts 8:14-17 “Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.”

Why did they lay hands on them? It may have been due to the fact that there was a long-standing tension between Samaritans and Jews. Samaritans had the first five books of the Bible, but held to their own interpretation of it.

In John 4 Jesus confronts the Samaritan woman and He tells her “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

Maybe God waited to give Samaritans the Spirit until they submitted to the message of the Jewish apostles. This would keep in line with an emerging pattern.

The Four-fold Pattern:

1. Jews are present
2. An apostle is present
3. No tongues
4. People are saved

What is going on in Acts 8?

- (1) Those upon whom the Spirit came were Samaritans.
- (2) The timing of the Spirit’s coming was after their salvation and after their baptism.
- (3) The need of the Samaritans? To see that salvation is of the Jews.

D. The Coming of the Spirit to the Gentiles (Acts 10)

This brings us to a point 5-7 years later (after Acts 8). The Holy Spirit now comes upon the Gentiles.

Immediately after Peter has the same vision three times three Gentile men appear at the door.

What is happening in Acts 10?

- (1) Those upon whom the Spirit came were Gentiles (v.34). The Jews are amazed (v.45-46). This is in keeping with the purpose for tongues (unbelieving Israel). It seems tongues needed to be present so the Jews would accept the Gentiles into the church. This is exactly why God gave Peter the vision of the unclean animals lowered on a cloth sheet. “What God has made clean, do not call common” (Acts 10:15).
- (2) The timing of the Spirit’s coming is before water baptism. ““Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47).
- (3) There was no laying on of hands.
- (4) The tongues:
 - i. The need for them: “So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ‘You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them’” (Acts 11:2-3). Peter then relates to them what happened, “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us *at the beginning*. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” **at the beginning* refers to the same miracle that happened at Pentecost.
 - ii. The nature of them: It is the identical gift the Jews received. “If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:17). This is a known dialect/intelligible speech. “For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God” (Acts 10:46). Peter and the Jews would not have accepted the Gentiles had this been some crazy repetitive gibberish. Peter and the Jews needed to learn that God had given the Gentiles the same gift and Spirit He had given to the Jews. This is why Paul can say in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Remember Acts 1:8? This now includes the entire world - Jews, half-Jews, and non-Jews.

The Four-fold Pattern:

1. Jews are present
2. An apostle is present
3. The tongues are known foreign languages (called ‘glossais’).
4. People are saved

E. Twelve of John the Baptist's Disciples are Saved (Acts 19)

This brings us to a point 15 years later (after Acts 10). The Holy Spirit now comes upon a unique group of men in Ephesus. Something is wrong and Paul is trying to identify the problem. "And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit'" (Acts 19:2). John the Baptist had been dead for twenty years and these men are still waiting for the Messiah.

John himself said that those following him should believe and follow the Christ. "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28-30).

Paul then preaches to them "Jesus" not the "Spirit."

"On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all" (Acts 19:5-7).

What is happening in Acts 19?

- (1) Those upon whom the Spirit came were disciples of John the Baptist. There was a little rivalry emerging in John 3:25-30. "Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him'" (John 3:25-26). It is after this controversy that John said Jesus must increase and he himself (John) must decrease (v.30).
- (2) The timing of the Spirit's coming is when Paul lays hands on them (Acts 19:6).
- (3) The need of these disciples is to submit to the apostle's doctrine - the true Gospel.
- (4) The tongues:
 - iii. The need for them is to convince them what they are doing now is right.
 - iv. The nature of them - "they began speaking in tongues" (Acts 19:6).

The Four-fold Pattern:

1. Jews are present
2. An apostle is present
3. The tongues we assume from Acts 2 and 10 are "the same" which is known foreign languages
4. People are saved

Conclusion:

1. Acts does not present a normal pattern for the experiences of the believer when they are saved and receive the Spirit.
2. Many people in the book of Acts experienced no gift of tongues when they were saved.
3. Many churches in the book of Acts experienced no gift of tongues when they were saved.

4. The mark of the Spirit-filled believer in Acts is acceptance and confession of Jesus as God and Savior, and obedience to the Word of God as preached by the apostles.

II. Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians

It is interesting to note that even though the church at Corinth had many problems Paul refers to them as “those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (1 Corinthians 1:2). In addition to this they had all the spiritual gifts, “you are not lacking in any spiritual gift” (1 Corinthians 1:7). But even though they were true believers sanctified in Christ and they had every gift - they were also carnal! “ But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). It is possible for an individual to be born again and gifted yet misuse or abuse the blessings and gifts God has given. That is exactly what the church at Corinth was doing. **Giftedness (*charismata*) is not an evidence of spirituality.**

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ” (1 John 4:1).

A. Unity and Diversity in One Body (1 Corinthians 12).

1. The Holy Spirit has given believers *different* gifts - (vv.4-11).
2. Though differently gifted we are bound in unity - (vv.12-14).
3. Every member of the body, regardless of which gift he has been given, is essential for completeness - (vv.15-30).
4. 1 Corinthians 12:31 “But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.” Paul is rebuking them for earnestly desiring the seeming prominent gifts (which Paul argues in 12:22-23). These are not to be sought as the Spirit Himself distributes the gifts (vv.4-11). He tells them that giftedness is secondary to love – they are selfish in their desires, they are selfish in their giftedness. He tells them *giftedness* is secondary to *love*. That is why he says I will show you *a more excellent way* which is discussed in chapter 13.

B. Motives for Each Gift (1 Corinthians 13).

Love - “love does not seek its own interests.”

1. Any amazing thing apart from love is useless and profits nothing - (vv.1-3).
2. Any gift apart from biblical love is useless - (vv.4-7).
3. Love is permanent whereas all gifts are temporary - (vv.8-13).

Have tongues stopped (v.8)? This is a common question. Though the evidence here is not conclusive it is interesting to note several things.

There are four New Testament books that list spiritual gifts.

- (1) 1 Corinthians (AD 54-55).
- (2) Romans (AD 56).
- (3) Ephesians (AD 60)
- (4) 1 Peter (AD 65)

The last recorded miracles of the Bible occurred in AD 58 on the island of Malta (Acts 28:7-10). From AD 58-96 when John completed the book of Revelation there are no more recorded miracles. A period of nearly 40 years and miraculous sign gifts seem to have vanished. Why might this be so?

- The transition between the Old and New Testaments was nearly complete.
- The church (both Jews and Gentiles) had been accepted.
- Certain gifts (the miraculous gifts) were used to confirm both the credibility of the apostles and their message of Jesus Christ as messiah and risen savior.
- Tongues were a sign for unbelieving Israel. 1 Corinthians 14:22 “tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers.” (see Isaiah 28:11-12). This purpose is seen on each occasion they are given in Acts 2, 10, and 19.
- Paul wrote at least 12 other letters (epistles) after 1 Corinthians, but he never again mentions tongues even though he does mention gifts.

C. Explanation of 1 Corinthians 14

1 Corinthians 14:1 “Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.”

- i. If our motive is love we will desire to use our gift(s) for the body and not for our own benefit. Why would Paul encourage gifts to be sought if the Spirit gives them according to His own will?
- ii. 1 Corinthians 12:4 “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.
- iii. 1 Corinthians 12:11 “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

v.2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

- i. Paul is criticizing them – not suggesting some kind of prayer language.
Where do you ever see in the Scripture the angels using some special language?
- ii. 1 Corinthians 14:15 I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind (understanding) also.
- iii. Galatians 5:22-24 But the fruit of the Spirit is...self-control.
- iv. 1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. *Gifts are to serve one another not myself.

v.3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

i. This is the purpose for all spiritual gifts – edification.

v.4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.

- i. Is Paul accepting a gift's use for self-edification when all along he has been teaching the building up of the body, not promoting self, and serving others? He is describing the Corinthian babble tongues that are not biblical tongues at all – that kind does not edify whereas all true spiritual gifts do edify.
- ii. 1 Corinthians 13:5 ... it does not seek its own.
- iii. 1 Corinthians 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- iv. 1 Corinthians 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. (is Paul contradicting himself by saying two different things?).
- v. 1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

v.5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

***Guidelines for Verbal Gifts** (1 Corinthians 14:22-33)

Especially note the guidelines for tongues speaking.

1. A sign for unbelievers not believers - (14:22).
2. By two at the most three - (14:27).
3. One by one (each takes his turn) - (14:27).
4. There must be an interpreter - (14:27-28).
5. No women allowed - (14:34-35).
6. No confusion as things done decently and in order - (14:33).

III. Evaluating Spiritual Movements with Scripture

A. The Test of Holiness (does it have its source in a holy God?)

There exists in the world today many amazing phenomena. Though these things are truly spectacular we must remind ourselves that amazing things have occurred throughout history (Egyptian magicians), and all things “amazing” must be evaluated as to their *source*.

Hebrews 12:29 “for our God is a consuming fire.”

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 “what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.”

1 Peter 1:15-16 “but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

1 John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Ephesians 5:13 “But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible.”

Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

B. The Test of Love

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 “If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

“Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely” (Philippians 1:15-17).

C. The Test of Identification and Separation

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders.”

The activity of Satan is with all power and *false signs and wonders*. This should not surprise for Scripture says, “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

“So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Ephesians 4:14).

2 Corinthians 2:11 “so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.”

“ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive” (Romans 16:17-18).

D. The Test of Humility

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:10). “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

When you evaluate ministerial motives you must look first for one clear and distinguishable mark - humility. If humility is absent then everything else is suspect, for the servant is not above his master.

Pride was evident in the disciples documented desire for personal advancement and recognition. Jesus Christ came and graciously showed them a radically different path. Mark 9:33 “What were you arguing about on the way?” Mark 9:35 “If anyone would be great...”

In Mark 10:35-37 James and John wanted the attention, the acclaim, the “ministerial promotion”... and if we get real honest - there are times we desire those things as well. In their self infatuation - Jesus became a means to their end of personal exaltation. In the same manner the “showy” gifts (miraculous and verbal gifts) could help elevate those who have them. But Jesus defines greatness, “But whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (vv.42-43) The foundation for this radical statement? “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (v.45). Pride and selfish ambition reveal a misplaced motivation for ministry (James 3:14,16).

Counterfeits

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness**’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

What is actually going on behind the stage, behind the curtain where the lines are no longer memorized and the theatrics disappear? How can you really tell the difference between a showman and a servant of Christ, or between a crowd of people playing religious games and the true church of God? Let God search your heart and answer these questions - who is the true master – Christ or fame? Christ or riches? Christ or success? Christ or popularity? Christ or miraculous gifts? Does your life and the ministry you are part of have the distinctive marks of

holiness, love, separation, and humility? This is a good starting place to begin evaluating anything that is happening in the name of God.

“But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, ‘God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble’ (James 4:6). “Love does not insist on its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

What is evidence that a church is exalting Jesus Christ and following the New Testament pattern? It is a Christ-centered and Scripture-centered gathering.

1 Timothy 4:13 “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”

Acts 2:42 “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

John 15:26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me (Jesus Christ).

The things of Jesus Christ in the Scripture will be elevated.

Miracles

Miracles and healing were special sign gifts given at certain periods of time, to authenticate the message being given.

1. Moses - Joshua: God's word being written down.
2. Elijah (Elisha) - Jezebel was a Baal worshiper. She did her best to kill those who worshipped the true God. God confirmed who were the true prophets, and who the people were supposed to be following
3. Christ (apostles) - The Gospels and Acts - Hebrews 2:3-6 - Because it was a new message. God confirmed this most radical message with signs and wonders.
4. In the future... During the great tribulation because this will be a climatic time in the history of the world.

Healing

1. Christ and the apostles healed in uncontrolled atmospheres - today, they do it in buildings and places where they can always control the environment and outcome. Why not go into hospitals or to random people in the slums?
2. Christ and the apostles healed people instantly - Charismatics claim progressive healing - it's started but may take a while.
3. Christ and the apostles healed them totally - not partially.
4. Christ and the apostles healed everyone that was possible - they did not go into remote places and film unverifiable events. They have great lines of people, but when they get enough film they quickly pack up and leave. Leaving the rest of the huge line just standing there disillusioning people towards Christ and His true and authentic power.
5. Christ and the apostles healed external diseases, not just lower back pain/headaches.
6. Christ and the apostles raised people from the dead.

God is able to heal anybody from anything today if He chooses, but He may choose not to (Job, Paul, etc.).

We don't ever want to be caught in a purely defensive mode.

^{NKJ} **Psalm 103:3** “Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases...”

The theological thrust of this passage bursts with truth and hope. Christ forgives sin and delivers us.

*A very helpful book is *Charismatic Chaos* written by John McArthur Jr. It is available in the CABC book shop.