

Tongues Speaking (Part 1)

Text: Acts 2:1-11

Introduction: Several introductory points.

1. What is the modern tongues movement? There are few recorded examples of “tongues speaking” in church history that resemble the modern tongues movement except in cultist groups like the Montanists who were clearly under the influence of demonic spirits (refer John Ecob’s book “Tongues Shall Cease”).
2. The modern tongues movement can be traced back to the early 1900’s and particularly the Azusa street revival. “The **Azusa Street Revival** was a historic Pentecostal revival meeting that took place in Los Angeles, California and is the origin of the Pentecostal movement.^[1] It was led by William J. Seymour, an African American preacher. It began with a meeting on April 14, 1906, and continued until roughly 1915. The revival was characterized by ecstatic spiritual experiences accompanied by miracles, dramatic worship services, speaking in tongues, and inter-racial mingling. The participants were criticized by the secular media and Christian theologians for behaviors considered to be outrageous and unorthodox, especially at the time. Today, the revival is considered by historians to be the primary catalyst for the spread of Pentecostalism in the 20th century.¹”
3. The Pentecostal movement and tongues speaking in particular has swept the world, crossing over denominational lines (refer slides for examples).
4. The tongues speaking movement teach and practice a form of “tongues speaking” that basically involves speaking unintelligible gibberish. Is this of God and supported by the Word of God? Is the gift of tongues described in the Bible the same as “the gift” touted by modern tongue talkers?
5. Two foundational truths to remember before we study the issue itself:
 - The Bible is the final authority on ALL matters of faith and practice. Not feelings or experience! We judge our experiences by the Bible not the Bible by our experiences. We affirm the absolute and total sufficiency of the Scriptures for the Christian life. (Psalm 119:104; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2. Peter 1:3; Jude 1:3)
 - The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth, not the Spirit of error (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
 - The Bible warns against apostasy and demonic deceptions in the last days. (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 John 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:8-9; Rev. 13:11-14; 16:14; 2 Tim. 4:3-4)
6. We will now study and define the gift of tongues from the Bible and thereby be able to discern whether the modern concept of tongues speaking is truly of God.

¹¹ <https://www.apostolicarchives.com/articles/article/8801925/173190.htm> Viewed 28.6.20

I. **Biblical Tongues were Real Languages (Acts 2:1-11)**

A. **Word Definitions – 2 N.T. words translated ‘tongues’**

1. ‘glossa’ = “the tongue; by implication a language” (Strong’s). It is used to refer to:
 - a. The physical organ of the tongue (e.g. Mk. 7:33; Lk. 1:64; 16:24; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:11; James 1:26).
 - b. Actual languages (e.g. John 5:2; 2:1-11; Rev. 9:11; 16:16; 1 Cor. 14:21).
2. ‘dialektos’ = a mode of discourse, that is “dialect”; language, tongue (Strong’s). Examples: Acts 2:8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14
3. Note: We get our English word “glossary” meaning “An alphabetical list of words relating to a specific subject, text, or dialect, with explanations; a brief dictionary”² from the Greek word ‘glossa’ and the English word “dialect” from the Greek word ‘dialektos’.

B. **The Tongues of Acts 2**

1. The tongues spoken in Acts 2 were actual languages and it is plainly stated as such. Acts 2:6 *“Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own **language** (dialektos).”* At least 14-15 specific languages are mentioned.
2. This is the first time tongues are spoken in the N.T. and provide a vital definition for the rest of the references on tongues in the remainder of the New Testament. This is called the Law of First Mention which states, “the first mention of any given subject gives the key to its subsequent meaning” (Sargent).
3. In an attempt to salvage the Charismatic “tongues gift” from the obvious knockout blow it receives in the plain language of Acts 2, many try and argue that Paul speaks of a different kind of tongues as a private prayer language in 1 Corinthians 14.
4. David Cloud writes,

“Pentecostals and Charismatics often teach that there are two types of tongues described in the New Testament: the “public language” tongues of Pentecost and the “private prayer language” tongues of 1 Corinthians 14. Some call this distinction ‘ministry tongues’ and ‘devotional tongues’. As we have seen in the history section of this book, early Pentecostal leaders understood that biblical tongues were real earthly languages. They even thought they would be able to go to foreign mission fields and witness through miraculous tongues without having to learn the languages. Eventually the “heavenly language” and “private prayer language” doctrine was developed. Those are the terms we have heard frequently at Charismatic conferences, such as those in New Orleans in 1987, Indianapolis in 1990, and St. Louis in 2000. The tongues that I heard in these conferences were not

² <https://www.lexico.com/definition/glossary> Viewed 28.6.20.

languages of any sort but merely repetitious mumblings that anyone could imitate. Larry Lea's "tongues" at Indianapolis in 1990 went like this: "Bubblyida bubblyida hallelujah bubblyida hallabubbly shallabubblyida kolabubblyida gloooooory hallelujah bubblyida." I wrote that down as he was saying it and later checked it against the tape. Nancy Kellar, a Roman Catholic nun who was on the executive committee of the St. Louis meeting in 2000, spoke in "tongues" on Thursday evening of the conference. Her tongues were a repetition of "shananaa leea, shananaa higha, shananaa nanaa, shananaa leea..." This is taken directly from the audiotapes of the messages. If these are languages, they certainly have a simple vocabulary!"

5. Question: What about Paul's reference to "unknown tongues" in 1 Cor. 14? The phrase appears 6 times in the chapter (Vs. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27).
 - a. Answer: The word 'unknown' is in italics as it was inserted by the KJV translators NOT to give the idea that Paul was talking about some unintelligible gibberish concept of tongues but rather to help us understand the problem that was being addressed in the Corinthian church where some were exercising the gift of tongues and speaking in languages unknown to some of the hearers.
 - b. John Ecob: "It (the word unknown) is not intended to indicate a language which could not be learned or is unknown to mankind, but in the context of the Corinthian Church it was a language which had not been learned by some of the hearers and therefore needed an interpreter. God understands ALL languages and He hears when we pray in any language, however, in a Church meeting."
 - c. Note: Unknown does not mean unknowable!

C. The Contrast with Modern Tongues

- a. Modern tongues do not fit the Bible's plan definition. They more closely resemble the warning of Isaiah.
- b. Isaiah 8:19 *"And when they shall say unto you, **Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"***
- c. Illustration: Kenneth Copeland & demonic manifestations

II. Biblical Tongues were a Sign to Unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:21-22)

A. The Quotation from Isaiah

1. Paul is quoting from Isaiah 28:11-12 which says, *"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."*

2. In the same chapter in Vs. 16 it says, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation..." The New Testament clearly identifies Christ as the corner stone rejected by the builders but chosen by God (Matt. 21:41-44; 1 Pet. 2:4; Eph. 2:20; Rom. 9:33).
3. Ecob: "So the whole purpose of the gift of tongues (languages) to the Apostles was to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy and thus warn Israel of the seriousness of their position following their rejection of Christ! Did Israel heed the warning? Certainly not! Just as the prophecy stated: "Yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." (1 Cor. 14:21)

B. The Record in the Book of Acts

1. Significantly, each time the gift of tongues is exercised in the book of Acts, Jews were present (Acts 2:6-11; 10:46 & 19:6).
2. Fernand Legrand, a former Pentecostal, makes the following observation: "It is worth noting that wherever the sign appears, it is always in the presence of Jews, and where we do not find Jews, as in Athens or in Malta, neither do we find the sign...It is in the very nature of the sign that we find the nature of their unbelief...The sign denounced or corrected their lack of faith concerning the salvation of those who spoke languages that were foreign to their own, that is the Gentiles..."
3. Since tongues were primarily a sign to the Jews, the need for the sign ceased in the first century. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the Jews scattered to the nations.
4. Isaiah prophesied that not only would the Jews receive the sign of tongues, they would reject it and be judged (See Isaiah 28:11-13).
5. Cloud: "This is a far-reaching doctrine, because in the context of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements tongues are commonly said to be a sign to believers. Tongues speaking is considered a sign of faith and a sign of God's blessing and a sign of the indwelling Holy Spirit and a sign of power. In all these cases, tongues speaking is looked upon as a sign to believers. In 1 Cor. 14:20-22 Paul refutes this error in the clearest of words."

To be continued...

Conclusion: Let us be prepared to take a stand for the truth in this apostate hour!

Tongues Speaking Part 2

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Introduction:

1. Brief review of previous sermon. We considered two points on Biblical tongues:
 - Biblical tongues were Real Languages, not unintelligible babble & gibberish (Acts 2:1-11).
 - Biblical tongues were a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Isaiah 28:11-12)
2. We will now consider 3 additional points on Biblical tongues in comparison to the modern tongues speaking movement.

I. Biblical Tongues were NOT spoken by Every Christian (1 Cor. 12:28-31)

- A. Verse 29-30 present a series of rhetorical questions where a “no” answer is clearly implied.
- B. This is confirmed in the Greek text with the presence of the Greek negative particle μή (may) which means ‘not’ or ‘no’.
- C. Renown Greek Scholar A.T. Roberson states, “Are all (μη παντες). The μη (not) expects a negative answer with each group.” Quite clearly, the gifts are distributed across the members. It is therefore not possible for all to speak in tongues and the case put forward by the Apostle is simply for the sake of argument.
- D. This is a big problem for the Pentecostal Charismatic movement that encourages all believers to exercise the gift of “tongues” and many stressing that it is the essential sign that you have been born again. The Apostle Paul makes it crystal clear that not all believers were given the gift of tongues, only some. And these were sovereignly given miraculously. They did not have to be learned or practiced!
- E. George E. Gardiner: “God has sovereignly given gifts and placed the gifted people as He wills – not as they will, desire or seek. The Apostle’s questions, “are all?”, “do all?” require a “no” every time. All are not apostles, teachers, prophets or workers of miracles. All do not have the gifts of healing, tongues or interpretation. When we bear in mind Paul’s statement that the gifts have already been bestowed, and couple that with his reminder that not every Christian has the same gift, then we see how contrary to Scripture is the teaching that all believers should seek for the confirmatory gift of tongues.”
- F. David Cloud: “A simply survey of the book of Acts proves conclusively that not all believers in the early churches spoke in tongues. Even on the day of Pentecost, while the disciples that were in the upper room spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4), those that were saved that day through Peter’s

preaching did not speak in tongues (Acts 2:40-42). The Jews that believed in Acts 4:4 and 6:7 did not speak in tongues. The Ethiopian Eunuch that was saved in Acts 8:35-39 did not speak in tongues. The first people who were saved at Antioch in Acts 11:20-21 did not speak in tongues. Lydia and her household who were saved in Acts 16:13-15 and the Philippian jailer and his family who were saved in Acts 16:30-33 did not speak in tongues. Those who were saved in Thessalonica and Berea and Athens in Acts 17:4, 12, and 34 did not speak in tongues. Crispus and others who were saved at Corinth in Acts 18:8 did not speak in tongues. Those who believed in Ephesus in Acts 19:17-19 did not speak in tongues.”

II. **Biblical Tongues were a Temporary Gift which Ceased (1 Cor. 13:8)**

A. How would tongues cease?

1. The Greek tense indicates tongues would cease of their own accord. Former Pentecostal, George Gardiner explains:
2. Former Pentecostal, George Gardiner explains: “Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail...” “Here the verb is transitive requiring an outside influence for completion. “...whether there be tongues, they shall cease;” Here the verb is intransitive, requiring no outside influence for completion. Tongues shall cease in and of themselves...the statement about prophecy and knowledge are both in the passive voice whereas the statement concerning tongues is in the middle voice.”

B. When would tongues cease?

1. The answer is found in going back to the primary purpose of the gift of tongues which was to be a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Isaiah 28:11-12).
2. Gardiner: “When Titus the Roman sacked the city of Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews over the world in 70 A.D., the reason for tongues disappeared and the gift ceased in and of itself. Since then there have been no Biblical tongues spoken! The reason for the sign is no longer here and God does not give His gifts as toys when their purpose has ceased to be.” Tongues were a sign-gift for the infancy of the church (See 1 Cor. 13:11; 14:20).
3. John Phillips: “Pauls says, ‘Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. ‘Tongues, of course, was the supernatural ability to speak in foreign languages. Paul says they would ‘cease’. He uses a different verb and a different voice. He does this deliberately under direct, plenary verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The word he uses is *pavo*. It means ‘to stop,’ or ‘to come to an end.’ This time the middle voice is used. Literally that means that tongues will

make themselves to cease. They will come to an automatic end. God will not have to bring any force to bear upon them to cause them to stop. **They will cease in and of themselves.**”

4. W.E Vine, author of Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words concurs: “The gift of tongues was about the first to be discontinued all attempts to reintroduce it are either fraudulent or the outcome of deception; they are contrary to Scripture and are void of the actual operation of the Spirit of God.” (*1 Corinthians 13:8*).
5. Quotations from the early church fathers concur with the view that tongues ceased after the Apostolic period.
6. For example, **Chrysostom (AD 347-407)** in an exposition of 1 Cor. 12 states, “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but **now no longer take place.**”
7. Concerning Chrysostom’s teaching, John Ecob writes, “Chrysostom wrote extensively on the gifts of the Spirit in his exposition of 1 Corinthians, and discusses the character of the tongues existing in the early Church. He is very clear that the New Testament tongues was a special ability given miraculously by God for early Christians to speak languages which they had not learned. There isn’t the slightest hint that they were Charismatic gibberish which was unintelligible to the one speaking or to the hearers. **He compares the tongues spoken by soothsayers, and states that the difference between the gift of prophecy and the tongues of the soothsayers was that the prophets understood what they were saying and were calm and in control.**”
8. In Homily 29 on 1 Cor. 12:1-2, Chrysostom states: “For this is peculiar to the soothsayer, **to be beside himself, to be under compulsion, to be pushed, to be dragged, to be haled as a mad-man.** But the prophet not so, but with sober mind and composed temper and knowing what he is saying, he uttereth all things. Therefore, even before the event do thou from this distinguish he soothsayer and the prophet.”
9. Question: What does “that which is perfect” refer to?
 - a. John Phillips explains: The word for *perfect* is *teleios*. It is derived from the word *telos* (*the end*). The Latin equivalent word is *finis* – ‘nothing beyond.’ Hence, the word means ‘perfect,’ that which is mature, whole, or complete. It means ‘to reach the goal’ (neuter gender). The goal of the communication gifts was the completion of the New Testament. With the completion of the New Testament we no longer need the gifts of inspired speaking (*prophecies*) and supernatural knowledge. With the completion of the New Testament and the passing of

any need for supernatural phenomena, Christianity became mature. It was no longer adolescent. It was adult.”¹

- b. James 1:23-25 *“For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man **beholding his natural face in a glass**: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into **the perfect law of liberty**, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”*
- c. 2 Cor. 3:18 *“But we all, with open face **beholding as in a glass** the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*
- a. 2 Peter 1:18-19 *“And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. **We have also a more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:”*

III. **Biblical Tongues were Governed by Apostolic Law (1 Cor. 14:23-40)**

A. **The Edification Rule (Vs. 26)**

1. Edification is the keynote in this chapter. This was a general test for those who wished to exercise their spiritual gift in the primitive New Testament Church. The word *edify* and its derivatives are from the Greek word οικοδομew (oikodomeoto) which means to build a house, therefore to build up a Christian in his faith and holy walk. This word occurs 7 times in I Corinthians chapter 14, namely, vs3 x 1, vs 4 x 2, vs 5 x 1, vs 12 x1, vs 17 x 1, vs 26 x 1.
2. It is clear that the mechanism for edification involves the intelligent assimilation of the Word of God, received into an obedient heart by a direct act of faith. **The Holy Spirit stresses this point above all others in this chapter.** If the church would be governed by the principle of Biblical edification, most of the Corinthian chaos would dissolve away.
3. Paul clearly links **understanding** to edification in this chapter. No understanding means **NO** edification!

B. **The Number Rule (Vs. 27)**

1. A maximum of 3 tongues speakers in a meeting and take it in turns.
2. The practice of many Charismatic congregations is for the whole church to speak in tongues at the same time. Apart from the fact

¹ Phillips pp 299-300

they are not speaking genuine tongues according to the Bible's definition, they are violating this instruction.

3. Vs. 33 *"For God is not the author of confusion..."*
4. The reason behind Paul's instructions was because he wanted the whole church to be edified – "Let all things be done unto edifying." (Vs. 26)

C. The Interpretation Rule (Vs. 27b-28)

1. The word 'interpret' is the Greek word $\delta\iota\epsilon\rho\mu\eta\nu\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ (diemeneuo) and means "to translate into one's native tongue". Notice some examples of how the same Greek word is used elsewhere in the New Testament:
 - a. John 1:38 "Then Jesus turned and say them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say being **interpreted**, Master), where dwellest thou?"
 - b. John 1:41-42 "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being **interpreted**, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by **interpretation**, A stone."
 - c. Mark 5:41 *"And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, **Talitha cumi**; which is, being **interpreted**, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise."*
 - d. Mark 15:22 *"And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being **interpreted**, The place of a skull."*
 - e. Ecob: "Nobody would question that the "interpretation" of these words is **translation** from one language to another, yet the same Greek word is used by the Holy Spirit when referring to the gift of interpretation. When we read, "and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23), it is without question translation from one language to another. Why, then, do Charismatics change the meaning of 'interpretation' (translation) to revelation, when the Bible is God's completed revelation?"
 - f. Former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand of France describes the Pentecostal "interpretation dilemma": "In all the cases of interpretation that I have checked personally with the greatest care and with an open mind, I have discovered nothing other than human fabrication and deliberate trickery."
 - g. Former Pentecostal George Gardiner adds, "I have heard hundreds of "messages in tongues" and "interpretations." Not one ever added anything of value to the meeting. Everyone was a rehash of Scripture, (often quoted inaccurately), some

promoted false teaching, some were wildly fanciful predictions, some were designed to rebuke individuals with whom the speaker had had a disagreement!”

- h. Illustration: George Gardiner tells of an occasion when he was a student in a charismatic Bible college: Although raised in the movement, George began to have doubts about the whole tongues phenomena. He had a roommate who was a Jew who knew Yiddish. With deadly sincerity these two young men wanted to put the matter of interpretation of tongues to the test in the College chapel service. It was agreed that his Jewish friend would rise at the appointed time and recite the 23rd psalm in Yiddish. The young man did his part magnificently and then sat down, waiting breathlessly for someone to give the interpretation. A young woman rose to her feet and said that God was displeased with the student body, for they had been dating too much and not attending to their studies. George said that there was not a word about sheep or shepherds or green pasture. These two young men packed their bags and immediately left that institution. (from an old sound recording)

D. The Self-control Rule (Vs. 32-33)

1. The true prophet does not lose control of himself and speak under compulsion. He is able to exercise self-control.
2. Confusion, chaos and loss of control are not of God!
3. Gardiner: “As far back as recorded history can take us there is the record of speaking in tongues as part of the ceremonies of pagan religions. Some of these ceremonies were vile, and demonic forces were involved. In Paul’s day, such practices were common, and today’s missionaries tell of similar phenomena. It is a well-known fact that spiritists, Mormons and other anti-Christian cults speak in tongues. An interesting fact about the modern charismatic movement is that it often includes those who do not meet Biblical standards as “born again” believers. It is admitted by leaders of the movement that there are those who do not believe in such essential doctrines as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth and the Deity of Christ. Yet these people speak in “tongues.” Is the Holy Spirit blessing unbelievers and blasphemers, or could the “spirit” be another? **The very real possibility of satanic influence cannot be lightly brushed aside.**”

E. The Gender Rule (Vs. 34-35)

1. How contrary this is to the practice in so many Charismatic churches where women lead in speaking in tongues and even preach! Many of the key founders and leaders of Pentecostalism have been and are women.

2. Note: Sincerity not enough! Disobedience to God's Word is disobedience, no matter how sincerely and spiritually one disobeys!
Illustration: A child disobeying with a "sincere heart".

F. The Decency Rule (Vs. 40)

1. Many things are being attributed to the Holy Ghost today that are indecent and out of order.
2. Gardiner: "For over twenty years of this writer's life, he was associated with charismatic churches. I saw women "slain under the power," sprawled on the floor while the altar workers tugged at their skirts or covered them with "altar clothes" and coats to minimize the indecent exposure! Is it not inconceivable that the HOLY Spirit would be a part to indecent exposure?"

Conclusion:

1. Recommendations for further education.
2. Remember the warnings of the Word of God concerning the last days (e.g. 1 Tim. 4:1).