

# **SPEAKING WITH TONGUES**

*Christian Development Course A Reason of the Hope*

## **ACTS 2:1-18**

This lesson introduces a most confusing subject to those who do not understand the Bible. By study we will be able to give others a reason why we believe what we do about tongues. Proper understanding of the subject depends on your reading I Corinthians chapters 12-14; Acts 2:1-18, 1044-48.19:1-6; Mark 16:17; Isaiah 28:11

## **USE OF TONGUES IN THE BIBLE**

Tongues in the Bible fall into two distinct categories. You must be able to distinguish between them in order to understand tongues.

1. As the INITIAL sign or evidence you have received the Holy Ghost. Scripture references for this category are: Isaiah 28:11; Mark 16:17, Acts 2:1-18; 1044-48, 19:1-6.

2. Used among those who have experienced the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking with tongues for: (1) Edification of the believer speaking with tongues (2) Edification of the church assembly, when accompanied by an interpretation.

Scripture references for this category are: I Corinthians chapter 12-14.

## **DEFINITION**

By comparing Acts 2:4 with Acts 2:6, 8, and 11, you will find that the Bible defines tongues" as languages." Keeping this in mind makes the subject easy to understand.

Two basic kinds of tongues, or languages, are in the frame of reference from which we are studying.

- **OTHER TONGUES** - Is a language the speaker has never learned, spoken as the Spirit gives the utterance. It could be, and often is, a language spoken by other nationalities as their native tongue. Although it is another tongue to the speaker, if someone was present who spoke that particular language he could understand the speaker. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-18).

- **UNKNOWN TONGUES** - Although translators tell us the word unknown is not in the original text, it is nevertheless a properly used scriptural term. A person speaking in tongues of this type is not understood by man, and is

speaking unto God (1 Corinthians 14:2). Unknown tongues belong exclusively to the church, those who have received the Holy Ghost evidenced by speaking with tongues.

Both of the above mentioned kinds of tongues are supernatural and miraculous due to the fact they are spoken as the Spirit gives the utterance (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 14:2). Each will be fully explained in this lesson.

## **INITIAL EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST**

Before beginning this part of the lesson, review lesson five for a thorough understanding of the Holy Ghost Jesus Christ, in His earthly ministry, had promised the Holy Ghost to His followers (John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-13; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). Christ's promise was fulfilled when the church began (Acts 2:1-4). Peter declared (Acts 2:38-39), that the promise of the Holy Ghost was to all people.

Since we can and do receive the Holy Ghost, what sign or evidence is given to assure us that we have this glorious gift) The only Bible evidence of the initial (first or beginning), infilling of the Holy Ghost is that of speaking with tongues. I find no other sign or evidence given in the Scripture A precedent has been set in the Word of God. New Testament believers spoke with tongues when they received the Holy Ghost

Joy, peace, happiness, fruit of the spirit, possessing the beatitudes. gifts of the Spirit, etc. are NOT evidences of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they are the RESULTS of being filled with the Holy Ghost.

An often used argument, and fallacy by those who believe it, is that tongues were given to those on the day of Pentecost for the purpose of preaching to other nationalities in their native tongue. This is clearly refuted in Acts 2:11, as the listeners declared "*...we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*" Preaching on the day of Pentecost was done by the Apostle Peter (Acts 2:14-40). He was using the keys to the kingdom of heaven Jesus had given him (Matthew 16:19). I have often wondered why the proponents of this theory send their missionaries to language school. Why not let the spirit anoint them to preach in the native tongue of the people? One hundred twenty believers at Pentecost were speaking in other tongues, declaring the wonderful works of God as the spirit gave them the utterance.

Don't allow anyone to sell you short, speaking with tongues is the one and only sign God has given to New Testament believers as evidence they have received the Holy Ghost. Christ died at Calvary for you to have this glorious experience. It is the most wonderful thing that could happen in a person's life. Don't ask God for tongues, ask Him for the Holy Ghost, other tongues will accompany this gift. If you have never experienced the exhilarating excitement of the Holy Ghost, I pray you will as you study this lesson. At this point read Luke II 1-13 and Acts 2:1-39.

**NOTE:**

Tongues in the following instances is strictly and exclusively for those who have received the Holy Ghost as outlined earlier. These remarks are not applicable to the sinner in any manner, other than for clarification of the Scriptures. Paul's teaching in II Corinthians 12-14 is applicable to believers only.

Tongues in the following cases is not the continuing evidence we are full of the Holy Ghost. It is good to speak with tongues for the purposes outlined in the areas of personal and church edification. To require of ourselves and others to speak with tongues on a scheduled basis as a sign one still has the Holy Ghost is unscriptural. Many factors are indicative of our walking in the Spirit. Among the many these are a few: (1) Being obedient to the teaching of the Scriptures. (2) Bearing the fruit of the Spirit. (3) Being faithful to God's cause in every way. (4) Abiding in Christ (5) Adding to our experience the necessary ingredients for spiritual stabilization Study John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:22-23; II Peter 1:5-11, along with other passages for clarification of this point.

**EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLY**

Tongues in this instance is an exercise of one of the nine spiritual gifts. For it to accomplish edification for the assembled believers, it must be accompanied by another one of the nine spiritual gifts. the interpretation of tongues. The interpretation may be given by the person speaking with tongues or by another person.

Let me explain how the above may occur in a local church service. A believer, full of the Holy Ghost will be motivated or moved upon by the Spirit to speak audibly in unknown tongues. In reverence to God's spirit the rest of the congregation should sit quietly in prayer allowing God to perform His work of edification, exhortation, or comfort. Following a relatively short discourse in a language unknown to the speaker or the congregation, that same person or someone else may give an interpretation of what was said in the native tongue of the congregation. Both of these are, and must be by Spirit utterance.

Without question Paul is giving instructions for a local church service when he spoke of "...when ye come together... in the church..." (I Corinthians 14:26, 28). While a church service is in progress, there are regulations placed upon the use and exercise of speaking with tongues and interpreting tongues (I Corinthians 14:26-28). Speaking with tongues, needing interpretation for edification to be accomplished, comes in courses (from the Greek word *MEROS* meaning a division or share, piece, portion, section, allotment, or by turn). Three (3) courses are the maximum allowed in any one church service. This does not mean that two or three people must speak with tongues before there can be an interpretation. Paul is dealing with *COURSES* here, not *PERSONS*.

After a maximum of three courses of speaking with tongues if there IS or ISN'T an interpretation given, speaking with tongues audibly for interpretation, should cease. If the person speaking with tongues or someone else in the congregation feels like speaking with tongues, he should speak to himself and God quietly, so the church service can progress (I Corinthians 14:27-28). The same regulations apply to prophecy which is a Spirit inspired utterance spoken audibly in the native tongue of the local assembly.

Three of the nine spiritual gifts involving speaking: prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. These are not to replace or supersede the preached Word of God. Churches are not perfected, only edified, by spiritual gifts. God gave the ministry to the church for its perfection (Ephesians 4:11-12). The control of every service should be in the hands of the Pastor, or the one in charge of the service.

Tongues, plus an interpretation, equals and accomplishes the same as prophecy. God chose tongues and their interpretation as a sign to unbelievers (I Corinthians 14:22). Tongues that are interpreted, or prophecy, is for one or all of the following three things: **EDIFICATION, EXHORTATION, OR COMFORT** (I Corinthians 14:3).

Spiritual gifts are not given to the believer to set the church in order, conduct business affairs, purchase or not purchase property, to build or not to build buildings, instruct others in giving money, pronounce judgment on individuals, direct in marriages, accept or reject ministers, etc. Those doing so are speaking from their own spirit and not by the Spirit of God. Spiritual gifts should come under the three stated guidelines above. Paul encourages us to "*...seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church*" (I Corinthians 14:12).

Great stress is laid upon the factors of **PEACE, DECENCY, and ORDER** (I Corinthians 14:33, 40), in any local church service. Anything violating any one of these three guidelines is not in order - whether it be gifts of the spirit, preaching, singing, testifying, playing instruments, hand clapping, receiving offerings, dancing in the spirit, entering and leaving the building, or any other factor involving order and religious decorum in God's house. These guidelines do not in any way discourage or forbid the use of any and all spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 14:39).

The following facts concerning any believer speaking with unknown tongues should be committed to memory as an aid in witnessing, and giving others a reason of the hope that is in us.

- SPEAKETH UNTO GOD.
- NO MAN UNDERSTANDETH HIM.
- IN THE SPIRIT HE SPEAKETH MYSTERIES.
- EDIFIETH HIMSELF.

- SHOULD PRAY THAT HE MAY BE ABLE TO INTERPRET.
- SECONDARY TO PROPHECY UNLESS THERE IS AN INTERPRETATION.
- IS A SIGN TO UNBELIEVERS.

So many questions arise when this subject is studied, perhaps these limited remarks will answer some of the questions in your mind.

## **EDIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER**

Any person speaking in tongues, needing an interpretation, is no doubt blessed individually to some degree. The basic purpose of this type tongues is not to edify individuals only. God's purpose and plan calls for an interpretation in order for the church to be edified. If no one interprets the tongues spoken, the speaker is to refrain from speaking in tongues audibly after three courses. They are to then pray for God to give them the gift of the interpretation of tongues so the entire local assembly can be edified (I Corinthians 14:13).

At this juncture we will look at the blessing and gift of speaking with tongues that need no interpretation. These are specifically given to the believer for personal edification, and may be exhibited in one or all of the following ways.

1. **USED IN PRAYER** - Praying in tongues is a blessing and privilege of the saint of God. Although the understanding is unfruitful the spirit is edified (I Corinthians 14:14-15). We are to pray with the understanding i.e. in our native language, but if God's spirit prompts us we are to pray in tongues. On such occasions you are speaking directly to God, and there is a communication with your spirit under these conditions that nothing can supersede.
2. **USED IN SINGING** - The same things said about praying in tongues applies to singing in tongues. You and others may not understand the words but the inward man is renewed and blessed (I Corinthians 14:15). Singing with the understanding i.e. in your native tongue, brings a blessing also.
3. **USED IN GIVING THANKS** - In this frame of reference, a saint would be blessing something or someone and begin speaking with tongues. This is a form of praising God and offering thanksgiving in unknown tongues both publicly and privately (I Corinthians 14:16-18). The same principle of points one and two apply here also.

All three of these types of the spiritual gift of speaking with tongues may be exercised in public or private. If in a public service, the type and order of the service will dictate whether our praying, singing, and giving thanks in tongues should be done audible or to ourselves and God. If it would be disruptive or stop the progression of the service, we should keep silence (I Corinthians

14:19, 28).

## CONCLUSION

No contradiction exists between Paul's instructions to "Quench not the Spirit." (I Thessalonians 5:19), and the statement "... *the spirits o the prophets are subject to the prophets.* " (I Corinthians 14:32). Quenching the Spirit means to refuse to allow God's spirit to use or bless you when it is proper and in order. Subjection of our spirits has to do with CONTROL. Control of ourselves in the house of God is important and essential for the promotion of peace, decency, and order.

Never study spiritual gifts without including I Corinthians 13:1 - 13. Paul's writing on charity in this instance is without parallel. Charity, which is the love of God expressed through us, supersedes, faith and hope.

Another lesson will cover the details of all nine spiritual gifts. This lesson is limited to the subject at hand.

Speaking with tongues is God's method of controlling and using, for His glory, the most unruly member of the body - the tongue (James 3:1-18). May our voices be lifted to Him in praise and adoration, whether in our native tongue or an unknown tongue.

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