

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!