

An Amazing Argument For Tongues!

The Promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

²⁸*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:*²⁹*And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29).*

Joel predicted a day when God would pour out His Spirit on all who "call on the name of the Lord" (Joel 2:32). This outpouring would result in a charismatic flow of the Spirit of prophecy among God's people; and Peter quoted this passage on the day of Pentecost, explaining that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day was the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:14-21). This prophecy is an ongoing promise to all who accept Christ as Lord, for all believers can and should be filled with the Holy Spirit (See Acts 2:38-39; 10:44-48; 11:15-18).

In the book of Acts, speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance is the initial outward evidence accompanying the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6); and is linked so close with the manifestation of "speaking in tongues" that this is considered the norm when receiving that baptism.

It is plainly taught in the scriptures that speaking with tongues was not an unusual occurrence in the early church. Every prominent account of conversions in the apostolic church either plainly states or else strongly implies that the convert did speak with other tongues upon being filled with the Spirit of God. (See Acts 2:1-4, Acts 8:12-18, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 19:1-6). To the above most Bible students would agree.

It is when we discuss the place of tongues in the present Christian church that controversy arises. There are three general lines of thinking on this subject: 1. Tongues have ceased. 2. Tongues are optional. 3. All who receive the Holy Ghost do speak with tongues.

Seeing that these positions are opposed one to the other, it is required of every sincere person to "Search the scriptures; for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) . . . "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12) We all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We all must give account of ourselves to Almighty God. Since every individual is responsible to God alone for his salvation, let us cast aside the opinions of men and consider each of these positions in light of the scriptures.

I. Tongues Have Ceased

We have chosen to examine this position first because if this be true, there is no need to investigate the doctrine of "speaking with tongues" any farther.

Let us begin by establishing more thoroughly what is believed by the proponents of this doctrine and reasons given for this belief. It is believed that the Apostles actually did speak in other languages under the influence of the Spirit of God. It is also conceded that those with whom the Apostles had contact also received what is sometimes called the "miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost" (speaking with tongues). It is dogmatically asserted, however, by those of this persuasion that no one after the Apostolic era could possibly receive the Holy Ghost, speaking with tongues. The reason given for the sudden halt to this glorious experience is that all miraculous manifestations of God to the church ceased upon the death of the Apostles and of those with whom the Apostles had contact. The lone scripture given to support this theory is I Corinthians 13:8. Let us examine this passage of scripture.

I Cor. 13:8-12. *"Charity never faileth: but 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.*

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: But when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known."

Notice that verse 8 is a prophecy that someday tongues will cease. There is no doubt about it. There will be a time according to the Bible when men will no longer speak with other tongues as the spirit gives utterance. The question we must answer is: "***When did this prophecy actually state that tongues would cease?***" Verse 10 identifies the time as ". . . *when that which is perfect is come.*"

Those who contend that tongues have ceased teach that "that which is perfect" refers to the New Testament scriptures, and that upon completion of the New Testament all speaking with tongues ceased. However, there are several discrepancies in this argument. Notice that at the same time tongues are to cease, verse 8 teaches that some other things are also to be discontinued.

". . . whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Whenever tongues are to cease, knowledge is also to cease. If knowledge has not yet ceased, then tongues have not ceased either. Now we know definitely that knowledge has not ceased. We still have colleges, seminaries, Bible studies. etc. If knowledge has ceased, why are you now reading this article?

". . . whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.." At the same time tongues are to cease, prophecies are to cease. Now if tongues have ceased already, that means prophecy has also ceased never to be resumed. This, however, is contrary to the scriptures. For the scriptures teach that during the tribulation, a time yet to come, two witnesses shall prophesy for three and a half years. (Rev. 11:3) Since prophecy has not yet ceased and since knowledge has not yet been discontinued, then it is very evident that neither have tongues ceased. It is also shown since tongues have not ceased that "***that which is perfect***" referred to in I Cor. 13:10 is not the New Testament. Certainly the New Testament is perfect, but there are many other things which are also perfect. ***Jesus Christ was perfect, but he did not cause a halt to speaking with tongues. The gift of the Holy Ghost was perfect,*** yet the speaking with tongues accompanied the Holy Ghost. So we see it is necessary to study the context of this passage in order to know the time indicated by "***when that which is perfect is come.***"

In this connection let us look closely at verse 12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Now, seeing through a glass darkly refers to our present mortal state. *Then face to face speaks of the time when "that which is perfect" is come. When shall we see Jesus face to face?* At the return of Jesus for His church, whereupon we shall be changed from mortal beings to immortal beings. (I Cor. 15:50-54, I Thess. 4:13-18) This is when we shall see Him face to face, and this is when we shall know even as we are known. Do any of us now know Jesus as He knows us? No! We merely know Him in part, but THEN (when that which is perfect is come) shall we know even as we are known. He knows the number of hairs on our heads. He knows our down-sittings and our uprisings. We do not know Him that fully now, but we shall someday know as we are known; and that day will come when we are all with Christ Jesus in heaven.

In view of the above we can see that ". . . when that which is perfect is come" refers to the time when we have received our immortal bodies and are in the presence of the Lord forever. It is at this time that tongues shall cease, knowledge shall vanish, and prophecies shall fail. Knowledge will vanish because we shall know all things. Tongues will cease because the fundamental function of tongues is to speak mysteries unto God. "For 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." (I Cor. 14:2) When we stand face to face before the throne of God, there will be no need to speak mysteries in the spirit.

We see then, that there is absolutely no support for the teaching that tongues have ceased. If the original church of Jesus Christ practiced speaking with tongues, why shouldn't the present church of Jesus Christ

speak with tongues? Did not the Lord promise through the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:39) He was referring to the gift of the Holy Ghost accompanied by speaking with tongues; and Peter was saying that it was promised to those who were yet afar off. This includes people in our present time. If God has promised it to us, why not believe it, embrace it, and receive it?!

II. Tongues are Optional?

There are two principal schools of thought among those who believe that speaking with tongues should be in the Christian's life today. The first view states that some people who receive the Holy Ghost do speak with tongues, while others who receive it do not. The second teaching holds that all who receive the Holy Ghost do speak with tongues, and that tongues is the sign that a person is being filled with the spirit.

The first question that we must answer then is, "In the early church did all who received the Holy Ghost speak with tongues?" Let us examine the historical record given to us in the book of Acts. There are four in-depth accounts of people receiving the Holy Ghost. The first of these is found in Acts 2:1-4.

"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 it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them *cloven tongues like as of fire*, and it lay 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."

Notice that here they were ALL filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues. All who received the Holy Ghost here spake with other tongues.

Now let us look at another instance found in Acts 10:44-46:

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God."

Here again, all who received the Holy Ghost did speak with tongues. Further, this scripture teaches that the way they knew that these individuals received the Holy Ghost was "*for they heard them speak with tongues.*" It is evident that speaking with tongues was the sign that people had been filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:6 records: And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. Again in this record of the Holy Ghost outpouring, we see that those receiving the Holy Ghost did speak with tongues. The last account of people receiving the Holy Ghost which we would like to discuss is found in Acts 8:14-19.

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost."

This is the only full account of conversion in the book of Acts (the history book of the early church) which does not specifically state that those who received the Holy Ghost did speak with other tongues. However, if we will study the above passage we can show that they did in fact speak with tongues when they received the Holy Ghost at Samaria. The author of the book of Acts merely did not explicitly say that they spake with tongues because by this time it was an accepted fact that tongues was the accompanying sign of the Holy Ghost.

Notice here the setting: The Samaritans had believed and had been baptized. (Verse 12) Yet Peter and John came down from Jerusalem to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. ("For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:") Now the question is, "How did they know that the Holy Ghost had fallen upon none of them?" Was it not because they had not heard them speak with tongues? Then verse 17 emphatically declares, "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." How did they know they had now received the Holy Ghost? There obviously was a sign. Let's go on to verses 18 and 19. This passage states that Simon **SAW** that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given. Now, if there were no visible manifestations accompanying the Holy Ghost, what did Simon see?

Also notice what Simon the sorcerer did. He offered the apostles money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." Why would Simon offer money for the power to lay hands on people that they might receive the Holy Ghost? Simply because he had watched the apostles lay their hands on the people and had seen them begin to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave utterance. He thought within himself. *"If I could lay my hands on people and they would speak in other languages that they had never learned before, that could be turned into quite a money-making proposition."*

So we see that even though Acts 8 does not say they spake with tongues when they received the Holy Ghost, it is very evident that they actually did. If you ask a shoe clerk to bring you a pair of shoes, you don't say, "And be sure to bring the tongues." You know when you get the shoes that you get the tongues of the shoes along with them. The same is true with the Holy Ghost. Acts 8 did not say that they spake with tongues because the author assumed by this time everyone knew that when an individual receives the Holy Ghost, he does speak with tongues!

Thus we see that in every account of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in the early church the recipients did speak with other tongues when they were filled. Acts 2 every time they received the Holy Ghost they spake with tongues, why should we believe that we have received the Holy Ghost without speaking with tongues (Mark 16:17)? ***"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they SHALL SPEAK WITH NEW TONGUES."***

If tongues are not the sign that a person has received the Holy Ghost, how are we to know that we have received it? Some say that a person receives the spirit automatically when he believes. (See Acts 19) Others contend that the spirit comes when an individual is baptized. Those holding the above views insist that we must accept by faith that we have received the spirit with no outward manifestation or definite spiritual experience. Can these teachings stand the test of the scriptures?

Acts 8:12 records: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." **Notice!** These Samaritans had believed and had been baptized. According to the foregoing doctrines, these people should have now had the Holy Ghost. Yet Acts 8:14-16 plainly tells us that Peter and John "when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:)" They hadn't received the Holy Ghost! What does this teach us then? Even though we may have believed and also been baptized, this does not mean we apostles know when Cornelius' household have received the Holy Ghost. How then can we know that we have received the Holy Ghost? How did the apostles know when Cornelius' household received it in Acts 10:46? *"For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."* What more proof do we need? When you receive the Holy Ghost you will know it; for you will speak with other tongues as the spirit gives utterance.

A source of great confusion on the "tongues question" is not being able to differentiate between tongues as the initial sign of the infilling of the Holy Ghost and for self edification in private prayer, as opposed to the Gift of tongues given for the edification of the church.

III. The Gift of the Holy Ghost, or The Gift of Tongues?

In the 14th chapter of I Corinthians Paul teaches extensively concerning the operation of tongues in the Christian's life and the operation of the gift of tongues in the church. (Note that the gift of tongues and the gift of the Holy Ghost are different things.) All who receive the Holy Ghost do speak with tongues, but this does not mean that they have the GIFT of tongues.

It is obvious by the content of this chapter that the Corinthians had been mishandling what God had given to them. When the church came together, they all would spend the entire service time speaking with tongues. Paul teaches them in verse 23, "*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*"

Now Paul was definitely not teaching against speaking with tongues as some would have us believe; for in verse 18 he says, "*I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.*" Paul states clearly what he was teaching in verse 19, "**Yet 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." Corinthians, when you come together don't just speak in tongues continually, but rather speak words that will edify other members of the church and instruct unbelievers that might be present concerning the things of God.

Now, is it ever proper to speak with tongues *in the church*? Certainly!

Paul here is instructing as to the proper exercise of the Gift of tongues coupled with the gift of interpretation to be used **IN THE CHURCH**. The gift of tongues is an extraordinary operation of tongues in a believer's life. It is one of the nine gifts of the spirit listed in I Cor. 12:8-10, and is specifically designed for use **IN THE CHURCH**.

I Cor. 14:26-28: "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath A TONGUE, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, (in the Church) let it be by two, or at the most be three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church: and let him speak to himself, and to God."

What about tongues outside the church and in the believer's private prayer life? There are two ways for an individual to pray: (1) with the spirit, (2) with the mind or understanding. Jesus said that they that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth. (Spirit and mind)

How does one pray "with the spirit?" I Cor. 14:14 tells us, "*For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.*" We see that praying in an unknown tongue is praying with the spirit. I Cor. 14:2 verifies this, "For 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." The purpose of praying in other tongues is stated in I Cor. 14:4, "*He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth (builds up) himself.*" There is certainly nothing wrong with being built up spiritually. This is necessary so that we will be strong.

No wonder Paul was such a powerful man of God. He said, "*I speak with tongues more than ye all*" (verse 18). Isaiah prophesied concerning this source of strength, "*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.*" (Isa. 28:11-12) This operation of speaking with tongues is not the gift of tongues, for no place in the Bible is it referred to as such. Tongues in prayer is for the *upbuilding* of one's spirit and for speaking mysteries unto God. Tongues as the gift of tongues is to be coupled with the gift of interpretation of tongues for use in the church to the edification of the body.

All people who receive the Holy Ghost will speak with tongues, not only once, but again and again. The Holy Ghost is our spiritual fuel that gives us power. It is like gasoline in an automobile. You burn it, and

then you need to be refueled. Not only is receiving the Holy Ghost speaking with tongues the rest, but it is also the REFRESHING. (Isa. 28:11-12) Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. How is a man edified or renewed? I Cor. 14:4, "*He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.*" The manna given to the children of Israel in the wilderness was a type of the Holy Ghost. The quail was a type of the word of God day. Titus 3:5 tells us that we are saved, "*by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;*" So we see that God chose speaking with tongues as a sign that a person is being filled with the Holy Ghost, whether for the first time or for the one-hundredth time.

This is not the gift of tongues, but is merely what God intended for every New Testament Christian to exercise and enjoy.

Why Did God Choose Tongues?

Often the question is asked, "Why did God choose tongues as the sign that a person is being filled with the Holy Ghost?" First of all, God is sovereign and can do anything that he chooses to do. As the Bible states, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Romans 9:20).

Secondly, the Bible teaches us that the tongue is an unruly member of the body, set on fire of hell; and that no man can tame the tongue, for it is full of deadly poison. (James 3:6-8) In order for a person to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, he must totally yield his body, soul, and spirit to almighty God. Since the tongue is the most unruly member of the body, God chose to use the tongue as a sign that the individual had totally submitted his will to the will of God. If an individual will speak words in obedience to the urgings of the spirit that he himself does not understand, this is a sign that the person has given himself totally unto God. It is abhorrent to many people that they would speak things which they themselves do not understand, by-passing the intellect. This is why Jesus said that men through wisdom knew not God. So we see that there is a deep spiritual reason behind God's choice of tongues as a medium of spiritual communication with Him.

Some wrong Objections:

1. Tongues were given in the apostles' days so that the gospel could be conveyed to men of other languages. We don't need this today, since we can learn other languages through education.

Answer: While it is true that tongues were used by God for communication in one incident in the Bible, (Acts 2) this was not the primary purpose for tongues. Paul said in I Corinthians 14:2' "*For 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.*" Paul positively states that the primary purpose of tongues is not to speak unto men.

2. Tongues heard today are mere gibberish, and are of the devil.

Answer: Sorry to say, this writer has witnessed what skeptics refer to in the above objection. Some people, through a lack of teaching or possible insincerity, have blurted out gibberish and called it speaking with tongues. Others, under the influence of Satan, have jabbered as though they were speaking with tongues. Satan always likes to counterfeit anything real from God in an attempt to discredit it. A true minister of God can detect the false from the real in a moment. When a person truly speaks in tongues, it will not be gibberish or mumbling. It will be fluent and beautiful. Just because there are counterfeit twenty-dollar bills in circulation, that doesn't keep us from spending our good ones; likewise, merely because the devil might produce counterfeit tongues, we must not throw overboard this spiritual exercise that is vital and absolutely necessary.

3. Paul said that not all spake with tongues.

Answer: The scripture here referred to is I Corinthians 12:30 "Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" Paul here is dealing with the gifts of the spirit: The gifts of healing, the gift of tongues, and the gift of interpretation of tongues. It is true and we have stated already that not all have the GIFT of tongues. All who receive the Holy Ghost do speak with tongues, but all who have the Holy Ghost

do not have the Gift of tongues for use in the church.

4. Conclusion

May this writer conclude this booklet with a personal testimony? This writer's own mother, in 1962, made a trip to the country of Egypt. While in a church meeting there, a certain Arabic lady was to be baptized. This lady had no education, not even so much as to be able to read and write in her native tongue. After she was baptized, the Holy Ghost fell upon her. She suddenly began to speak in perfect English as the spirit gave her utterance. She had no prior knowledge of the English language, yet she spoke fluently without even so much as an accent! She said, "How beautiful is the sky, my God, how beautiful is the sky." She went on to praise God with many other words in English. Afterward, she gave a message directly to the missionary who understood English. This happened just like the book of Acts. It was the exact same experience.

This writer has many friends who have experienced this same thing while visiting foreign countries. If you have never received the Holy Ghost evidenced by speaking with other tongues as the spirit gives utterance, then you do not have all that God has for you. You must have this experience in order to live the Christian life that Jesus wants you to live. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The apostles had this power, the early church had this power, and God wants you to have this power today. Without the power of the Holy Ghost in us, we fulfill the scripture written by Paul in II Timothy 3:5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." –E Baxter, Jr.

For more information or assistance on the above subject, please call or write us.

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