

The Gift of Tongues

Christ gave a commission to His appointed apostles to bring the light of the gospel committed to the Hebrews to the rest of the world in the darkness of error.

“And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues...”

(Mark 16:15-17)



The commission for the men of Galilee was of a worldwide scale, and only divine enabling could fulfill them to accomplish that mission. For this cause, those reconciled to God were given authority over devils to cast them out through the power of the gospel. They were also given the promise of being equipped to “speak with new tongues” as their mission demanded. However, there has been some confusion as to what this gift was exactly, and even more obscured is the purpose. The largest and fastest growing religious movement to originate in the United States” is the Pentecostal movement. The movement emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit, and in specific, holds to a doctrine that demands all believers speak in a manner of tongue that departs from the plain understanding of the Bible gift. The Scripture admonishes us, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1John 4:1) Seeing that the movement has risen in numbers like wildfire, it demands that there is the clearest account of what the gift of tongues is from the Scriptures. While, this article does not intend to

dwell at great length on a false gift of another spirit, we must be able to “test” these spiritual gifts by the Bible, and to do this, we must understand the true gift of tongues. As we examine Scripture, it will shed a clear light on the subject to clear up misunderstandings that may exist regarding the matter.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

We are told of the designations in the body of Christ, with the various gifts in addition to those.

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”
(1 Cor. 12:28-31)

There are several points that need to be realized regarding the body of Christ. All those functions are in the body of Christ of which Christ is the head. Notice that the gifts of the



Many parts; one body; one Spirit: the Spirit of Christ.

Spirit are not all the same, but it is the same Spirit operating throughout the body. The apostle said to the same church that "the Lord is that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17), and Christ is called the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, hence it is said of Him "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." (1 Cor. 12:4-5) Christ administers the Spirit, by which the members of the body have their appointed administration, and all the various gifts, "but the same Spirit" accomplishes the same glorious purpose of furthering the gospel in the world.

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"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." (1 Cor. 12:11-12)

Now, if Christ is working through His people to "walk even as He walked" (1 John 2:6), we must say that it is Him that speaks through the body of His people. In Christ is all the gifts, as it is written: "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:8) Thus the gift of tongues is also found in Christ to give unto men.

John beheld the risen Christ, a glorious high priest and the life of the body of His people, maintaining the oil in the lampstands of the church; supplying them sufficient oil to be a light for their mission. Thus John described Christ as having "the voice of many waters" (Rev. 1:15), and was further told that the waters "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." (Rev. 17:5) Thus in Christ's voice, we find the voice of the Spirit which is imparted to His believing church; this is the voice of many waters, or "tongues", which He "gave...unto men" to communicate with men the gospel.

Before we enter into a more full understanding of that gift

however, we should understand the purpose of the body of Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BODY

We are told the purpose of the body is to edify each other member, to present each member perfect in the Son of God.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13)

The gifts are to bless and uplift each other in love to bring the restoration of the image of God in man. Yet it is also for the purpose of proclaiming the gospel to the whole unbelieving world. “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24:14)

The body of Christ therefore has a twofold purpose on this earth:

- 1) Accountability to love and nurture those within the church with the Word of God.
- 2) Accountability to speak the truth in love to those without the church with the Word of God.

Thus the believing become stronger in the truth of Christ. And the unbelieving are brought to belief of the truth of Christ.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

It is evident that not all have the gift of tongues, but that the gift of tongues is a sign that follows the Christian believers for the sake of proclaiming it to others around the world who speak in different languages. We are going to

examine closely the outpouring of the Spirit, when Christ promised the signs for proclaiming the gospel:

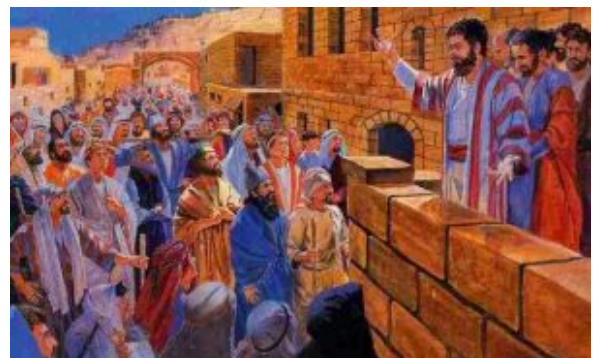


“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” (Acts

2:4-5)

In Jerusalem, at the time of the three annual feasts, there gathered men from all over the world. This was especially true in this case. Men of Israel had relocated to other lands after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, and as such, learned the native tongues of the people wherever they resided. Thus, during Pentecost, there were dwelling at Jerusalem men “out of every nation under heaven.” These devout men knew nothing of the Messiah and the work He had fulfilled, and spoke other tongues. For this purpose, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost caused the believers in Christ “to speak with other tongues”, and connects this sign with the men of other nations. And more than just connecting the gift of tongues with men of other nations, the inspired record goes further than this.

“Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all



For bringing the gospel to

the world...

amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:6-11)

There can be no mistake in the matter of what the gift of tongues was: it was other languages. The languages of many "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

The Greeks prided themselves on knowledge, and this was especially the case with Corinthian church. In the beginning of his address to the Corinthians, he said "the Greeks seek after wisdom", then says "knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." (1 Cor. 8:1) He speaks regarding the gifts to them that there is no purpose for the Greeks to speak in another tongue to fellow Greeks, and for this cause he says: "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy, because he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God: for no man understands him; but in the spirit he speaks mysteries." (1 Cor. 14:1-2) The man who speaks to other men of his own language in another language doesn't speak to men because "no man understands him", so he can only speak to God, even if he speaks, as the apostles did, of "the wonderful works of God"- He may "speak mysteries", but it isn't profitable for anyone.

Why would anyone in the Corinthian church speak such things? The Greeks who prized wisdom, knowledge, and were competitive, was not unlikely to show that he may speak in many more

tongues than his brother in a typical Greek fashion. Typical of the Greek mindset, they were strongly desiring spiritual gifts, and revealing this in tongue speaking to no profit: "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." (1 Cor. 14:12) However, Paul admonished them to "covet earnestly the best gifts".

The apostle was careful to compare the reality of the gifts, to show "the best gifts" which would serve to edify the church, saying to "desire spiritual gifts but rather that you may prophesy." Seeing as the multitude of unknown tongues was not edifying for the churches, although it was not a gift contrary to the Spirit. "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying." (1 Cor. 14:5)

When the Corinthian believers spoke these manifold languages in the congregation, being "zealous for spiritual gifts", Paul said it would not profit the unlearned "except he interpret" the language so the church could understand and receive the mysteries of the revelation spoken by the Spirit of God. He further remarked of his labors to many different lands, saying "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: 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." (1 Cor. 14:18-19)

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY OF TONGUES

Christ foretold the gift of tongues, but he foretold a reality that was not a new one, but an old truth written from the prophets in the Old Testament:

"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other

lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.” (1 Cor. 14:21)

The verse Paul refers to, referencing the gift of tongues is the one in Isaiah: “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.” (Isaiah 28:11-12) “Another tongue” will he speak to the people, giving a proclamation to the weary that they may find rest for their souls. Such is the purpose of the gift of tongues: it is to proclaim the gospel truth spoken of by Christ, inviting all: “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:28-29) For this purpose, the gift of tongues was given. “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serves not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” (1 Cor. 14:22)

Thus we are given the instruction of the purpose of tongues: it is for the unbeliever, that he may understand the gospel. Yet the purpose of prophecy was to edify the church. Paul then makes the conclusion, “Let all be done for edifying.”

However, there is one more notable thing that should be considered about the gift of tongues in the Old Testament reference. The word in the Hebrew for “tongue” is “lašhoñ” (לשון). If there was any doubt that this gift of tongues was that of a known language amongst men, we needn’t go far to see how this word for tongue is used in the Hebrew in the Old Testament. The same word is used in Genesis 10:5 to speak of the languages which came as a result of the scattering from the Tower of Babel, when God and Christ decreed that the builder’s speech should be confounded, thus bringing an eventual division in communication. “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his

tongue, after their families, in their nations.” (Gen. 10:5)

However, where the curse of rebellion brought division, strife, and confusion of tongues as at Babel, the gospel’s gift of tongues is a promise that the gospel will at last, in Christ, unite those who were once divided. “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and tongues, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:14)

THE TONGUES OF ANGELS

Some, in sincere misguiding, believe they speak in “the tongues of angels”; a language which cannot be comprehended at all. Yet the result is little different from the Corinthians speaking unknown languages to their fellow Greeks which they zealously boasted themselves in. It is not a language that can be comprehended which could not edify the church. “Though I speak with the tongues of men, even of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor. 13:1-2)

There! It is proof that men can speak in an angelic language! Yet wait. The apostle is not saying this, because it is clear that the rest of his testimony was regarding the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians were priding themselves on; but rebuked them saying that “knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” The word for “EVEN of angels” is the word in Greek meaning accumulative force. It is meant to embellish the point the apostle was seeking to make to advance the idea that NO LANGUAGE, NO KNOWLEDGE, NO PROPHECY IS ANY GOOD AT ALL WITHOUT LOVE. Love is the thing which edifies the church, and makes noble use of any language we could speak. It is love which moves the angels of heaven to work for our salvation. It is

the angels without love that would make the idea of speaking a mystery language to no understanding which cannot edify, hence why Paul said he would rather speak five words someone can understand, than ten thousand words that are not able to be comprehended.

TONGUES IN PAGANISM



The apostles did not speak in angelic tongues, but tongues that could edify unbelievers with the gospel message. However, there were those who spoke in unknown tongues. In ancient pagan temple worship, it was common in the worship practices of the congregation to speak in languages that were thought to be the

languages of the gods. Ancient history records it abundantly as occurring amongst non-Israelite, non-Bible believing heathen religions as far back as 1100BC. It was not uncommon for these heathen worshippers, especially their prophets, to speak in unearthly languages, go into trances, have fervent or animalistic behaviors.

The earliest reference may be found in the "Report of Wenamon", where it speaks of a young Amen worshiper whose possession became something of a sensational matter and attracted historical notoriety. When he became possessed by "a god", it is said that he began to emit sounds in a strange ecstatic "tongue.":

"Now, when he sacrificed to his gods, the gods seized one of his noble youths, making him frenzied, so that he said, 'Bring the god hither! Bring the messenger of Amen who hath him. Send him and let him go.'"

George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, page 353

Plato, in his account of the dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus speaks of a madness that is a gift from the heathen gods. "but in reality the greatest of blessings come to us through madness, when it is sent as a gift of the gods. Io in

Prometheus Bound states: Oh! Oh! Alas! Once again convulsive pain and frenzy, striking my brain, inflame me. I am stung by the gadfly's barb, unforged by fire. My heart knocks at my ribs in terror; my eyeballs roll wildly round and round. I am carried out of my course by a fierce blast of madness; I've lost all mastery over my tongue, and a stream of turbid words beats recklessly against the billows of dark destruction."

He also spoke about miraculous healing that would take place when the possession took over the worshippers:

"Moreover, when diseases and the greatest troubles have been visited upon certain families through some ancient guilt, madness has entered in and by oracular power has found a way of release for those in need, taking refuge in prayers and the service of the gods, and so, by purifications and sacred rites, he who has this madness is made safe for the present and the after time, and for him who is rightly possessed of madness a release from present ills is found."

"And a third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses...All these noble results of inspired madness I can mention, and many more. Therefore let us not be afraid on that point, and let no one disturb and frighten us...We, on our part, must prove that such madness is given by the gods for our greatest happiness."

Virgil (70-19BC) in the "Aeneid" speaks of this tongue speaking. He references a Sibylline priestess, when in prayer on the Isle of Delos, telling of her speaking in an frenzied and strange tongue after being united with the god Apollo. Speaking of the Greek god Apollo, the oracle of Delphi was well known over all of Greece since 400BC. Speaking of the Oracle of Delphi, Chrysostom made the observation: "This same pythoness is said, being a female, to sit at times upon the tripod of Apollo astride, and thus the evil spirit ascending from beneath and entering the lower part of her body fills the woman with madness. And she with dishevelled hair begins to

foam at the mouth, and thus being in a frenzy, to utter the words of her madness.”

“Oracles of the great ‘lord’ at the Shrine of Delphi, as Heraclitus put it, were revelations of the god’s will through ecstasy, not through sensible words. So were the Sybil’s unintelligible cries. A priest or priestess, seized by sudden trances of the spirit, uttered mystic sayings, which were held to be all the more divine as they were least rational or articulate. Philo in Alexandria had taken over the Greek notion, arguing that such ecstasy, when the mind or unconscious reason was superseded, was the highest reach of the human soul in its quest for God.” Moffatt’s New Testament Commentary, p. 214



One modern day observation was written of an Eskimo ritual to contact the spirit world. The testimony says: “Suddenly one of the men, Krisuk, went out of his head. Unable to contain himself to the regular rhythm of the service he leapt to his feet crying like a raven and howling like a wolf. In ecstasy he and the girl, Ivaloo, began to yell in a tongue I could not understand... Certainly it was not the usual Eskimo language... and if there is such a thing as speaking in tongues I heard it then.”

Yet this is only one of many modern examples. Others may be found amongst Hinduists, Animists, and Islamic Sufists to name a few.

What is this spirit that is speaking through them? We are told in the Scripture that unclean spirits, the spirits of devils, can speak through human vessels:

“And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou

art; the Holy One of God.” (Luke 4:33-34)

The demonic influence manifested itself in these heathen religions which were “without God” and “having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them.” (Eph. 4:18) Even so, in the last days, we are told of this very experience happening with supernatural manifestations throughout the entire earth:

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” (Revelation 16:13-14)

Notice that the unclean spirits come from the mouth of these three spiritualistic powers; one being called “the false prophet”; which means another spirit takes possession of this prophetic ministry that is of a worldwide scale, and it works miracles to deceive mankind. In the prophecy, we are told that it is out of the mouth, where the tongue resides, there comes an unclean spirit as frogs. And frogs always catch their prey with their tongues. It is further spoken of in Revelation 13, as a lamblike beast that deceives the world because of its miracle-working power, and that it speaks “like a dragon”. The dragon, is identified in Revelation 12 as the Satan and his fallen angels, which are devils and are called that old “serpent”. Thus, the voice of the serpent or dragon is that same angel which used the serpent’s subtlety to deceive Eve, causing her to disobey God and fail the test of faith. That voice is the same who will work in these last days through the lamb-like false prophet to deceive many. Thus it is indeed the tongues of angels speaking through the false prophet system, but it is not the angels of God; but the devil and his angels taking possession of souls.

The counterfeit gift of tongues, which speaks in a language not familiar to man, which is prevalent in Pentecostalism today is not a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit; but rather a new manifestation of the devil's spirit from ancient paganism.

In Conclusion:

- 1) The Gift of tongues is intelligent language
- 2) It was prophesied in the Old Testament
- 3) There was a manifestation of a strange tongue from the heathen before Acts 2.
- 4) The last movements of prophecy declare a false spirit and a false prophet that manifests the counterfeit gift of tongues.
- 5) We are left to conclude that the fastest growing movement in the world, the Pentecostal movement, that holds tongue speaking does not hold its origin in apostolic godliness, but rather from Babylonian confusion and Greek mysticism.
- 6) The movement is nothing less than the spirit of false prophet of Revelation: introducing a counterfeit spirit to the true God.