

Speaking in Tongues?



"So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air... 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" (I Corinthians 14:9,19).

We should be aware of false teachings, one of which is "that the speaking in tongues is a sign of the reception of the Holy Spirit", that would be advocated in these closing days. It is only fitting, then, that we examine these in the light of Bible truth before accepting them as sound doctrine.

We read that many will come to Christ on the Judgment Day, boasting of their many miracles and mighty works, yet they are not God's people (see Matthew 7:22-23). Some contend that Satan cannot perform miracles, but how is this thought reconciled with Revelation 16:13-14. Yes, my brethren, Satan can, and does, perform great wonders even in our day (see I Timothy 4:1-2; II Corinthians 11:14-15).

These false philosophies, taught today, rob God and His Son of all the great fundamental truths as presented in the Bible, even to the denying of the resurrection of man and the second coming

of Christ.

There has been a "movement" for some time now which teaches that all who receive "the baptism with the Holy Ghost" (Holy Spirit) will invariably "speak with other tongues". In other words, there is no "baptism" without "tongues". There is only one way to tell if this is true or false, and that is to weigh all the evidence pertaining to it in the balance of God's Word.

We know from a study of past history, and from events still in the future, that the true faith will not be a popular belief until the Kingdom is established. Let us rejoice, for the truth is never followed by the masses. Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock..." (Luke 12:32).

Let us remember that on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-12) all who claimed to be baptized with the Holy Spirit spoke in languages understood by those present, not in a tongue that was unknown to those listening. Whenever the word "tongue" appears in the Bible, it is definitely understood to mean a language or a race of people. Some of the references to prove this are: John 5:2; Acts 1:19; and Revelation 14:6.

Let us look at the record of events leading up to the day of Pentecost in Acts 1. We are told that the disciples were meeting in an upper room. Just why

were the one hundred and twenty gathered in the upper room and what are the circumstances concerning their gathering there? This upper room was the place where the children of God met for prayer. It was this group that Jesus came to and stood in their midst and said, "...Peace be unto you" (Luke 24:36). In verse 49, He tells them to remain in Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high." That is, they were to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at the record in Acts 2 of the circumstances under which they received this power of God. "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 sat 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" (verses 1-4).

When was Pentecost? It was a certain day on the Jewish calendar just as we have certain days on our national calendar, such as Thanksgiving Day, Labor Day, Memorial Day, etc. Pentecost was a day, not an experience, and always came just fifty days after the first

fruits offering to the Lord (see Leviticus 23:15-17).

No one who studies this event will offer the thought that if the apostles had prayed a little harder, or repeated "glory, glory, glory", a little faster, or some other phrase any more often, that the Holy Spirit would have come a day or an hour sooner. Acts 2:1 says, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come..." So we find that when the day did come the promise was fulfilled. They were not instructed as to how they should wait, but only as Luke 24:49 said, "... but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

We see that being "filled" with the Holy Spirit and the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" are one and the same as Acts 1:5 says, "...ye shall be **baptized** with the Holy Ghost not many days hence", and Acts 2:4 reads, "And they were all **filled** with the Holy Ghost..." To look a little further, in Acts 2:37 Peter was asked what should we do now that we have heard these things, and in verse 38 he tells them, "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Now we see that the words "being filled", "baptized", and "gift" all mean the same thing. The gift is not being able to

speak in an unknown language, but the gift is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

A person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit when he or she is baptized in the name Lord Jesus Christ, and then has hands laid upon him or her by an ordained minister of the Church of God to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38; Acts 19:5-6). If a person does not receive the Holy Spirit, then he or she does not belong to Christ, and is not saved (see Romans 8:9).

To further understand the use of the word "tongues", we must study I Corinthians 14. In this chapter, the word "unknown" is used six times and each time it means a foreign language. If one goes to a foreign country and attends a church meeting, but only speaks English, he must have an interpreter in order to understand what is being said. If he does not have someone to interpret for him, everything that is said is an unknown (non-understood) language.

When it comes time for prayer and a man prays in Spanish but the one that only speaks English does not understand him, it is like the situation in verses 1-2 of chapter 14: he hears the words but does not understand them, but God hears and understands the foreign tongue. When a man is asked to lead in prayer the person praying understands

what is being said, and God understands as we find in verse 4, but not all present will understand.

In verses 10-19, Paul states that whether he is preaching, praying, or giving thanks, he wants those around him to understand what he is saying so that they may receive a blessing from the words that they are hearing. Understanding was very important to Paul, as he tells us in verse 20. He does not want anyone to be a child-like person in understanding, but he wants us to have understanding as an adult. That is the reason he would rather give five words that people can understand, than ten thousand words that leave people in the dark about what he wants them to know (see verse 19).

How then do we understand verse 27? "If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue (unknown language), let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret." Paul's meaning should be clear for he says, "If any man speak..." So we see that we have one man speaking and not two or three people speaking. Therefore, if a man is giving a message (sermon or study) and it is in a foreign language, he should give two, or at the most three sentences, and that by course, or one at a time, so that the interpreter can readily

translate the thought into the second language. We see that only one is speaking and only one is interpreting, and this is the system we use in the church today.

Let us think back to verse 22 in finishing our thoughts. It tells us that the speaking in tongues is a sign, that is a tool, that is to be used in reaching out to the unbeliever. We have men and women in the church that have the wonderful ability of speaking in other languages. They may go to a country and minister to the people there, or they may translate doctrines and tracts into other languages. Both are using that gift to reach the unbeliever.

In conclusion, verse 40 tells us, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

NOTE: When the word "unknown" is in italics, it is an added word to the text.

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