

What Are Tongues?

The first biblical use of the term “tongues” is found in Gen. 10:20: “These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their *tongues*, in their countries, and in their nations.”

This verse is part of the genealogy given for the sons of Noah after the flood, showing from where the various nations came after God confused the languages. Genesis 11 tells us why the languages were confounded and the inhabitants scattered abroad: “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” Gen. 11:1-9.

From this time forward there would be many different

languages or tongues on the face of the earth.

Tongues are languages; plain and simple! In fact, on the inside of the *Authorized King James Version*, where the use of the term “tongues” to describe other languages originates, we read: “Translated out of the

original *tongues*...” It is self evident that the translators meant languages by the word tongues.

Tongues In The Christian Church

The ability to speak in tongues is a spiritual gift. Paul lists some of the gifts of the Spirit thusly: “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.” 1 Cor. 12:28.

For what purpose are these gifts of the Spirit for? Paul tells us exactly why they were given: “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 fullness of Christ.” Eph. 4:11-13. The gifts of the Spirit are given to build up and strengthen God's church.

The first mention of these Spiritual Gifts in the Christian church is found in Acts 2: “. . . 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.” vs. 2-4.

Were these tongues some “mystical language” of the



The Oracle of Delphi

From around the sixth century B.C. until Christianity appeared, in their quest for information or direction, the Greeks would visit an oracle, a shrine where questions could be brought to the gods through a human medium. These temples, like the one pictured above, existed throughout Greece and were dedicated to Apollo, the Greek god associated with prophecy. None were more famous than the Delphic Oracle.

Along with Apollo, at the temple of Delphi, Dionysus, the god of wine and ecstasy, was honored equally for having the ability of prophecy.

During a typical ritual, while music was being played, a priestess, titled the Pythia, would go into a trance and utter strange sounds. These vocalizations were then interpreted by priests and considered the voice of Apollo or Dionysus!

The interpretations given were intentionally vague, whereas a true prophet is direct, plain and to the point - God sends His prophets to warn His people; He desires their speech to be crystal clear!

As we shall see, throughout the ages, down to the present, music, trances and ecstatic utterances play a key role in all Pentecostal religions.

This first recorded, false gift of tongues was eradicated by the introduction of Christianity in the first century A.D.; however, it would soon be revived in the second century under the new name of Montanism.

Spirit? No! They were different languages previously unknown to the disciples. It is the ability to speak in a foreign language, previously unknown to the present speaker, that comprises the true gift of tongues. It is given to enable a believer to give the Gospel where there would have been a language barrier. Notice that in verse 4 it is other languages that are called *other tongues*.

The people gathered at Jerusalem “were confounded, because that every man heard them speak *in his own language*. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?” Acts 2:6-7. “Galilaeans” were easily recognized and generally held in contempt by other people, because they were considered unlearned, compulsive, violent and disorderly people. The people of Galilee were *especially noted for errors in grammar!* They were known for absurd pronunciation errors, therefore making ridiculous mistakes; thus Peter was easily detected as one of Christ’s disciples. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine the great surprise of the multitudes. Since the Galilaeans couldn’t even speak their own language very well, “how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” *ibid.*, vs 8.

Then verses 9-11 tell us what kind of people were there that spoke in other “tongues”: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judaeans, Asians, Egyptians, Libyans, Romans, etc.

That these Galilaeans could fluently speak other languages seemed so impossible that some thought they must be drunk! (vs. 13).



Above, is painting of the “Cult of Cybele,” known for its ecstatic utterances and sensual dance. One of its former priests introduced a false Pentecostal revival in the early Christian church.

Montanism

Montanism, also known as the New Prophecy and Cataphrygian heresy, arrived in the Christian church during the second century A.D.

This movement was started by the so called, self proclaimed, prophet Montanus.

Montanus was formerly a priest in the Oriental ecstatic cult of Cybele. Upon his supposed conversion to Christianity, he introduced some of his previous pagan rituals under the name of “The New Prophecy” to his followers.

Eusebius of Caesarea, the famed church historian, tells us that Montanus would enter into a ecstatic state, fall into a trance and begin prophesying. The interpretations were said to be the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Montanus and his followers insisted that this was the fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus to send the Spirit of Truth, and that this Spirit was made manifest to the world through himself and the prophets and prophetesses associated with him.

Most of the early Christians realized that this was a false gift, as a true prophet *never* intentionally induced any kind of ecstatic intensity nor maintained that these actions were of God.

Throughout Asia and North Africa Montanism flourished. Termed a Pentecostal outgrowth of Christianity, it lasted from its beginnings in the second century until Emperor Justinian I enacted legislation with severe penalties against its practise in the sixth century, essentially destroying it. Some remnants of this religious practice seem to have survived until the ninth century.

God gave the disciples the ability to speak in tongues for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. By using the “ignorant” men of Galilee, He was able to confound the wise. It made a great impression upon the multitudes and resulted in many conversions of people from every part of the known world, thus taking the Gospel to many different regions.

I have read various tracts by different authors claiming that there was a two fold miracle going on at Pentecost, one of speaking in tongues and one of hearing. This is not substantiated by the biblical account, for there is no mention of “ears of fire!”

There are only three examples of speaking in tongues recorded in the Bible: Acts chapters 2, 10 and 19. In all three instances, the gift was bestowed upon the believers to promote the Gospel message only when there was a group of people present that spoke different languages! Proof of this is found in Acts 4. In this chapter there is a repeat of all the events that took place in chapter 2, but because the people there spoke the same language, the gift of tongues was absent. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” God does not just pour out the gifts of the Spirit, tongues or otherwise, where it is not necessary!

Unknown Tongues

The word *unknown* found in the King James version of the Bible is a “supplied word;” it is not found in the original texts. The translators added this word to help us to understand the verse. Unfortunately, it seems to have

brought about some confusion as well.

Once again, before the day of Pentecost the men of Galilee spoke only their native language (Very poorly at that!). At the outpouring of the Holy Spirit they gained the ability to speak new languages. These new languages were *unknown to them* before this time; however, they were known languages in other areas of the world. To many of those who read this paper, Russian is an unknown tongue, but not to a person living in Russia.

A Desired Gift

After Pentecost tongues had become a much coveted gift to many; a proof of their high calling; and as such it was an abused gift. By the tone of Paul's counsel concerning the proper use of this gift, it was used for outward show to gain the admiration of other people. This temporarily became a problem in the early Corinthian church. The fact that Paul does not mention it in his second epistle to the Corinthians indicates that the problem was most likely remedied by the admonition in his first epistle.

Paul said to the Corinthians: "He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself. . ." 1 Cor. 14:4. To speak in a language that no one else understands is no help to the cause of Christ! For this reason Paul warns: "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 . . . Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." *ibid.*, vs. 9 and 11. Why would a servant of Christ want to become as a babbling barbarian!? We must give the Gospel in clarity so that he who hears may take it elsewhere!

A Special Language To Talk With God?

Many will quote the following verse to prove that there is a special language that we need to speak to



The "Classical Pentecostals"

Charles Fox Parham declared in 1901 that speaking in tongues was a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. The very first person to speak in tongues was Agnes Ozman, one of Parham's students, on January 1, 1901. This new movement might have sputtered if not for William Joseph Seymour [above], a black preacher who listened to Parham through an open door in his Houston Bible school. Soon Seymour set out for Los Angeles, where his own [supposed] baptism in the Spirit in 1906 brought him an enthusiastic following. Within two years of founding a mission in an abandoned church on Azusa Street, his multicultural ministry sent missionaries to 25 countries.

The Azusa Street movement merged the white American holiness religion with worship styles derived from African-American traditions. The Azusa Street "Apostolic Faith Mission" conducted three services a day, seven days a week, where thousands received the "tongues baptism."

The expressive worship and praise at Azusa Street, included shouting and dancing. The admixture of tongues and other charisms with black music and worship styles created a new indigenous form of Pentecostalism extremely attractive to the general populace in America and around the world.

This "new" worship style was not really new. It is almost identical to the Delphic worship style and Montanism.

Many have referred to this movement as "Neo-Montanism."

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."

1 Cor. 14:2.

The first thing to remember is a common sense point: God understands all languages - He invented them! There is no need of a special language to talk with Him.

This statement from Paul was a rebuke to those engaging in this activity of vanity! Paul warned those people that unless they were to give the Gospel message in the local language so that people could understand, they would speak in vain, and it would accomplish nothing for the cause of Christ. Speaking French to an English audience is useless - "When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" *ibid.*, v. 16.

Tongues Of Angels?

Many will say, "but Paul says he spoke with tongues of angels!" Is this true? NO! Lets look at the passage in 1 Cor. 13:1. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

If read in context, one quickly realizes that Paul is saying that the gift of tongues is far inferior to love (charity). It is quite clear that the term "though" means "even if." In verse 3 Paul said, "Though I give my body to be burned . . ." Paul was beheaded! Therefore, he clearly means "even if I give my body to be burned."

Are Tongues "The" Sign Or Test Of The Indwelling Spirit?

Many of our charismatic friends put tongues at the top of the list when it comes to "proof" of a man's calling, but this is directly opposite of what the Bible teaches.

"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.” 1 Cor. 12:28. In this list, tongues is last, in fact, he goes on to say, “greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues.” 1 Cor. 14:5. Why then do so many consider tongues to be so important? According to Paul, a teacher is also greater! If it is so important, why does the Bible say that not all are given this gift: “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?” 1 Cor. 12:29-30. The clear, obvious answer to these questions is: NO! The gift of tongues *is not* the ultimate test of your Christianity! The Bible says, “the fruit (test) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Gal. 5:22 and 23.

Another observation that makes it obvious that tongues is not the only or most important fruit of the Spirit is that, of the more than fifty times the Bible mentions someone being filled with the Spirit, tongues is connected with only three instances!

Consider this admonition from Christ: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” Mat. 15:8. ***God reads the heart - talk is cheap in any tongue!***

John tells us of a much



The Charismatic Movement

The Charismatic or “Neo-Pentecostal Movement” was founded in the 1960’s. It first received attention when Dennis Bennet announced to his congregation in Van Nuys, California at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church that he had received the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. His church divided and he was sent to a small parish in Seattle. There Bennett preached his new wave doctrines. TIME and NEWSWEEK carried Bennett’s story, giving the movement national recognition.

The Charismatic Movement derives its name from the Greek “charismata,” meaning “gifts of the spirit.” These gifts include speaking in tongues, prophesying, and the gift of healing.

For charismatics, baptism in the holy spirit is an intensity, a spiritual breakthrough. One author relates his experience thusly: “We are to be edified. Edify means to build up or charge up - much like charging up a battery . . . one of God’s ways to charge up your spirit is by speaking in tongues.”

It is this “spiritual charge up” that draws so many into the Charismatic Movement. Loud music and chanting accompany this style of worship, but is this God’s way?

The Bible tells quite a different story. When in communion with God, Christ, our Example, sought out a secluded, QUIET place for prayer.

In fact, all throughout the Bible, when people sought communion with the Lord, it was in simple quietude.

The example of Elijah’s search for the Lord gives us clear example of how He communicates with us.

“And a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice**. And it was so, when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. ” 1 Kings 19:11-13.

God does not work in a bedlam of noise; He works in a still small voice. None of the Bible writers were “Charismatics;” they all approached their communion with God in quiet reverence on their knees.

“Be still, and know that I am God.” Psa. 46:10.

better way in which we can discern a true follower of Christ from a merely professed follower. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:3-4.

Keeping God’s commandments of love, the ten commandments, is the ultimate test of true Christianity.

Tongues is not mentioned as a requirement for the saints. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness and temperance are an evidence of patience born of the Spirit, giving us the ability and desire to keep God’s commandments, “and his commandments are not grievous,” because we love the Lord and our fellow man. 1 John 5:3.

“Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.” Rev. 14:12.

A Challenge for the Honest of Heart

The Charismatics and Pentecostals claim the event at Pentecost as their foundation, but is this so? The evidence given previously speaks loudly against this belief, as the Apostles spoke in languages that other men understood, not in ecstatic utterances. A diligent investigation by the honest of heart into the historical

record concerning the phenomena of ecstatic utterances does not bring him to the Pentecostal experience of the Apostles. For all of recorded history there have been various groups of religious zealots that spoke in unknown tongues. All of the accounts of this type of religious experience predating the day of Pentecost are of pagan origin, and as such, it immediately becomes obvious that these religions were of satanic origin, as they are not recorded within the sacred pages of the Bible as coming from God. The evidence of historical incidents of *glossais*, speaking in tongues, in paganism are just too big to ignore!

This type of worship style has been revived many times throughout the Christian era under various names.

The recorded cases of speaking in ecstatic tongues can be traced back as far as 1100 B.C. During this period of heathen use, prior to the Christian era, it was the supreme example of demonic possession and was probably quite similar to the vocalizations of the demoniacs of Genneserat.

Plato, the Greek philosopher, talks about the “gift” of ecstatic speech in his time. In his *Phaedrus*, he shows us that he is well acquainted with this phenomenon; in this work he talks of several families that were engaged in ecstatic speech, praying and making strange utterances, while possessed! He pointed out that these practices even brought about physical healing to those engaged in them! This should be of no surprise, as Satan will have this same power at the end: “And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.” Rev. 13:14. False healings and tongues are one of Satan’s old tricks and John saw that they would be revitalized at the end!

Another description given that predates Christianity by approximately one hundred years is found in *Aeneid* (Virgil, “Aeneid,” trans. James Rhoads, vol. XIII of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. R. M. Hutchins, Chicago), describing the activities of the Sybiline priestess on the Island of Delos. He attributes her ecstatic utterances to being spiritually unified to the god Apollo!

During the Christian era, aside from the “Montanism” mentioned in the center column on page three, Chrysostom, in speaking of the Pythoness of Delphi wrote, “This same Pythoness then 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 disheveled hair begins to play the bacchanal and to foam at the mouth, and thus being in a frenzy to utter the words of her madness. I know that you are ashamed and blush when you hear these things: but they glory both in the disgrace and in the madness which I have described.” *Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*.

A great challenge for the sincere Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatic believers would be to check the evidence in the Bible and the historical record to see which form of

“glossolalia” more closely matches their style. Would it be the unintelligible utterances of the various pagan cults or a known language that would enable you to spread the Gospel to someone that spoke another language? Is there any Biblical evidence that every or any strange utterance is an expression of God?

There is no doubt of the supernatural origin of the ecstatic utterances known as talking in tongues, but the question is: Who is the originator of these spiritualistic manifestations?



Voodoo and Native Americans

Music and mystic chanting have long been associated with both the Native American religious experience and the practitioners of Voodoo.

The unintelligible vocalizations uttered by the priests of these religions are interpreted by others in the same way that the various Pentacostal and Charismatic Christians do. In fact, the Haitian Voodoo practitioners venerate many of the Christian saints and believe in the sovereign God of the Christians!

For both groups, upon “conversion,” the Charismatic and Pentacostal religions are the most popular. By being so similar in their styles of worship, it is a quite natural step.

Confusion and the Ecumenical Movement

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Cor. 14:33.

In many of the Pentecostal and Charismatic religions the worship style is more like a festival instead of the reverent and peaceful form of worship that our Example, Jesus Christ, followed. The loud music with its driving beat and in some cases people rolling on the floor with “holy laughter,” people vocalizing in tongues (while others are studying or trying to!) and chanting, “Yes Jesus, praise you Jesus...,” while someone else is trying to say a prayer is not in accordance with anything within the biblical record.

Two of the main parts of spiritual Babylon are: 1.) Confusion and 2.) A great religious union.

Unlike the early Pentecostal movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Charismatics are found throughout all the main-line Christian denominations, Evangelical as well as Orthodox and Catholic. The “interdenominational” era has arrived, but is this the way God would have it? Only if it is done in truth. Jesus said to His disciples, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.” Mat 10:34-36. He came to separate a people for Himself, “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Eph. 5:27. He does not want us to just to come together strictly for the sake of unity; we must stand for truth! This great

ecumenical movement, fueled largely by the non-denominationalism of the Charismatic movement, was foretold in the Bible. In Revelation 17:13, “These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”



“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.”

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Rev. 17:5. Babylon the great, is the city of spiritual confusion. “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” Rev. 18:1-4.

God is calling His people out of the great apostasy and religious confusion in the spiritual city of the end.

Are you sincere enough to test your faith against the infallible word of God?

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